



A summary of University District community planning and implementation measures that affect Weinland Park

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Planning for the University District in 1995 and 1996

With support from The Ohio State University and the city of Columbus, Campus Partners in 1995 and 1996 spearheaded a very broad, community-based planning process for the University District. EDAW, an urban planning firm based in San Francisco, led a team of consultants who examined nearly all aspects of the social, economic and physical environment of this most densely populated area of Columbus with the goal of creating a comprehensive improvement plan. Hundreds of civic leaders, residents, university students and employees, business owners, property managers, and city and community agency staff participated in half a dozen task forces and numerous community meetings. After careful review of a draft plan by the University Area Commission, the University Community Business Association, the Columbus Historic Resources Commission and the Columbus Development Commission, Campus Partners in July 1996 published the *University Neighborhoods Revitalization Plan: Concept Document*.

Ohio State's Board of Trustees in May 1997 adopted a resolution accepting this plan "as generally reflecting the set of guiding principles for the revitalization strategies and programs for the improvement of the neighborhoods around the university." Columbus City Council on June 1997 approved an ordinance adopting the plan "as a guide for public and private improvements in the University District."

The *University Neighborhoods Revitalization Plan: Concept Document* suggests a very comprehensive approach to urban rejuvenation with some 250 recommendations that are almost a compendium of the best ideas to improve urban life. **The executive summary of the plan is attached with recommendations marked that are of particular interest to Weinland Park.**

The *University Neighborhoods Revitalization Plan: Concept Document* is a helpful starting point for the Weinland Park community planning process. Although not all of its recommendations pertain to Weinland Park, the plan offers a vision for the whole University District and a series of core values are the organizing element for all of the recommendations. (See page E3 of the executive summary.) The vision and core values found wide support among neighborhood civic leaders and could be helpful in defining a more specific vision for Weinland Park.

High Street planning

Again with support from the university and the city, Campus Partners led an effort in 1997 and 1998 to develop a master plan for High Street in the University District. The goal of this planning effort was to delineate more clearly the implementation of key recommendations in the concept document to enhance the commercial vitality of High Street. A broad-based steering committee, chaired by Pasquale Grado, executive director of the University Community Business Association, worked closely with the lead consultant, Goody Clancy & Associates, an urban planning firm based in Boston.

As a result of this planning effort, Campus Partners in 2000 published *A Plan for High Street: Creating a 21st Century Main Street* and a companion volume, *University/High Street Development & Design Guidelines*. Columbus City Council in May 2002 adopted both publications as official city documents.

High Street is the eastern boundary of Weinland Park and is the center for commercial activity in the neighborhood, although East Fifth Avenue could support additional retail and other business activity. The Weinland Park planning effort is likely to focus more on the residential area of the neighborhood, rather than on the commercial corridor of High Street. Stakeholders, however, should consider how the recommendations for High Street in the concept document and the High Street plan, as well as implementation measures such as South Campus Gateway, can have a positive affect on the residential area.

Implementation of recommendations from the plans

The *University Neighborhoods Revitalization Plan: Concept Document* contained more recommendations than could be implemented at one time. As a result, Campus Partners and other stakeholders in 1997 identified a series of priority implementation measures that have been the focus of much of Campus Partners' work of the last seven years. Listed below are implementation measures in which Campus Partners has had some involvement and which directly affect Weinland Park:

Government-subsidized housing. With support from neighborhood civic leaders, the city and the university, Campus Partners in 2001 developed an innovative plan to restructure the Broad Street Portfolio of project-based, Section 8 housing, including about 550 units in Weinland Park. Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing is implementing that plan, having closed on the housing units in April 2003. Now known as Community Properties of Ohio (CPO), the housing has more effective management and supportive services for the residents. CPO will begin renovation of

the apartments in April 2004 with an investment, on average, of more than \$40,000 per unit. CPO also plans to demolish the building at 328 E. Eighth Ave. because the structure of the building makes it difficult to manage well and the building is a magnet for crime.

Homeownership. A number of programs exist to encourage affordable homeownership in Weinland Park:

- The Ohio State University Faculty and Staff Homeownership Incentive Program provides \$3,000 in downpayment assistance to university employees to buy a home and live in the portion of the University District that includes Weinland Park.
- Northside Community Development Corporation is building up to five new single-family homes as infill housing in Weinland Park for low-moderate income families.
- Columbus Housing Partnership (with federal dollars from the Columbus Compact Corporation) offers up to \$6,000 in downpayment assistance to buy homes in the Columbus Empowerment Zone, which includes Weinland Park. CHP also has cooperated with Ohio State University Extension to offer home-buyer education classes in Weinland Park.
- The City of Columbus has funds to assist potential homeowners.

Code enforcement. The University District Code Enforcement Task Force meets monthly to promote neighborhood improvement through effective code enforcement. In cooperation with the task force, the city code enforcement staff has developed a program of systematic exterior code enforcement. In contrast to a complaint-based method, the systematic approach assigns an inspector to review the exterior of every building in an area. As applied in the northern part of the University District in 1999 and 2000, the result was an immediate improvement in the appearance of the neighborhood. The city also used federal funds to provide grants to low-income homeowners to make repairs ordered by code enforcement. Those federal funds, however, have not been available in recent years, so the systematic approach has been limited to the predominantly student neighborhood east and south of the university campus.

Public safety. The U.S. Attorney's Office and the Columbus Division of Police cooperated in a major sweep through Weinland Park in early 1995 to arrest members of the Short North Posse. Among the actions that have followed in the wake of that sweep are:

- Staff from the U.S. Attorney's Office cooperated with neighborhood civic leaders and agencies in subsequent community-building activities that eventually led to the Weinland Park Community Collaborative receiving a Weed & Seed grant.
- With leadership from the Mayor's Office, civic leaders worked through a long planning process to apply for a renewal of the Weed & Seed grant in 2003, but were unsuccessful.
- The Columbus Division of Police has periodically targeted Weinland Park for special patrols, such as the "hot spot" campaign in 2003.
- Broad Street Management, Inc., and now Community Properties of Ohio Management Services have cooperated with police to deal with crime associated with the Section 8 housing.
- The upcoming renovation of the Section 8 housing will include attention to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.
- In response primarily to the efforts of Weinland Park civic leader Tom Dearing, the city in 1996 installed a few barriers in alleys around Indianola Avenue just north of Fifth Avenue to

restrict movement and encourage public safety. The success of this initiative should be reviewed and similar initiatives might be considered for other parts of Weinland Park.

Despite these many efforts, the public image of Weinland Park is one of an area with a high rate of violent crime. The murder of seven people in Weinland Park in 2003, including a baby and a triple homicide, did nothing to dispel this image.

Refuse collection. The Campus Partners Public Service Committee meets regularly on refuse collection issues. The city's Refuse Collection Division has worked closely with the committee to improve the level of service in the University District. The city instituted a "dumpster zone" in the core student neighborhood east of High Street. In this zone, the city replaced its 300-gallon plastic containers with metal dumpsters to increase the refuse capacity, improve service and reduce the potential damage from fires. The city recently extended its "dumpster zone" into a portion of Weinland Park to improve service.

Parks and recreation. Campus Partners encouraged the city to take ownership of dilapidated, tax-delinquent properties north of the fire station on the west side of Indianola Avenue. The properties were subsequently torn down and a small park created, as called for in the concept document. Several departments at Ohio State have cooperated with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Columbus to study the possibility of building a Boys and Girls Club in the University District. A few years ago, the city planted a number of trees along Summit and North Fourth streets as a beautification project.

Public education. The university's P-12 Project and service-learning initiative have encouraged involvement with Weinland Park Elementary School through a variety of programs. The university's Jumpstart program has been working in Godman Guild and the elementary school. Columbus Public Schools plans to rebuild the school on its site. The new school is projected to open in the fall of 2006.

Human services. Ohio State's Campus Collaborative developed the recommendations on human services and education in the concept document. The Campus Collaborative implemented a number of programs from 1996 through 2001 when it was succeeded by Ohio State's Outreach and Engagement Office, P-12 Project, service-learning initiative, and the placement of an Ohio State University Extension agent in the University District. Among the many programs instituted in Weinland Park are:

- Employment readiness and job placement support by staff paid for by OSU Extension and the Columbus Employment Consortium. Between 1996 and 2001, the program, working in cooperation with neighborhood agencies, was directly responsible for employment of more than 100 residents.
- Through a federal COPC grant, the Campus Collaborative helped start a community garden, community pride events, a youth-run neighborhood newspaper, and provided assistance to new business start-ups through the Weinland Park Business and Entrepreneurship Center and resources for Job Success and Project Build classes.
- OSU Extension and Godman Guild have collaborated on the Community Technology Center at Godman Guild. The university's Office of Information Technology provides technology support.

- The advisory committee for the OSU Extension agent in the University District was instrumental in the transformation of the Colofab Credit Union to Your Neighborhood Credit Union, offering its membership and access to financial services to everyone in the University District.
- The National Youth Sports Program operated by the university's Athletics Department has been opened to youth from the University District.
- OSU Extension offers a variety of educational programs on 4-H, family living skills, nutrition, financial literacy and more.
- Ohio State's College of Human Ecology hopes to build a new early childhood education center in Weinland Park, perhaps adjacent to the new elementary school. A substantial number of the children served in the center would come from the neighborhood.

Transportation and access. One of Weinland Park's assets is its location, which is accessible to the university, downtown and Interstate 71. Among the transportation and access projects that affect the neighborhood are:

- The city will make East 11th and Chittenden avenues two-way streets concurrent with the opening of Gateway. The city also has agreed to upgrade the streetscape of East 11th Avenue as a "signature street."
- The city has installed "bump-outs" along North Fourth and Summit streets to help narrow the width of these streets and make them more pedestrian-friendly.
- COTA is studying alternative routes for its proposed light rail system, including a route along High Street and a route along Summit and North Fourth streets.

Commercial revitalization. The focus for commercial revitalization in the University District has been on High Street. Among the initiatives are:

- Columbus City Council in 2001 adopted an urban commercial overlay for High Street and in 2002 adopted the High Street plan and development and design guidelines. Council also expanded the authority of the existing University Area Review Board to implement the guidelines on High Street. These actions will guide future development along High Street for years to come.
- Campus Partners is investing more than \$130 million in construction of South Campus Gateway, an urban mixed-use project that blends entertainment, retail, rental housing and offices uses along with a 1,200-space parking garage. Gateway will open in the fall of 2005.
- Campus Partners has purchased property on the northeast corner of Eighth Avenue and High Street to accommodate a possible secondary redevelopment on the east side of High Street between East Eighth and East Ninth avenues in the future.
- The city has committed to streetscape improvements along High Street from Fifth Avenue to the Gateway project.