

**TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM #4
SUMMARY FINDINGS FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING
WORKSHOP**

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On February 5, 2005, over 42 participants attended a Weinland Park neighborhood planning workshop on neighborhood development, revitalization and workforce development priorities. Participants included Weinland Park and University District residents and city and institutional representatives. Residents and other participants had been invited to participate in the day-long event or, if they could not devote that much time, to come towards the end of the event to an Open House for discussion of the workshop results and group priorities. In addition, comment sheets were available for participants who had to leave early or who preferred to express their views individually in writing.



Welcome – Robert Caldwell, Working Committee Chair

The day-long event included a display of maps and analysis materials and brief presentations by the neighborhood plan consultants suggesting frameworks for understanding neighborhood issues. The participants then worked in small breakout groups facilitated by members of the Weinland Park Working Committee (WPWC) and the consultant team to discuss a series of questions focusing on the neighborhood's assets, problems and opportunities. Representatives of the small groups presented each group's three top priority issues and then all the participants voted among these priority issues.

INFORMATION-SHARING: LEARNING ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The morning session began with a welcome and overview by Robert Caldwell, chair of the WPWC and president of the Weinland Park Civic Association, and Todd Singer, Senior Planner from the City of Columbus. They provided a summary of the

overall planning process for Weinland Park and the activities of the WPWC. The consultant team then presented an overview of their analysis and work to date.

Neighborhood and Community

The consultants presented an overview of opportunities and challenges in Weinland Park. The neighborhood has many assets, including a location convenient to downtown and the university and walkable distances to shopping and other community needs; a strong urban character with public parks and many streets with architectural integrity; and a number of strong community institutions, from the school and the library to the Civic Association, Godman Guild and the Northside CDC. In addition to these assets, new public and private investments in the neighborhood will bring new opportunities.

The goal of the Weinland Park Neighborhood Plan is to create a sustainable, mixed-use neighborhood. The presentation included a brief discussion of a series of maps (see Figures 1 – 4) to help frame the workshop discussion.

- *Figure 1: Opportunity Areas and Revitalization Areas.* Five Opportunity Areas show locations where new investments in housing, mixed-use, and open space can attract new residents to the neighborhood, creating new neighborhood entrances. The Revitalization Area is the core existing neighborhood where the focus should be on enhancing the existing community and providing opportunities for existing residents.
- *Figure 2: Revitalize Housing.* Housing strategies are critical to the Revitalization area to encourage homeownership, help existing owners maintain their homes, and to promote the conservation and enhancement of neighborhood character.
- *Figure 3: Improve Public Spaces for Everyone.* The network of public spaces, streets and sidewalks, known as the “public realm,” influences how we feel about a place and helps to define its character. Many improvements are already scheduled, including park and streetscape projects, but other are also possible.
- *Figure 4: Create Safe Connections.* Although Weinland Park is a walkable neighborhood, its pedestrian routes need to be safer and traffic flowing through the neighborhood, especially on 4th and on Summit, needs to be slowed down.

Through partnerships of all the stakeholders in Weinland Park – residents, the city, property owners, community nonprofits, and OSU and Campus Partners – the neighborhood can create a sustainable, mixed-income and diverse neighborhood. A neighborhood plan that balances support for existing residents in the core neighborhood with redevelopment of the vacant and underutilized Opportunity Areas can bring improvement and success without gentrification.

New Buildings and Public Spaces

The consultants provided an overview of existing physical conditions of the neighborhood and focused on the potential in the Opportunity Areas that could accommodate larger scale redevelopment: the Coated Fabrics site, the Eleventh Avenue

corridor, a cluster of properties along Eighth and Ninth Avenues, the Kroger supermarket area, and the 3M site along Fifth Avenue. The discussion included a visual survey of the existing physical characteristics of the neighborhood followed by a series of examples of comparable neighborhoods where the physical environment was much improved. Examples of projects from other places that illustrate ways to consider the future redevelopment of these key sites within Weinland Park were also presented. (See Figures 4, 6, 7, 8, 9.)

Workforce Development

The consultant team’s workforce development specialist gave an overview of population, education and employment data and the wider economic context affecting Weinland Park and the neighborhood’s residents. Some of the challenges facing neighborhood residents include educational constraints (relatively low number of residents with college degrees), an economy in which manufacturing jobs have been in decline for a generation, and a dispersal of jobs to suburban locations, making transportation problems a significant barrier for the many Weinland Park residents who do not have access to a car or rapid public transportation routes to job centers.

However, Weinland Park is very close to a major regional employment center, the OSU campus. Plans for increasing residents’ access to training and to OSU jobs will be an important strategic element of the neighborhood plan.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

After the presentations, participants divided into three groups. Working with a map of the neighborhood and recording comments on flip charts, a consultant and a Working Committee member facilitated a discussion in each group guided by four questions:

- What is good and not so good about the neighborhood?
- What will make the biggest difference in obtaining jobs?
- What do we need to do to build the community and enhance the neighborhood?
- What is your vision for the “opportunity areas”?

The recorded results of the small group discussions are presented in Table 1.



TABLE 1: WEINLAND PARK NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING WORKSHOP – SMALL GROUP RESULTS

	<i>Group One</i>	<i>Group Two</i>	<i>Group Three</i>
<p>Issue What's good?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Renovated housing – positive change ▪ Convenient location ▪ Affordable ▪ Good community feeling ▪ Attractive areas ▪ Godman Guild ▪ New elementary school well planned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Convenient, good location, central People, family ▪ Neighborhood has become safer, attracting people back ▪ Many positive activities for children and youth: Godman Guild, Library, school, Shortstop ▪ Good community with a sense of family; diverse groups get along well ▪ Architectural character and quality of older houses – better than new houses ▪ Active community association; people coming together ▪ Co-lab program ▪ Community is improving; Weinland Park is “coming back” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ People ▪ Convenient: central location (OSU, downtown, public transportation); close to Short North, campus, basic shopping needs ▪ Godman Guild and Library – safe, fun and educational; job opportunities for teens ▪ Improving home maintenance and tenant screening ▪ Many children ▪ Good neighbors if we are good neighbors ▪ Potential to be a totally walkable community ▪ Potential for diversity, mixed-income community ▪ Large opportunity sites
<p>What's not so good?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drug trade and crime effects; attracts disruptive visitors; problem areas around carryouts; 5th at N. Fourth; East 8th between Hamlet and 5th ▪ Dangerous if you get in the way ▪ Lack of education ▪ More affordable housing needed ▪ Negative perception of the area ▪ Some poor living environments ▪ Absentee landlords ▪ Recreational opportunities too far away ▪ Poor relations with police 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor image and reputation ▪ Still too much crime: fewer incidents but they are more violent (murders) ▪ Need more residents to participate in community efforts ▪ Poor condition of streets and sidewalks ▪ Vacant houses and lots, buildings; abandoned sites ▪ Animal infestations ▪ Gang activity is becoming generational ▪ Drugs and prostitution continue ▪ Too many liquor stores – loitering and bad behavior around bars and carryouts ▪ Trash collection problems: big containers always full, trash falls out, illegal dumping ▪ Coated Fabrics site is unsafe, contaminated and unsecured ▪ Insufficient street lighting – cutoff of street lighting at night and in early morning creates dangerous situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of sidewalks on some busy streets ▪ Poor image to external and internal communities – a “stepchild” area ▪ Children need safe place to play ▪ Unemployment and limited job access ▪ Insufficient day care ▪ Overflowing trash containers ▪ Poor lighting – people feel unsafe ▪ Limited resident participation and leadership – need more “ownership” of neighborhood issues ▪ Ineffective policing – need partnerships with community ▪ Need more investment in the community

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Issue Workforce Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Single moms need support services (child care, etc) for jobs ▪ Need improved public transportation for job access ▪ People's backgrounds keep them from getting jobs ▪ Vendors reluctant to come to Weinland Park – no pizza deliveries in the neighborhood ▪ Godman Guild has excellent training but underfunded ▪ Need to build skills ▪ Crime alternatives, like drug trade, are lucrative (quick \$ and big \$) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More motivation and opportunities for positive change and better personal choices ▪ Local employers not always responsive to job applicants from the neighborhood ▪ Job development staff at Godman Guild is good – need expansion ▪ To be available soon – in-school employment resources for teens through Godman Guild ▪ Need programs for kids – to start earlier making connections in the neighborhood ▪ Poor transportation access to jobs ▪ Not enough childcare support ▪ Residents disappointed by earlier program failures and false starts ▪ Promote neighborhood based cottage industries ▪ Need apprenticeship programs ▪ Support the “grandmother” corps – residents who work with kids to encourage, give them opportunities, provide encouragement and feedback – relentless and positive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Need jobs for a livable wage ▪ More education and job training: vocational education ▪ Take advantage of current work force opportunities ▪ Jobs needed for teens still in high school ▪ Young people who want jobs in summer feel estranged from other students ▪ Need equipment and skills for online job applications ▪ Job incubator ▪ Promote entrepreneurial spirit to start own businesses ▪ Practical, hands-on training through schools and internships that could lead to paid jobs

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<p>Neighborhood Revitalization Opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The park on Indianola needs more attention ▪ Playground equipment needed in the northeastern part of Weinland Park ▪ Parks need supervision ▪ Infill development between Short North and the Gateway Center on High Street needed ▪ Potential new park on or near 11th Ave, extending Hamlet north to Chittenden ▪ Recreational opportunities needed in parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Welcome to WP signs at neighborhood entrances on High Street (use grapes in a logo to play on the Weinland Park name) ▪ Support stable blocks such as Euclid Ave; Hamlet between 8th and 9th; 6th Street south of 7th ▪ Work on resolving problems around the carryout stores ▪ Build sidewalks on Fifth Ave ▪ Traffic calming program: lower speeds on 4th and Summit; signal timing on 4th to lower speeds ▪ Improve pedestrian crossings, especially around the school; 7th and Summit ▪ WP needs a recreation center; the closest on is 1.5 miles away across High Street ▪ Create a bike route to connect WP with the route to OSU and the bike path across High Street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build on school, park and child development center improvements - focus efforts to maximize benefits ▪ Improve sidewalks from neighborhood to new school ▪ Encourage folks to move into the community ▪ Traffic calming – 7th Ave needs to be pedestrian friendly; sidewalks; signal timing on Summit and 4th to slow traffic; safer crosswalks; parked cars can impair vision ▪ Community Properties – form partnerships with tenants to enhance the community; keep children safe ▪ Attract businesses to busy crossroads (arcade? Bowling alley?) ▪ Enhance the university – neighborhood direct connection with family orientation ▪ High school (charter?) to keep kids from being disconnected ▪ Attract service businesses to N 4th ▪ Family friendly housing and environment along 5th and 6th streets ▪ Possible one-way street network: Euclid, 8th, 9th. Would allow parking on both sides of the street

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<p>Opportunity Areas (Development Sites)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 11th Ave area: park on the Zettler site with houses facing the park; retail on 4th and on Summit; mixed income housing ▪ 8th and 9th Ave: playground needed with DF grant and 7th and 8th, redevelopment potential south of the Gateway Center – explore higher-density, mixed use potential ▪ Kroger area: Library at dollar store site; redevelop Kroger and police; library on east side of High Street is better for WP pedestrians; make the police station centrally located and a positive destination; neighborhood needs a civic center; partnership between police and library sites/ ▪ Coated Fabrics site: police station potential; mix of housing and neighborhood spaces on Grant Ave; mixed use for properties abutting 5th Ave 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High Street: give WP an identity on High Street; redevelopment of Kroger site; mixed use buildings ▪ Coated Fabrics: residential development in harmony with neighborhood; single family homes, townhouses and green space closer to the neighborhood and higher densities east of Grant Ave ▪ Create a park at the Zettler site so that Hamlet connects from the neighborhood park to the Zettler park. ▪ Police station location: consider a location on Fifth Ave 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kroger site and library: keep library on High Street near public transportation; improve High Street crosswalks; create a neighborhood gateway east from a redeveloped Kroger site ▪ Coated Fabrics: make a destination site for neighborhood residents

There was considerable consensus among the small groups as they discussed the questions and considered potential changes:

What's good?

Participants agreed that as a walkable, urban neighborhood near downtown and the university, Weinland Park is a convenient place to live with significant assets and potential. Every group talked about how the neighborhood has been improving and the good community feeling created by the neighbors working together. Neighborhood institutions like Godman Guild and the Library and the positive role they play in the life of young people were also mentioned by all the groups.

What's not so good?

All the groups pointed to the neighborhood's poor image and reputation as one of the most important problems the neighborhood faces. Although the crime situation has improved greatly during the last ten years, there are continuing problems and safety is a concern for all, compounded by poor police-community relations. The physical appearance of some parts of the neighborhood also contribute to this image because some absentee landlords do not maintain their properties well, trash collection and illegal dumping remain problems, and vacant lots and buildings send a message of abandonment.

Jobs and workforce development

Everyone agreed on the need to prepare Weinland Park residents better for jobs through education and training and the need to connect residents more effectively with employers. Much of the discussion was on the need to expand efforts to prepare young people from young ages, helping them to understand the world of work, creating internships and other activities that give them experience and contacts that could lead to permanent opportunities. Participants also identified barriers to work such as insufficient day care and poor public transportation connections to some employment centers. Finally, finding ways to nurture entrepreneurial abilities and promote home businesses were also mentioned.

Neighborhood revitalization opportunities

The discussions on neighborhood revitalization focused on improving amenities like parks and the physical condition of the neighborhood; traffic calming; and building on the stable areas and the coming improvements to the neighborhood. The participants want to see less speeding on Summit and N. Fourth Streets and to improve pedestrian safety at the crossings of those streets as well as others in the neighborhood. Attracting new retail and service businesses to serve the neighborhood was another proposal for improving the core community. Participants also highlighted the need to give Weinland Park an identity on High Street through signs and redevelopment.

Development sites – the Opportunity Areas

The participants were positive about the possibility of redeveloping the Opportunity Areas with new housing and, as appropriate, mixed use or business development. There was general agreement that redevelopment of the Kroger and dollar



store sites into mixed use would be very beneficial for Weinland Park and help create a High Street identity for the neighborhood. Although there are concerns about contamination at Coated Fabrics and 3M, redevelopment of these sites to bring new residents, new parks, new amenities, and possibly, new jobs, is a very high priority for the workshop participants, who want the neighborhood to attract new residents. Participants also want the new library to be easily accessible and suggested several different potential locations for the police station.

OPEN HOUSE: GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND VOTING ON PRIORITIES



After several hours of discussion, each group was asked to select the top three priorities that emerged from their discussions and write them on poster sheets, which were displayed at the front of the room. A representative of each group then presented their results to workshop participants and others who arrived for the Open House. After the group presentations, all participants were given four adhesive dots to “vote” on the items that they felt were the most important. Each person could distribute his or her votes in any manner, from placing all dots on one item to stress its overwhelming importance, to each dot on a single item. In order to see if there were any significant differences in priorities among the participants according to their affiliation, different colored dots were handed out for residents of Weinland Park, residents of other University District neighborhoods, employees or affiliates of nonprofits or of businesses, employees or affiliates of the City, and others (including those who preferred not to be categorized).



The priorities of each group and the number of votes they received is as follows:

TABLE 2: SMALL GROUP PRIORITY LISTS	
Dot Votes	Priorities
Group One	
4	<i>Safety and perception.</i> The perception of Weinland Park as dangerous and crime-ridden is worse than the reality. There is a need to make the neighborhood cleaner and more attractive and slow the speed of through traffic.
11	<i>Housing and business.</i> There is a need for more affordable housing and support for retail and other businesses.
15	<i>Education and social support services.</i> There is a need for excellent and more available human services and an emphasis on education and life long learning to keep people on the right track.
Group Two	
13	<i>Traffic calming and pedestrian safety.</i> Lower speed limits on 4 th Street and Summit Street; modify signal timing to slow traffic; focus on priority pedestrian crossings on 7 th Ave and around the school
10	<i>Improve security and control crime.</i> Work to limit problems around carryouts, to reduce youth loitering and the appeal of gangs, to improve street lighting, and to reduce the impact of vacant lots and buildings by securing them and then redeveloping them.
4	<i>Opportunity areas.</i> Create new mixed-use buildings on High Street with a Weinland Park identity; housing redevelopment from single family to multifamily on Coated Fabrics; create new open space at the Zettler site.
7	<i>Workforce development.</i> Promote neighborhood-based cottage industries and apprenticeship programs and support the community residents who work with youth (the “grandmother corps”).
Group Three	
13	<i>Internal neighborhood.</i> Building a walkable community – improve traffic, safety, and trash.
5	<i>Development that improves the neighborhood</i> with compatible uses, which being mindful of potential stressors
24	<i>Local employment,</i> especially for teens and people who want part time work – need mentored employees

All the items received dot votes in a rainbow of colors, which means that there was no extreme distinction between Weinland Park residents and the other participants in the workshop. With a few exceptions, the Weinland Park residents accounted for about half of the votes for each item. The exceptions were “education and social support services” from Group One and “traffic calming” from Group Two, where Weinland Park residents accounted for fewer than half of the dot votes for those items.

A similar set of priorities emerged from the three groups, with a focus on jobs, making the neighborhood safer and more livable, and support for new development. If we reconfigure the votes into these three categories, we can see the overall priority ranking.

Employment, workforce development and education:	46
Neighborhood safety and quality of life (including traffic calming):	40
New compatible development:	20

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

The results of the neighborhood planning workshop support the directions that the WPWC has been pursuing in its policy statements and the suggested redevelopment options that the consultants and the WPWC have been discussing. Participants are most focused on improving opportunities and quality of life for the residents of the neighborhood now. Increasing employment and forging connections so that residents have greater access to nearby employment is particularly important. The plan's recommendations on enhancing the employment chances of Weinland Park residents on the OSU campus will be especially welcome.

The quality of life and neighborhood revitalization issues that emerged in the workshop discussions encompass a variety of issues including land use, transportation, city services and policing. Participants were enthusiastic and hopeful about the new investments coming to the neighborhood and want to be sure that additional initiatives build on the new park, school, childcare and streetscape initiatives already programmed. Workshop priorities that will be part of the plan include:

- Land use: securing and then improving vacant lots and buildings, green space additions and improvements, mixed-income housing strategies,
- Transportation: traffic calming strategies to control speeds on arterial roads, enhancements to pedestrian safety
- City services and policing: potential opportunities to improve methods of dealing with trash and dumping, code enforcement, and police relations

Workshop participants were supportive of pursuing redevelopment strategies for the Weinland Park Opportunity Areas. The idea of new housing to create greater income diversity and to support the potential for new neighborhood-serving retail and services was generally supported. There was considerable interest in ways to create a distinctive Weinland Park identity and presence on High Street, between Short North and the university area. The final plan should explicitly draw the connections between how redevelopment in the Opportunity Areas will help the neighborhood meet many of its goals for the Revitalization Area, enhancing quality of life, creating a bigger market for businesses that serve the neighborhood, and adding to residential stability and community.