

COUNCIL ADDENDUM TO THE BLUE ASH TOWN CENTER CONCEPT REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Blue Ash City Council and Administration retained a professional consultant to undertake and prepare the attached *Blue Ash Town Center Concept Redevelopment Plan*. This process was undertaken due to a recognition that while today's downtown is attractive and viable, that the City must remain vigilant in ensuring that downtown continues being competitive in an ever-changing market. Thus, a process was undertaken to produce the Concept Redevelopment Plan which is both ambitious and visionary.

However, as with any bold and visionary process, some fears and trepidation can be expected from those not intimately involved in the process. In particular, some property owners may feel threatened by some of the plan's renderings reflecting an ambitious overhaul of downtown. To that end, it is anticipated that this Council Addendum, combined with the Concept Redevelopment Plan itself, will provide some clarifying statements.

First and foremost, the attached plan is intended to be a conceptual document. It provides a framework for discussion of a potential future for downtown Blue Ash. The attached plan is NOT an implementation strategy or document. As such, specific renderings or site plans are for illustrative purposes only and not meant to dictate specific outcomes. Such specificity will be undertaken during the implementation phase, and anticipated to be done on a case-by-case basis in a joint venture with property owners and developers.

Secondly, it can be re-stated that the PRIMARY focus of the attached plan is a commitment to four key principals:

- A. That the City will encourage the introduction of more appropriate dense and mixed use developments than exist today but to be determined at a later time;
- B. That future projects will encourage pedestrian flow and connectivity, particularly to Towne Square;
- C. That the City will encourage and support key public and/or private anchors or venues; and
- D. That the City further study the re-organization of existing parking and traffic conditions to result in a more productive and effective configuration conducive to proposed new building patterns.

Lastly, the attached plan does NOT recommend an urban renewal approach to change but rather a process characterized by mutually beneficial and dynamic public – private partnership. Hence, it is not anticipated that wholesale eminent domain will be utilized during implementation. The City will work to bring together property owners, developers, investors and other stakeholders to build and identify the strategy for the implementation of quality, economically viable projects that contribute to the downtown vision.

The City of Blue Ash has historically been a leader in providing a quality community through visionary planning and implementation. To remain a leader in the region, such visioning and planning is needed by our City leaders for the future. The attached plan represents another pro-active vision that will be viewed with success 20 years from now. In the meantime, it is hoped that this Addendum clarifies implementation direction.

Blue Ash Town Center



Concept Redevelopment Plan



City of Blue Ash, Ohio

Menelaos Triantafillou & Associates
Planning and Urban Design • Cincinnati, Ohio

December 2005

**Blue Ash Town Center
Concept Redevelopment Plan
City of Blue Ash, Ohio**

Submitted to:

City Council, City of Blue Ash



Submitted by:

Menelaos Triantafillou & Associates
Planning and Urban Design
Cincinnati, Ohio

December 2005

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Executive Summary

The Blue Ash Town Center is envisioned to become a new center for the people of the community, the City's daytime population, the visitors and shoppers, and the region at large. It is anticipated to be a more active and economically viable district, capable of staying competitive against other existing shopping and lifestyle centers and others that may be developed in the future.

The existing downtown is attractive and economically strong as a place to shop, sell, and invest. Parallel to this, two emerging trends are beginning to pose challenges to the downtown in its capacity to remain competitive, to respond to market dynamics, and to maintain an attractive, pedestrian oriented environment.

The first trend is the emerging retail consumer market that is looking for the new generation of retail/entertainment places, and the investment in leasing and developing business that locate in these type of centers. The second trend is the decline in the use of retail space in the downtown and the increase in service oriented uses. Currently this relationship is reversed with the service sector occupying more than 43% of leasable space than retail uses. Combined with the automobile oriented physical appearance of the district, the vacancy of the old Thriftway site, and the potential for redevelopment at the northwestern corner of Kenwood and Cooper Roads, these challenges call for action.

The leadership of City's elected officials and of the Administration have responded and have initiated the review of the downtown with the aim towards redevelopment. The planning process included the invited participation of key stakeholders in an advisory committee capacity to provide input in the plan making effort.

This document includes the findings and recommendations for the redevelopment of the downtown district. Its main sections are the description of the Concept Plan and the section on the Redevelopment Strategy outlining steps for its implementation.

I. Executive Summary

The contents of the document are structured as follows:

Introduction - General Overview of the reasons and issues prompting the review of the downtown.

Existing Conditions - The review and assessment of key existing physical conditions in the downtown such as land use, circulation, character, and other considerations.

Concept Redevelopment Plan - Explanation of the plan and its elements to retrofit the downtown into a Town Center environment. The plan recommends substantive changes through redevelopment to take place through the participation of property and business owners and the support and guidance from the City. These changes will be the result of a collaborative process between the property owner, potential developer, and the City. The plan does not recommend an urban renewal approach to change but rather a process characterized by a mutually beneficial and dynamic public-private partnership.

The plan envisions a niche-type town center, not a shopping environment to compete with existing regional retail centers.

Redevelopment Strategy - The strategy outlines a set of recommendations that need to be implemented in order for the redevelopment to be effective. These include:

- Establishment of broad support and involvement from key individuals, agencies, and the public.
- Undertaking of key projects and actions as soon as possible to kick-start the success of redevelopment.
- Establishment of effective urban design guidelines.
- Establishment of implementation and work program priorities.
- Establishment of implementation phases for redevelopment.

I. Executive Summary

Introduction

By most local and national accounts, Blue Ash is considered as one of the best communities in America. Its trajectory from one of Cincinnati's early suburbs to a thriving community reflects effective planning and development. Its residential environment, its strong and achieving school system, the public recreational amenities, its high quality research/development office parks, and its commercial clusters, combine with the Interstate 71 location to establish a premiere place in the region.

With a population approximately at 12,500 persons and a day time labor force estimated at 44,250, Blue Ash has a strong, diversified economy. The City's estimated median household income of \$77,948 is among the highest in the region and results in a spending estimate from its residents - \$180 million annually - within the community and its region.

During the early 80's the City undertook targeted urban renewal activities to redevelop the commercial area centered at the Kenwood/Cooper intersection. Through successive changes the area known as Downtown Blue Ash contains a substantial amount of retail and services investments. The City's elected leaders and its administration in collaboration with the private sector have worked hard to establish a viable business district. The Town Square added a significant public space element in the downtown and is serving as a focal community space for festivals, community activities, and other events.

The downtown's character and physical structure are the result of individual property development guided by zoning and design guidelines. Until the mid 90's, this process of development was successful and was commonly pursued by most suburban communities around the country to develop commercial areas, in the form of convenience centers and strip commercial corridors.

Emerging Retail Trends

Recently, the emerging focus of leading-edge communities is how to reinvent their commercial strips into vibrant places, characterized by the successful integration of mixed-use developments, public amenities, and pedestrian-

II. Introduction

Town and Lifestyle Center Growth

Regional malls

2000-2005 22

Under construction 6

Town Center/Lifestyle centers

2000-2005 100

Under construction 55

By 2006, the inventory of town center/lifestyle centers can be expected to have more than doubled the 35 million square feet that's out there now.

Source: ISCS

Characteristics

Some of the common elements that run through these retail environments include:

- the making of the shopping activity into an enjoyable experience,*
- shops fronting onto a commons or public space,*
- the abandonment of the 'mall-type' retail model in favor of an outward orientation of shopping units,*
- increased connectivity between the retail spaces, the place of work and housing,*
- an unusual high number of 'third places',*
- public amenities integrated within the built environment, and connectivity with public transit.*

friendly environments. The new retail trends and consumer preferences are beginning to challenge the role, structure, and form of conventional shopping centers and suburban commercial strips, and are changing the dynamics of shopping as to how, when, and where. Today's consumers have a vast array of choices with new options for retail environments continuing to emerge. With increasing competition in consumer products and the branding of merchandising, retail developers are establishing new forms of mixed-use places combining commercial, entertainment, office, residential uses, and public amenities into identifiable centers. Successful public-private partnerships are the prerequisite for the implementation of such places, with the local government playing an important role in investing and ensuring the feasibility and quality of the development.

Today, there are many emerging forms of retail environments available to the consumer who is seeking a shopping experience not available in the traditional shopping centers and suburban strips. These environments include life-style commercial centers, clustered specialty stores within a neighborhood business district, urban entertainment districts, sports districts, arts/historic/cultural districts, resurgent downtowns and suburban 'village centers', new town centers, street-front shopping, 'main-street'-type business districts, and airport malls.

Blue Ash's downtown is a hybrid strip corridor/community center with effective streetscape and traffic improvements. However, more important than character is the ability of the downtown to remain viable in the future within increasing competition from newer commercial areas in its region. This issue and the concern for the potential future weakening of the business environment are two key challenges that formed the impetus for the City's elected officials to pursue the study of the downtown and prepare a plan and strategy to address them.

The plan and its strategy will help redirect the downtown's evolution into a contemporary form of mixed-use environment, capable of maintaining the City's signature in quality community and business development into the 21st century. The City's leadership envisions a renewed

downtown, a town center environment that serves as a community focus to its residents with its own sense of place. That center should provide new options through redevelopment for its existing uses, and new investment opportunities for retail, office, and residential development.

Planning and Urban Design Process

In order to ensure that key stakeholders were included in the preparation of the plan and strategy for the downtown, the City of Blue Ash invited a group of individuals to serve as an ad-hoc committee and work with the consultants and the administration. Among the individuals invited and participated in the process were property and business owners in the downtown, residents adjacent to the downtown, developers, the Mayor and two Council members, and professionals engaged in development and having knowledge of the downtown. The collaboration and discussions were structured around three working sessions (charrettes) and interviews.

The charrettes took place on April 20, May 19, and June 27, 2005. The charrettes explained the goals of the plan, presented the analysis and evaluation of the study of the downtown and all pertinent data, presented preliminary plans, and received inputs and comments from the participants. The consultants used the input from the participants' comments and integrated it in the preparation of the plan and strategy presented in this document. The proceedings and the outcomes of each of these charrettes are on file with the City Administration.

Mariemont, Hyde Park, Ludlow



Case Studies

During the planning process the consultants discussed the key factors that contribute to the success of viable business districts in the Cincinnati area. In addition, examples of developed and planned town center mixed use environments were investigated, and their key characteristics were presented during the charrettes for discussion and comments from the participants.

Locally, Mariemont, Hyde Park, and Clifton business districts were investigated. These three business districts

The key physical factors that contribute to the success of Mariemont, Hyde Park, and Ludlow business districts are:

- Mixed uses of commercial, residential and office in a vertical and horizontal configuration*
- Entertainment, restaurants, and cafe uses*
- Buildings located along the sidewalk*
- Continuous urban form instead of free-standing structures*
- Streetscape quality and character*
- Access to parking lots behind the buildings as well as on-street*
- Higher density multi-family neighborhoods adjacent to the business district (within 5 minute walking distance)*
- Public space amenities and urban green space*



are often used as examples of places that people like to visit as being viable and engaging.

The qualities and economic viability of these business districts have persisted through time, in spite of the fact that they are dissected or they are situated along major traffic arterials, carrying significant volumes of traffic. The analysis of these districts reveals that the effects of heavy traffic are mitigated by a combination of factors such as:

- on-street parking on non-peak hours to establish a shopping environment as opposed to a through traffic strip commercial, where the pedestrian and shopper have diminished priority;
- traffic management to reduce the impact of traffic including lower speed limits through the district, pedestrian crossings at mid-block and at intersections;
- narrow right-of-ways and road pavement width to accommodate four lanes of traffic as opposed to five lanes with the median lane serving as a continuous left turning lane;
- presence of few definable ingress/egress points as opposed to a great number of driveways to serve adjacent free-standing buildings;
- defined sidewalk pedestrian environments and pedestrian activities, including outdoor seating

A review of average daily traffic volumes for Erie, Ludlow Avenues and Kenwood Road (ADT 1996-2002 OKI) shows that Kenwood Road handles an additional 5,000 automobiles as compared with Ludlow Avenue and 10,000 more automobiles than Erie Avenue. However, this difference in traffic volume has not had adverse effects on the character and viability of the Clifton and Hyde Park business districts. One key difference is the fact that Kenwood Road is much wider and it has a traffic through orientation as opposed to Ludlow and Erie Avenues.

The fact that heavier traffic volumes do not adversely

Blue Ash Town Center - Concept Plan and Redevelopment Strategy

affect these business districts is of importance to the retrofitting of downtown Blue Ash into a commercial center which facilitates safe pedestrian movement and increased business activity. The plan emphasizes a new look and role for Kenwood Road in order to unify the business district and establish the district's envisioned character.

**Easton Town Center, Columbus,
Crocker Park, Cleveland
The Green, Dayton**

During the charrettes, three newer town center-type developments were reviewed and discussed with the participants. These three projects are located in Ohio and have strong characteristics with the envisioned potential for downtown Blue Ash. In addition, these developments draw from market areas that are similar with the socioeconomic dynamics in Blue Ash and its immediate region.

**Crocker Park Town Center - Westlake,
Cleveland October 2004**

1,700,000 square feet of mixed commercial, entertainment, office, and residential uses with outdoor (private) amenity space

The graph below shows the comparison of median household income between Blue Ash and Westlake in Cleveland where Crocker Park town center is located. It is quite apparent that Blue Ash has a strong market potential for the redevelopment of the downtown into a niche-type business district, on a city-wide basis, 5-mile radius, and Hamilton County.



These three examples of new centers also show the emerging trends in the evolution of land use composition for new mixed use environments. The review of the three



II. Introduction

cases as well as other similar cases in the US shows that new mixed developments have evolved along three phases:

First Phase - commercial, entertainment, and office mixed use (Easton Town Center, summer 2001 - 1,500,000 square feet)

Second Phase - commercial, entertainment, office, and residential mixed use (Crocker Park, Westlake, Cleveland, October 2004 - 1,700,000 square feet)

Third Phase - commercial, entertainment, office, residential, and institutional mixed use (The Green, Dayton, August, 2006 - 800,000 square feet)

During the charrettes, the participants strongly encouraged the inclusion of residential and institutional uses in the redevelopment of downtown Blue Ash, in addition to commercial, entertainment, and office uses.

Blue Ash City Officials Trip to Chicago
Case Studies: Deerfield, Schaumburg,
Naperville, and St. Charles



Commercial/residential/office mixed use with rear pedestrian access and parking area. Front street/rear parking connectivity via arcade.

In order to gain a first hand understanding of mixed use redevelopment projects in earlier suburban communities similar to Blue Ash, City Officials traveled to the Chicago area and visited three such communities which showcased mixed use infill projects through public-private partnerships. The projects in the communities visited by the officials varied in their size and scope but generally included commercial/entertainment/residential mixed use structures situated along the street, with rear parking and rear access to uses by pedestrians. Additional residential development was also included adjacent to the main mixed use structures. Mixed use was accomplished with inclusion of commercial uses at first levels and residential units above. The project planning and implementation took approximately 10 years to complete and included feasibility, public-private funding commitments, leasing and phased construction.

Within the framework for rethinking downtown Blue Ash, the review of case studies is useful not as examples for emulating and copying but as a means of understanding the emerging retail, lifestyle, and living choices. In addition, they inform us on how local governments and developers are responding to these trends in a collaborative way, in their effort to develop viable projects and unique

II. Introduction

places for those who live, work, and shop there.

Charrette Participants Inputs

At the conclusion of the planning process and interaction with the stakeholders, several themes and ideas emerged through inputs from the participants as listed below:

- Establish an overall 'big' plan, a vision that identifies project-level changes. "Think Big".
- Establish a strategy that will be used to implement the plan and that identifies public-private actions and commitments.
- Housing at high density is a major key to success and needs to be given priority. Housing in the downtown as part of mixed-use projects, housing adjacent to the downtown, and housing at other locations in the city. Provide for a range of housing options.
- Explore the increase of retail shopping (goods) and reduce the amount of services.
- Establish critical mass with respect to built form. height, commercial and residential uses
- The Thriftway property and the NW corner of Kenwood and Cooper are offering unique opportunities for redevelopment but the effort and commitments should include the entire downtown.
- The plan and strategy should outline specific recommendations for City Council's consideration and eventual commitments.
- Parking should strive towards an overall downtown parking availability.
- Identify the role that the downtown should play in the city and its region.
- Relate commercial and residential uses to the emerging population/consumer market profiles seeking entertainment/experience economy environments (the creative class).
- Don't be afraid to 'stretch' boundary but avoid threats to the surrounding areas. Policy needs to be established to define possible guided change of adjacent residential areas.
- Projects will require public subsidy.
- Start with 2-3 projects to build success. Start with a project that can bring dramatic impact in the downtown. A mixed use project has this potential

with shops and condominiums. The City should identify this first key project and pursue it through an effective public-private partnership process.

- Character of downtown very important – manage streetscape, signage and other elements.
- Traffic and movement of cars and pedestrians a key consideration. The movement system should support pedestrians, bicyclists, and cars with ease. Mass transit possibilities should also be reevaluated.
- Parking needs for residential units in the development must be reevaluated to ensure quality and feasibility. More than one space per residential unit should be provided. Consider parking sharing in the business/retail environment.
- The civic component in the redevelopment is very important as a focus. Most successful business districts have a civic component and space for festivals and civic activities.
- On-street parking along Kenwood Road should be pursued within the framework of the plan.
- People like parallel parking along the street. It reinforces the sense of a pedestrian retail street and district, not a passing through area.
- On-street parking needs to be defined in the plan in relation to the uses proposed and ingress/egress points.
- Unified architecture should not be encouraged as it becomes monotonous. The placement of buildings at the street level will establish a strong visual character and will bring vitality throughout the area with mixed use development.

About this Document

The contents of this document are referred to as the Blue Ash Town Center - Concept Plan and Redevelopment Strategy. The Concept Plan, presented graphically and in narrative, and the Redevelopment Strategy are the two principal sections of the document. In addition, the section on Existing Conditions presents the key findings of the physical analysis of the downtown, and the key assets and issues that play an important role in the redevelopment plan.

Existing Conditions

This section summarizes the findings and analysis of the existing conditions in the downtown. It seeks to understand what is the state of the downtown with respect to land use, circulation, physical character, utilization of land as a ratio of building floor area and lot size, and other aspects. It also identifies the key assets and constraints that need to be considered.

In order to develop this understanding the consultants undertook several planning and urban design field investigations, reviewed relevant documents available by the City Administration and other public agencies, conducted interviews, and engaged in discussions with the invited stakeholders during the charrette sessions.

The Downtown

Blue Ash downtown is located at the southern section of the city, adjacent to Ronald Reagan Highway (RRH). It has excellent access from RRH and I-71 and I-275 and I-75 to the north. The downtown area is a unified zoning district with the classification "D-1 Downtown Commercial District". The district contains approximately 90 acres of land. Table III-1 below shows the general conditions of the total district in terms of built/impervious and green/pervious characteristics.

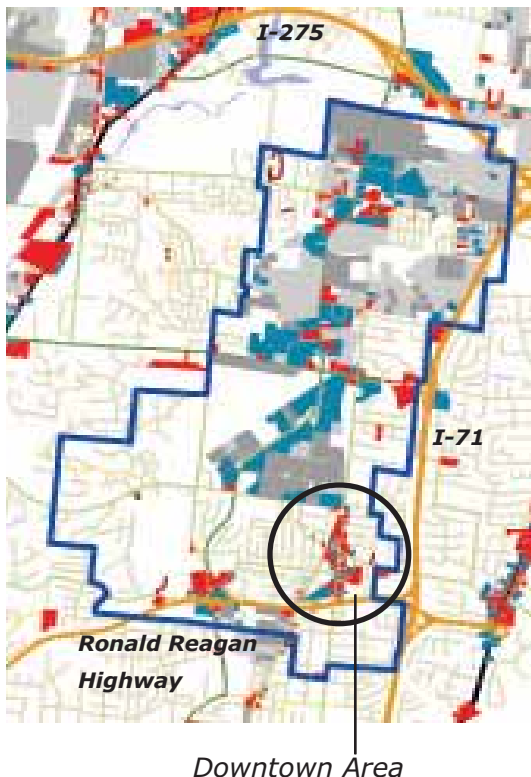


Table III-1 Downtown Physical Conditions

Building Coverage:	20% (28.5 acres)
Parking/Driveways +:	37% (34.0 acres)
Streets/Right-of-way:	11% (9.5 acres)
Green *:	32% (28.0 acres)

+ This category also includes the paved park spaces

* The category 'green' includes the lump sum of any area in the district that is not paved over such as park, and the multitude of left over spaces between curbs, setbacks, etc.).

The downtown district and area for detailed study is shown in the aerial photograph in Figure III-1. Kenwood Road is the main arterial dissecting the district and forms the main intersection with Cooper Road that defines the center of the downtown.

III. Existing Conditions



Figure III-1
Downtown Blue Ash District

North →

The area outlined in red is the D-1 Downtown Commercial District. The observation of the graphic reveals the spatial configuration of the physical conditions as described in Table III-1. The predominant built form is characterized by free-standing buildings surrounded by parking lots. Town Square is prominently located but it is contained by parking lots and the street system. There are no definable pedestrian and visual paths that connect it with the rest of the district and the surrounding community. The driver along Kenwood Road does not perceive the presence of the Town Square as a community amenity focus.



If we were to evaluate the downtown in comparison to older and/or emerging business districts, the lack of cohesiveness in urban form, its dated strip commercial character, combined with the absence of a strong pedestrian realm and downtown parking zones, would be the first major observation. In these newer town center districts, disconnected parking lots associated with individual buildings have been eliminated and have been replaced by defined business district parking zones, effectively connected to the retail areas through pedestrian

III. Existing Conditions

Blue Ash Town Center - Concept Plan and Redevelopment Strategy



networks. It is because of these characteristics as well as land use dynamics and consumer preferences that the downtown’s competitive presence may diminish in the near future, as other centers emerge outside the city jurisdiction.

Furthermore, the analysis of the downtown indicates that the land available is not used effectively. There is a great degree of physical fragmentation among buildings and properties that is conducive to retail that is mainly served by the automobile. The building coverage of 20% presented earlier is very low as compared with town center-type business districts that easily accommodate building coverages greater than 50%. The relatively low building coverage for the downtown is attributed to its historic development process and the priority given to vehicular circulation.



Figure III-2
3D Computer Enhanced Aerial View
Downtown Blue Ash District

Figure III-2 above shows an aerial view of the downtown with Kenwood Road pointing to the top of the image (north). The buildings within the downtown district have

III. Existing Conditions

been digitally extruded and have been enhanced with color to emphasize form and spatial configuration. The observation of the graphic makes it easily apparent to discern the loose building configuration, the lack of an overall organization and a focal point, and the presence of parking areas separating buildings.

Figure III-3 below is an image of the downtown depicting only the buildings within the district. Black for buildings and blank (white) for space in between buildings. This blank space is for parking, driveways, streets, the Town Square, and the lump sum of left over wasted and/or underutilized space. The purpose of the graphic is to show the physical organization of the built environment along Kenwood and Cooper Roads, which as was explained earlier is typical of suburban strip commercial development. In addition, the graphic serves in showing the inefficient use of urban land that results in less square feet of gross leasable space for non-residential uses. This relationship between gross space and lot size is expressed in terms of a ratio, the Floor Area Ratio (FAR).

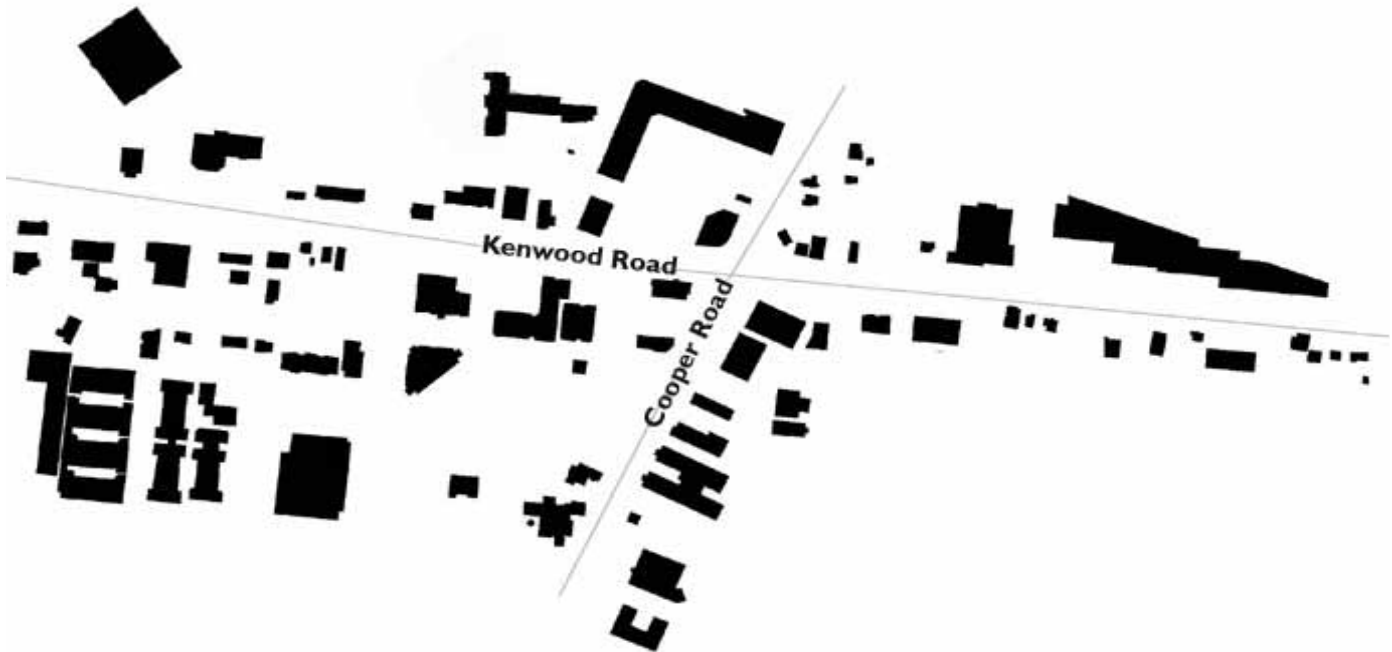


Figure III-3
Figure-Ground Analysis
Downtown Blue Ash District

North →

III. Existing Conditions

The consultants prepared the FAR analysis in order to understand how effectively is the use of the land within the downtown, and used the findings in order to determine the potential land use intensity to establish a more viable and dynamic center. The FAR analysis showed that the downtown has an average ratio of .33, which is typical of suburban and strip commercial areas. The FAR analysis is one of several indicators of land use intensity and the degree to which urban land is being utilized efficiently. Higher ratios usually are achieved by converting ad-hoc left over space, parking and driveways into developable sites where additional gross square feet can be accommodated through existing building expansion (horizontally and vertically), new building construction, the reorganization of existing parking within definable parking zones to serve sections of the downtown, and necessary adjustments in parking ratios.

Parking and Circulation

The analysis of the existing off-street parking configuration and the relationship of parking lots with adjacent buildings is an important task in determining how well the district functions with respect to the following key issues:

- How much off-street parking is available in the downtown?
- Where is this parking located?
- How possible is it to drive across parking lots to use the downtown buildings without exiting onto the arterial roads?
- What are the key obstacles that inhibit driving across parking lots?

The analysis and evaluation of existing conditions revealed that:

- At the time of the survey (spring-summer, 2005) there were a total of 3,278 parking spaces in the downtown district to service primarily commercial, service, and office-type of land uses, and a small amount of institutional uses. Compared with the total combined gross square feet of nonresidential space in the district, based on the average of three (3) spaces/1,000 square feet of gross space, it appears that the district has adequate parking.
- With minor exceptions, the preponderance of parking lots

III. Existing Conditions

are offered to the customers of particular uses and this is ensured by the presence of 'barriers' making it difficult to drive to other parking lots in the district without using Kenwood and Cooper Roads.

- Each use along Kenwood and Cooper Roads has control of its own ingress/egress facility. Combined with the dispersed location of buildings through out the district, the lack of a coordinated pedestrian network beyond the existing streetscape, most shoppers use the district by stopping, parking and then driving to another use.

Figure III-4 below shows the off-street parking availability for each isolated parking lot. Figure III-5 in the next page shows the parking/building relationships, the main streets, and the ingress/egress system.

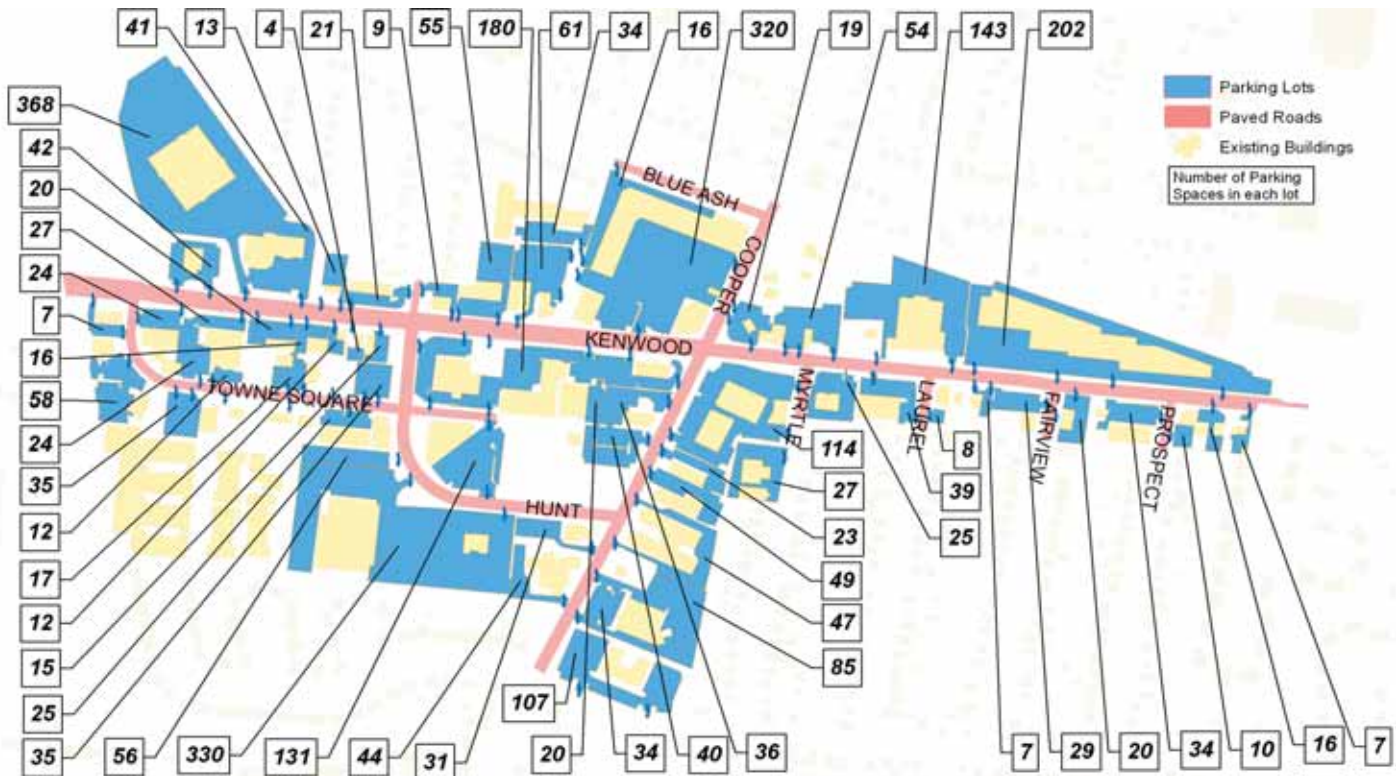


Figure III-4
Off-Street Parking Analysis
Downtown Blue Ash District

North →

III. Existing Conditions



Figure III-5
Building/Parking Analysis
Downtown Blue Ash District

North →

These deficiencies in parking and circulation will need to be addressed in order for the district to move from its current strip commercial type development to a true town center environment, capable of increasing its potential for its economic viability in the near future. In the next section of this document specific recommendations are put forth for guiding the necessary changes.

Land Use

Land use was determined through several visits and field investigations during spring/summer, 2005. Land use was recorded for each property and for each building. Land use information was used to determine the current dynamics of the district with respect to type of use, amount of use, and location. In addition the consultants used the land use information to begin to understand potential changes that will need to be made in order for the district to acquire a mixed-use character, commensurate with the establishment of a competitive town center environment in accordance with the emerging consumer/retail trends.

Land use was recorded according to the following categories:

III. Existing Conditions

- Finance, Insurance, Real Estate:
Uses devoted exclusively to these type of professional services
- Retail Trade:
General commercial-type uses
- Business Services:
Uses providing business services with no retail trade
- Office Uses:
Professional services uses
- Mixed Use:
Retail/office and residential uses
- Institutional:
Public and semi-public uses, including park space
- Multi-Family Residential
- Single-Family Residential
- Green Space
- Roads/right-of-way
- Vacant Lots and/or Buildings

Figure III-6 shows the land use distribution for the buildings and uses in a single building within the downtown district.



Figure III-6
Existing Land Use Analysis
Downtown Blue Ash District
North →

The analysis of land use is shown in Table III- 1. Gross floor area devoted to specific types of uses is provided for first floor and subsequent floors of each structure. A

key finding is the difference between retail trade uses and uses devoted to services. Table III-1 shows that in the downtown district retail land use is 14% (168,597 square feet) of the total and that service uses occupy 20% (243,310) of the total. The difference of approximately 43.5% less retail than service uses is not a healthy indicator of the district’s retail dynamic. Retail uses in viable town centers would show a reverse relationship between retail and service uses, where retail is the predominant use category. In the case of downtown Blue Ash this may mean that, in the future, as the district’s retail will increasingly be competing with other newer centers in the region, service use may become more prevalent as a result of increasing space leases for non-retail uses. While this is not a serious issue at this time, it may become an issue of real concern in the near future.

**Table III-2
Land Use by Type by Building Floor Area
Downtown Blue Ash District**

		Square Feet
1. Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate:	7% of gross space	82,676
2. Retail Trade:	14%	168,597
3. Services:	20%	242,310
4. Mixed-Use:	4%	<u>66,484</u>
		Subtotal: 560,064
5. Office:	9%	117,425
6. Institutional:	3%	28,763
7. Multi-Family:	35%	457,745
8. Single-Family:	2%	23,021
9. Vacant:	6%	74,872
Total Building Floor Area:		1,261,893

Another observation from the analysis of land use is the fact that land use for the first four land use categories accounts for a total of 560,064 square feet. This is a relatively high number of total square feet for these categories of land use. However, retail type land use accounts for only 30% of the total.

According to planning standards, the amount of square

III. Existing Conditions

feet (560,064) for non-residential and non-office uses as shown for downtown Blue Ash is comparable with larger scale regional centers serving an area greater than a 10 miles radius. With the exception of very few niche-type uses, downtown Blue Ash offers a high degree of regional access but does not serve as a regional focus. This plan does not advocate that downtown should become a regional shopping center. What this analysis indicates is the potential lack of strength and ultimately a reduced importance and competitiveness for the downtown, as its region develops with newer-type retail centers. The physical space is available in the downtown district but it is not being used efficiently.

Note:

Mixed Use category includes primarily office, services, and retail uses, with very few residential uses

This low percent of retail in the downtown acquires a much more meaningful importance when the total of 560,064 square feet is compared with dynamic retail centers in the region. Table III-2 lists known commercial and lifestyle centers and emerging 'town center' retail establishments. While the physical organization of these establishments varies in comparison with downtown Blue Ash, its purpose is to establish the perspective for understanding the importance of the total square feet currently available, the small percent occupied by retail uses, and its future potential.

**Table III-3
Cincinnati City Center, Suburban Lifestyle and Upscale Retail Centers Gross Retail Space**

Tower Place:	483,000	square feet
Fountain Place:	800,000	
Rookwood Pavilion:	245,000	
Rookwood Commons:	350,000	
Center of Cincinnati:	440,000	
Millworks:	1.3 million	
Sycamore Plaza:	320,000	
Kenwood Town Center:	550,000	
Sycamore Center: (planned)	250,000	retail, 180,000 office (7 storey tower)
Streets of West Chester: (phase one)	450,000	
Deerfield Town Center:	432,000	
Downtown Blue Ash District	560,064	(retail, services, finance-insurance-real estate, mixed use)

III. Existing Conditions

Conclusion

In concluding the analysis of key characteristics of the downtown, the consultants believe that while the downtown district is completely developed and has economic viability, it is nevertheless underutilized (i.e. efficiency of gross space in relation to the lot/parking area). Furthermore, the area's physical characteristics, layout, and land use are currently working but will increasingly become unable to sustain the downtown's competitiveness within emerging retail environment typologies and shopping/consumer trends in the immediate region.

The downtown offers several important assets and opportunities that can be harnessed in order to redevelop it to a competitive and vibrant town center environment.

- Strong potential for retrofitting and reorganizing the existing physical environment through selective redevelopment.
- The potential for developing in the short term two strong projects at the Thriftway property and at the northwestern corner of Kenwood and Cooper Roads.
- The potential for reestablishing Town Square into downtown's focus for the community, with more direct connection with the retail uses.
- The presence of key public institutions such as the Public Library and Board of Education.
- The presence of large traffic volumes on Kenwood Road
- Strong interest from developers in current and planned residential development projects.
- Established neighborhoods surrounding the downtown.
- Accessibility to the interstate system.
- Strong market potential as evidenced by demographic characteristics within a 5-mile radius.
- Strong leadership from City Officials and City Administration and a proven record of excellence in development

The next section of the document presents the concept plan for the redevelopment of the downtown into a town center, mixed use environment.

III. Existing Conditions

Concept Plan

Rethinking Downtown Blue Ash

The redevelopment plan outlines a bold vision based on the realities and potential present. Small ad-hoc changes and cosmetic improvements will not fix the problem. The plan's time frame is 10-12 years. Changes will take place over a long period of time on the basis of the plan and its strategy. The plan does not make a case for making the downtown into a regional shopping center in competition with Kenwood Town Center, Rookwood, and other similar lifestyle centers. Its identity should be of a niche-type place, molded along some of the principles found in successful business districts rather than regional entertainment centers. Its flavor should strive to establish a sense of place unlike the more generic assortment of brand merchandising in today's lifestyle centers. Composition of uses and mix of uses, together with an effective spatial organization will contribute to the redevelopment of the downtown.

The plan and its key principles are conceptual and are intended to set forth a direction for addressing current and future needs. The plan suggests a long range vision as one of many possible redevelopment forms. The recommendations outlined in the document are used as guiding principles for restructuring land use and for giving it form. The plan and its recommendations were reviewed by the stakeholders during the charrettes and comments are reflected in the concept and its strategy.

Plan: A Shared Vision for the Future

The plan envisions the existing downtown area as the City's center, a unique place to do business with long-term competitive retail viability.

The plan's vision is to make the downtown area:

- Easy to use and functional, that ensures economic viability by respecting its scale and role in the region and the expectations of the market place.
- An established "niche" position in the region for visitors/users and residents.

IV. Concept Plan

Key Principles

Gradually, through improved urban design guidelines discourage the amount of land used for commercial strip-like development along Kenwood Road within the district, as well as the further expansion of retail uses beyond the district.

Redevelop commercial and service use areas into denser forms of development with mixed-use (commercial/office/housing) developments and/or high density residential uses.

Concentrate commercial development and promote the establishment of a core area offering critical mass of retail and entertainment uses, interconnected by a quality pedestrian system directly linked with the Town Square.

The core of the downtown should serve as a development node and should be defined by high-intensity land use development (starting at the average .50 floor area ratio, compared with the existing .33), mixed-use commercial and residential uses, buildings up to four stories high, defined business district parking areas (surface parking, one level below grade garages, and parking structures), a pedestrian amenity system with high connectivity to create a lively, safe, and attractive walking environment.

Establish the intersection of Kenwood and Cooper Roads as the epicenter of the new concept, and the retrofitted Town Square as the focus of public activity and community life, integrated with the commercial and mixed-use environment.

Establish a civic uses area to accommodate the Library, Board of Education, and other similar uses with direct connection with the Town Square and the commercial area.

Establish a draw of visitors to the downtown by developing a building complex to offer space for performing arts/

entertaining venues' adjacent to or integrated with the civic uses structure. A performance space, support facilities, and 2-3 movie screens should be included in the center.

Increase viability and the area's urbane qualities by making it a destination for dining and entertainment.

Organize parking into definable nodes to serve specific uses and sub-areas, interlinked by a functional and safe pedestrian system.

Downtown Town Center Concept

The application of the guiding principles as listed above, together with the existing physical opportunities and land use mix are used to establish the conceptual representation of the envisioned town center. Figure IV-1 shows the concept for establishing a mixture of land uses that includes:

Typical retail/service mix for approximately 40,000 square feet building

<i>Retail Type</i>	<i>Sq. Footage</i>
.....
<i>Dry Cleaners (Pick-Up)</i>	<i>1,500</i>
<i>Coffee Shop</i>	<i>1,200</i>
<i>Convenience Store</i>	<i>2,500 - 3,000</i>
<i>Delicatessen (Prepared Food)</i>	<i>1,200</i>
<i>Donuts / Bakery Store</i>	<i>1,000</i>
<i>Financial Services</i>	<i>2,500</i>
<i>Florist</i>	<i>1,000</i>
<i>Gifts / Cards Store</i>	<i>2,000</i>
<i>Ice Cream Shop</i>	<i>1,200</i>
<i>Jewelry Store</i>	<i>1,000</i>
<i>Music / Books</i>	<i>2,500</i>
<i>Optometrist</i>	<i>1,000</i>
<i>Postage / Photo Services</i>	<i>1,000</i>
<i>Restaurant (Full-Service)</i>	<i>5,000</i>
<i>Restaurant Taqueria</i>	<i>1,500</i>
<i>Shoe Repair</i>	<i>500</i>
<i>Shoes</i>	<i>2,000</i>
<i>Sports Apparel / Shoes</i>	<i>2,000</i>
<i>Video</i>	<i>2,500</i>
<i>Women's Apparel</i>	<i>2,000</i>

Retail sales: bookstore, specialty shops, apparel, sporting goods, office supplies.

Entertainment/performing arts: restaurants, brewpubs, cafes, jazz club, performing arts theater, movie theater(s), comedy club, gallery.

Niche grocery store: regional or national chain grocery store, approximately 25,000-30,000 square feet.

Offices: current offices, professional offices.

Services: existing and additional such as athletic club, computer services, printing/reproduction, bike shop, etc.

Residential: housing clusters of condominiums, apartments, townhouses, and units over commercial space.

Civic: library, board of education, other public uses

Public amenities. Town Square, pedestrian network, green space, plazas.

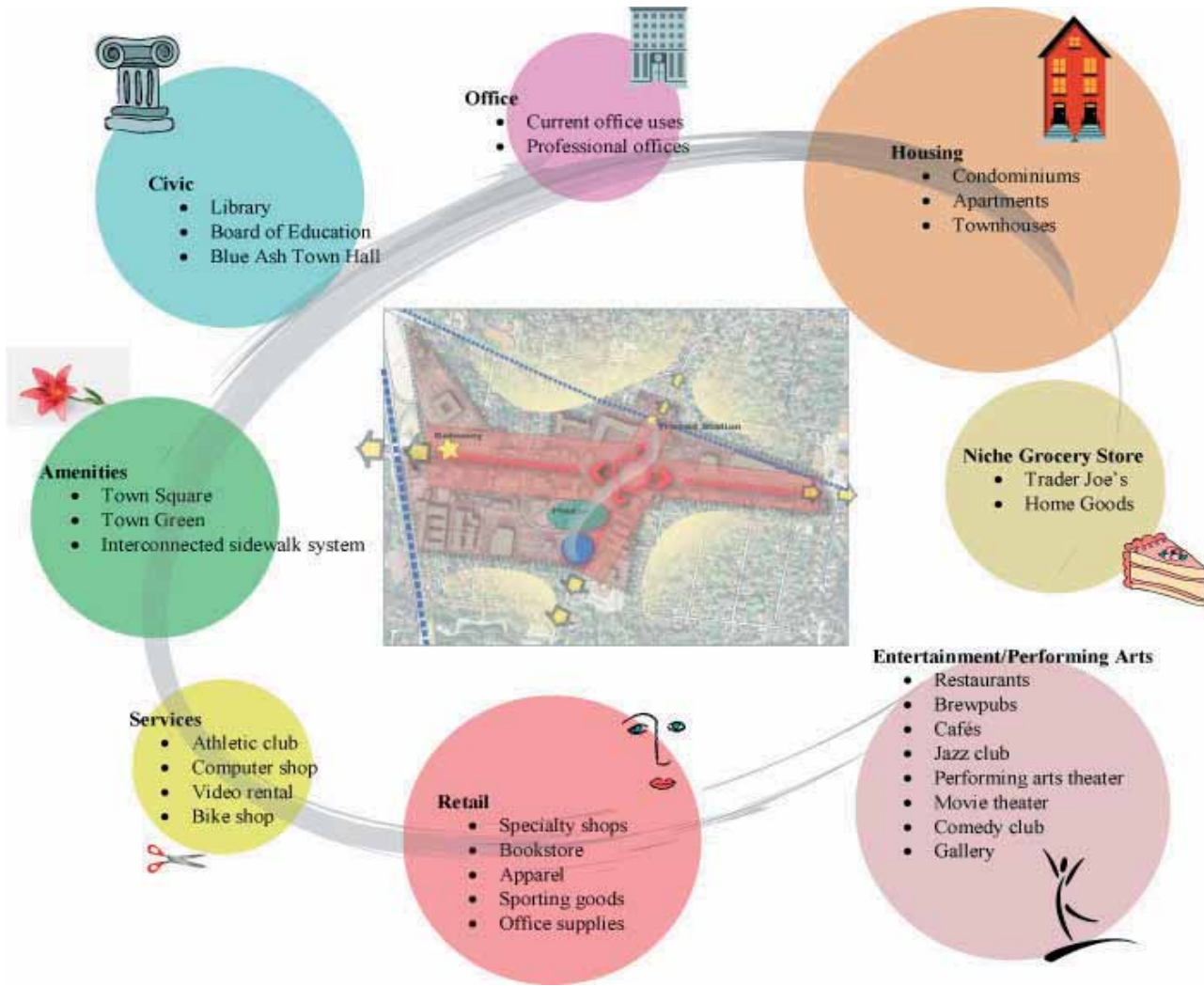


Figure IV-1
Town Center Land Use Concept
Downtown Blue Ash District

Town Center Land Use Structure

The redevelopment plan recommends the restructuring of the downtown in order to establish specific land use areas centered on a key core area, with a strong development focus at the intersection of Kenwood and Cooper Roads. This area will be connected with the retrofitted Town Square with mixed use redevelopment around the Square. Land use in the focus area will be mixed use retail at first floor with three levels of housing over it.

The Square's role will be expanded to provide space for outdoor activities in association with surrounding restaurants and cafes, in addition to its use for a multitude of public activities.

IV. Concept Plan

Figure IV-2 shows the proposed Town Center Land Use Concept. It identifies specific areas for land use in an effort to organize the existing development and future redevelopment. Its key elements are:



Figure IV-2
Town Center Land Use Concept
Structure
Downtown Blue Ash District
North →



A proposed civic/performing arts redevelopment cluster at the existing area where the Library and Board of Education uses are located. This will add a further dimension to the square's expanded role.

Along Kenwood Road, two major mixed-use subareas will accommodate existing uses. These will be incorporated through compact development in new buildings built closer to the road, with parking and servicing to the rear.

IV. Concept Plan

Definable residential subareas within the district and adjacent to it so that new residents can live within the envisioned town center.



Retail Street Character

(For illustration Purposes)

Improvements at the intersection of Kenwood and Ronald Reagan Highway to define the node as a gateway. In addition, redevelopment of existing properties at this node with office uses will further define its gateway role.

The establishment of Kenwood Road as a boulevard with a strong streetscape/pedestrian system, reduction in the number of ingress/egress points and the development of a landscaped median.

Concept Redevelopment Plan

The Concept Redevelopment Plan is one of many possible alternatives that can be implemented in the downtown district. Its purpose is not to freeze a particular picture in time but instead to identify a possible physical development and redevelopment that adheres to the principles of the plan and findings of the planning process. The recommendations of the plan will not take place immediately and will require coordinated and phase development changes guided by the plan's vision and strategy. The plan's span is approximately 10-12 years with incremental redevelopment to take place in phases.



Retail Street Character

(For illustration Purposes)

The plan recommends substantive changes through redevelopment to take place through the participation of property and business owners and the support and guidance from the City. These changes will be the result of a collaborative process between the property owner, potential developer, and the City. The plan does not recommend an urban renewal approach to change but rather a process characterized by a mutually beneficial and dynamic public-private partnership.



Retail Street Character

(For illustration Purposes)

Figure IV-3 shows the overall urban design plan by emphasizing the building footprints for land use development, the envisioned form, the redefined and expanded role of Town Square, parking and circulation.

IV. Concept Plan

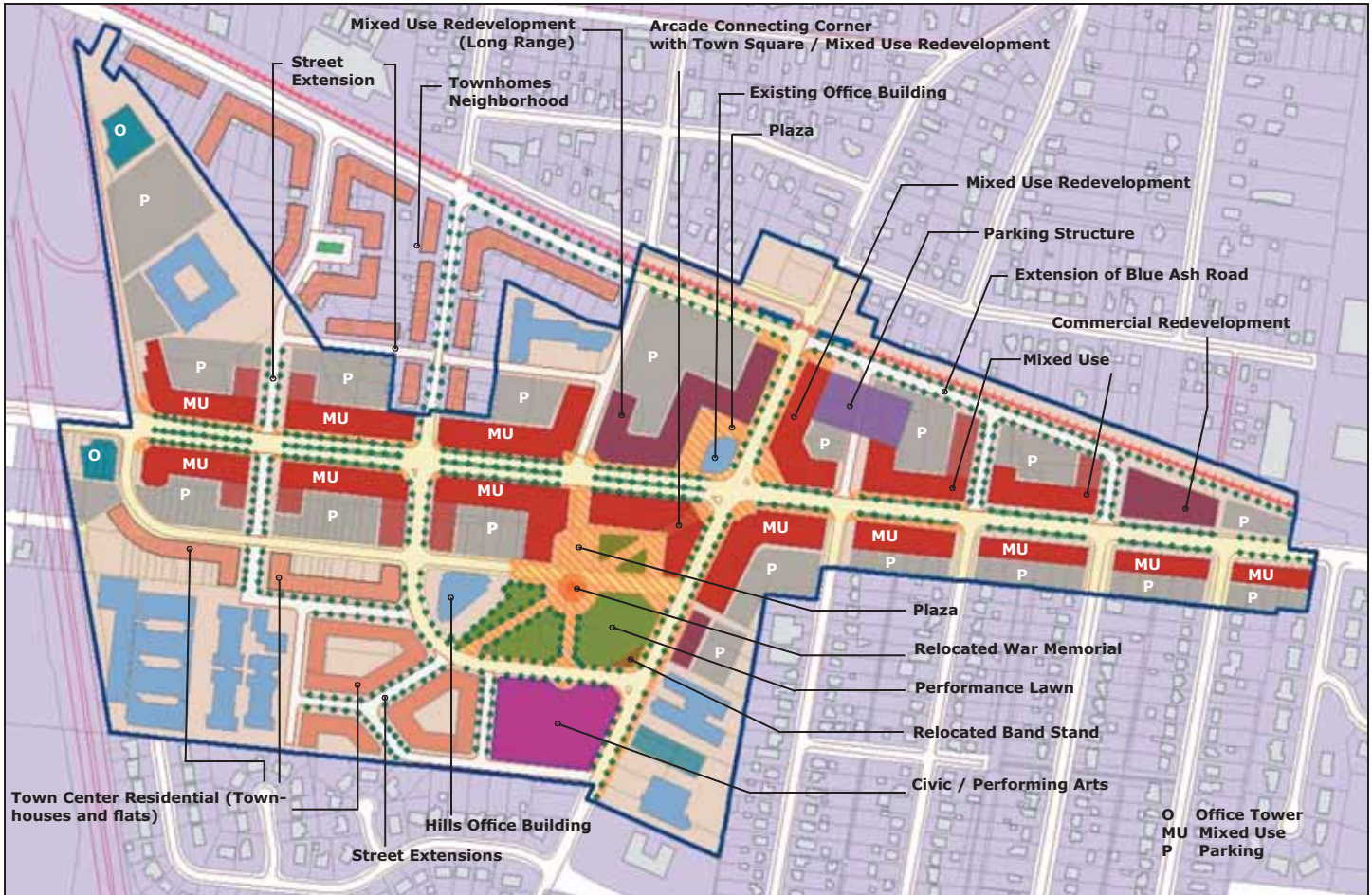


Figure IV-3
Town Center Concept Redevelopment Plan
Downtown Blue Ash District

North →

The building shapes shown are conceptual and serve to emphasize the envisioned form and pattern of development, and to establish estimates of gross floor area that can be accommodated. The town center concept incorporates substantial redevelopment for residential units (approximately 2,000 units) as independent townhouse structures and housing flats (condominiums and/or rental) with designated garage parking, and residential units at second, third and at selected locations at fourth floors of mixed use buildings, with commercial uses at ground floor.

Parking for mixed use buildings will be provided in a one level garage below grade, as well as at surface lots to the rear of buildings as designated on the plan. Commercial use parking will be separated from residential parking.

The existing Town Square will be retrofitted to become a truly central public space in order to serve as the pedestrian focus of the center with restaurants and other entertainment and retail shops facing the square and having open space directly connecting with the square.

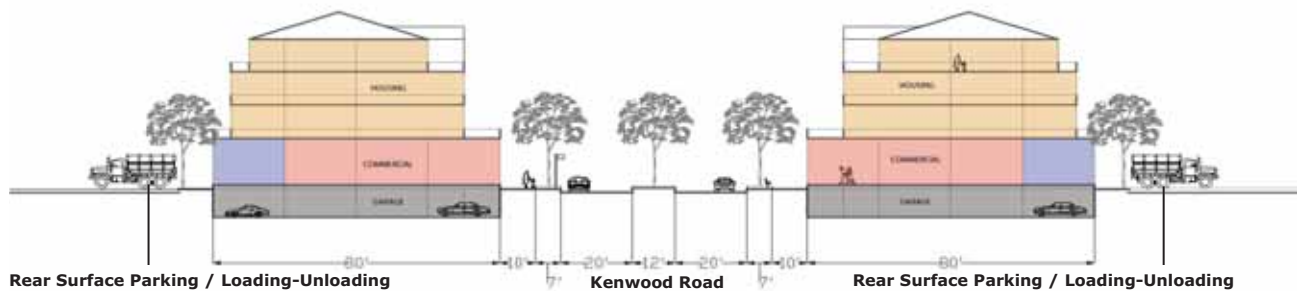


Figure IV-4
Section through Kenwood Road
Downtown Blue Ash District

Redevelopment along the western side of Kenwood Road north of Cooper envisions an exciting mixed use building(s) at the northwestern corner of Kenwood and Cooper; the redevelopment of Ringo Lanes with mixed use commercial/office/residential; and the long-range redevelopment of Keystone Plaza with a new commercial development and adjacent surface parking.

The existing commercial space along the eastern side of Kenwood Road north of Cooper is characteristic of strip retail. The Plan envisions future redevelopment of the area with mixed uses and surface parking to the rear.

The plan recommends redevelopment along both sides of Kenwood south from Hunt to RRH in mixed-use commercial/residential or office.

Figure IV-5, IV-6, and IV-7 show the organization of the building forms suggested for the redevelopment of mixed uses along Kenwood Road. Retail uses will occupy the first floor with pedestrian access from the streetscape environment along a retrofitted Kenwood Road. Parking will be provided at surface and one level below surface for retail uses. Via private and secure access, parking sections will be set aside for the residential units above. Service and loading/unloading will take place along the rear of the buildings. The appearance of the buildings from the rear

Blue Ash Town Center - Concept Plan and Redevelopment Strategy

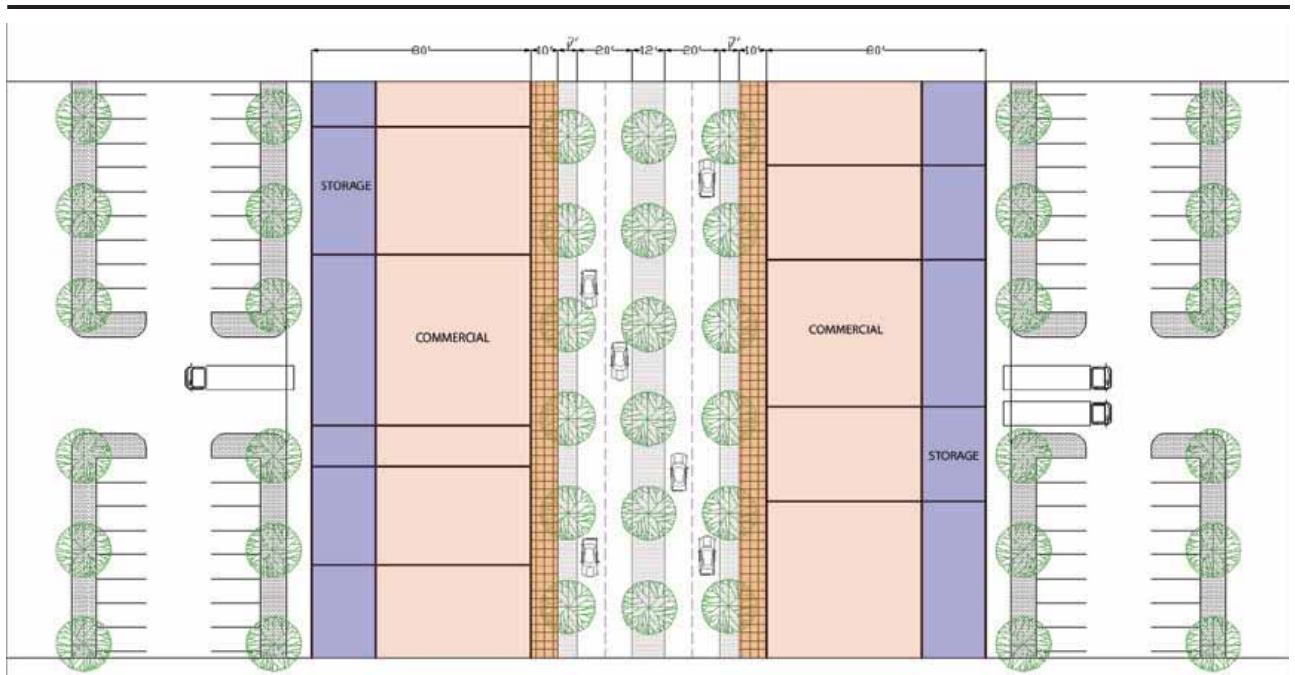


Figure IV-5
First Floor Redevelopment
Downtown Blue Ash District

Kenwood Road

will be just as attractive and clean as the front facades. Parking lots will be lighted with effective landscaping

The Plan recommends significant streetscape improvements along Kenwood Road in order to establish a strong pedestrian realm and an attractive town center character. The key changes will include the following:

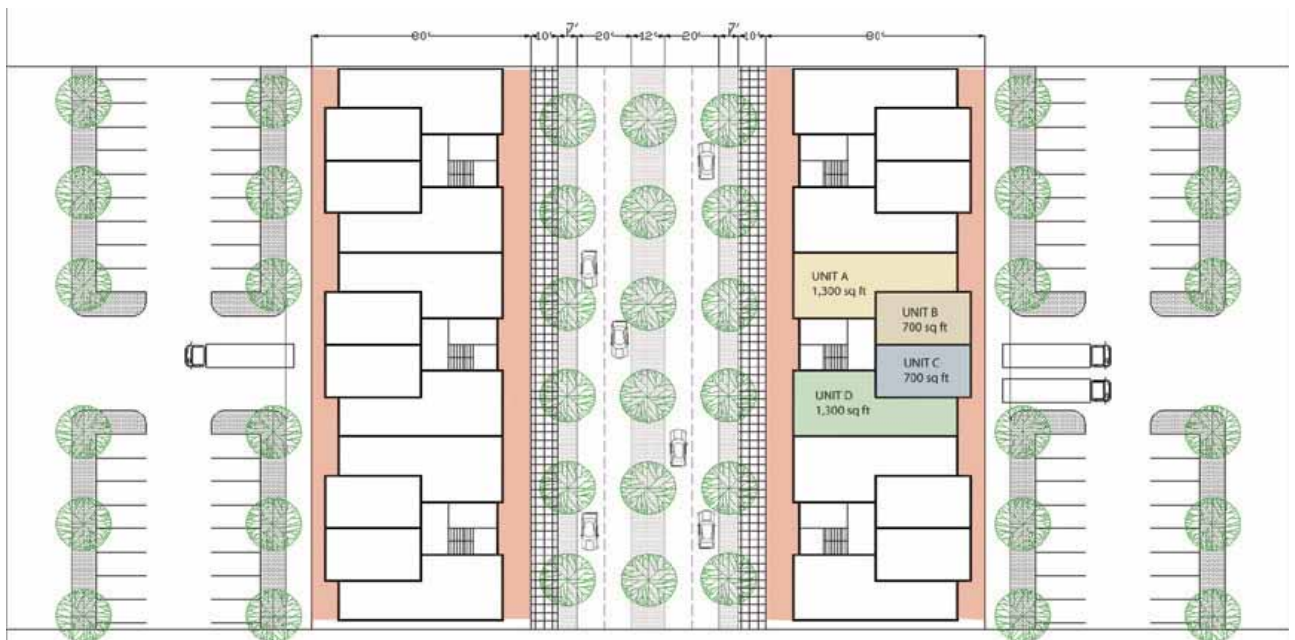


Figure IV-6
Second-Third Floor Redevelopment
Downtown Blue Ash District

Kenwood Road

IV. Concept Plan

The elimination of several ingress/egress points in favor of defined access drives to rear parking lots, the intersection of Hunt and Town Square Roads, as well as at intersections of all existing Streets.

The establishment of a continuous system of sidewalks with definable crossings emphasizing the pedestrian realm.

The utilization of the existing median as a landscaped island and for left turn storage lanes. The maintenance of two lanes of traffic for each direction at current lane widths

The provision of on-street parking during non-peak traffic hours. This will de-emphasize the existing dynamic of Kenwood Road as a driving through arterial and instead it will strengthen its new role as a business district. Sidewalk activity will be made possible and safer with the parked cars along the curb - a traditionally common element of business districts. In addition, the slower traffic will make it possible for those driving through to have a stronger connection and understanding of the town center district.

The establishment of sidewalk widths between 10-12 feet wide. This will make it possible to accommodate parking meter/utility poles space, street tree planting space, sidewalk walking space, and window shopping pedestrian space.

Street trees along the streetscape to enhance the pedestrian scale and to provide comfort during the summer months. The trees will be selected for their ability to allow the reading of signs and will be planted at proper distances to ensure that the drivers and pedestrians can identify the retail uses along the street.

The following rendering (Figure IV-7) is a sketch depicting the envisioned relationships previously explained . It is not intended to establish an architectural character for redevelopment in the downtown district. It shows scale relationships and potential character for Kenwood Road. The Plan recommends two office towers (4 stories) at the entrance of the downtown as shown through redevelopment of the existing sign shop and new development west of Kenwood Road. Office development at this location will add daytime workers to the town center and will also make an architectural statement along

the Ronald Reagan Highway. Additionally an office tower is recommended in connection with the existing office building at the corner of the access drive and Blue Ash Road. The Hills office building and the office building at the corner of Kenwood and Cooper are recommended to remain and be incorporated in the plan. It is also recommended that the four story office building at the Kenwood/Cooper corner should undertake substantial facade improvements in order to increase its visual compatibility with the envisioned built form.



Figure IV-7
Kenwood Road
Streetscape Character
Downtown Blue Ash District

The Plan does not recommend a particular design style and/or theme for the recommended town center. The character of the district should strive for a strong urban form with human scale elements and details that establish its own image and presence. This can easily be accomplished through contemporary and traditional blends. Urban design guidelines will need to be established in order to guide the envisioned changes.

A niche-type grocery store (approximately 25,000 – 30,000 sq.ft.) is recommended for the town center to serve as a magnet for consumers in the City and the region. This use should be incorporated within a mixed use structure,

together with other retail uses to establish a strong activity focus.

In the long-range phases the plan recommends the redevelopment of the SW and NE corners of Kenwood and Cooper with mixed use commercial and residential structures.

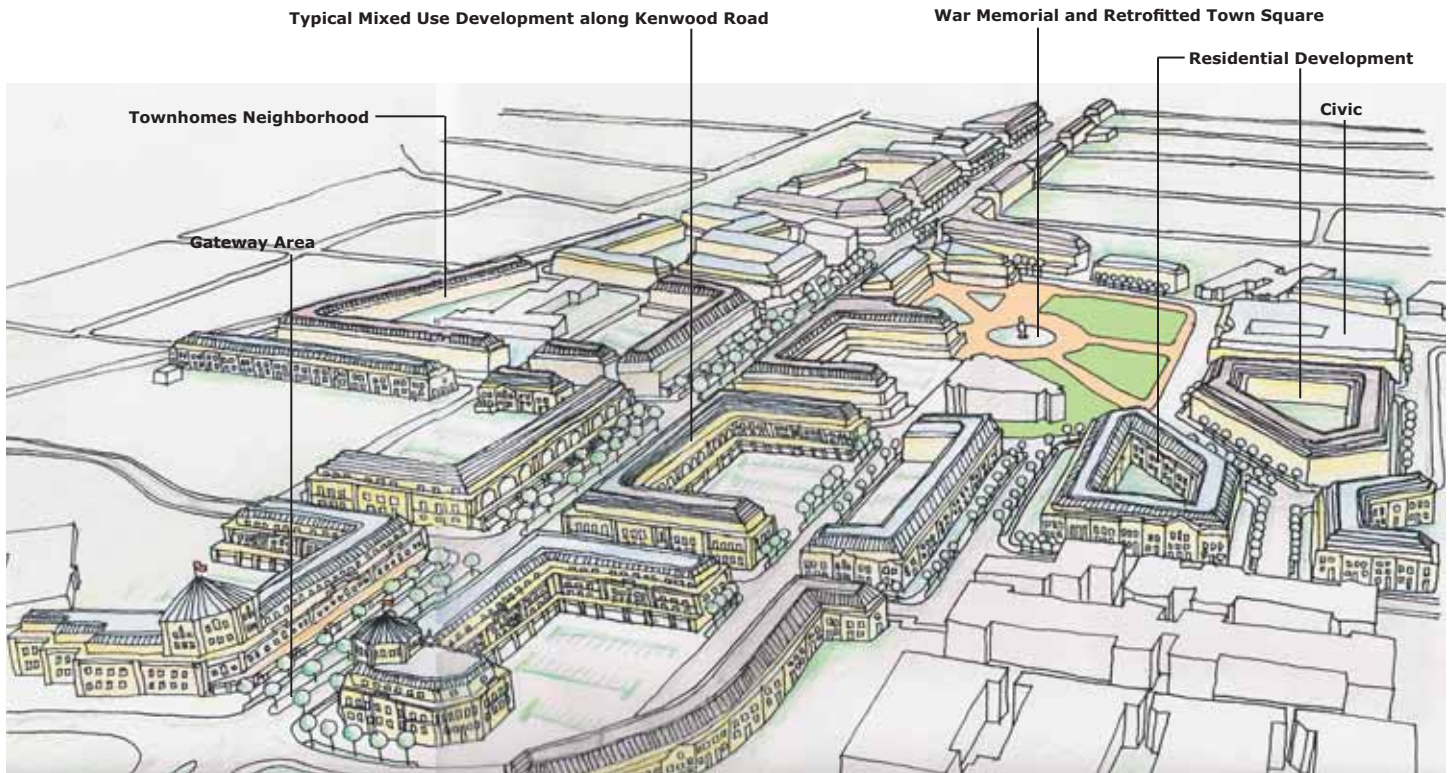


Figure IV-8
Bird's Eye View of Town Center
Downtown Blue Ash District

The plan recommends that if in the future the existing Blue Ash Nursing Home and the office building next to it may be considered for redevelopment in collaboration with their owners.

Town Square

The Redevelopment Plan recommends that the existing layout and organization of Town Square should be reconsidered in context with the envisioned changes in the downtown. As it was explained earlier, Town Square will be integrated more directly with the retail, entertainment, and pedestrian elements of the district. The Plan calls for the implementation of the following:

Building forms from redevelopment along Kenwood Road

should ensure that the Square has a strong and direct visual and physical connection with the street and the retail environment.

The Square should be retrofitted to serve the downtown as its major public space. Currently, there are subareas of the Square that work effectively while others are disjointed. The changes in elevation 'break' the space into separate subareas and do not give the sense of a unified space with ease of flow capable of holding large amounts of people.

The retrofitting should eliminate elevation changes. The change in elevation can be made more effectively through the use of a vegetative or water curtain wall fountain by the parking area of the Hills office building. The rest of the space can be unified into a single area through its redesign. Paved spaces and lawn/landscaped areas should be provided in relation to restaurants and cafes that will be facing the public space.

The War Memorial should be relocated to the center of the space and should be visible from the street. The band stand should be relocated closer to Cooper Road and should be facing a large performance lawn.

Two major pedestrian connections should be made between the Square and the street environment: One directly from Kenwood road that will serve as public space for outdoor cafes and restaurants; and one between the corner of Kenwood and Cooper through an arcade.

Redesigned Town Square and New Location of War Memorial



IV. Concept Plan

Figure IV-8 shows an image of the retrofitted Town Square. The view is looking at the Square from its southeastern corner. The buildings at the foreground are residential units and the new civic/performing arts building.

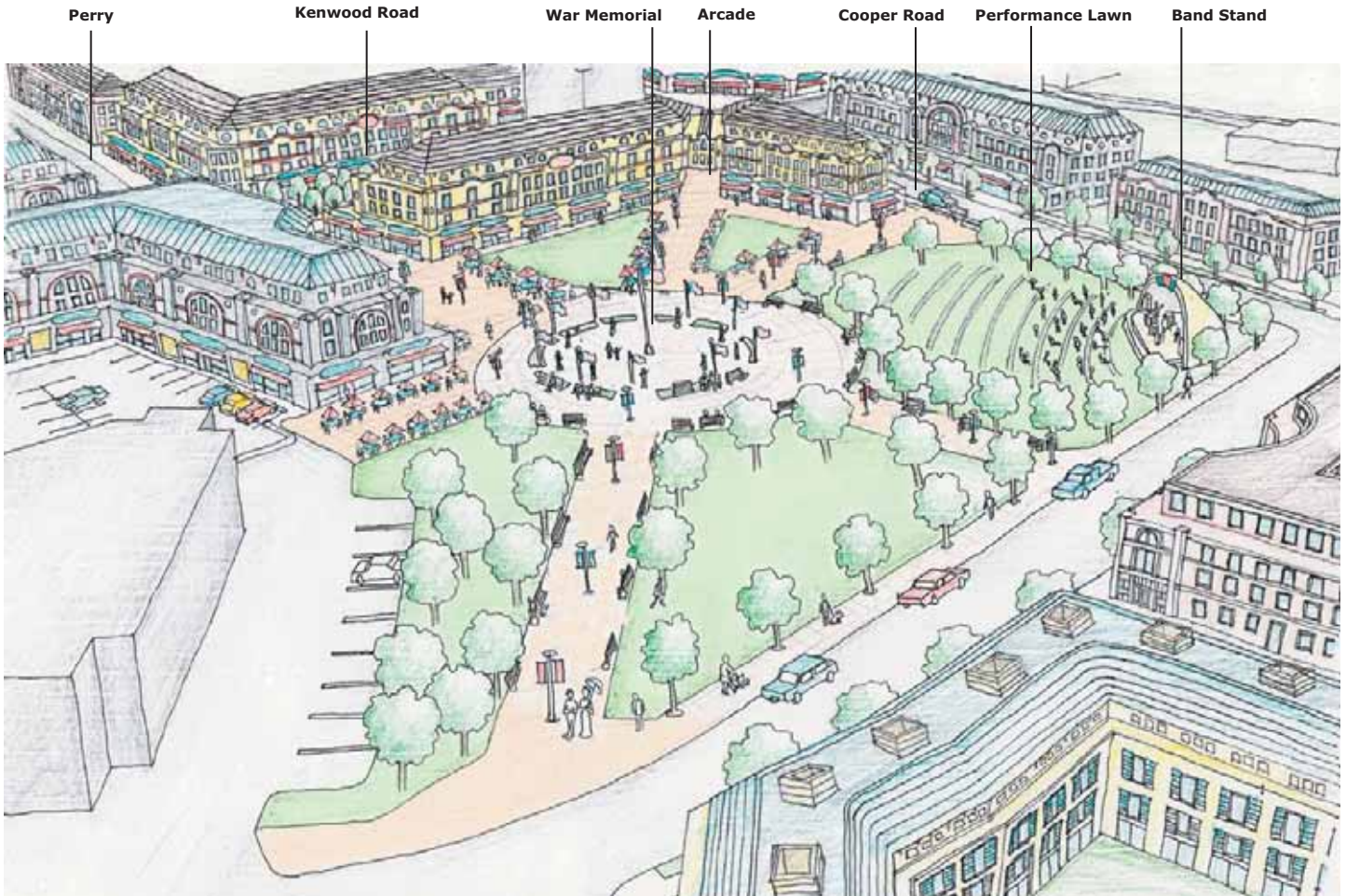


Figure IV-9
Bird's Eye View of Town Square
Downtown Blue Ash District

Kenwood and Cooper Roads

The Plan recognizes that the corner of Kenwood and Cooper Roads is the retail heart of the downtown. In spite of the fact that the current streetscape elements and details in

architectural and landscape design are of high quality, this 100% corner is disconnected from Town Square, and its development is not commensurate of a town center-type environment.

Northwestern quadrant

The character of the built environment for each of the quadrants is incongruent. The northwestern quadrant provides a unique opportunity for redevelopment of the type envisioned in the plan. The plan recommends mixed use redevelopment to define that quadrant. Parking should be provided to the rear of the building(s). A garage structure is also recommended to serve this area and the downtown at large, through a collaborative project approach between the City and a developer. Redevelopment of the existing properties all the way to the Keystone Plaza is also recommended north along Kenwood Road to continue the mixed use character.



Example of Street Corner Mixed Use Redevelopment

The above example shows a four story building along two street fronts. First level accommodates retail uses with sidewalk space for outdoor cafes. The upper three floors accommodate apartments and condominiums of

varying sizes catering to professional and empty nester populations. These examples were identified through research in the Urban Land Institute data base of successful redevelopment projects, and it is included in the plan document as an illustration only to explain the urban design and redevelopment principles recommended by the plan and its strategy.



Example of Mixed Use Redevelopment

This is another example of mixed use redevelopment along a crescent-type arterial street. The structures are of scale compatible with the envisioned town center environment. Architecturally, the character of the development does not emulate traditional town centers, and tries to accommodate newer trends in mixed use architecture. The above is also included in the plan document only as an illustration of the plan's principles.

Preliminary estimates of the redevelopment of the corner property from Kenwood to Blue Ash Road with mixed use (four story building), surface parking, one level of parking below the building and garage structure (six levels - two below grade and four levels above) showed the following:

Corner of Kenwood and Cooper Mixed Use Redevelopment:

- Retail: 40,000 - 45,000 square feet
- Residential: 75-90 units *
- Parking: 150 for residential; 60 plus 720 in garage structure

* Average unit size: 1,320 square feet

Southeastern quadrant

The southeastern quadrant is currently developed but not in a way that can define the 100% importance of the intersection. The plan recommends redevelopment of the quadrant to establish a strong building form to complement the northwestern corner. The Plan recommends that the bank and the furniture mall properties should be redeveloped with mixed use development of one or two buildings. Both uses can continue to operate from the new building(s). The furniture mall building may be possible to be incorporated into the redevelopment after an architectural and urban design assessment study. Figure IV-10 below shows an illustration of the envisioned form and character of the redevelopment of the southeastern quadrant of the Kenwood and Cooper intersection.



Figure IV-10
Southeastern Corner Kenwood and Cooper Roads
Downtown Blue Ash District

A key feature of this redevelopment is an open arcade that connects the corner streetscape with the retrofitted Town Square. In addition to being a pedestrian plaza-like connection, the arcade will also make it possible to visually connect the 100% corner with the City's main public space.

The architectural style shown is only for illustration purposes and it does not promote a particular style. Redevelopment proposals will be evaluated on how well they adhere to the principles of redevelopment plan, urban design guidelines, and the implementation strategy to be developed for the project in a collaborative manner between the City, property owners, business owners and developer.

Residential Development

The Plan recommends the development of a range of residential units in the downtown district and adjacent to it as shown on the Concept Plan (Figure IV-3).

The Plan shows townhouses in the area outside the formal downtown district along Blue Ash Road, Tillsam and Hunt. These residential units will compliment and support the envisioned town center and will add assurance for the maintenance of the residential areas west of Blue Ash Road. The layout and design of these units should be compatible with the scale of the adjacent homes maintaining a height of 2 and 1/2 to 3 stories high.

Their character can be traditional and or a mixture with contemporary styles but of uniform height and scale. The urban design plan for these residential areas should emphasize connectivity with the town center area and adjacent neighborhoods.

In an effort to achieve improved vehicular access the Plan recommends the extension of Tillsam with Kenwood Road at the time that the redevelopment of the commercial areas along Kenwood Road is being considered. Additionally, the Plan recommends a new street connection between Perry and the extended Tillsam Street.



Example: Residential Development - Traditional Townhouse Types



Example: Residential Development - Attached Single-Family and Townhouse Types

Thriftway Site

The redevelopment plan envisions residential development for this property. The exact time for redevelopment will be determined at a later time when the property will be ready to be considered for a new type of land use. The plan however, wants to make a strong recommendation towards the development of quality in-fill housing at a density of 14-18 units/acre. The design and layout should strive for a compact building form combining open space amenity and project identity. Several types of housing can be considered such as townhouses and flats with building heights at 3-4 floors. Parking will be provided in garages integrated with the units or in a single garage structure, with additional surface parking areas. There should be 2 parking spaces provided for each unit because the area does not have a public transit system.

Figure IV-11 shows a compact plan incorporating closely-spaced townhome/flats units situated along a 'mews' or green. Arches with units over them provide vehicular access to interior courtyards and garages below the units.



Figure IV-11
Residential Development at the Thriftway Site
Downtown Blue Ash District

(Menelaos Triantafyllou & Associates)

Civic/Performing Arts

The presence of civic uses in the downtown is a key ingredient towards its success in becoming a focus of the community, a mixed-use environment combining retail, service, entertainment, office, residential, civic, and public amenities. The downtown redevelopment plan recommends the reuse of the properties that are currently used by the library, Board of Education, and the Chinese restaurant for a multi use two-story building with strong architectural significance. The following uses are recommended: a new library at first level accessible from Hunt and Cooper roads; a new headquarters for the Sycamore Schools Board of Education at second floor; other public semi-public uses; a gallery/exhibit space; two-three movie theaters; comedy club; small theater with combination space for music performances; small cafe/deli; and other compatible uses. Preliminary estimates show that approximately 120,000 - 150,000 square feet can be accommodated in the two story building that will be supported by a parking garage for 250 parking spaces.

The new building will have orientation towards the redesigned Town Square with prominent entrance and pedestrian focus. Its architecture should make a statement to distinguish its presence and role in the downtown.

Three Dimensional Representation

The images shown in the next pages are three dimensional computer generated views of the envisioned plan for retrofitting the downtown into a town center. Their objective is to show the relationships between form and the compactness of development according to urban design principles. The forms are abstract and by no means do they portray architectural character.

Figure IV-12: Kenwood Road aerial view looking north showing urban form, rear parking areas, Town Square, and Kenwood as a boulevard.

Figure IV-13: Town Square

Figure IV-14: Town Square and Kenwood Cooper Roads

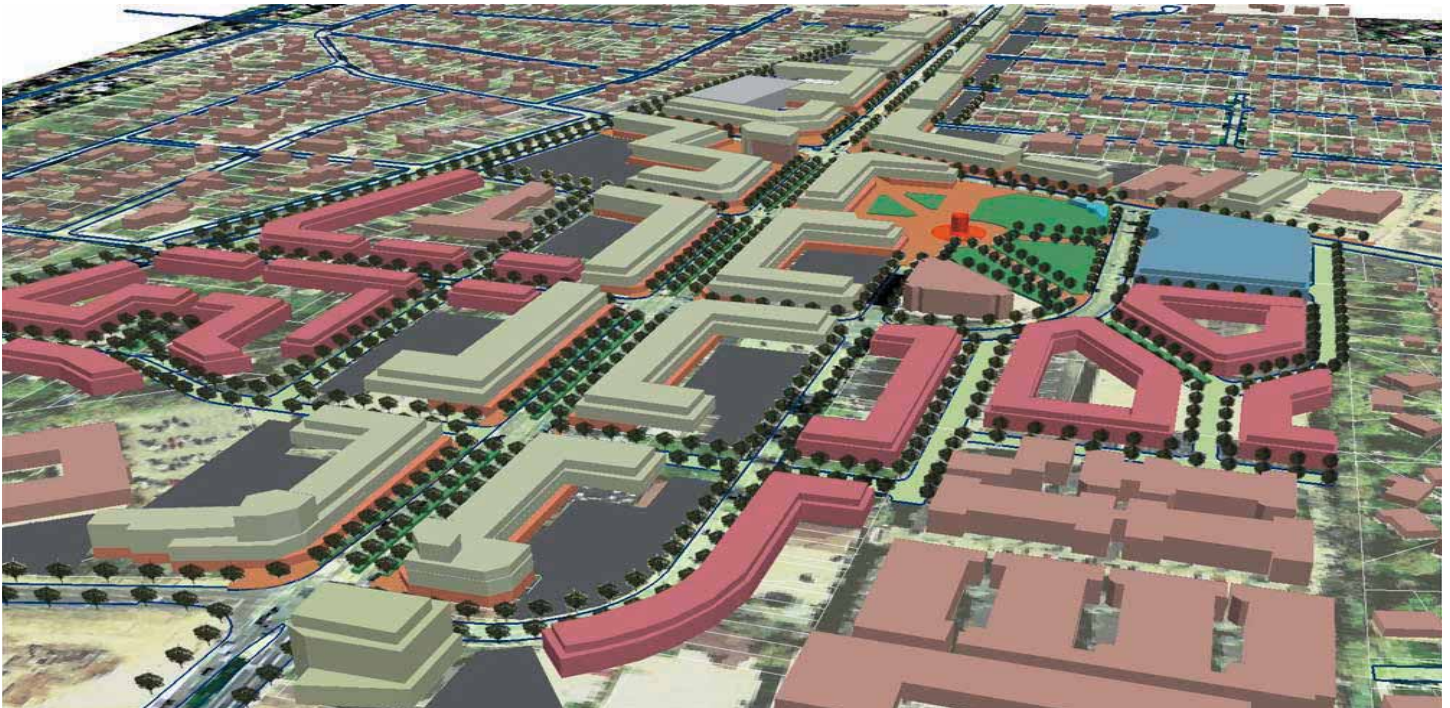


Figure IV-12
Kenwood Road Aerial View Looking North
Downtown Blue Ash District

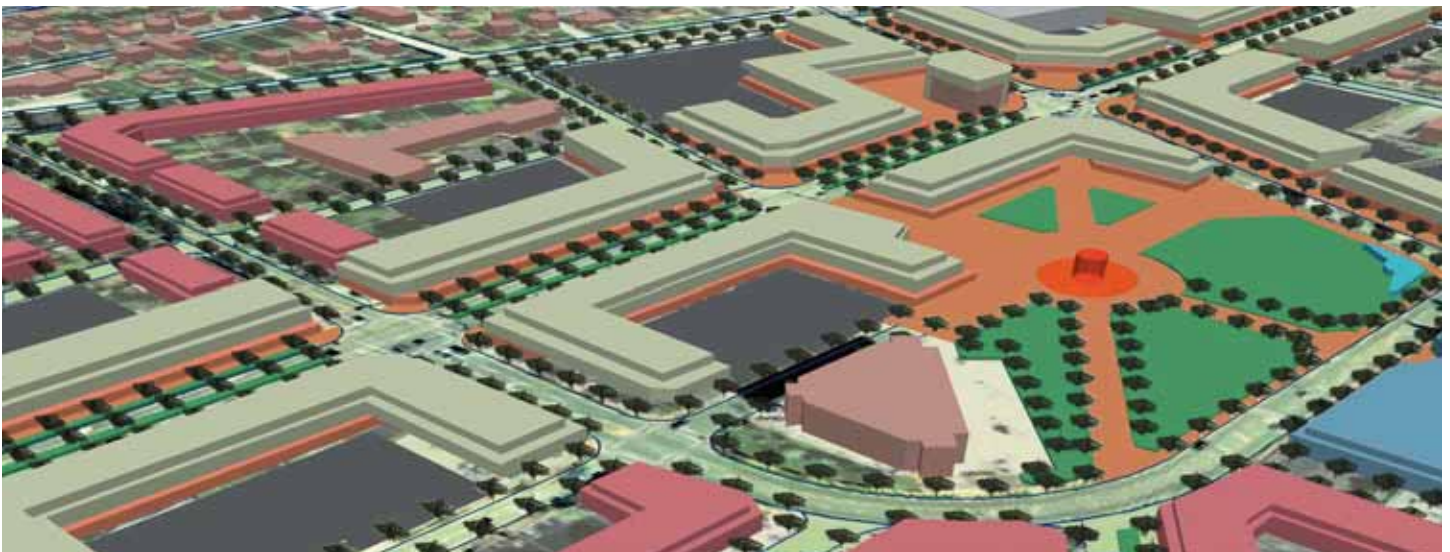


Figure IV-13
Town Square Aerial View Looking Northwesterly
Downtown Blue Ash District



Figure IV-14
Town Square Aerial View Looking South along Kenwood Road
Downtown Blue Ash District

Redevelopment Strategy

Making it Happen

Great ideas and visions are useless unless they can be backed by a strategy to implement them. The Concept Redevelopment Plan illustrates what Downtown Blue Ash could become - a competitive and viable Town Center environment, the focus of the community, excellence in development and public amenity, and the trademark of the City.

The proposed redevelopment plan is ambitious in setting forth a vision and direction for the redevelopment of the downtown area. The time frame to implement its key recommendations will range between 10-12 years and possibly more. The plan and its strategy provide for a framework and that they will be constantly evolving as economic, social and political circumstances change, and the City redirects its efforts to address the new circumstances.

Before any decisions can be made by City Council for any specific redevelopment projects, the overall financial commitment by the City and its role in a specific project will need to be determined. Project feasibility is the most important step in determining if the City should invest in a collaborative process with a selected developer.

The City's key role will be to act as a catalyst for the redevelopment. Spearheaded by its Administration, the City will work to bring together property owners, developers, investors and other stakeholders to build consensus and to identify the strategy for the implementation of quality, economically viable projects. The implementation strategy will commence the gradual manifestation of the physical changes envisioned by the Plan. Every step taken must be clear, effective, and focused.

Redevelopment is different than greenfield development. Land costs are higher, land assembly and land control are prerequisites for success. The development process is more complex, and the City's participation with respect to financial and regulatory support, is a key component for success to make redevelopment feasible. Consistent

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Examples of Redevelopment Project

Implementation

Portland Development Commission, Oregon

Pioneer Place Phase I - Project Features:

215,196 sq. ft. of retail; 16-story office tower with 316,884 sq. ft. of office space; and 830-space parking garage.

Total Project Cost: ` 147 million

Public contribution: 32 million (22%)

Private Contribution: 115 million

River Place (Ten year phasing) - Project

Features:

480 condominium, town-home and rental units; 6,000 sq. ft. of retail; 42,000 sq.ft. of office space.

Total Project Cost: 84.3 million

Public contribution: 23.5 million (28%)

Private contribution: 60.8 million

with other experiences in redevelopment where the local government takes the key role in the implementation process, the City of Blue Ash will not be the primary source of funding. The City's contribution in the form of defined public investment will serve in leveraging private investment and in making the project viable. In successful redevelopment projects, public finance contributions range between 25%-30% of the total project cost. Typically, public resources are used for land acquisition, site cleanup and preparation, infrastructure upgrades, street connections and expansions, parking development, and other 'soft' costs normally associated with pre-development activities. Among these costs, land acquisition is the one that usually demands the greatest amount of funds.

It is estimated that the redevelopment of the downtown will require public subsidies in the range of 1-2 million dollars/acre. Land assembly in the downtown could easily reach \$1,000,000/acre, and could range between 12%-15% of the total project cost.

An important strategic component of the City's implementation program will be the identification of the sources of funding that can be used for project implementation.

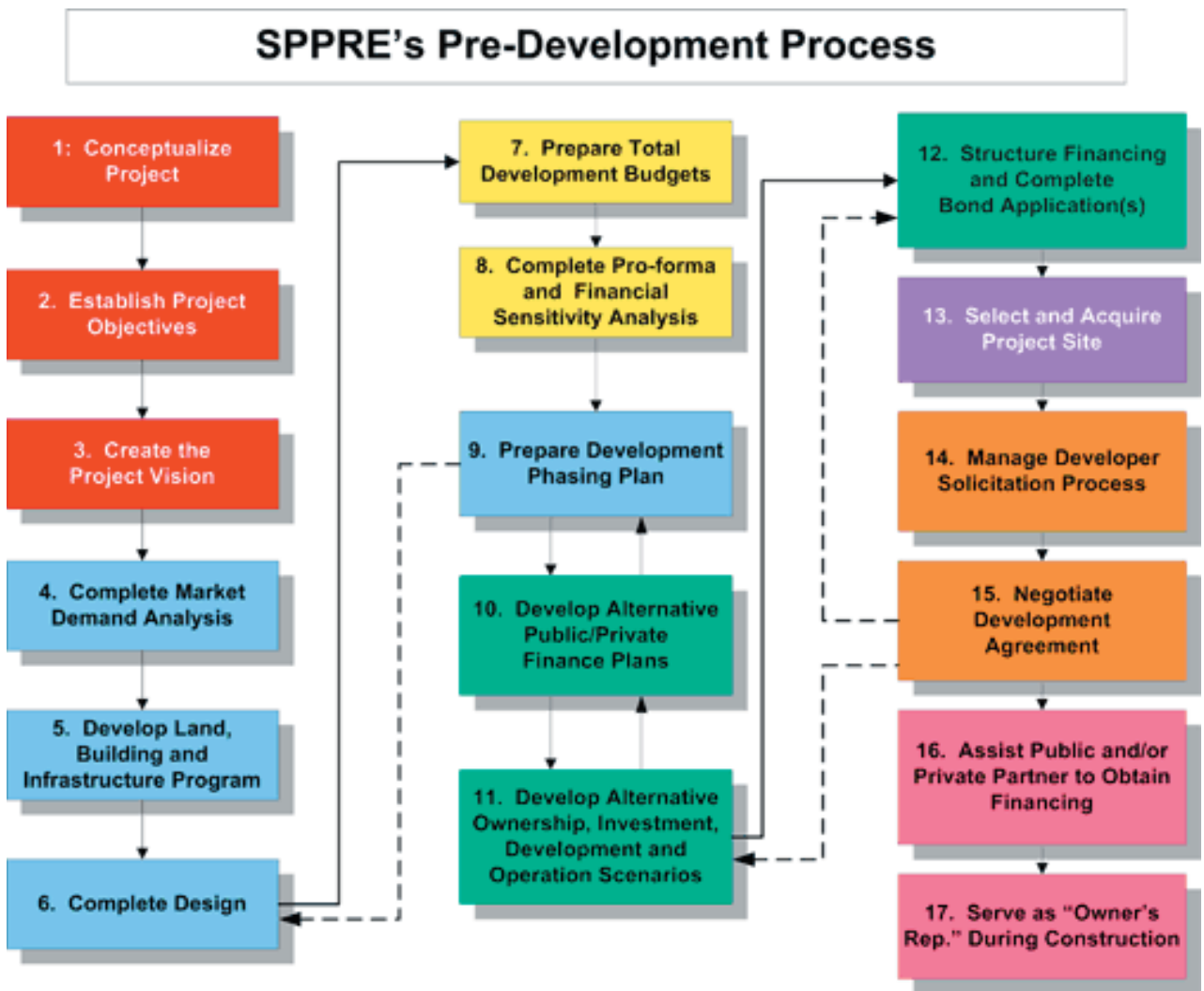
The City leaders with the guidance and management from its Administration will be the key stakeholders and will provide the strategy for implementing the plan through public-private partnerships. These partnerships are complex and require commitment, planning, support, and consensus on the chosen direction from City officials and members of planning commission. Table V-1 shows in summary the key steps of the Public-Private Finance and Pre-Development Process prepared by John Stainback who is considered the foremost expert on public-private partnerships and their role in bringing success to redevelopment projects.

The Table shows 17 steps from project conceptualization to the negotiation of a development agreement. The process that will eventually be put in place for the downtown's redevelopment may not include all these steps. However,

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the steps of budget development and financial sensitivity analysis are crucial in that they will help determine if there will be a positive financial cash flow for the project that justifies the public and private contributions. This will indicate if the project is financially feasible and if it should be pursued as a public-private partnership. The steps of the pre-development process can be undertaken by the City or via a partnership with a selected developer prior to making formal commitments.

**Table V-1
Public-Private Finance and Pre- Development Process**
(Source: SPPRE, Stainback Public/Private Real Estate, 2004)



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The Implementation Strategy outlines five key measures that if implemented will enhance the City's position in realizing the redevelopment of the downtown. These measures are listed below not in any order of priority:

1. Establish broader support and involvement
2. Undertake key projects as soon as possible
3. Establish effective urban design guidelines for current and future changes
4. Establish implementation and work program priorities and process
5. Establish implementation phases

1. Establish Broader Support and Involvement

The main goal of this measure is to garner public support for the implementation of the Plan. City Council and the Administration will spearhead and coordinate this measure in order to communicate the plan, its benefits, and its role in strengthening the downtown's future. Through a targeted effort, including meetings, presentations, discussions, and the City's web site, the redevelopment plan and its proposals will be explained and will be marketed. The City should solicit inputs from the public and will provide explanations on proposals and commitments.

As a first step, the City should establish an outreach program aimed at presenting the plan and its goals.

2. Undertake Key Projects as Soon as Possible

The implementation of the Redevelopment Plan needs a jump-start. It is essential, after the completion of the planning process that visible projects start and are completed to begin building confidence and excitement. These projects should reflect the Plan's principles and should adhere to its vision. In addition, these projects should reflect the inputs received from the stakeholders during the charrettes. The criteria to be used in selecting and in supporting such projects are as follows:

- Be consistent with the Concept Redevelopment Plan
- Make the greatest impact possible in expediting the implementation of the plan, in creating positive spin-off effects, such as increased visibility, and increased quality in development and character.

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- Project leverages public financing commitments.
- Project is cost effective.
- Project has broad community support.

Projects already in consideration and/or planned should be reevaluated for their adherence to the redevelopment plan. In addition, a list of projects should be identified and should be pursued by the City as soon as possible. These will include but not limited to:

Control the land of the two important sites (Hosbrook/Chili/Bowling Alley and Thriftway) through partnerships with developers who have an interest in redeveloping the properties according to the Concept Plan. In addition, preliminary plans and feasibility for these properties should be developed so that the City can have a good understanding of what may be possible in terms of development, costs and responsibilities, and overall project magnitude. It will take more than one year in order to identify feasibility and the proper financial structure, plans, and potential project success before the City will have the information needed to make the proper decision.

3. Establish Effective Urban Design Guidelines

Design guidelines is a powerful tool to influence the character and quality of future development. The City of Blue Ash has already in place Design Review Criteria for projects in the D-1 Downtown Commercial District. A preliminary review of these guidelines showed that they outline objectives and areas of concern with respect to building appearance, site planning and development, signage, landscaping, and circulation. However, they are very limited and at times too inflexible and specific. In addition they do not address the downtown in terms of a particular structure and organization, nor do they address overall form, massing, scale, and other larger scale considerations.

The existing guidelines do not consider the cumulative effects of the results from a project-by-project development process because they work only on site/building specific issues. Consequently, they will need to

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be appropriately expanded and adjusted to help guide the implementation of the Concept Redevelopment Plan and its goals that address the downtown as a unified environment with a distinct form and character.

Three main issues will need to be addressed:

1. Review and evaluation of the existing guidelines in collaboration with the Planning Commission. Development of a new set of guidelines.
2. Establishment of a project review process within the amended guidelines that makes it possible to review and improve small incremental development projects in a way that they may adhere to the concept of the redevelopment plan.
3. Review and evaluation of the existing D-1 zoning district in order to determine if any text amendments will be necessary.

The City Administration should also hold special educational meetings with the Planning Commission in order to increase the member's understanding of urban design issues, design guidelines, and the manner that projects will need to be evaluated.

4. Establish Implementation and Work Program Priorities

Identify all currently planned and anticipated projects and improvements by the private and public sector that may have an impact on the redevelopment of the downtown. These should also include projects and improvements planned by the City Administration. Make recommendations for changes and amendments so that any adverse consequences may be mitigated, and that these projects will support the changes contemplated by the redevelopment plan.

Establish the implementation program for the redevelopment of the downtown, identify tasks and priorities to be pursued.

Establish strategies, potential locations, and potential funding sources for needed property acquisition.

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Evaluate planned mixed use development projects outside the downtown for their potential impact and/or support for the redevelopment of the downtown.

Undertake street connectivity analysis and assessment to facilitate the implementation of the plan.

Undertake traffic impact studies to determine how to modify Kenwood Road into a boulevard-type arterial, and to reduce the impact of regional through traffic.

5. Establish Implementation Phasing

Redevelopment will be undertaken in phases. The Concept Plan is an illustration of the future downtown as if it is fully developed. Phasing of the redevelopment into definable segments makes it more possible to establish focus and expectations and facilitates its management.

Three phases are proposed for the redevelopment of the downtown:

Phase One: 1-4 years. During this phase the key projects for redevelopment should be pursued as described in the previous section. In addition, design guidelines and review procedures should also be developed as early as possible. Residential developments and the mixed use redevelopment at the Kenwood Cooper Roads should be given priority.

Phase Two: 5-9 years. Projects during this phase should include redevelopment of properties along Kenwood, south and north of Cooper, and by the Ronald Reagan Highway area. Second phase redevelopment may also include changes along Kenwood Road north from Cooper Road. In addition, redevelopment dynamics will be set in place through the market's response to the implementation of the key projects during phase one.

Phase Three: 10-12 years and beyond. During this phase specific projects and opportunities will emerge as a result of projects already built. Development at the southwestern

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and Cooper Roads may be possible. Depending on market conditions and the success of the redevelopment thus far, it would be possible during this period to reevaluate the viability and potential for redevelopment of the existing commercial space at the Kenwood and Cooper Road intersection.

It is logical to assume that first phase projects are the most important because of the potential they have to be catalytic developments. Consequently, they will need to be selected carefully and they should establish the level of quality, architectural and urban design character, and market viability recommended by the plan.

Second and third phase projects are more difficult to predict when they may be implemented. Their exact phasing is not as critical. Generally, second and third phase projects are those that are less likely to be undertaken today because, for a variety of reasons, they are not feasible and/or politically acceptable in the short term.

Conclusion

The Concept Redevelopment Plan was put in place through the initiative of the City's leadership and Administration, with the assistance and inputs from several private and public stakeholders. A vision for the retrofitting of the downtown into a Town Center has already been completed and has been presented in this document. The next steps will determine the success of the vision's implementation by finding the means and the ways to make the future downtown a reality.