

## **XVI. INTERVIEWS**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the following interviews is to achieve a greater understanding of 1) “green” or sustainable development principles/practices and 2) the potential challenges of as well as recommendations for implanting “green” development on the Whittier Peninsula.

The selected interviewees include national experts on “green” or sustainable development practices, urban design professionals, a new urbanism market consultant, the Columbus Audubon Center director, local downtown development officials, and local realtors.

### **B. LIST OF INTERVIEWEES**

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- Mr. Rose prefers the terms “Environmentally Responsible” or “Smart Growth” as projects still rely on non-renewable resources and are not “sustainable.”
- Holistic perspective is important. We should promote healthy societies.
- Building green provides more day light, fresh air, less reliance of non-renewable resources, recycled materials, non-toxic materials, and reduced water consumption (added benefit of reducing strain on sewer systems).
- Communities need to investigate changing their zoning practices in order to allow for denser, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use, “inclusive” developments. New York City (out of necessity) is a leader in implementing such “new urbanist” zoning. Set backs, road widths, units/acre, parking, green space requirements, etc. American Planning Association is sponsoring a New Urbanist Codes conference in Chicago July 15-16.
- Communities should resolve to limit funding (e.g., HOME funds, CDBG, etc.) projects that promote sprawl.
- As communities increase “smart growth” policies, they should “practice what they preach” and require public projects (e.g., schools, libraries, government offices) to be green. For example, the city of Seattle requires all new buildings to be LEED Certified.
- Education outreach for government and decision makers is important to promote best practices. Numerous national organizations/experts are available.
- Significantly, consumers are generally not attracted to a project because it is “green.” Location, design, lifestyle, and quality of build still are the major drivers of demand. Education at the consumer level is generally the responsibility of the developer.

- An average cost estimate to be LEED qualified from standard practices:

	Cost Differential
LEED Certified	0% - 1%
LEED Silver	3% - 5%
LEED Gold	4% - 7%

- Projects should generally blend with their environs and be “comfortable” for residents, users, and surrounding neighborhood.
- There is no “cookie-cutter” answer to a target demographic or successful project mix. Rose Companies, for example, develops housing for many income levels and optimal mix is best determined by site-specific variable such as size, location, and local market.
- Mr. Rose recommended that the city of Columbus conduct extensive interviews with 3-4 development firms that specialize in “smart growth” infill development projects in order to enhance RFQ/RFP process. ULI and USGB could provide references.
- Urban Land Institute can provide (for an approximately \$100,000 fee) consultation services for organizations looking to implement “smart growth” practices.

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- Greg Kats is a leading expert on clean energy technologies and high performance building. Mr. Kats co-founded and until 2001 served as Chair of the IPMVP, the national standard for monitoring and managing building energy and environmental performance. He is the author of *The Costs and Financial Benefits of Green Buildings: A Report to California's Sustainable Building Task Force (Kats et al., 2003)*, the most comprehensive study on the costs and benefits of green building.
- Although this report was written with specific regard to California state buildings, data is national in scope and conclusions are broadly applicable to other types of buildings and for other public and private sector entities.
- The additional costs associated with green buildings are about 2%, while the financial benefits are about 10 times as large. The majority of the “green premium” is due to the increased architectural and engineering design time necessary to integrate sustainable building practices into projects. Note that the cost of green building tends to decline with experience in design and development, as clients and their design and architecture teams get beyond their first green building.
- The benefits of green building include some elements that are relatively easy to quantify, such as energy and water savings, as well as those that are less easily quantified, such as the use of recycled content materials and improved indoor environmental quality.
- Major financial benefits include: reduced energy, water, and waste costs; reduced emissions; reduced risk and insurance costs; lower operations and maintenance costs; and enhanced productivity and health.
- Significantly, the relatively large impact of productivity and health gains reflects the fact that the direct and indirect costs of employees are far larger than the costs of buildings or operational costs, so even small increases in employee productivity translate into larger benefits.

- The conclusions indicate that while green buildings generally cost more than conventional buildings, the “green premium” is lower than is commonly perceived.

**Financial Benefits of Green Buildings  
Summary of Findings (per square foot)**

<b>Category</b>	<b>20-Year NPV*</b>
Energy Value	\$5.79
Emissions Value	\$1.18
Water Value	\$0.51
Waste Value	\$0.03
Commissioning O & M Value**	\$8.47
Productivity and Health Value (Certified and Silver)	\$36.89
Productivity and Health Value (Gold and Platinum)	\$55.33
Less Green Cost Premium	(\$4.00)
<b>Total 20-year NPV* (Certified and Silver)</b>	<b>\$48.87</b>
<b>Total 20-year NPV* (Gold and Platinum)</b>	<b>\$67.31</b>

\*NPV – Net Present Value

\*\*O&M – Operation and Maintenance

- There exist a variety of “soft green” (or “patina”) standards nationally. These standards are generally not performance based. By contrast, the US Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standard provides 1) a defined process that is democratic 2) testing/performance requirements and 3) degree of accountability.
- In 2002, it was estimated that approximately 3% of new non-residential construction in the nation was LEED certified or LEED equivalent. This proportion is estimated to have increased to between 4% and 5% for 2005.
- Evaluation of LEED submission documentation for a dozen buildings shows an average reduction in energy use of 30%, but an average peak reduction of about 40%. While the data set is limited, it is nonetheless indicative. Commercial air conditioning and commercial lighting – together represent about a quarter of peak load. LEED design typically sharply cuts these peak demand uses due to technologies and design elements such as: high performance lighting, increased ventilation effectiveness, commissioning, heat island reduction measures, and on-site electricity generation.

- LEED was first introduced through a Pilot Program, and twelve buildings received version 1.0 certification in March 2000. Version 2.0 was released shortly thereafter for use as a design and certification tool, utilizing 34 performance indicators. At the end of 2000, about 8 million square feet of buildings were undergoing LEED certification. By early 2003, this number had jumped to over 100 million square feet. As of December 2002, of all new construction projects in the United States, an estimated 3% had applied for LEED certification, including 4% of schools, 16.5% of government buildings and 1.1% of commercial projects. In addition, many buildings use LEED as a design tool without going through the certification process. LEED's use and impact is therefore more pervasive than the figures suggest. In November 2002, LEED Version 2.1, an administrative update of LEED 2.0, was released.

## **Todd Zimmerman**

Partner

Zimmerman/Volk Associates Market Consultants

- An urban residential neighborhood succeeds when its physical characteristics consistently emphasize urbanity and the qualities of urban life; conversely, attempts to introduce suburban scale and housing types into urban areas have invariably yielded disappointing results. Appropriate urban design—which places as much emphasis on creating quality streets and public places as on creating or developing quality buildings—is essential to success.
- Higher density, “new urbanism” development such as that likely to occur on the Whittier Peninsula provides several potential cost and revenue benefits including:

### **Cost Benefits**

**Lower land costs per unit** – Since no buffers are required between housing segments, the close proximity of different residential types leads to more efficient land yields. Further, there are no collector roads without developable frontages; for that reason the street network also contributes to the lower land cost per unit.

**Lower infrastructure costs per unit** – Due to the higher density, even with increased landscaping and sidewalks and alleys, the infrastructure cost per unit is lower than conventional subdivisions.

**Lower first-phase infrastructure costs** – Conventional communities usually require the creation of entire pods and collector roads. In the first phase of a new urbanism development, the only investment required is the completion of both sides of a single street that often serves a variety of housing types in close proximity as well as public spaces.

**Greater development flexibility** – Optimally designed streets can accommodate a range of housing types with the same lot depth. If market demand shifts, these housing types can shift accordingly.

**Lower costs for public services** – A 1997 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation study found that the public sector costs related to non-residential uses in a new urbanism development were 48% lower than a conventional plan, with costs for residential uses 5% lower. The most significant savings related to roads, storm water management, and water distribution. Further, integrated-use development creates a broader, more balanced tax base.

### **Revenue Benefits**

**Housing value premiums** – A well-designed new urbanism development can add value either through unit pricing and/or sales velocity.

**Higher long-term value for income properties** – A well-designed environment enhances the value of all property. Retail, office, and residential uses with close proximity and well-scaled (balanced) can create a positive synergy of uses.

**Location premium** – New urbanism buyers reflect the long-standing American dynamic of selecting neighborhood first and house second. New Urbanism neighborhoods provide a very real “sense of community” and convenience.

- Our recommended housing programs, although very specific in mix and proportion of housing types, generally include the proviso that new community or infill neighborhood design should recognize the inevitability of change as household characteristics and neighborhood dynamics evolve over time. Housing’s initial success requires detailed knowledge of probable first occupants; long-term community health requires flexibility of design at both the dwelling and the neighborhood level. This recognition is a contrast to the typical reliance on niche markets to create highly targeted housing types that lack the flexibility to respond to changing social and economic conditions.

**Mark Kline, Partner**  
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- Based in Columbus, Ohio, Kinzelman Kline provides Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Planning services for a broad range of public sector and private clients. Kinzelman Kline has been retained by the Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks to design the new park on the Whittier Peninsula (the Whittier Peninsula Metro Park).
- The Whittier Peninsula Metro Park component will feature an environmentally friendly design that is strongly oriented to pedestrian traffic and educational aspects. The total park acreage will be approximately 80 acres.
- Park amenities will include the Audubon Center, a family picnic area, playground equipment, an outdoor amphitheater, water features, green spaces, resting node, a boat launch, bike/pedestrian path, and educational paths with kiosks/plaques. The Audubon Center will have its own identity within the park setting. “Green” aspects of the park will include bioswales and rain gardens.
- Design of the park will be very “original” and integrate a uniform “theme.” Metro Parks “will not be picking from a catalog” for the materials, pavements, benches, lighting, bridges etc. The specific “theme” for the park has not been formally established, but it should pull from what the park was (a quarry) and is now (a nature/bird sanctuary). Since the park site was a former quarry, native rocks will be integrated throughout the park design. In addition, “environmental” art/sculptures will likely play a prominent role in decorating the park.
- There will be a roundabout placed prominently where Sycamore Road meets the edge of the planned park. This roundabout will allow visitors and residents to view the Peninsula from many perspectives. The “inside” of the roundabout will likely be green space that features a sculpture or water feature.
- Parking for the park will be 3’ to 4’ below street level, allowing for greater visibility.

- The boat launch area will be reformatted. The northern portion will be converted into a picnic area with a fishing pier. The southern portion will remain a launch
- The following comments/recommendations regarding the private development portion of the Whittier Peninsula were provided:
  1. It is important to massage the private development piece such that it maximizes orientation to the park as well as the downtown district (i.e., skyline). Providing this contrast between urban and natural settings is the peninsula's most unique feature.
  2. The former Lazarus Water Tower situated near the middle of the peninsula provides definition for the site and serves as a natural focal point. Potentially use the water tower as a bird habitat platform with multiple levels. This would also be a good place to have an artistic expression. The water tower will be visible from the downtown as well as brewery district.
  3. Take away the physical presence of the railroad track and highway. This can be accomplished through a variety of ways including constructing parking garages on the first floors of buildings. This has the added benefit of allowing "green" roofs to be placed on the top of buildings. Also, ground level garage areas can be used for retail.
  4. It probably makes sense to create pedestrian/bikeway path as part of Sycamore and Whittier bridges.
  5. Additional access may be possible by extending Liberty Street across the railroad tracks.
  6. Interstate 70/71 realignment will obviously impact the potential noise as well as access on the site.
  7. The grade differential created by bridging the railroad tracks will be an obstacle to integrating the peninsula with the Brewery District to the east.

- Success of downtown housing can be attributed to several factors including life cycle trends, land economics, positive synergy created by institutional and recreational facilities offered. (Density of uses), more relaxed lifestyle that relies less on the automobile, and the strong investment opportunities (people do not want to be left out).

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- Farr Associates, located in Chicago, Illinois, is an architecture and planning design firm recognized nationally as a leader in designing sustainable environments.
- Farr Associates is one of the few firms to practice “green urbanism” – a blending of New Urbanism design (planning) with “Green” building technologies (architecture). “Green urbanism” creates a consistent environment while fostering positive synergy.
- The following are potential five benefits that can be realized directly from “green” or sustainable development if done properly:
  1. Higher returns on investment
  2. Lower operating costs
  3. Marketing advantage
  4. Enhanced corporate image
  5. Improved health and productivity
- The estimated 2%<sup>1</sup> “green premium” for building is a reasonable *average* for the combined design and construction. However, the proportional added costs associated with building “green” (or “green premium”) generally decreases directly with scale (i.e., the total project cost) of the project and directly with the level of sustainable development experience among project team members. Further, it is important to note that there are additional *back-end* costs associated with LEED certification (for reviews and testing).
- Currently, the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program does not formally recognize nor evaluates neighborhood design. Doug Farr (principal at Farr Associates) has been working with the US Green Building Council, Congress for New Urbanism, and the Natural Resources Defense Council to create a LEED-Neighborhood Developments (ND) standard based on smart growth principles. The evaluation process for LEED-ND will likely be guided by

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<sup>1</sup> Based on estimate from *The Costs and Financial Benefits of Green Buildings: A Report to California’s Sustainable Building Task Force* (Kats et al., 2003).

the Smart Growth Network's ten principles of smart growth, which includes density, proximity to transit, mixed-use, mixed-housing types, and pedestrian/bicycle friendly design. Selection of projects for LEED-ND pilot evaluation may occur as early as Fall 2005. The Whittier Peninsula development appears to be viable candidate for this evaluation.

- There is currently a development site in Chicago that resembles the Whittier Peninsula near the intersection of Clark and Harrison Streets along the Chicago River. The site is bounded by a highway and railroad tracks. Rezco Development is currently in the early stages of creating a mix-use development. Mr. Pierce did not have additional details on this project.
- The following recommendations specifically for the Whittier Peninsula were provided:
  1. Given its apparent limited accessibility, the Whittier Peninsula may benefit from an “occupied vehicular bridge” that has uses on one or both sides. Uses may include observation deck, small retail shops, educational kiosks, etc. This will encourage as well as “reward” pedestrian flow to/from the peninsula. Another alternative may be to go under the railroad tracks.
  2. It has been Farr Associates experience that people enjoy watching industrial activity (e.g., construction, trains moving). There may exist an opportunity to turn the railroad into a positive attribute if design carefully.
  3. There will likely be a price premium given the site's proximity to a large park, an established entertainment district, and the downtown district. It will be important to think “vertically” when creating mixed-income housing. That is to say, the design should not segregate income groups.
  4. In fact, thinking “vertically” is important for all mixed-use buildings to be most effective.

5. “Noise tolerant” uses should be placed within proximity to the highway (which will also experience significant construction noise during the realignment) and rail tracks. Offices, green space, above ground parking structures. Utilization of noise absorbing “green” surfaces will also be beneficial.
  6. The pavement type on the highway will impact noise levels. There do exist pavements that are better at dampening noise than others.
  7. Create a special *design overlay* for the Whittier Peninsula that is consistent with new urbanism and smart growth principles.
- Development on the peninsula should be “incremental” and include multiple developers/architects. This will help to ensure variety and reduce the potential for a “monoculture,” which is generally less sustainable.

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- Columbus Downtown Development Corporation is a private sector organization created to implement the Downtown Business Plan for the City of Columbus. The organization provides low-cost, long-term gap financing for projects. Currently, the CDDC is focusing on redevelopment efforts in the River South portion of downtown, an area consisting of City Center Mall and approximately 30 acres of land situated south of Town Street and west of High Street. Note that the Whittier Peninsula and River South District will be adjacent, separated only by the Interstate 70/71 interchange.
- Currently, the planning firm of Beyer, Blinder, and Belle (based in New York City) is preparing a master-use plan for the River South District. The plan will be finalized by the end of the Summer 2005. First development in the River South District could break ground in late 2006/early 2007. Build out of the River South will be approximately 10 to 15 years.
- CDDC owns four large parcels that were acquired from the Lazarus Company. CDDC intends on developing 500 – 600 units on these four parcels. CDDC envisions creating River South into the highest density neighborhood in Columbus. The target density is approximately 80 to 100 residential units per quarter block with building heights up to 12-15 stories. Housing will predominately be “market-rate.” There are currently no estimates on a potential tenure mix.
- The River South District will take its design cue from successful “high” density neighborhoods such as “Buckhead” in Atlanta. River South is well suited for this high-density design since it is one of the few areas of downtown that has maintained its original street “grid” pattern.
- The former Lazarus Department Store is being redeveloped by New York-based, The Georgetown Company, which intends to transform the 750,000 square foot building into the county’s first renovated LEED- (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified facility. The original façade will be restored and new environmentally responsible technologies will be added. Examples of green technologies to be employed in the project include:

1. Recycling 2/3 of all demolition materials
  2. Harvesting and filtrating rainwater for use in cooling systems and rooftop garden irrigation
  3. Reduced Volatile Organic Compounds in building materials
  4. Energy efficient windows
  5. High performance HVAC systems
  6. Rooftop garden
  7. Waterless urinals
- Additional planned aspects to the River South District redevelopment include:
    1. Realignment and narrowing of Town Street. The Town Street Bridge will be realigned with Rich Street. The realignment is logical given Rich Street provides continuous flow through downtown district (Town Street “T’s” at High Street.) and there are environmental issues with the existing Town Street Bridge that serve to limit weight potential. Realignment of the bridge will allow Town Street to narrowed from the Scioto River to High Street, providing a more pedestrian friendly streetscape as well as space for a new plaza. The bridge portion may be reconfigured to accommodate a pedestrian bridge that would flow into the planned plaza.
    2. Front Street will be redesigned to accommodate two-way traffic flow through the entire River South District.
    3. BalletMet has expressed interest in relocating their practice facility on Mount Vernon Avenue to the River South District.
    4. Underground parking will impact the old sewer system downtown.
  - The Mill Corporation recently acquired the City Center Mall. The Mill Company is in the process of evaluating potential reuse of the mall.

- Significantly, the *entire* downtown district is Tax Abated for residential housing. There are three districts that offer a full 100% *transferable* Tax Abatement for 10 years: 1) the River South District 2) the Long Street Corridor – two blocks north and south of Long Street from Marconi Road to Fourth Street and 3) Arena/North Market District – approximately the entire area west of High Street between Spring Road and Interstate 670. The remainder of the downtown district qualifies for a 75% *transferable* Tax Abatement for 10 years. Abatements are for improved properties and are fully transferable. A \$200,000 valued improvement would realize an approximate tax savings of \$240 monthly. It is estimated that the abatement allows a person to afford 20% more home.
- Outside the three fully Tax Abated districts in the downtown district, there is not much activity. Conducting Topiary Analysis of other downtown neighborhoods. The CDDC's role is to catalyze development.

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- Mr. Ricksecker was executive director of the Riverfront Commons Corporation from 1997 to 1999. During this time, the general concepts for development and preservation of the Whittier Peninsula were formulated in the Riverfront Plan. The Riverfront Plan called for (generally) a divided land use. This would include approximately 50% natural parkland and 50% dense, “green development” using smart growth concepts.
- Ricksecker comments that the project, in his opinion, should have redundant access, with at least three vehicular access points, to provide the perception that the area is part of the city’s grid pattern. Currently, two points have been discussed. One would be in the vicinity of the bike path along the east side of the Scioto River, and one would be in the vicinity of Liberty Street.
- The Whittier Peninsula has closer physical and conceptual relationship with the Brewery District and its commercial/retail composition that it does to downtown. The Front Street and South High Street retail/commercial corridors will remain the primary retail and commercial strips for the area even after Whittier Peninsula is completed.
- Whittier Peninsula’s retail and commercial mix would likely include primarily local, neighborhood retailers, including a coffee house and video rental. However, given that the area will have one of the only urban wildlife centers in the country, there is some potential for, a destination restaurant, for example, with a wildlife viewing area. Or an outdoor outfitter for birders. This would accentuate the wild bird population’s presence.

- During Ricksecker’s tenure at Riverfront Commons Corporation, the Whittier Peninsula was found to contain approximately 211 species of birds, including some exotic species. Development of the Audubon educational center, plus the 80 acres of wildlife area, is an important piece of the comprehensive cleanup of the river. The city of Columbus will be updating combined storm sewer and overflow management systems to reduce impact on crucial points of the riverfront.
- Although the Brewery District isn’t within the Central Business District, for potential residents, it’s in the same market. Ricksecker notes that someone planning to live in “downtown” doesn’t distinguish between the two areas. And the market is classic market—empty nesters and Gen-X younger professionals, alternative lifestyles. Ricksecker speculates that for Whittier, we might see more households with children than downtown would.
- Early on in the process, Ricksecker met with Dennis Guest, director of the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, about the project to see if CMHA was interested in getting involved. There are a number of affordable housing developers in the Columbus area that do a great job, including National Church Residences, Columbus Housing Partnership. It is a good idea to keep the project economically stratified, and there are a number of ways and partnerships that can accomplish this.
- Stratified neighborhoods are good, and important, to keep middle-income families with kids in the city. In the future, typical middle-income (or even upper income) families won’t be able to afford to live in downtown neighborhoods like Victorian Village and German Village.
- Currently in downtown, the market for condominiums is very strong. Between 2002 and February 2005, there have been 778 rental units and 210 owner-occupied units constructed within the downtown effective market area, which includes the Brewery District. This area contains 210 rental units and 494 owner occupied units currently under construction. Units in the pipeline that have been approved include 391 owner occupied units and 101 rental units. And units in the pipeline (proposed) include 830 rental units and 606 owner occupied units.

- Ricksecker notes that the timing is good for neighborhood/residential development in downtown and surrounding areas. There is a lot of unmet demand, and there has been an increase in construction activity so far. The early housing push in downtown will hopefully lead to formation of neighborhoods, which will increase demand for housing on an ongoing basis.
- Based upon listings posted at the [www.downtowncolumbus.com](http://www.downtowncolumbus.com) website, downtown rents range from \$345 (Americana at S. Fifth Street) to \$1,400 at Arena Crossing in the Arena District. Sales prices within downtown area condominium properties range from \$85,000 at the Battleship Building in the Arena District to \$2.0 million at Miranova in the River South district.

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- Ms. Starck has been with Audubon Ohio since October 2004. Prior to coming to Columbus, she spent two years working in the Florida everglades with the Audubon Society. She is the director of the Columbus Audubon Center at Whittier Peninsula, and contributed to the center's business plan. The center's projected opening date is 2008, with groundbreaking in 2007.
- Target audiences/visitors to the planned Audubon Center elementary students, childcare and preschool groups, after school groups, youth groups and families. Part of the center's vision is to attract children and their families from the urban areas surrounding the center. Ms Starck notes, "We don't have a national focus. Our projections are based upon attracting visitors from the surrounding region. We may have people, Audubon members, who come from out of town, but we don't project (tourists) in our numbers." Regional projections call for approximately 16,500 attendees to the center by the third year of operation.
- Because the center is not going to charge an entry fee, there are no goals for walk-in tourism. The assumption is that there will be a few thousand per year, and hopefully a significant number of new residents on Whittier Peninsula will comprise some of the "regular" walk-in traffic. Ms. Stark comments that she believes the housing and retail components of the Whittier Peninsula project would contribute largely to the "daily rotation" within the center. The populations of residents and workers were considered during the planning of the center. "Hopefully they will come regularly, become Audubon members, and become part of our community."
- The center will be comprised of three classrooms, a small library, and a large multipurpose room with seating for 200. The center will also have patio and deck areas for special events, a small café and a gift shop.

- The center will be a key component of the development of the riverfront in the downtown area, and will tend to attract visitors during daytime hours for family-oriented activities. Ms. Stark doesn't envision the center having a lot of nighttime activities. She does not believe Whittier Peninsula's location adjacent to the Brewery District, a primarily nighttime destination, is negative, but rather has potential for complimentary ties. She believes that there will be overflow of visitors between both areas on weekends, and notes that the ties between the two areas should be investigated further. "There will be very good ties (between the two areas) in some ways. During our special events, we can help promote their restaurants by serving their food, for example."
- In terms of the retail environment for the Whittier Peninsula development, Ms. Stark comments that stores should serve neighborhood residents, and could include small convenience/grocery stores as well as some niche offerings focused on the arts. The center's gift shop and café will be nature education stores, with offerings such as Audubon field guides, bird feeders, things for kids, magnifying glasses and bug boxes. The café will be small, offering snacks and drinks, and organic foods from the society's farm in the Dayton area. The café will not offer hot food.
- When asked to comment on the concept of a destination restaurant within the development, Ms. Starck notes that it should be on scale with the surroundings, that it should be more of a small-scale, community place, designed to attract a clientele that would also appreciate the peninsula's natural attributes.
- Ms. Starck agrees with the general overall neo-traditional, mixed-use development plan, and says that offering a variety of housing at different price points is attractive to her. She plans to live on the peninsula, and believes that having mixed-income residents is positive.

**Nan Merritt, Planner,**  
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- Ms. Merritt’s organization serves as an advocate and lender for builders and developers to produce affordable housing by reducing their perceived risk. The housing trust is evaluated on areas such as production, affordability, and how efficiently the public’s money is used. Ms. Merritt emphasizes that they try to help put organizations together that can get things done. A good example would be a pairing of a construction firms with a Community Development Corporation.
- The housing trust has been in business about four years. Committed funding to over 1,500 units. Rental housing, single-family homes, all areas of the city, although they don’t work in the downtown area, per se. On the south side, the housing trust has helped to finance some Columbus Housing Partnership projects, single-family homes around Thurman and Frebis. They own property in Obetz and Urbancrest, and have helped finance some projects South of Main through Youthbuild (HUD) on Cherry Street.
- The organization has provided assistance to many blighted areas of Columbus, including the Hilltop/Homes on the Hill (renovations), Columbus Urban Growth on Taylor Road, King-Lincoln, Wineland, and Franklinton. Some are apartments, including some properties from the old Broad Street Management portfolio.
- On the WP, we would encourage a mix of housing prices, styles and types. We serve 80% AMHI and below.
- Ms. Merritt notes that she has attended some of the Whittier Peninsula community input sessions and presentations. “On the Whittier Peninsula, we would encourage a mix of housing prices, styles, and types. We serve households with income at or below 80% of the area median. But, we’re essentially a lender. On standby to help developers and builders if they need us.
- For the housing trust, a typical size project is a 1,100 to 1,400 square foot single family home.

- Ms. Merritt notes that the range of affordability to fit the needs of the south side community should include 30% AMHI to 80% AMHI, but the demand is going to be for high-end housing. In terms of the mix of market-rate to affordable units, she adds “I don’t see it as formulaic. I see it as what fits the community. I think, however, at least 20% of every project should include affordable housing. But I don’t think it should be legislated.”
- When asked to name one key element of the Whittier Peninsula project that would help it be successful, Ms. Merritt comments, “It should be well integrated into the rest of the community. Services needed there, are needed in the rest of the community. Kroger grocery store is finally coming in, and that is a very good thing. South High Street has a fair amount of commercial, some banks, etc. But not a lot of community life. I think the park and all that might help solve that. Not a lot of open space down in the neighborhoods. This could create more community life on the south side, if it’s integrated well into the rest of the neighborhood—that includes upscale housing and businesses, and housing and businesses that serve moderate to low-income households as well.”
- The Whittier Peninsula shouldn’t be developed as a “separate” neighborhood. It should feel like part of the community, and should *be* part of the surrounding community. That includes things like architecture, retail. Retail should cater to higher-end and moderate-income consumers.
- The great communities of the world aren’t rigid about zoning. There is always a mix of styles, incomes, and offerings.

**Jim Tinker**, Director  
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- The city considers Whittier Peninsula as being part of the Brewery District. When the boundaries of the Brewery District were set in 1992, the western boundary was the Scioto River. That makes the Brewery District the largest historic district in the city.
- One of the most important elements to the project, says Tinker, is good communications. The community needs to be behind the project, and be involved in it, for it to work. Many facets of the community should be behind this project, and should believe in and communicate about it.
- Bringing the community down to the river is a great idea. Comments Tinker. Access to the river is very important, and it is limited currently throughout downtown. The Scioto Mile concept is really good—the Whittier Peninsula project could further this by giving the public increased access and interaction with the river from the site. Possibly a canoe livery or other form of boating.
- Access to the site is important. There should be multiple access points to the site. Tinker comments that it would be great if Mound and Whittier were reconnected. And further, Sycamore and Short streets should be connected. It's a question of affordability.
- Another key point is how does ODOT's Interstate 70/71 split redevelopment plan fit in or impact with the Whittier Peninsula and Brewery District areas? Once we know this, it would be easier to plan access to the peninsula.
- Connecting the Brewery District and downtown is more difficult than say, connecting downtown with the Short North. The Interstate 70 barrier is larger, psychologically. However, focusing on the river and the development along its route, connecting us with downtown can be done with Short and Mound Streets. Possibly a bridge project for Sycamore Street. If you're going to put 2,000 people out there, there has to be at least two ways to get in and out of the area.

- The vision for the Brewery District was initially owner-occupied housing (condominiums) and nightlife. Since its renaissance in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a significant amount of office space has been developed, with high (90.0%+) occupancy rates. About 300 businesses call the district home, with 40% of those businesses being law offices due to the district’s proximity to the courthouse. Many “creative class” professionals—graphic design firms, advertising agencies, and architectural firms, are also located in the district, attracted to the dramatic and historic nature of the area’s architecture.
- The vision for the Whittier Peninsula, according to Tinker, might be flavored with some of the same elements—a strong presence of “creative class” workers (either home offices or small office spaces).
- Buildings should be functional and adaptable for new technology, including wireless. The development should cater to independent, locally owned businesses.
- Retail mix would optimally include some specialty shops but primarily an upscale neighborhood mix of “necessity” shops such as newsstand/convenience, diner/coffee shop, etc. Tinker notes that retailers should also be local, independent operators, not chain stores. Some adjectives that describe these retailers would be upscale, unique, and neighborhood-supportive.
- Common green spaces and common events with the Brewery District would be great for Whittier Peninsula. Each could draw people from all over other areas of town. There needs to be connectivity. Businesses will feed off of that traffic. Tinker comments that the “green” concept used to redevelop the Lazarus building should be taken a step further, asking the question “What kind of businesses are best for green development?”
- Young professionals and empty nesters are the typical urban pioneers. Maybe education and getting families in there is important. Many aging baby boomers are very active and vital! Bring an educational organization or learning center, continuing education aspect there. Maybe it should be linked to Audubon.

- Several residents of the Brewery District have commented that the railroad tracks are a noise nuisance. When a train hits a turn, there is a metal scraping sound. Residents complain.

**Laura Hatem-Geist**

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- Ms. Hatem-Geist grew up in the German Village area and has lived there for most of her life. As a realtor, she specializes in single-family and condominium sales in the south side of Columbus.
- Increasingly, the Brewery District, Whittier Peninsula, German Village, Merion Village and Schumacher Place are perceived as one large area. Schumacher Place is located east of the eastern boundary of German Village to Parsons Avenue. Bounded to the north by Livingston Avenue and to the south by the rest of German Village.
- Schumacher Place and Merion Village don't have their own commissions yet, but they work together with the other area commissions. The south side is a very cohesive area.
- The increase in owner-occupied housing in the area is the primary trend in Merion Village and Schumacher Place. The average home sales price in the Merion Village/Schumacher Place areas ranges from (an estimated) \$200,000 to \$210,000.
- Rents rage within this area, however. A one-bedroom unit would rent from \$600 in Merion Village to \$1,000 in German Village.
- Ms. Hatem-Geist comments that homebuyers are diverse, but obviously people who want to live in older, established communities are typically young married couples, singles, and the gay community.
- The share of families with children moving to the area is lower. Ms. Hatem-Geist notes that most of the families with children that she observes moving into the southside neighborhoods put their children in private, parochial or alternative schools.
- One notable infill development is the Treetops condominium development next to Planks Bier Garten.

- To make Whittier Peninsula successful, the project should be aesthetically similar to the surrounding area. The buildings should be high quality, keeping historic standards in mind. Keep green space, create and maintain a center community gathering area.

**Bob Leighty, President**

Merion Village Association Board of Directors  
444-3144

- Mr. Leighty has been a resident of Merion Village since 1988. After moving to Columbus in 1984 from the east coast, he purchased his home on South Fourth Street in 1988 and has lived in the neighborhood ever since. He has been involved in neighborhood and community improvement groups since moving to the area.
- For Leighty, one of the primary strengths of Merion Village is the diversity of community, which includes families who have lived in the neighborhood for generations, as well as new residents.
- Diversity in terms of the community’s physical structure and architecture is also a key strength, he notes. “The architecture in Merion Village varies a lot. There is a lot of history here. Our house was built in 1891.”
- According to Leighty, another advantage that Merion Village has is that “everything is built on a pedestrian scale, rather than built to serve the automobile.” The proximity to downtown, German Village and mass transit is also advantageous.
- Leighty is “very excited” about the development of the Whittier Peninsula, and explains that to be successful, the development needs to “compliment” the wildlife sanctuary. “I represent Merion Village in the Council of Historic Neighborhoods. About ten years ago, we got involved in the planning and community input meetings for Riverfront Commons, trying to figure out what made sense. I met some folks who are involved in birding, and that struck me—it’s phenomenal that there are 250 species of birds in that area—so close to downtown and urban areas.”
- Leighty believes that the combination of Audubon and Columbus Metroparks is “wonderful” and applauds the development of an urban-center metropark. “It’s about time that there is a metropark closer to the city. There are a lot of challenges: Brownfield reclamation, homeless displacement, crime. But I think we have the tools to handle those challenges. We can make it a safer place to be. These are solvable problems.”

- In August 2005, the Merion Village Association will celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and Leighty's tenure with the group dates back to 1992. Leighty comments that "(Merion Village) is getting much more attention—much more rehabbing of buildings going on. In 1992, realtors didn't refer to it as 'Merion Village'. We (the association) were just trying to make the neighborhood as good as it could be. Worked on safety issues, encourage historic preservation."
- The City of Columbus' Community Reinvestment Area designation brought about \$2.0 million in investment into Merion Village, and helped complete some physical changes, including the Merion Village arch. The association put out planters.
- Over the past 17 years Leighty has noticed that neighborhood pride, awareness of its history, and safety have improved. "Merion Village really feels like a neighborhood. You go to the store, and run into people you know. It's nice."
- He notes that the challenges are continuous. "I get frustrated with Columbus Public Schools. We've done work with Southwood Elementary. That building will be renovated. It's a beautiful, historic building. They were going to tear it down."
- On housing development on the Whittier Peninsula, Leighty notes, "I hope we can keep the neighborhood diverse in terms of income-eligibility. Neighborhood activists get into debates about it. 'German Village was better before it was exclusively wealthy people. We try to support programs that help people regardless. It's a hard thing to do. Try to study other developments. Conducting case studies and pinpointed marketing could help."
- We need to look at what's happening with families down here. Diversity is great—singles, families, children. Keeping families down here will involve improving the schools.
- Leighty comments that retail offerings on Whittier Peninsula should serve the neighborhood, and should fit into the surrounding architecture, streetscape. The mix should include everyday goods and services for residents, as well as some degree of specialty stores.

- “It depends upon what happens with the RiverSouth area. It would be great to see a Target in that development. I don’t know that retail (at the Whittier Peninsula) needs to be overdone. Columbus has a very overbuilt retail market. Also, you don’t want to compete with the Brewery District. You want to compliment it.”
- “If you want to attract families to the Whittier Peninsula, there shouldn’t be a high concentration of bars. Is this something that I wouldn’t mind living close to? Restaurants, neighborhood taverns need to be on scale with the rest of the neighborhood.”
- Smart planning of the project is key. “Come up with strategies that sound like they will work 20 years from now. Retail should be a classic, pedestrian-oriented mix. Bookstores, cafes. Look at successful urban neighborhoods.”

Other comments include:

- “I think in general, there should be a lot of access points to avoid traffic bottlenecks to the Audubon Center, to residential area, or to retail. Well-thought out access points are good.”
- “Keep the streets open, and honor designs that have worked classically. Keep it walkable, accessible. Whittier Peninsula shouldn’t become an exclusive, country club development that is enclosed or gated.”
- “Parking is a very sensitive issue. For example, a large, successful restaurant would require too much park