

SUBJECT: A report and recommendation on the Northside Comprehensive Land Use Plan (NCLUP) dated September 2006.

PURPOSE

To review and report on the Northside Comprehensive Land Use Plan dated September 2006.

BACKGROUND

This plan was developed by the Community of Northside, which has asked the Department of Community Development and Planning (DCDP) staff to present the plan to the City Planning Commission (CPC) for approval. This plan had previously been brought to the CPC on September 16, 2005. The CPC asked staff to facilitate an initial meeting between the Northside Community Council and business owners in Northside, because various businesses believed that they were not included in the planning process. On October 11, 2005 a meeting was held at the McKie Recreation Center to discuss issues between the Northside Community Council (NCC) and the Northside Business Association (NBA). Staff also met with representatives of the steering committee on October 20, 2005 to discuss various aspects of their plan.

The Northside Business Association Steering Committee, which consisted of 9 representatives met 9 times from January 2006 to August 2006 to discuss and forge a compromise regarding the hotly contested zoning issues in the MG Districts. The Steering Committee presented the final new zoning proposals to 20 industrial property owners in attendance at a meeting held on September 11, 2006 at the McKie Recreation Center. On September 18, 2006 the Northside Community Council approved the revised NCLUP. The plan was also approved by the NBA on November 6, 2006. Copies of the plan were handed out to City Planning Commission (CPC) members at the March 2, 2007 CPC meeting.

PLANNING AREA

The study area includes the entire Northside Community.

PLAN OVERVIEW

The Plan provides an overview of the existing land use conditions including: quality of life, housing, commercial development, and green space development. Recommendations and implementation strategies are found on pages 72 through 85. The following are the implementation strategies:

Recommended Zone Changes:

- There are 38 suggested zone change areas reflected on the attached maps pages 78-85 (Exhibit A). There is also a proposal to create a new "MG-NSO", Manufacturing General-Northside Overlay Zoning District as part of the 38 recommended zone changes (Exhibit B).

Quality of Life:

- Forums for community dialogue on education and cultural diversity.
- Creation of a Chase Cultural Campus, which would redevelop the Chase Elementary School and McKie Community Center site to accommodate a new community cultural campus.
- Develop a second school plan & implementation process.
- Establish a Northside Community Fund. The fund has already been established. However, programs should be developed that would work with residents, associations

and institutions to develop projects that reflect the neighborhood's priorities.

Quality Housing Choices:

- Work on targeted code and property improvements in the southern residential areas with the initial focus on Fergus Street.
- Create a marketing program that will showcase Northside as a great place to buy a house and invest in the neighborhood.
- Work to create new housing on Cresap Avenue, implement the Colerain Connector Plan, and complete development at Rockford Woods. Housing will be an ownership product that respects hillside locations and provides a mix of price points.

Commercial Reuse:

- Upgrade the 4000 block of Hamilton Avenue. The Northside Business Association along with area developers will purchase, renovate and release properties to improve the overall character and the mix of goods and services in the neighborhood.
- Create the Gateway Circulation and HUB Project that will work together to address the need for a bus hub at the Ludlow Viaduct/ Hamilton Avenue/ Spring Grove Avenue intersection. Together they will create alternatives for consideration and press to resolve this issue in a positive way.
- The community will support development and implementation of mixed-use model projects involving old industrial buildings in the areas south of Blue Rock Avenue into mixed-use buildings with residential and commercial uses.
- The community will create a "big box" task force to deal with both desired and unwanted advances on the neighborhood. The task force will work with interested developers on issues of appropriate location, design and site functionality.

Enhance & Connect Green space:

- Create greenspace at Badgely Run Park from the old right-of-way land of the Colerain Connector project. Completion of the park and associated greenspace is the community's top greenspace priority.
- Develop a landscape program for new commercial mixed-use areas.
- Develop a greenspace trust, which will purchase and hold property to convert into greenspace.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The plan was prepared by the Northside Land Use Plan Steering Committee, the Community Building Institute and other stakeholders. These stakeholders included new and longtime residents, business owners, property owners, school officials and representatives, parents, and interested developers. Please see attached list (Exhibit C).

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Staff has not received any information from residents about the proposed plan.

DEPARTMENT CONCERNS

DCCDP staff circulated the plan to several city departments to obtain input on the strategies prior to presentation of the plan to CPC. The following is a list of concerns from City departments:

DCCDP:

- We commend the neighborhood for their hard work, however this plan appears to be a neighborhood action plan and not a land use plan as currently written.
- The current plan is the same as the 2005 plan previously submitted. The Northside Steering Committee had agreed to change following items at a meeting held on October 20, 2005.
 1. Change the name of the plan. The plan includes such items as education & cultural diversity, a community fund, a marketing program and other issues that are not associated with a land use plan. This is a Neighborhood Comprehensive Plan or a Comprehensive Community Strategy that includes a land use element.
 2. Simplify the zoning recommendations so that it would be easier for the CPC to accept or approve.
 3. Make the map on page 22 an existing zoning map.
- The plan does not show any recommendations for future land uses. This is a major component for a land use plan. The future land uses in the plan is needed to support and justify any future zoning needed in the neighborhood. This focus is not clearly displayed in this plan.
- The plan appears to rely on 38 neighborhood zone changes to guide the goals & objectives of the plan including a new recommended "MG-NSO" Manufacturing General-Northside Overlay District.
- As written, approval of the plan could imply that the proposed zone changes are appropriate prior to a zoning study being completed.
- Some of the proposed zoning designators on page 78-85 are not part of the City of Cincinnati Zoning Code.
- The proposed PD Planned Development Districts in the plan do not meet the PD guidelines as outlined in the Zoning Code.
- The format of the plan makes it hard to follow. For example, the existing conditions, analysis and recommendations for the plan need to be reorganized so that the reader can see the story being told and understand the reasons for the requests being made.
- Staff believes that all zoning recommendations included in the plan on pages 76-85 should be recognized as an element of the plan, but reviewed separately as a zoning study request after a decision has been made regarding the plan. For that reason staff recommended that the Plan identify the areas the community feels should be rezoned, and provide an explanation for the rezoning. Instead, the plan identifies specific zoning designations for specific properties. Therefore, approving the Plan may imply that the zone changes are appropriate prior to staff completing a zoning study. Staff has not determined the merits of each of the requested zone

changes. However, staff has determined that the PD designations as requested do not meet the PD guidelines as outlined in the Zoning Code.

Park Board:

- It is clear that the community values the green spaces in and around Northside and recognizes the importance of green space to the character of the neighborhood and to its quality of life. We could not agree more.
- The plan refers to enhancing the connections between the neighborhood's green spaces such as Mt. Airy Forest, Greeno Woods, LaBoiteaux Woods and Buttercup Valley, for example. This is consistent with the Park Board's plan.
- A number of "pocket parks" are proposed on page 65, a "green space entry park" is proposed on Spring Grove Avenue (page 62) and there are several references to a "green space connector" along the former railroad right-of-way, which cuts diagonally across part of lower Northside. None of these sites are now contemplated as new parks within the Park Board's plan. The Park Board, due to their small size and relatively high maintenance cost, does not recommend "Pocket parks". If these facilities are desired by the community, we suggest that other entities are approached to build and maintain them.
- The Park Board currently operates and manages Hoffner Park, Jergens Park and the preserves of Parkers Woods, Buttercup Valley, LaBoiteaux Woods, Greeno Woods, Bradford-Felters Tanglewood, Fox Preserve, Mt. Airy Forest and properties along the Colerain Connector. Additionally, we partner with the Mill Creek Restoration Project on their efforts to improve the Mill Creek and create a trail system along it. Given the large amount of green space in and adjacent to Northside, plus the presence of Spring Grove Cemetery, we do not see the need to create new City parks within the neighborhood. Even if capital funding could be made available to develop new parklands, the costs of maintenance would be problematic.
- References to the Colerain Connector Plan imply that the Park Board may be involved in creating parks and recreation sites as envisioned in the plan. The Park Board will only be involved in certain aspects of the plan and only, as capital and operating funds are made available to build and maintain these elements. Generally these are to include large areas of contiguous green spaces and trails within those areas. We also will remain involved in trail and green space connections between the Colerain Connector corridor and Mt. Airy Forest. Features such as playgrounds, a skate park and smaller park sites within this corridor are not supported by the Park Board, and should instead be pursued with the Recreation Commission, or as part of the development of new housing, or through other entities.

Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati:

- Northside is serviced by combined sewers so there will be connection credit issues for virtually any added flow. For example, most recently MSD has worked to establish credits for residential development along Kirby Road near Ashtree Drive, and is currently working with the engineer for the American Can site.
- MSD has recently received several requests for sewer availability for proposed new restaurants in the area. Credits will likely be a difficult issue to navigate.

- Sewage needs/issues must be considered when looking at changes in land use. Increased flows in this area may be very difficult to offset with sewer credits. Please inform MSD as early as possible when development plans call for increased flow into our infrastructure.
- In those areas where there are proposed zone changes, MSD has several projects proposed.
 1. Nine Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Upgrade Projects,
 2. One High Rate Treatment Plant (HRT) project, and
 3. One 18 MGD Storage Facility Project
- The area of Northside that has the largest potential conflict with future sewers is the area along the Mill Creek to the south being identified for change from a Manufacturing General (MG) district to Northside Overlay (MG-NSO). MG-NSO would allow a mixed use of residential and live/work space along with manufacturing general.
- The MSD Capital Plan identifies 7 additional HRT and 13 CSO upgrade project sites that are not located in Northside but are within 5000 feet of Northside and the proposed MG-NSO location. Planning for these projects is scheduled out at 2020-22. It may be that a consolidation of project sites could lead to a larger footprint located within the MG-HSO area.
- From an easement standpoint, the cost of easements will only minimally be affected by zoning (commercial algorithms are higher than residential per square foot). As the area develops and becomes more condensed, any encumbrance upon a property and the proximity to residential property becomes greater thus potentially increasing easement costs.

RECOMMENDATION

The staff of the Department of Community Development and Planning recommends that City Planning Commission take the following action:

Accept the final Northside Comprehensive Land Use Plan (NCLUP) dated September 2006 and direct staff to initiate a zone change study to determine if the zone changes proposed in the plan are appropriate.

ACCEPT:

Respectfully submitted,

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