

SUBJECT:

A report and recommendation on the draft of the Mt. Washington Comprehensive Plan dated March 2007.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Planning Area: The entire Mt. Washington neighborhood (map attached)

Purpose:

To create a long-range vision for the neighborhood to preserve and improve the community's quality of life.

BACKGROUND:

Through the City's 2004 Community Priority Request (CPR) process, the Mt. Washington Community Council requested that a Comprehensive Plan be developed for the neighborhood. In 2005, members of the Mt. Washington community with help from staff of the Department of Community Development and Planning initiated a comprehensive planning process for the neighborhood. City staff from the Departments of Buildings and Inspections, Transportation and Engineering, Parks, and Police and the Metropolitan Sewer District and Greater Cincinnati Water Works also participated in the planning process.

EXISTING PLANS:

In 1996 the City adopted the "Mount Washington Urban Design Plan" which set policy guidelines for the primary neighborhood business district along Beechmont Avenue. The Urban Design Plan updated and revised standards set by the "Mt. Washington Architectural Focus Study" that was prepared by the City in 1979. The community has never had a comprehensive neighborhood plan.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:

On August 31, 2005, Department of Community Development and Planning hosted a "Kick Off" meeting for the plan in the neighborhood. Notices for the meeting were sent to the 7,000 property owners in Mt. Washington, posters were displayed in the business district and flyers were distributed throughout the community. Over one hundred and fifty Mt. Washington stakeholders attended the Kick Off meeting. The meeting included information regarding the planning process and was highlighted by a brainstorming session to discuss what Mt. Washington would be like if the Plan were successful. A website was created to track progress of the plan and subsequent meetings were advertised by mail, on the website, or by email.

Stakeholders were also encouraged to make nominations for the Steering Committee. City staff and community leaders reviewed the nominations and appointed a Steering Committee that included a diverse group of residents and other stakeholders. Subcommittees of volunteers were then formed to research topics in depth and propose future recommendations. Two Open Houses were held to obtain feedback on the draft Goals, Objectives and Strategies of the Plan. Over one hundred stakeholders attended the open houses and provided comments and feedback on a variety of issues. The recommendations were revised based on feedback received.

Students at Mt. Washington Elementary School also participated in the planning process by drawing "Dream Cards" depicting their wishes for the neighborhood. The drawings included skate parks, water

parks, video game and clothing stores, movie theaters/entertainment venues, organized sports and a new swimming pool and showed support for Mt. Washington Elementary School. Many of these ideas were incorporated into the Plan.

Letters were sent by the City and the Mt. Washington Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation to all property owners in the business district explaining the proposed zone changes in the business district and requesting feedback.

Outside organizations such as Housing Opportunities Made Equal, Cincinnati Public Schools- Local Schools Decision Making Committee and Consultant, Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority, Anderson Township, Anderson Area Chamber of Commerce, Sierra Club and Cincinnati Preservation Association also participated in the creation of this plan.

PLAN OVERVIEW:

The plan provides background information and future recommendations in the categories of Economic Development, Housing, Transportation, Quality of Life, Utilities, Natural Environments and Preservation, and Land Use.

Recommendations focused on topics such as improving the mix of businesses and aesthetics of the business district, promoting and enhancing the walkability and pedestrian-friendliness of the entire community, improving communications about issues and events in the community, preserving and promoting the neighborhood’s historic and natural assets, increasing opportunities for physical activity by improving the trail network, and encouraging the use of green building techniques.

A draft of the plan was circulated to the Departments involved in the creation of the plan and their feedback was incorporated into this draft.

OUTSTANDING ISSUES:

The community has been unable to reach a consensus regarding the zoning of the primary neighborhood business district (NBD) located along Beechmont Avenue. The plan currently recommends Commercial Community- Pedestrian-oriented (CC-P) zoning on both gateways to the NBD and the property south of Corbly Street. Commercial Community-Mixed Auto and Pedestrian-oriented zoning (CC-M) is proposed to be placed on the property north of Corbly Street, to accommodate the existing mix businesses that have drive-throughs (such as fast food restaurants, financial institutions and an oil change facility) and businesses, including strip malls) that are set back from the street to accommodate large parking lots along Beechmont Avenue. Property owners in the business district have not voiced opposition to the proposed zone change (See map, attached).

A portion of residents of the community and members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and Subcommittees; however, have been vocal about their desire for a pedestrian-friendly business district and have requested that the entire business district be zoned CC-P. They argue that CC-P zoning would promote uniformity of the business district in the years to come and achieve desired character. They cite the O’Bryonville business district, which is located on a street with traffic compatible to Beechmont Avenue, as an example of the desired character.

Those who oppose a zone change of the entire NBD to CC-P are concerned that the community will be driving out desirable businesses (such as financial institutions and some coffee shops) that require drive-throughs to successfully operate. The community has requested the feedback of Planning Commission on this issue.

CONCLUSION:

1. The draft of the Mt. Washington Comprehensive Plan reflects countless hours of community and staff research and participation.
2. The Steering and Sub-Committees support recommendations in the draft plan as necessary to improve the quality of life in Mt. Washington.
3. Community stakeholders largely support recommendations in the plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

APPROVE the draft of the Mt. Washington Comprehensive Plan dated March 2007 and direct staff to finalize the document based on recommendations made by City Planning Commission.

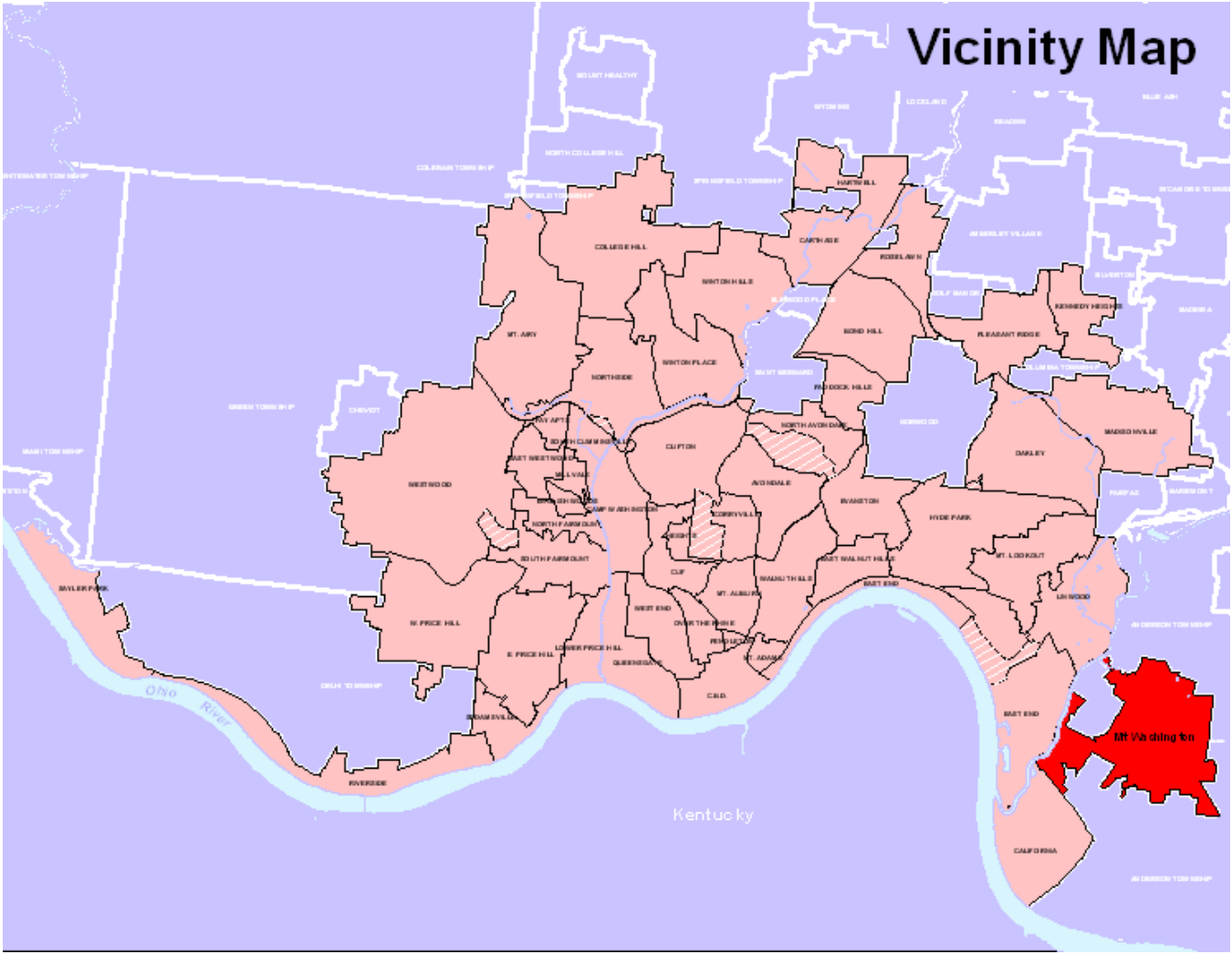
APPROVED:

Respectfully submitted,

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Vicinity Map



NBD Zone Changes

- Zone Change to CC-M
- Zone Change to CC-P

