

# Planning Matters



CITY OF COLUMBUS, MAYOR MICHAEL B. COLEMAN DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT, DIRECTOR MARK BARBASH

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## From the Administrator Planning Matters

by Vince Papsidero, AICP

**SECOND EDITION.** In your hands is the second edition of the Planning Division quarterly newsletter. We received much positive feedback since our first issue was distributed via the *ethernet* and I am pleased to continue this conversation with those interested in planning issues related to the city of Columbus.

With this edition we explore several recent accomplishments and projects: the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan was adopted by City Council following an intensive 15-month planning process involving ten separate jurisdictions; the Weinland Park Neighborhood Plan was adopted by City Council following a two-year neighborhood-based planning effort; design concepts were presented for creating a true, mixed

use neighborhood in the Northeast Planning Area as part of that plan process; and a recent residential rezoning in the Merion Village neighborhood demonstrates a participatory design review process in which we participated.

Special thanks go to Elsie Stiger, Graphics Designer, for her work to create this electronic newsletter. Her well-recognized skills allow our planning documents to more effectively "talk" to our various audiences. ►►



Top: The Big Darby.

Above left: Dresden Germany.

Left: Sketch of Merion Village infill development project.



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**PERSONNEL.** It's exciting to note that this fall some significant personnel changes occurred in the division. Mark Dravillas was promoted to manager of the Neighborhood Planning Section, Reza Reyazi was promoted to manager of the Long Range Planning Section, and Lori Baudro, AICP, was promoted to Senior Projects Coordinator. We also welcomed Lisa Russell, formerly of the Building Services Division, as a new planner in our office. Lisa will be working in the Long Range Planning Section.

At the same time, the Planning Division has been in a rebuilding mode filling a variety of vacancies, including three positions funded by City Council in the 2006 budget. As of this writing, we have started the process of filling two entry level Planner I positions that are new to the Division and have begun the process of filling one Planner II vacancy. These staff resources allow the Division to be more responsive to a backlog of neighborhood requests for planning services. These positions take the division closer to its 2000 staffing level, but we will still be short by several professional planners.

Over the summer Elan Daniel, who is now a first year student in the OSU City and Regional Planning graduate program, served as a volunteer intern in the Urban Design Section. He assisted Daniel Thomas, Manager, with a number of projects including the Eastmoor Design Charrette. Joining the office this fall is



*Sketch of Weinland Park land use proposal.*

Kevin Chastine, second year graduate student who is assisting the staff on a variety of assignments.

**PROJECTS.** Among the wide variety of assignments currently underway in the Planning Division are the following major projects: Darby Accord implementation; Jobs Centers Study; Northeast Area Plan Update; Far South Area Plan; Milo-Grogan Neighborhood Plan; Merion Village/Schumacher Place amendment to the Southside Plan; Airport Area Joint Economic Development Strategy; Ft. Hayes BRAC Process; and Whittier redevelopment. In addition, the staff is involved in a number of projects with neighboring jurisdictions, including Grandview Heights, Dublin, Pataskala, Prairie Township, and Groveport. ♦

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## Big Darby Accord The Watershed Master Plan

by Kevin Wheeler

On July 31, 2006, Columbus City Council adopted the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan following a 15-month intensive planning process. The project benefited from consistent leadership by Mayor Coleman and Council President Habash among others. The adoption was the culmination of a collaborative effort among ten communities to develop what the project mission statement describes as a “multi-jurisdictional plan and accompanying preservation and growth strategies, capable of implementation, oversight and enforcement.” The Accord partnership included Columbus, Franklin County, Brown Township, Pleasant Township, Prairie Township, Norwich Township, Washington Township, Hilliard, Grove City, and Harrisburg.

The project was lead by the “G4,” a group of four individuals appointed to represent the City of Columbus, Franklin County, townships, and suburban communities respectively. Mike Reese, Policy Director for the Mayor’s Office represented Columbus. Kevin Wheeler, Planning Division Assistant Administrator, served as project coordinator, working directly with the G4 and the consultant team – led by EDAW. Elected officials from the participating jurisdictions met periodically to provide direction to the effort and an advisory group of key stakeholders served throughout the process by sharing their expertise and perspective.

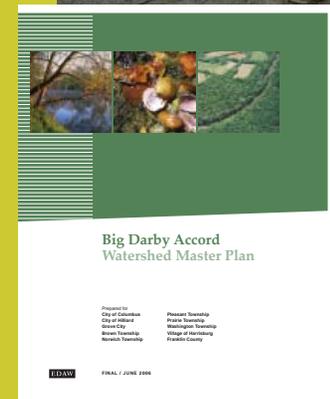
The resulting plan covers 55,000 acres (the Franklin County portion of the Darby watershed) and emphasizes a balance of conservation and new development. The process included four public open house meetings and involvement by hundreds of residents, property owners,

and other stakeholders. After existing conditions analysis was completed and alternative land use concepts were modeled for water quality impacts, a preferred plan was developed. The plan recognizes the critical link of land use practices to water quality and establishes standards intended to ensure environmental sustainability of new development.

The Accord General Land Use Plan calls for about 25,000 acres of open space, including roughly 8,000 acres already held as parkland or conservation areas – a combined 45% of the planning area. The plan further designates the open space in a series of tiers, corresponding to their protection priority. These conservation recommendations are supported by a series of recommended best management practices and standards for such things as storm water controls and stream corridor protection. ▶▶



Above: Mayor Michael Coleman and Maryellen O'Shaughnessy at Big Darby.



Left: plan cover

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## Big Darby Accord The Watershed Master Plan

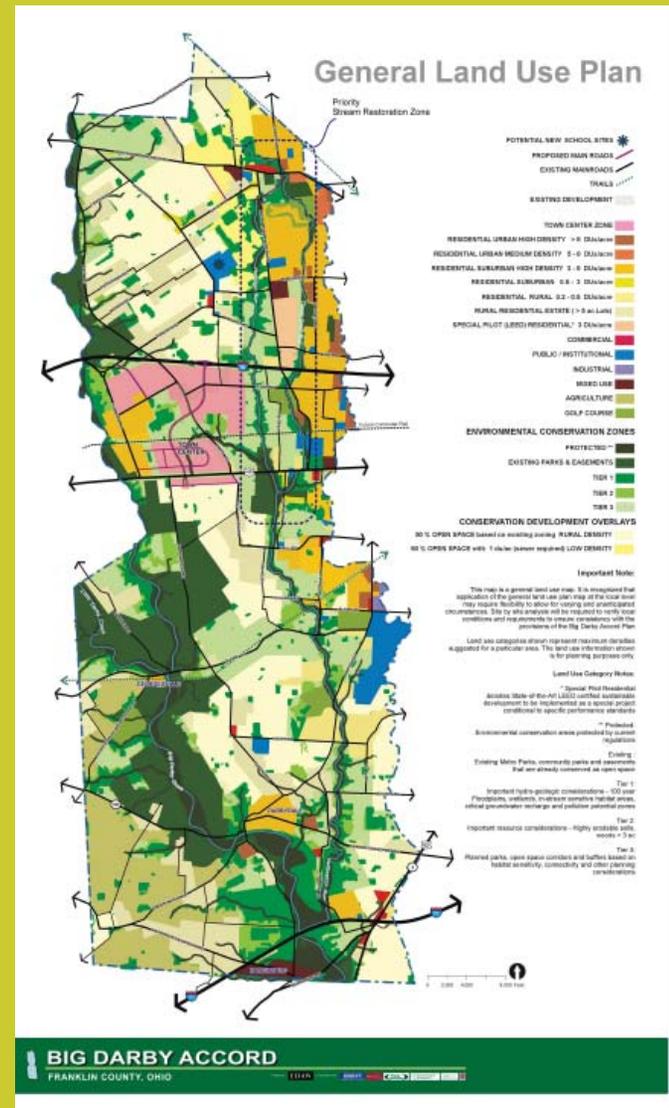
The Accord proposes a Darby Town Center, to be located generally between US 40 and I-70 as a focused, mixed-use development that would incorporate traditional design elements.

The Town Center is designated to receive central water and sewer services from Columbus without the requirement of annexation. Other development activity is proposed to take the form of conservation subdivisions with 50% open space. The Accord recommends that an inter-jurisdictional advisory panel be established to review development proposals for consistency with the plan. The plan also outlines potential revenue mechanisms to fund conservation efforts and the other implementation activities, such as TIFs and New Community Authorities.

The Big Darby Accord is a resolution to several years of development moratoria in the area and brought a cooperative approach to balancing development pressures and environmental protection goals across jurisdictions. The contributions of everyone who helped to bring it to completion was greatly appreciated by the project leadership. The Accord document can be viewed online by visiting the "Columbus Plans and Overlays" link under the "About Columbus" heading on the City's front page: [www.cityofcolumbus.org](http://www.cityofcolumbus.org). ♦



Example of the  
Town Center  
residential  
development  
pattern.



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## Weinland Park Neighborhood Plan

Focusing on Stabilization, Revitalization, and Economic and Workforce Development

by Todd Singer

Weinland Park is a small but diverse and vibrant neighborhood of nearly 5,000 residents in the southeast corner of the University Area. Nestled between the core area of OSU student housing and Italian Village, Weinland Park extends eastward from North High Street to the Norfolk Southern railroad.

During its heyday in the 1950s, Weinland Park was home to working class families employed at local businesses, such as the now closed Columbus Coated Fabrics, which extends almost the entire length of the eastern border of the neighborhood.

The neighborhood has faced many challenges over the last few decades, but is experiencing measurable new investment:

- Campus Partners' new South Campus Gateway is a pedestrian-scale mixed-use development anchoring the northwest corner of the neighborhood.
- The new Weinland Park Elementary School and The Ohio State University College of Education and Human Ecology's Early Childhood Development Center immediately next door.
- City-financed roadway enhancements, including the now two-way East Eleventh Avenue to serve as a signature street



for those approaching the university from Interstate 71.

- City improvements to Weinland Park.
- Establishment of a neighborhood-based credit union.
- New ownership, management and rehabilitation of subsidized housing units which, in past years, had raised concerns for some area residents. ▶▶

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## Weinland Park Neighborhood Plan

### Focusing on Stabilization, Revitalization, and Economic and Workforce Development

Most importantly, strong, energetic neighborhood leadership has stepped forward, which in concert with Godman Guild, has infused the neighborhood with a feeling of excitement about the many opportunities for growth and rebirth presented by well-focused, planned future change.

The emerging neighborhood enthusiasm was evident in very strong grassroots participation in development of the Weinland Park Neighborhood Plan, adopted by Columbus City Council on July 24th. The draft plan received the endorsement of the working committee, Weinland Park Community Civic Association, University Area Commission, and Columbus Development Commission.

Planning staff worked with neighborhood stakeholders and a highly-skilled consultant team (led by Goody Clancy & Associates of Boston) for over two years to reach consensus on recommendations building on positive changes underway and working to coordinate and enhance these changes with future improvements championed by diverse neighborhood stakeholders. Inclusive stakeholder participation in the planning process was emphasized from the very beginning.

The plan focuses on economic and workforce development, brownfield redevelopment and infrastructure support, housing, public safety, and human and social services. The overarching goal of the Plan is neighborhood revitalization with minimal displacement of those who currently call the neighborhood home.

Six redevelopment opportunity areas along the periphery of the neighborhood were analyzed and presented as possible development concepts. Due to the amount of land that can be assembled in those locales, they present the best opportunity to complete the neighborhood with a mix of housing types, styles, and price ranges, as well as job-generating new and relocated businesses.

Increased neighborhood-scale open space is encouraged in the plan, as are continued improvement in neighborhood-police relations, crime prevention through environmental design, linking newly-trained residents with job opportunities, and tax incentives for renovation of existing and construction of new residences.

The Plan will be used as a principal reference document by city departments, developers, community representatives, Columbus Development Commission, and Columbus City Council when making decisions concerning the planning area. A neighborhood-led implementation process is underway. ♦



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## Merion Village Infill Development Project Growing Inward With a Passion



*by Devayani Puranik*

Many of the city's urban neighborhoods are experiencing infill residential development on vacant or redeveloped sites, the continued careful renovation of historic structures, and the conversion of commercial or industrial structures into residential uses. The advantages of such projects include proximity to urban amenities, presence of potential employees/employers and available transportation and utility infrastructures. This reflects Mayor Michael B. Coleman's emphasis to "grow inward with a passion".

Neighborhood plans developed by the Planning Division recommend design guidelines for infill development to encourage projects that are sensitive to neighborhood priorities and "fit" with unique, neighborhood physical characteristics.

Infill projects are essential for healthy communities; however, designing an infill project is a very intensive and sensitive task. The designer has to work with a variety of factors: lot size, utilities, neighborhood character and market demographics, architectural standards, historic elements, transit systems, existing land use, zoning and density issues, plan recommendations, and public comment.

A condominium project on Moler Street in Merion Village is one such example of infill development in which an existing commercial building

(Racequip) was proposed for rehabilitation and new construction was proposed on an adjacent parking lot. BSD architects proposed rezoning these parcels for multi family use. The Southside Plan recommendations encourage residential development compatible with the neighborhood.

The initial proposal was to add one story for higher density condominium use on the existing two-story building and to construct a new three-story condominium building on the parking lot. This met with opposition due to compatibility and density issues. ►►



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## Merion Village Infill Development Project Growing Inward With a Passion

While the Planning Division shared the community's concerns about the proposal, staff recognized the potential benefits of the project if design changes were made.

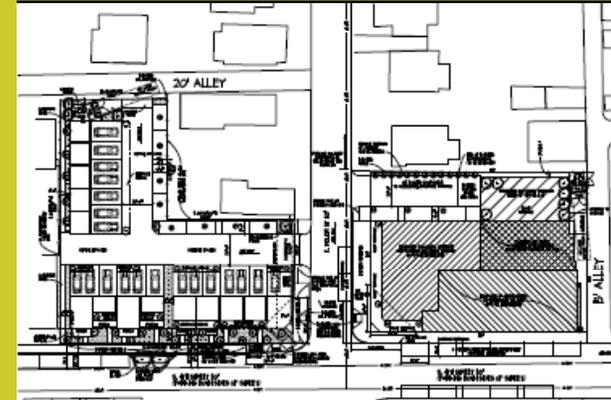
During the next stage, Planning Division staff worked with BSD Architects and neighborhood leadership to address issues around density, relationship with other buildings, circulation, etc., to make the project more compatible with the neighborhood. Simple solutions were recommended to improve on the initial design. These included changing the orientation of the buildings, using materials in a more creative pattern, lining building openings, breaking building mass, incorporating a creative roof alignment, and creating courtyard/green space.

Bob Leighty, President of the Merion Village Association, said, "We were very pleased to see the City's planning

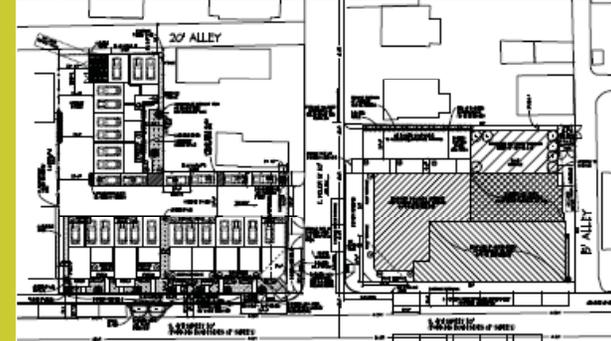
department work with this developer's architects and our neighborhood's residents to improve this proposal. This application of City resources and expertise is a textbook example of how City government can assist its residents in trying to improve our neighborhoods."

The review process by the planning staff in neighborhoods with an adopted plan is not a rigid process but serves as a great tool for working with development proposals. The evolution of the Moler Street project from the initial application to Development Commission approval serves as an example of how Planning Division staff can work in collaboration with developers and neighborhood associations to help facilitate a well designed, compatible infill development. ♦

Before



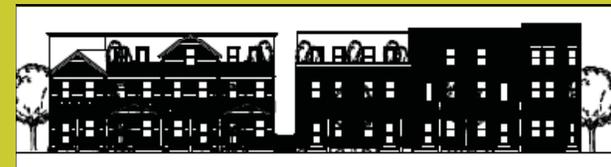
After



Before



After



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## Dresden, Germany Learning From a Sister City

by Vince Papsidero, AICP

Earlier this summer I had the opportunity of spending five days in Dresden, one of Columbus' sister cities, as a participant in the exchange program between the planning schools of The Ohio State University and the Technical University of Dresden. It was a fascinating experience.

As many know, Dresden was significantly impacted by Allied bombing during the later part of World War II. Extensive damage occurred throughout the heart of the city. Some reconstruction occurred under the former East German Republic, but it is plainly apparent that far more significant change has occurred since reunification.

Today Dresden is in many ways a very cosmopolitan city with significant cultural facilities, a lively downtown retail district, an arts district comparable to the East Village in New York City (Neustadt), a strong economy as one of Germany's technology centers, and an extensive open space and park

system. Dresden has also celebrating its 800th birthday this past year with a strong emphasis on history and culture.

The exchange program included an opening event at Dresden's World Trade Center and a day-long conference on sustainability. My presentation focused on several of Mayor Michael B. Coleman's priorities, including Get Green Columbus, Home Again, downtown housing, as well as the I-670 cap.

Much of my time was spent with various city officials, including Planning Director Andreas Wurf, who oversees much of the redevelopment taking place in the core. He requires design competitions for all new public and private buildings, as well as competitions for individual facades on multi-tenant blocks. The central core in the Audstadt (historic center) is surrounded on three sides by a tree-lined boulevard placed where the original medieval walls stood and on the fourth side by the picturesque Elbe River. ►►



This view looking northwest from the top of the Frauenkirche shows the historic core of Dresden.



The Frauenkirche (Church of our Lady) has been rebuilt largely with donations from German and international foundations, including about \$500,000 contributed from Columbus citizens.

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## Dresden, Germany Learning From a Sister City

Dr. Christian Korndorfer, environmental protection director, led a tour of various flood control and stormwater management facilities. Dresden was severely impacted by flooding about three years ago. In response to that crisis, the city has constructed a variety of “dry” stormwater facilities along major tributaries that feed the Elbe in order to temporarily capture and hold peak storm flows. Many of these are located in parks and neighborhood greenspaces where they serve as environmental enhancements.

As part of city efforts to address global warming a very large park on the northern banks of the Elbe River valley has been maintained to cool the city (air conditioning is very scarce). There is also a very extensive tree planting program throughout Dresden.

One of the highlights of the visit was christening a new tram (streetcar) named for the city of Columbus as part of Dresden’s sister city program (Partnerstadt). Transit company officials explained their system, providing a tour

of their high tech maintenance facility and their new headquarters, including the operations center where all transit vehicles are tracked in real time (the system can modify traffic signal timing to address delays). The transit company is part of a larger utilities corporation, with a majority of shares owned by the city, in which profits from the electrical and natural gas companies help to offset operational costs for the transit company.

Multi-modal transportation is a given in Germany. Bike paths parallel to rural roads appear to link all villages and towns. Sidewalk and bikepath systems are integrated in urban areas, where paver size and color are used to differentiate pedestrian and bicycle zones. Many workers, including white collar professionals, commute by bike or use transit. Parking is limited and vehicles tend to be small.

Many lessons can be learned from Columbus’ sister cities. Dresden certainly demonstrates a wealth of approaches to sustainability, economic development, culture and historic preservation. ♦



*Sidewalk, bikepath and tree lawn treatment near the Technical University of Dresden.*



*Floodwall treatment along a tributary of the Elbe River in Meissen, Germany, within the Dresden metro area.*



*This new tram was named for City of Columbus as part of Dresden’s Partnerstadt (Sister City) program.*

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