

Weinland Park Neighborhood Plan

**TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM #1
THREATS, OPPORTUNITIES AND POLICY DIRECTIONS:
KEY FINDINGS**

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The Weinland Park Neighborhood Plan began in the spring of 2004 with the creation of a Working Committee representing neighborhood, government agency, nonprofit, institutional and business interests. In late 2004, Goody Clancy & Associates, the planning and urban design firm that has been working with the City and Campus Partners on the revitalization of High Street, was brought into the Weinland Park Neighborhood Plan process. The consultant role is to assist the City and the Committee in creating the plan, including a workforce development plan, and visualizing the future potential of this neighborhood. The scope of work includes four Technical Memoranda of which this is the first.

Entering the planning process when it was already underway, Goody Clancy's first task was to understand the analysis and policy directions developed by the Working Committee and to undertake a series of interviews with persons knowledgeable about the issues of most concern in Weinland Park. This memorandum contains our understanding of Weinland Park issues and the planning directions developed by the Neighborhood Plan Working Committee.

NEIGHBORHOOD OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The Committee identified seven important themes that should be addressed in the neighborhood plan:

- Economic development
- Public safety
- Community involvement
- Neighborhood aesthetics
- Infrastructure
- Housing
- Land Use

The group then engaged in an extensive discussion to identify the positive assets of Weinland Park and associated opportunities as well as the neighborhood's weaknesses and future challenges.

Assets. The Working Committee identified a number of positive aspects of the neighborhood. Generally speaking, the neighborhood retains a framework of assets in people and place that can serve as a foundation for improvements. These assets include:

- Convenient location and manageable size

- A public park and green spaces
- A core of activist residents with committed leadership
- Upcoming renovations and improved management of the Section 8 rental properties portfolio by Community Properties of Ohio
- A historic district and areas of consistent architectural character
- A new elementary school and future child development center

Problems. The Committee identified a variety of problem issues, many of which are interrelated. Among the most important are:

- Poverty and unemployment among residents
- Public safety issues, including crime and poor relations with the police
- A high proportion of renters and absentee owners
- Poor upkeep of many properties and a number of vacant lots and buildings
- Need for improvement in some city services and facilities
- Environmental hazards including stormwater flooding and contamination at brownfield sites

Weinland Park has “broken window syndrome,” in which poor upkeep and neglect by both private and public owners sends a message that no one cares about the neighborhood, thereby encouraging more graffiti, litter and other signs of disrespect for the place and the people who live there. The Committee also identified a current of apathy and cynicism among many residents, based on their previous experience, which makes it difficult to engage them in working for improvements in the neighborhood.

Hopes and fears. The hopes that Committee members have for improvements in the future include overall improvements to quality of life, more homeowners and a less transient population, more green space and recreational resources, aesthetic improvements to public streets and spaces, positive engagement of more young people, and development of more positive role models. However, there are fears that improvements to the neighborhood could lead to dislocation of current residents through real estate speculation and gentrification.

WORKING COMMITTEE POLICY STATEMENTS

The Working Committee divided into five subcommittees to develop policy directions for the Plan:

- Community Involvement and Public Safety
- Housing
- Human Services
- Infrastructure
- Land Use, Economic Development and Aesthetics

The five policy statements that emerged from the subcommittee discussions are based on a common vision for Weinland Park and also reflect the concerns identified during the discussion of opportunities and challenges.

Vision for Weinland Park. Weinland Park as a safe, walkable, stable, and cohesive mixed-income community that helps existing residents remain in the neighborhood while welcoming new residents and investment is the core vision of the policy statements. To make that vision possible, the Weinland Park Neighborhood Plan needs to integrate investments in the people of the neighborhood and in the neighborhood as a place. Existing residents need a coordinated set of programs that provide more access to jobs that can support a family, more opportunities for family and youth development, and improved relationships with the police to promote crime reduction. At the same time, additional investment in the physical condition of the neighborhood is needed: rehabilitation of existing buildings where appropriate, infill development on vacant lots, redevelopment of the significant former industrial sites, streetscape improvements, and pedestrian amenities. Attention to the physical environment includes not only development and urban design improvements but also encompasses programmatic efforts such as stepped up enforcement of building codes and quality of life measures such as anti-dumping and anti-graffiti ordinances.

Almost all the subcommittees expressed the concern that existing residents could be displaced if Weinland Park improvements begin to attract large numbers of new residents.

Additional planning directions. Policy issues specific to the subcommittees and not mentioned above include the following:

- *Community Involvement and Public Safety*
 - Educate residents about crime and fire prevention and promote resident participation in city safety initiatives.
 - Incorporate crime prevention through environmental design when appropriate.
- *Housing*
 - In order to phase residential rehabilitation efforts, focus on contiguous areas such as the Hamlet Street, Euclid Avenue, and East Eight and East Ninth Avenue corridors.
 - Expand residential design review into Weinland Park and provide assistance to lower-income owner-occupants so that they can comply with design standards.
 - Assist existing residents to improve their living situation in the neighborhood, for example, moving from rental to homeownership.
- *Human Services*
 - Promote parenting education for young parents.
 - Promote financial literacy and money management.
 - Enhance and expand youth programs for non-school hours.
 - Reverse the trend of outmigration of older persons and integrate them into community life.
 - Provide access for differently-abled persons to participate in community life.
 - Reinforce the capacity of community organizations such as the Civic Association.
 - Establish a “Welcome Wagon” program for new residents.

- Support efforts to help people returning from prison to reintegrate into the community in a positive way.
- *Infrastructure*
 - Establish appropriate traffic calming techniques to make streets safe for all users.
 - Advocate for returning Summit and N. Fourth Streets to two-way traffic.
 - Improve pedestrian facilities, giving priority to areas around the new school, childhood development center and park.
 - Incorporate bicycle facilities and bus shelters in transportation improvements.
 - Pursue coordination of OSU and COTA transportation to benefit neighborhood residents.
 - Improve waste collection, recycling, litter and graffiti removal and education, and employ neighborhood residents in recycling jobs.
 - Plan park and recreation improvements with resident input and create tot lots in several safe and accessible locations throughout the neighborhood.
 - Enhance drainage and stormwater management and public education programs to avoid flooding and pollution.
- *Land Use, Economic Development and Aesthetics*
 - Change zoning as needed to achieve neighborhood goals.
 - Establish design guidelines.

Committee Discussions and Policy Issues

In Working Committee discussions with the consultants, the Committee clarified that the policy statements that mentioned Hamlet Street, Euclid Avenue and East Eight and East Ninth corridors as priorities was the result of the fact that these areas have assets such as architectural consistency or higher homeownership rates, or they are already slated for streetscape improvements. Other parts of Weinland Park that are similar nuclei of homeownership and design integrity, such as Sixth Street, should also serve as focus areas for rehabilitation and homeownership programs. There was also some discussion about creating design standards and design review for the neighborhood. Some residents worry that this could create a burden for existing residents. However, programs to assist low-income owner-occupants to meet code and design requirements could mitigate this potential problem.

In addition to improvements to the existing residential neighborhood, Committee members are also interested in the potential for redevelopment of the vacant, former industrial sites at the edges of the neighborhood and the empty or underutilized commercial properties in the neighborhood. Businesses that could employ neighborhood residents would be particularly welcome, but the Committee is also very open to housing that brings new residents to the community without displacing the existing residents.

Committee members are very interested in identifying opportunities for job training and access to employment for the Weinland Park population. A member of the consultant team is focusing on that issue and will discuss it in a separate Technical Memorandum.