

this is **CLEVELAND
HEIGHTS**

**THE
NEW
SUBURB**

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PLANNING INNOVATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The Cleveland Heights community in Central Ohio is bounded by Cleveland Avenue, one of the most transit-heavy corridors in the city, and is near Morse Road, one of the most heavily developed routes in the county. Yet Cleveland Heights itself is **a densely forested, sparsely populated residential district** almost forgotten to the development surrounding it.

That lack of development stems from an equally **distinct history** for the area. Cleveland Heights is on all sides surrounded by the City of Columbus, but the Heights itself is part of Blendon Township and is unconnected to the City's water supply. As such, construction in the district has been limited to a scattering of homes with individual septic systems.

These historic circumstances have created a distinct identity for Cleveland Heights. The area is **closely identified with nature** because its tall trees and thick underbrush. It is a low-to-moderate income community that is close-knit, with deep roots and long investment in the district. This plan calls for responsible development so that these unique circumstances are protected.

The purpose of this development plan is to **protect the natural surroundings and strong community** of Cleveland Heights, while responsibly developing the area. That mission means building upon the natural amenities of the neighborhood through park development. It means constructing new homes that fit the style and price range of current ones. And it means creating a walkable suburb that stands out from the standard communities around it.

This is a new plan for development.

This is Cleveland Heights.



OVERVIEW

As Cleveland Heights develops, these recommendations will be a guiding force in the creation of a stronger community which preserves the important heritage of the area. The following are the four broad themes in which specific recommendations are clustered. Individual recommendations are detailed in the sections described below:

1) Infrastructure: Investing in infrastructure in the area is essential to creating a safer, more walkable, and more livable community. Infrastructure will also better connect Cleveland Heights to the surrounding community.

2) Housing: The appropriate development of housing is essential to creating this vision of Cleveland Heights. The stock of housing in the area will have to overcome a number of major obstacles, including a layout which conserves the natural surroundings of the

area and the lack of water resources. Housing can also create a mixed-income, walkable neighborhood through proper placement and design.

3) Park Space: While there are extensive forests in Cleveland Heights, it is not easily accessible to its residents. This plan will create innovative park arrangements that allow access to park space and extensive housing development.

4) Commercial Development: Once additional housing is built and connections to the area around Cleveland Heights are completed, there will be the opportunity to create a walkable series of neighborhood shops as well as

community space that will further define the community.

A brief estimate of costs and ideas for funding sources follows the recommendations.

“...a stronger community which preserves the important heritage of the area...”

A clear delineation between Cleveland Heights and other neighborhoods is its lack of infrastructure. The area feels like there has been minimal investment over the history of the suburb.

This, however, can be mended. There are federal funds available to neighborhoods to accomplish infrastructure improvements.

Current Conditions

Cleveland Heights lacks a number of basic infrastructure amenities. There are no sidewalks or street lighting in the Cleveland Heights neighborhood, and only small sidewalks along Cleveland Avenue. There are no connections to bicycle infrastructure and only basic transit stop signs along Cleveland Avenue. Finally, there is no distinctive signage showing that residents, visitors, or commuters are passing the Cleveland Heights neighborhood.

Recommendations

1) Install Sidewalks: Sidewalks are an important way to connect a community. They provide a walkable way for neighbors to interact with those living around them, and this interaction creates yields greater safety and creates a stronger neighborhood presence.

Sidewalks should be constructed along the main arteries of the area first: Abington Road and Sharron Road, integrating into the networks to the West, North and East. The fence along Abington Road should be removed to create these pedestrian connections. Sidewalks should also be added along the secondary roads in future stages. Along Cleveland Avenue, sidewalks should be widened to further separate pedestrians from the fast traffic.

2) Create Bicycle Connections: Bicycling is becoming a more accepted form of transportation for the Central

Ohio region. A bicycle network is slowly being constructed throughout the region, and Cleveland Heights should capitalize on that network by making connections to bike lanes and multi-use paths as they are completed.

A bicycle route should be created within the fence along Abington Road, allowing for movement between Cleveland Heights and the neighborhood to the east. When development of the empty rail line there into a bicycle lane occurs, Cleveland Heights' residents will be able to take advantage of the connection. A bicycle lane should be constructed along Cleveland Avenue to connect with the bicycle lanes that will be built further South along Cleveland Heights. It will also connect in with the Morse Road lanes.

3) Install Lighting: Lighting is crucial to creating a safe environment in Cleveland Heights. While the highly wooded nature of Cleveland Heights is a desirable feature to retain, adequate lighting is necessary to maintain a feeling of safety which complements that asset.

As with the development of the sidewalks, lighting should be constructed along Cleveland Avenue, Abington Road and Sharron Road first and expanded later. Cleveland Heights should utilize the model of lighting used along Northwold Road. Lighting should fully line Cleveland Avenue, as it is the main thoroughfare of the neighborhood and the main commercial corridor.

4) Construct Bus Stations: Transportation is an important way to connect Cleveland Heights with the surrounding area and downtown, and amenities such as bus stations are a great way of attracting ridership. Importantly, Cleveland Heights' residents said in the Blendon Township community plan that they would be more likely to utilize COTA buses if improvements



Cleveland Avenue with the addition of lighting, wider sidewalks, signage, and bus improvements

were made to the bus stops in the area.

Bus stations should be built along Cleveland Avenue in the area. These stations should be unique to the neighborhood because they will be an outside visualization of the neighborhood behind Cleveland Avenue.

5) Install Signage: Signage can visually identify a neighborhood including its boundaries and can create the sense of what a community values through the imagery it conveys. Signs should be built and attached to the lighting that will be constructed along Cleveland Avenue. The designs created by the Neighborhood Design Center should

be updated to reflect development in the area if necessary and signage should be clustered around the main entrances to the area.

6) Place Street Trees: Street trees are important elements of the urban environment. While there are an abundance of trees within Cleveland Heights, there are few along Cleveland Avenue.

New street trees should be added along Cleveland Avenue to improve the natural environment and the pedestrian experience along the corridor.

Chester Road before and after infrastructure improvements including sidewalks and lighting





HOUSING

While all of the improvements in the Cleveland Heights neighborhood are important, none outweigh the issue of housing. The type of housing which is built in Cleveland Heights can either compliment the current housing forms in the area or can stand in stark contrast to them. Because that decision greatly affects the community in the neighborhood, the decision needs to be made with deliberate care to preserve the character and feel of the entire neighborhood.

Current Conditions

Most of the homes within Cleveland Heights are single family houses with an average date of construction of 1953. According to the Blendon Com-

munity Plan, residents like the single family homes and low density development which allow for the dense forestation in the neighborhood.

Additionally, the Cleveland Heights neighborhood is a low-to-moderate income neighborhood.

Most homes are not immediately next to other structures. They are in a mix of conditions, and some homes are visibly in violation of existing codes because of the refuse on the property.

Homes in the area have not been connected to a sewage system until recently; thus, many homes have septic systems. Sewage infrastructure now exists in the area.

Chester Road with the addition of new homes



Canopy Conservation

Montgomery County, Maryland

Canopy conservation has been implemented in other counties around the country, not just per development but as law. In 1992 Montgomery County in Maryland enacted the Forest Conservation Law to combat the destructive practice of leveling forests for future development. The Department of Environmental Protection of Montgomery County established in 2000 the Forest Preservation Strategy, which was further updated in 2004. That strategy outlined the five goals of the program:

- 1) To increase the amount of wooded areas in riparian setbacks
- 2) To increase the amount of upland forests in the county
- 3) To maintain urban street trees
- 4) To increase the urban and suburban forest canopy
- 5) To ensure the long term health of forests on public lands

Specifically, with regard to the forest canopy, the county recommended that in all future development 50% of all suburban residential areas be covered by the tree canopy as well as 25% of all urban residential communities.

The active work Montgomery County is doing to conserve the forest canopy will help with issues of stormwater runoff, will clean urban air, and will reduce energy costs.

More information can be found at montgomerycountymd.gov and montgomeryplanning.org.



Recommendations

1) Enforce Existing Codes: Before development takes place in the area, the current homes should be brought into compliance with current laws and regulations. This will create the feel of a cleaner, more family-friendly neighborhood that will attract home buyers.

2) Apply Canopy Conservation: One of the seminal attributes of Cleveland Heights is the forested feel of the neighborhood. Residents have overwhelmingly expressed their desire to retain that feel even if development takes place in the neighborhood.

While the retention of trees will continue the unique character of Cleveland Heights, it also provides specific environmental benefits by reducing urban heat island effects and lowering energy costs.

Developers should voluntarily aim to reduce the number of trees destroyed during the construction of new homes by working around the natural environment in the placement of structures.

In addition, Blendon Township and Franklin County can work together to develop a Forest Conservation Law as has been done in other US counties. This law can provide a unified county approach to preserving the county's tree canopy.

3) Conduct Fair Housing Activities: Fair housing laws were created to ensure that all citizens would be able to access housing of their choice without facing discrimination. These laws are important in making communities open and equitable.

Franklin County supports fair housing. To reinforce their support, Franklin County has given preference

Katrina Cottages

Katrina Cottages were first conceived by New Urbanists as a response to the dismal conditions of FEMA trailers that coastal residents lived in after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The trailers were cramped and lacked the amenities that residents needed. The Katrina Cottages addressed the lack of amenities and the slum-feel of the FEMA trailers with a series of uniquely-designed homes.

The original Katrina Cottages took cues from the history of homes in the Gulf Coast region. They included large front porches and the unique architectural details that fit the historic character of the coastal cities. These created attractive places that quickly outpaced the quality and popularity of the cheap FEMA trailers.

The Katrina Cottages were originally designed as temporary dwellings, but their success and popularity have spurred new designs, national acclaim, and permanent developments. The small size and cheap construction costs especially made the homes extremely popular for affordable housing developers.

The success of the Katrina Cottages can be placed on their solid construction and smart design. The homes can be stick-built or prefabricated and placed at a site. Residents take greater stake in these homes because of their permanence.

The homes are also perfect for neighborhoods because of their attractive features. The homes can come in multiple colors, sizes, and shapes, creating a diverse neighborhood that sheds the monotony of traditional suburban developments. They also can be placed closer to the street, which combined with large front porch, allows neighbors greater interaction.

The Katrina Cottages are also narrower than traditional homes. They can be placed more closely together, creating greater density in a neighborhood. They can be clustered closely together, creating nodes of neighborhood activity that preserves park space for community enjoyment.



A few examples of Katrina Cottage designs. (Images from cusatocottages.com)

in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) applications to those communities which have held fair housing activities formally adopted by townships.

As the Cleveland Heights neighborhood is an eligible recipient of CDBG funds, Blendon Township should hold Fair Housing Activities in order to not only be more competitive for CDBG funds but also to reinforce the township's commitment to fair housing.

4) Utilize Conservation Development: The most forested parts of Cleveland Heights are a community resource and source of pride. As such, they should be spared from development.

Rather than a typical suburban development pattern which does not conform to the contours of the natural environment, conservation developments cluster more housing into smaller lots in specific areas. This allows for the preservation and use of wooded areas along with development.

5) Utilize Katrina Cottage Designs: The new home construction in Cleveland Heights should utilize Katrina Cottage designs. This line of homes was developed by Lowe's and are a series of stick-built house packages. Developers can purchase the plans from Lowe's, and the parts will be delivered directly to the site. These homes have multiple benefits:

- Because they are still stick-built construction rather than pre-fabricated homes, they are more easily customized to specific situations.
- The homes are more traditional in form, making them more fitting for the neighborhood. The architectural style fits more with the 1950s era homes of the area than modern architecture.

- Katrina Cottages come in a wide range of sizes and shapes. These diverse designs can be combined to create a much more distinctive neighborhood with the character of an older, more established one.



Conventional Development

- The size of these cottages can range from the smallest at 308 square feet to two-story homes at 1800 square feet. This range will allow for greater income diversity.
- The homes are meant to be starter homes, inviting new families into the neighborhood while also allowing these families to grow into their homes and add onto them.
- All of these homes have front porches, which are an important part of creating a stronger community in Cleveland Heights. These porches will face the street and facilitate greater interaction between neighbors.

More information about Katrina Cottages, their history and design, and pictures can be seen in the inset box at left.



Conservation Development

6) Install Rainwater Collection Systems: While sewer systems have been added to Cleveland Heights, a water system has not. Future residents in the area should will utilize clean well water like current residents.

In addition to well water, homes should be retrofitted with water retention systems. These systems collect rainwater into bins that can be reused for purposes such as watering gardens or washing cars.

If residents chose, they could also install more elaborate systems that can utilize rainwater for other indoor uses such as toilets. These systems will contribute to the viability of the water system in the neighborhood.



PARK SPACE

For all the forested area in the Cleveland Heights area, none of it is deliberately set aside as a neighborhood park.

Parks are important elements of communities. They can symbolize the values of the community. They provide public space for interaction, growth, and community development. They also provide a space for outdoor activities which promote healthy lifestyles. This combination makes park space a vital resource for a community.

Current Conditions

Currently, there is no dedicated, public park space in Cleveland Heights. There are a number of densely forested areas which could become park space in the future.

The most difficult issue for park space is that much of the forested areas of the community are located behind lots which could become future houses. Park space needs to stay accessible while also fitting into awkward space within the neighborhood.

In the Blendon Community plan, which encompassed Cleveland Heights, residents expressed their desire for increased park space. They also noted that they utilized parks on a regular basis.

Recommendations

1) Build a Series of Pathway Parks:

In order to utilize the forest that will be preserved using conservation development, a series of raised pathway parks will meander through the Cleveland Heights neighborhood. This will create an accessible nature preserve and a scenic walking path.

Raised wooden pathways will be built throughout the woods. They will be built around existing trees

A rendering of what Cleveland Heights' future pathway parks could look like.



and along angular routes that do not disturb the natural environment.

Because these paths will be jutting behind future homes, they will include handrails. This will be both a safety precaution for users of the pathways, and a deterrent against people leaving the paths and wandering through backyards.

All of these paths will converge on a single area that will become the Cleveland Heights Central Park.

2) Construct a Central Park: The main node of this series of pathway parks will be Cleveland Heights' own neighborhood park.

Because Cleveland Heights remains largely undeveloped, this park can truly be in the center of the community, rather than the outskirts. The park will be located on a six-parcel area bounded by Chester, Sharon, and Claridon roads. That space is currently unoccupied and is densely forested.

Cleveland Heights' Central Park should be a neighborhood amenity which includes play space for children, picnic tables for family and community events, and an open area for physical activity. In the future, an enclosed community center or a roofed area for picnics could be included.

Largely, the trees in the Central Park should remain but should be trimmed to create a manicured feel unlike the pathway park system. Natural barriers should be used to shield the park from the properties immediately adjacent to them. This will give nearby residents privacy.

The park should also be well-programmed to keep it an active place. A local community group should be encouraged to accomplish this task and aid in the upkeep of the park space.



A rendering of the future gate to Cleveland Heights' neighborhood park.

"... [parks] provide public space for interaction, growth and community development..."

Walkable neighborhoods are becoming increasingly popular with those seeking new homes. These neighborhoods combine residential uses with nearby neighborhood commercial uses, allowing residents the ability to walk to nearby stores for small items rather than having to drive for any necessity.

Cleveland Heights is perfectly suited to becoming a walkable neighborhood that combines all the convenience of urban living with the amenities of suburban homes.

To do so, Cleveland Avenue will once again become a commercial corridor encompassing small offices and eateries. Public space will compliment this commercial development to create a true community corridor.

Current Conditions

The current state of Cleveland Avenue is poor. The buildings along the street lack identity, coherent design, or even basic upkeep. They need complete make-overs to be retooled into neighborhood assets.

One place which does stand out for its contribution to community is the food cart located on Abington Road. The food cart serves tacos to local pedestrians as well as drivers.

“...a node of activity and an identifying feature of Cleveland Heights...”

The success of the food cart shows that Cleveland Avenue can become a commercial corridor, and that future development should include a nod to the popularity of this food cart.

Recommendations

1) Encourage Neighborhood Commercial Development: The businesses which should fill Cleveland Avenue should not be large commercial enterprises, but smaller stores, doctor’s offices, and commercial enterprises.

“... the convenience of urban living with the amenities of suburban homes...”

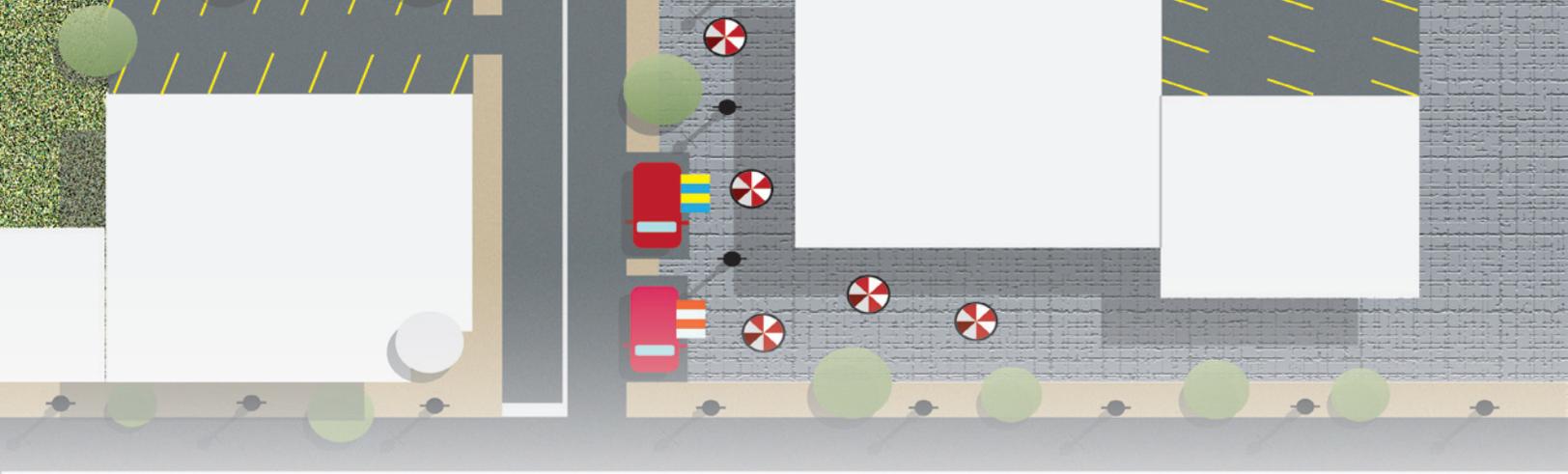
Because of the focus on smaller retail locations, when buildings are rehabbed or rebuilt, they should be retooled to include appropriately sized spaces.

2) Create The Market Square: Already, the parking lot at the corner of Cleveland Avenue and Abington Road is alive because of the success of the food cart located there. Future development should capitalize on that success.

The parking lot on that corner should be re-purposed as a full-time pedestrian square. It should connect the sidewalks along Abington Road and the Pathway Park which ends there. Brick pavers and themed lighting should create a market feel for the corner.

To fully create this iconic Market Square, redevelopment initiatives should focus on the redevelopment and construction of immediate buildings.

Activity should be concentrated on The Market Square. A local farmers market, live music, and other entertainment should be focused there. The square can become a node of activity and an identifying feature of Cleveland Heights in the future.



A site plan for Market Square featuring redeveloped storefronts, food cart stations, and outdoor seating at the corner of Abington Road and Cleveland Avenue.

3) Designate Food Cart Stops: Given the success of the food cart currently operating at the corner of Cleveland Avenue and Abington Road, specific spaces in the future should be dedicated to food carts alongside the new Market Square. These food cart stops will help to activate the area, attracting shoppers and creating the momentum needed to encourage additional entrepreneurial ventures.

To facilitate these food cart stops, permanent seating should be placed in Market Square.

4) Establish Design Standards: Cleveland Heights should adopt design standards for Cleveland Avenue to guide development of future retail along the road.

Development standards should mirror the smart growth overlay in place further up along Cleveland Avenue as outlined in the Cleveland Avenue Streetscape 2020 plan. This set of guidelines envisions buildings against the sidewalk to create more walkable places.

Parking should be placed to the side or rear of buildings and should be masked with trees, plantings, or decorative features.

The design of the buildings should be historically and culturally appropriate for the area.

5) Create Above-Ground Housing: The future buildings along Cleveland Avenue should include above-ground apartments. These residents will further liven the Cleveland Avenue commercial corridor.



FUNDING

*All prices are estimates and may change according to conditions on the ground.

CATEGORY	RECOMMENDATION	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
Infrastructure			
	Install Sidewalks	Construction of Sidewalks Along All Roads in Cleveland Heights	\$400,000
	Create Bicycle Connections	Design and Construction of Bicycle Lanes on Cleveland Avenue	\$10,000
	Install Lighting	Construction of Extensive Pedestrian Scaled Lighting	\$80,000 for 20
	Construct Bus Stations	Design and Construction of Unique Bus Stations	\$320,000 for 8
	Install Signage	Installation of Cleveland Heights Signage	\$0
	Place Street Trees	Installation of Trees Along Cleveland Avenue	\$15,000 for 20
Housing			
	Utilize Katrina Cottage Designs	Construction of New Homes in the Neighborhood	Homes range from \$33,000 to \$200,000
	Install Rainwater Collection Systems	Installation of Rainwater Collection Systems on All New Homes	\$7,000 per home
Park Space			
	Build a Series of Pathway Parks	Construction of A Series of Pathway Parks	\$150,000
	Construct a Central Park	Design and Construction of a Central Park	\$400,000
Commercial			
	Encourage Neighborhood Commercial Development	Rehabilitation of Retail Storefronts Along Cleveland Avenue	Market Driven
	Create The Market Square	Construction of a New Public Square Along Cleveland Avenue	\$400,000
	Designate Food Cart Stops	Designation of Two Permanent Food Cart Stops	\$0

POSSIBLE SOURCES OF FUNDING

As an infrastructure investment, sidewalk installation can be completed using Community Development Block Grant Funds. As a low-to-moderate income neighborhood, Cleveland Heights is eligible recipient of CDBG monies. Blendon Township should apply for these funds but must meet the minimum matching amount of 30% of the overall investment for sidewalk installation.

Bicycle infrastructure is eligible for CDBG funds. The minimum local match is 30%. Alternatively, Cleveland Heights could seek funding from the Ohio Department of Transportation. All construction should take place during otherwise planned street construction to lower costs.

Street lights are eligible for CDBG funds. The minimum local match is 30%.

Cleveland Heights should work with COTA for upgrades to Cleveland Avenue bus stations. Cleveland Heights and Blendon Township should actively support COTA's current application and any future applications for a Cleveland Avenue Bus Rapid Transit line.

Signage price included in lighting.

The installation of street trees is eligible for CDBG funds. The minimum local match is 30%. Before applying for funding, Cleveland Heights should identify a dedicated source of funding for maintenance.

Local developers already own a majority of the vacant land in Cleveland Heights. Private investment should account for the majority of the necessary funding.

A rainwater collection system is essential to complementing the well-water system to be built in Cleveland Heights. Private funding should be used to construct this system as houses are built.

Park systems are eligible for CDBG funds. The minimum local match for community facilities is 40%.

Park systems are eligible for CDBG funds. The minimum local match for community facilities is 40%.

Neighborhood commercial development will largely be funded by private sources. The local community should support this development. Development should occur incrementally as market conditions allow.

Market Square should be the catalyst for future commercial development by creating a node of activity on which to build. As such, it should be a joint public-private venture. The public funds should be used for the public space, while private funding should be used for building rehab. CDBG funds should be explored for this development.

Food cart stops should be a public investment that accompanies the development of Market Square.

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HEIGHTS

SUMMARY

These recommendations will be the guidelines for creating the future of Cleveland Heights. The plan actively works to preserve the natural beauty and community character of Cleveland Heights while responsibly preparing the area for future development.

Infrastructure

- Install Sidewalks
- Create Bicycle Connections
- Install Lighting
- Construct New Bus Stations
- Install Signage
- Place Street Trees

Housing

- Enforce Existing Codes
- Apply Canopy Conservation
- Conduct Fair Housing Activities
- Utilize Conservation Development
- Utilize Katrina Cottage Designs
- Install Rainwater Collection Systems

Park Space

- Build a Series of Pathway Parks
- Construct a Central Park

Commercial

- Encourage Neighborhood Commercial Development
- Create The Market Square
- Designate Food Cart Stops
- Establish Design Standards
- Create Above-Ground Housing

