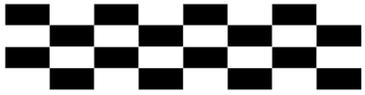


COLUMBUS 
THUNDERPARK

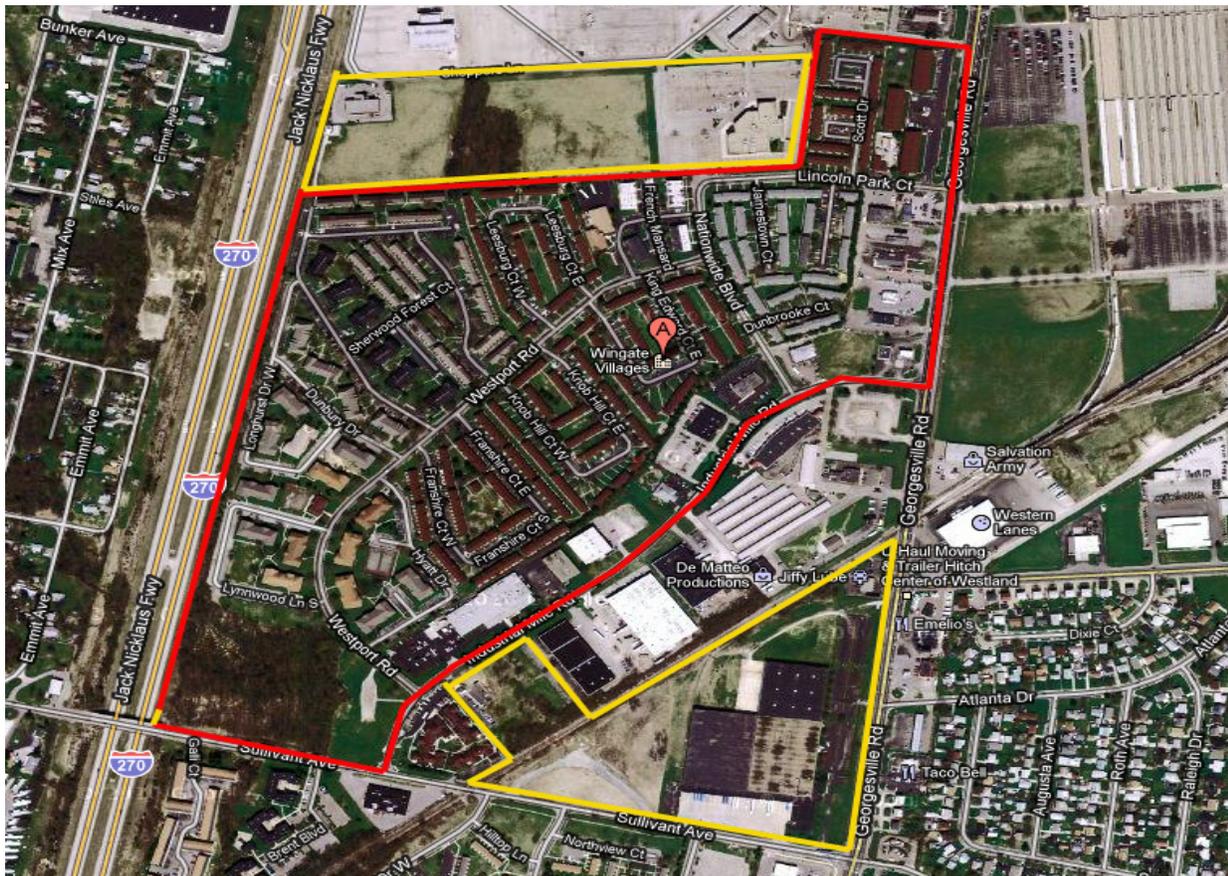
Redevelopment plan for Wingate Villages

Greg Overberg
Autumn 2010



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source: maps.google.com

Current Wingate Village site shown in red, consisting of just over 120 buildings. Additional abandoned or undeveloped land shown in yellow.

The Wingate Village Area

The Wingate Villages site is situated just south of Broad Street, just to the west of Georgesville Road. This site has become infinitely more important in the last year with the decision by Franklin County voters to move the new Casino out of the Arena District and to the old Delphi plant site just east of Georgesville Road. If you have ever been to this area, you know that the area as a whole is basically one deserted strip mall or box store after another. This disrepair encompasses most of Broad Street all the way to I-270 and Georgesville Road. Needless to say, this area needs revitalization, and if history repeats itself, the casino alone won't provide a sufficient boost.



Georgesville Road fronting the casino site



More abandoned sites on Georgesville Road

The apartment complex itself sits on about 100 acres and consists of a handful of different generation/style of apartments. The entrance to the complex is behind a row of deserted, run-down restaurants that obstruct the view of the complex to unknowing passer-byers (It's easy to pass the first time). Many sections of the complex have been chain-linked off to prevent cars from accessing them, while other parts have whole buildings boarded up. Even sections that had some occupation seemed to be only about $\frac{1}{4}$ to a $\frac{1}{2}$ full.

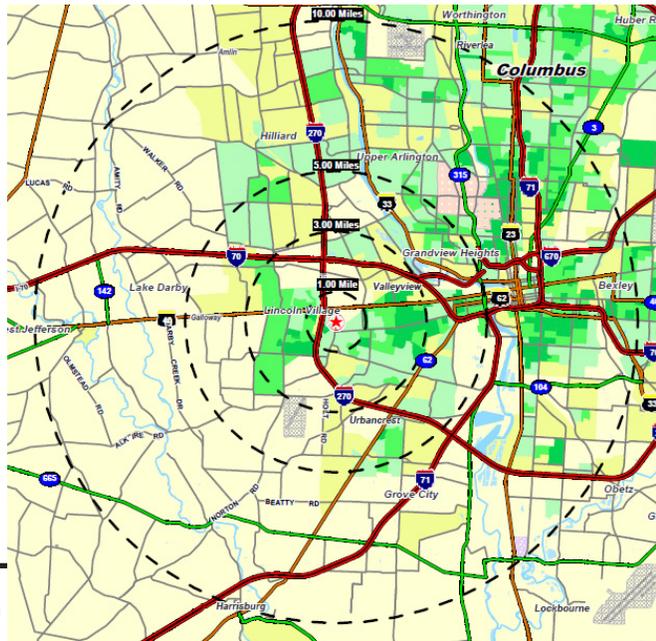
The sections that have been chained off or boarded up have fallen in to disrepair, with siding, gutters and roofing falling off, windows broken out, and show no signs of upkeep. Often times, even though windows were boarded up, the doors were left unboarded. This has led to numerous apartments that have the door sitting open or broken down. One can assume that many of the interiors have been stripped of valuable items and it seems that squatters may be occupying certain apartments.



Different parts of the Wingate Villages Site

Housing Situation of the Area

With a wide variety of subdivisions in the area, on both sides of the highway, it was important to find out if it was even necessary to have these housing units. Taking a look at population density maps and the average value of housing in a 3 mile radius, it became apparent that plenty of housing exists outside this complex that is also currently suffering from high vacancy rates, which could use to be rehabilitated. Around 58% of the houses within a 3 mile radius of the Wingate Villages are valued at less than \$99,000, with a median home value around \$93,000 for the same 3 mile radius.

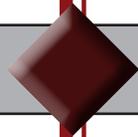


FULL DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE
 1990 - 2000 Census, 2008 Estimates & 2013 Projections
 Calculated using Proportional Block Groups

Lat/Lon: 39.946608/-83.111256

October 2010

Wingate Village		1.00 mi radius	3.00 mi radius	5.00 mi radius	10.00 mi radius
POPULATION	2008 Estimated Population	10,114	97,863	200,597	591,176
	2013 Projected Population	9,846	97,598	201,370	588,409
	2000 Census Population	12,806	99,745	199,906	597,494
	1990 Census Population	12,171	83,854	162,185	551,470
	Historical Annual Growth 1990 to 2008	-0.9%	0.9%	1.3%	0.4%
	Projected Annual Growth 2008 to 2013	-0.5%	-0.1%	0.1%	-0.1%
HOUSEHOLDS	2008 Est. Households	4,124	39,381	81,907	245,001
	2013 Proj. Households	4,028	39,400	82,553	244,107
	2000 Census Households	5,044	39,674	80,721	246,421
	1990 Census Households	5,189	32,588	63,550	217,453
	Historical Annual Growth 1990 to 2008	-1.1%	1.2%	1.6%	0.7%
	Projected Annual Growth 2008 to 2013	-0.5%	0.0%	0.2%	-0.1%
HOME VALUES	2000 Home Value \$1,000,000 or More	-	0.0%	0.2%	0.3%
	2000 Home Value \$500,000 to \$999,999	0.4%	0.0%	0.8%	1.0%
	2000 Home Value \$400,000 to \$499,999	-	0.0%	0.7%	0.9%
	2000 Home Value \$300,000 to \$399,999	-	0.1%	1.6%	2.4%
	2000 Home Value \$200,000 to \$299,999	0.1%	1.0%	4.9%	8.3%
	2000 Home Value \$150,000 to \$199,999	0.3%	5.4%	10.3%	14.8%
	2000 Home Value \$100,000 to \$149,999	12.9%	29.1%	31.8%	27.8%
	2000 Home Value \$50,000 to \$99,999	82.7%	58.5%	44.4%	38.1%
	2000 Home Value \$25,000 to \$49,999	2.9%	5.2%	4.6%	5.7%
	2000 Home Value \$0 to \$24,999	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%	0.8%
	2000 Median Home Value	\$ 80,641	\$ 93,236	\$ 114,715	\$ 124,842
2000 Median Rent	\$ 295	\$ 402	\$ 453	\$ 438	



Hot Debate in Columbus

Currently, the Cooper Stadium site has become a hot bed of debate among residents and developers. Developers would like to demolish the stadium and put in a half-mile auto/multi-use track, a mechanic's school, an auto-technology center, and a hotel/conference center. Since the day this development was proposed, residents and business owners have harshly criticized the plan for the potential noise in the neighborhoods it will cause. The developers countered by offering to build 35 foot sound barriers to dull the roar of the track; the residents still



Cooper Stadium Track plan

weren't satisfied. For almost a year now, the residents have countered with noise studies, to which the developer attempts to reason with and solve the issues. At this point, it seems that no offer or concession will satisfy the residents of the surrounding neighborhood. It seems that if the developer is set on completing this project in Columbus and that the market exists, that they should look for a different site



Casino Site across from Wingate Villages entrance

Wingate Site Potential

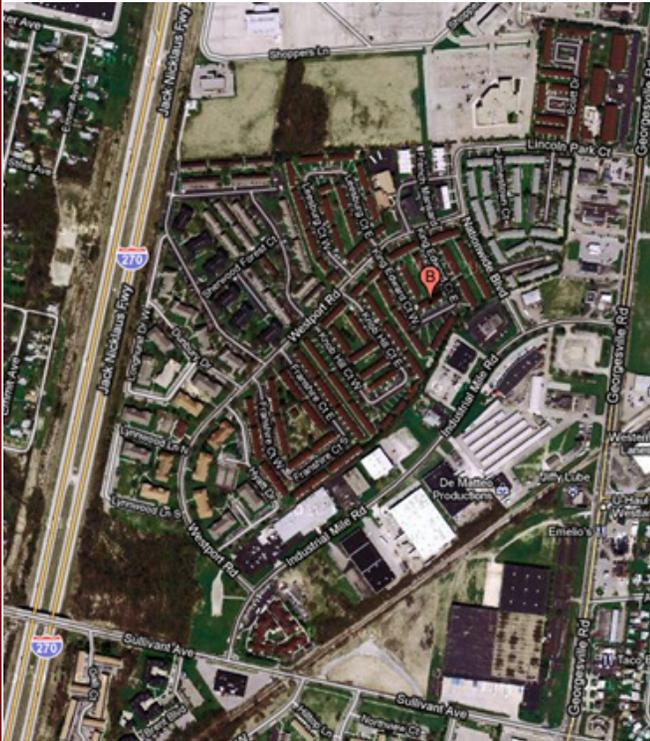
By a rough estimation, the Cooper Stadium site only consists of about 35-45 acres of land, greatly limiting the potential of the track and surrounding facilities. The Wingate site is almost 100 acres, with the possibility of purchasing vacant lands (yellow outlines on page 2) to the north and south (30 acres and 23 acres respectively), that would allow for much more flexibility in the design of the track. Being directly across Georgesville Road from the casino site (picture at left) could provide an a steady stream of people that could pump money into a development on the Wingate

Villages Site.

Not only that, the new site already has existing "sound buffers" to the neighborhoods. To the east is I-270, to the north is Westland Mall and Broad Street, to the east is the Casino site, and to the south is a block of commercial development. It also seems that the residents of the area are more open to any kind of positive development and would welcome such a business as long as the developer takes necessary steps to dampen the noise to the surrounding areas.

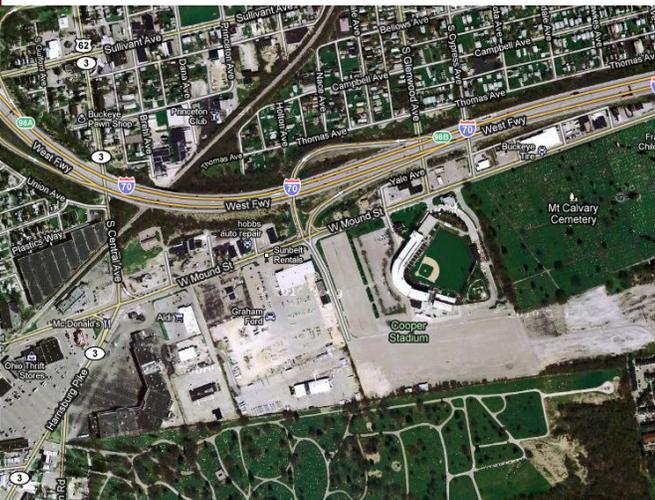
source: thecity.com

Site Comparison



Wingate Village Site:

- Currently around 100 acres, but could potentially be expanded to the north and south by an additional 53 acres
- Additional land will allow for more options with the track/hotel/school design
- Buffered on North by Westland Mall, Broad Street and expanses of commercial; on the East by the Casino; on the South by train tracks and more commercial and industrial; and on the West by I-270
- Residents more accepting of any positive development for the area.
- Directly off of I-270, near I-70



Cooper Stadium Site:

- Around 40-45 acres, with a more long and narrow plot of land
- Shape somewhat limits design possibilities
- Surrounding neighborhoods protest the plan because of noise worries. Planners promised sound dampening walls, but were still met with opposition.
- Directly off of I-70

Proposal for the Site

Wingate Villages has fallen in complete disrepair, and it seems that the general consensus that this development needs to be demolished. With plenty of existing affordable housing in the surrounding area, and a vacancy of 80% or so, it is pretty clear just by demand that the units aren't needed. Even worse is the fact that an out of state owner is in control of the apartments and seems to have little to no interest in putting any money in to this site. With the ongoing legal battle over taxes and the fact that this site isn't yet incorporated in to the City of Columbus, this could be a bit of a lengthy process before development can happen, but it needs to happen for the community, and can be successful at that.

Once the site has been obtained by the city, first and foremost would be to convince the developers of the Cooper Stadium track to move their plans to Wingate Village. With over double as much acreage, the developer will have much more freedom with the new site over the old Cooper site. More importantly, the neighborhood seems to welcome anything within reason to their area with proper design. The half-mile auto/multi-use track, mechanic's school, auto-technology center, and a hotel/conference center alone would bring in significant revenue for the area. With no current plans for a hotel to be initially built on the casino site, the door has been left open for other development in the area to fill this void. With plans of the current Cooper plan including a hotel and conference center, very little needs to be changed while transplanting the plan to Wingate.

However, even more can be done with this site that will tie into the racetrack theme: a racing theme park. Inspiration for this plan is rooted in a similar plan on a site on the other side of the world: Ferrari World. It's a theme park themed (and paid for) by Ferrari and has 20 rides under its roof at opening, including the world's fastest rollercoaster. The rides range from something for the kids all the way up to the thrill seekers, all sticking with the theme of Ferrari. Even though it is on the usual "epic" Dubai scale, it still "only" covers 20 acres. If the race track and associated buildings encompass 50-60 acres of this site, that still leaves a minimum of 40 acres for other development. Also, an interesting note: the developer of many of the rides at Ferrari World and who also helps develop theme parks worldwide, Jack Rouse Associates, is located in Cincinnati. Having theme park planners from inside the state of Ohio would bring a sense of pride and joy to such a large development only a few hours away from their headquarters



A development similar in scale to that of one in Dubai can be a bit hard to achieve in Columbus, but other indoor parks on a smaller scale have had success throughout the United States. One of the best examples is in the Mall of America in Minnesota, which also includes a 7 acre indoor theme park. This park currently has 27 rides and a multitude of restaurants and other playgrounds for children to explore. Another indoor theme park in Las Vegas, Adventuredome, has been a highly successful investment for Circus Circus only encompasses about 5 acres of valuable land on “The Strip.”

Mall of America



source: vacationplanning.net



source: visitingdc.com

Adventuredome

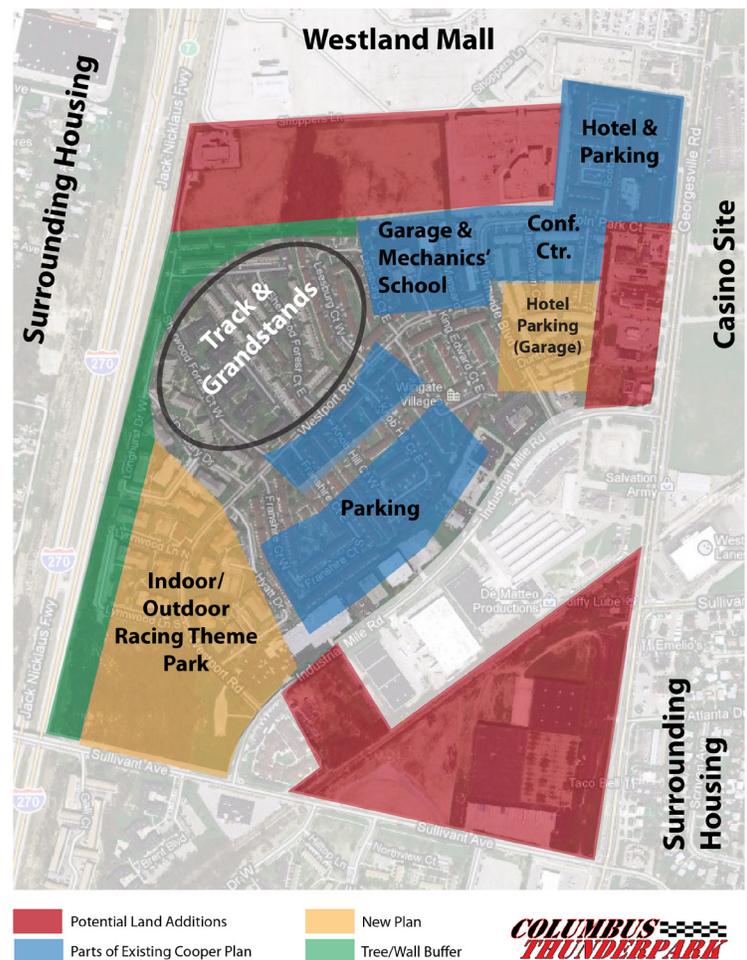


source: joyrides.com



source: agents.usaitours.co.uk

The initial plan in trying to redevelop this site was to find a project that would work together with the casino, but trying to base one plan on another didn't seem to work. Casinos are often all inclusive and contain hotels, food, entertainment, and gambling; people rarely leave until they head back home. On this note, it became evident that the casino will only draw from a certain crowd, and for this area to be successful, we need to draw on a larger portion of the population. If Westland Mall is indeed redeveloped, it would be a shame to leave this site the way it currently stands. Adding a race track/theme park would draw a year round crowd just like the casino and mall, and explode during events at the track. This would create a huge need for eateries, hotels, and other businesses associated with a tourist destination, thus creating many jobs above and beyond what the casino will create. With two more substantial businesses in the area coupled with the casino, hopefully enough money will begin flowing in to the area to finally get it back on its feet.



As an added point to the construction of a theme park in the area, it seems like Columbus is generally lacking in this type of business. Zoombezi Bay is the only competitor in this type of market, until you approach Kings Island near Cincinnati or Cedar Point in Sandusky. Obviously, this site will never grow in to such a huge park, but it doesn't need to. A park that caters the full range of families all the way up to the thrill seeker would be something that would be hugely beneficial for the area. If there is enough to do in the area, people from around the state, and hopefully country, would come and stay for a few days, making a huge difference for the city as a whole.

As a final note for the race track/theme park tie in, I think it would be a great idea for the track to allow people to pay to drive on the track during the weekdays or whenever events aren't going on. I have seen at many tracks around the country that people are willing to pay quite a bit of money just for the chance to drive a fast car on a track.

One last detail about the plan that is extremely necessary for the overall success is to create a pedestrian bridge crossing Georgesville Road from the casino site to the mall/track/theme park site. This can very easily tie in to the theme of the park, track or casino and create a vital link between the tourist destinations. As it stands, Georgesville Road is a 4 or 5 lane road that is difficult to drive on, much less cross as a pedestrian. A perfect example of this is the countless pedestrian bridges in Las Vegas crossing the strip. Sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure are also needed on and around Georgesville Road.



source: joeinvegas.blogspot.com



source: accessclarkcounty.com

Pedestrian Bridges in Las Vegas

Development and Paying for the Plan

If the developer was willing to put a track at Cooper Stadium, it seems that they feel there is a market for such a venue in Columbus. It also seems they would be willing to develop wherever works for them and the citizens; presumably, they have the funding or have a means to find funding to develop this project at this date. Putting the track at the Wingate site would solve the citizen resistance of the plan from the Cooper Stadium site. It also has just as sufficient access being just off I-70 and I-270 as the Cooper site has being off of I-70.

Another possibility would be to approach Penn National to potentially operate gambling on the races. Penn National already currently operates a handful of horse tracks around the country, and maybe car racing would also be an interesting market they may be interested in diving into.



Existing Hollywood Casino with horse track

Between these two companies, with the right approach, presentation, and design, potentially coupled with Jack Rouse Associates, the City of Columbus and private investors, that the funding for a theme park can be found. It would create a year round destination for the city, and draw a different crowd than the casino or mall would attract. Couple with having a race track, mechanics' school and hotel/convention center, the site would be a year-round destination for a large number of people with a wide variety of interests.



More of Jack Rouse Associates work

Proforma

The first step to redevelopment of the Wingate site is to demolish the existing 120-125 apartment buildings. The complex has a wide variety of designs, but the phases were often built in large sections, so throughout the whole side, only about 5 or 6 designs exist; this was useful in estimating square footage. With some designs being as small as 11,000-12,000 square feet but some designs up to 18,000 feet, the estimated square foot average fell in the 14,000-15,000 square foot range. Using the number of 15,000 square feet, because overestimation of cost is always better than underestimation, this number was multiplied by 124 buildings to come up with the grand total of 1,860,000 square feet for the entire complex. Plugging these numbers in to www.buildingjournal.com, the total cost per square foot was estimated at \$0.05, since most buildings are 3 stories, and therefore cheap to tear down. The total cost was estimated to be \$89,410.78, with the low estimate being about \$75,000 and the high estimate at about \$105,000 to tear down the Wingate complex in its entirety. This includes overhead, profit, and bonding set to Columbus.

The plan developed for the Cooper Stadium site, including the 1/2 mile track, hotel/conference center, mechanics' school, and garage was estimated to be around \$30 million. Given that the Wingate site would offer more space for possibilities and that Penn National currently has no plans to build a hotel on the casino site, one would expect this \$30 million to grow. Estimating high again would probably be in the \$40 million range. These costs could very quickly be defrayed by nightly hotel rates, conference hall rentals, entrance fees for races, ticket sales for the races, gambling on the races, and tuition from students attending the mechanics' school. A good example of a track in the Midwest that has had huge success in 10 years is the Kentucky Speedway. In this short time, the track has already had wild success to the point where Nascar has added it to the 2011 line up.

Developing a theme park can be difficult to calculate. For example, Ferrari World in Dubai cost around \$40 billion; clearly out of reach for a design in Columbus, Ohio. Small rides can cost from \$100,000 up to a few million, and a scaled down launched roller coaster similar to the one at Ferrari World can cost between \$10-15 million. The cost of a theme park can vary greatly depending on the size of the park and the size, amount, and type of rides included in the park. Many indoor parks often charge customers on a per ride basis or for a ride bracelet. A safe estimate would be to say that many people choose to purchase the ride bracelets which often cost \$10-\$20. Estimating that the indoor park is about %5 the size of Cedar Point, this would give us about 150,000 guests a year (again, probably a low estimate, since an indoor park could be open year round). At \$10 a wristband, this would bring in \$1.5 million a year. This is excluding other profits such as food, merchandise, and other profiting tools that many theme parks use.

According to thetravelerzone.com, theme parks have 7 spots out of 25 for "The Most Visited Tourist Destinations in the US." And according to coastergrotto.com, the two major Ohio Theme parks, Kings Island and Cedar Point, draw in 3 million and 2.9 million annual visitors. Considering that both of these parks are typically only open from late April/early May until the beginning of November, one can only imagine how many visitors could visit an indoor theme park similar in size to Nickelodeon Universe. Ohio is often called the "Coaster Capital of the US" in the themepark industry, and this would only tap in to the abundant industry.

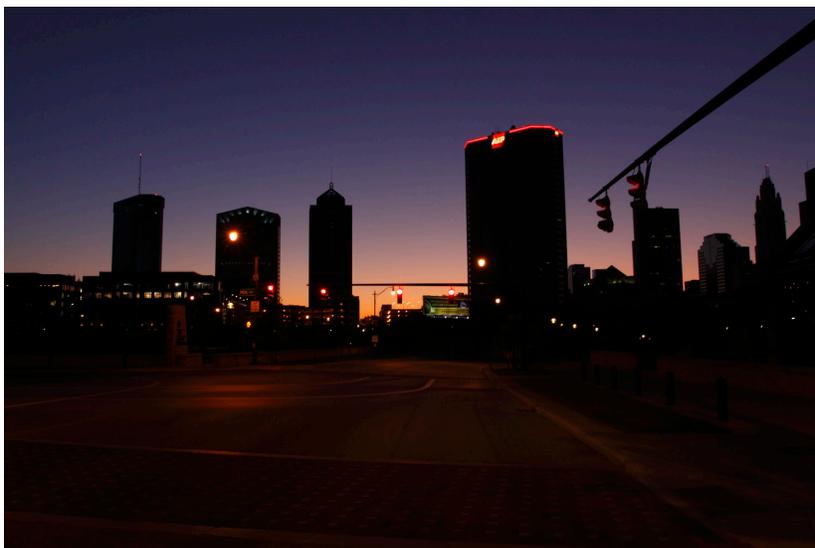
Conclusion

The goal of this plan was to solve two planning problems that the City of Columbus currently faces. The Cooper Stadium site is an indicator of positive growth in the area, but has been met with strong opposition from residents because of noise worries. The site is better suited for a different use that won't raise noise concerns like a race track will. The Wingate Villages site faces complete disrepair and is currently a huge concern for the city for multiple reasons. With redevelopment coming across the street, it is important to solve this problem.

Adapting the Cooper Stadium Track plan to the Wingate site has many benefits, ranging from having existing noise buffers all the way to its ideal location right across the street from the new casino. Fixing only one section of the problem in the area won't help the neighborhood as a whole; it is important to address all the problems, starting with the most major first.

To make the Columbus Thunderpark a huge economic catalyst for the area, it is important to expand upon the boost and income provided by the track and hotel complex. The theme park industry has remained fairly resilient through the tough economic times, and Ohio is a hot bed for the theme park industry. With little exception, Columbus is completely lacking in any similar businesses.

This plan has the potential to become part of the biggest redevelopments of an area of Columbus in its history. It can help bring in a whole new range of visitors, which will provide a huge economic boost, not only for the immediate area, but the City of Columbus as a whole. This site, along with the surrounding redevelopment, has the potential to become a model for other cities to follow in redeveloping a struggling area. The area around Broad Street and Georgesville Road, once a great pride in the city, can once again become a pride and joy for the citizens of Columbus for many years to come.



Will we bring the dawn of a new day to one part of Columbus?

