

The West End Urban Design Plan

Guidelines for the Future of The Lincoln Court and Laurel Homes



Artist Rendering of Proposed HOPE VI Development in Existing Context

Source: Torti Gallas and Partners

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Introduction

A Model for Urban Living Built on Our Heritage

A New West End Community

Purpose of the Urban Design Plan

The City of Cincinnati, through a blight study of the West End neighborhood determined that the community is a deteriorated and blighted area. The following Urban Design Plan intends to establish the recommendations for the revitalization of a portion of the blighted neighborhood that qualifies as an Urban Renewal area under chapter 725 of the City's Municipal Code.

Blight Study

In 1999, the City's Office of Architecture and Urban Design conducted a blight eligibility study of the West End and found that neighborhood conditions exist that constitute a serious menace to public health, safety, economic and social liability. These conditions substantially impair the growth of the community by impeding private investment that would create employment and preserve housing opportunities. The study determined that ordinary investment in the area would not occur without the aid of the City through Urban Renewal legislation.

West End Historic Profile

The West End community is predominately an African American neighborhood with diverse income and cultural legacies. It is located adjacent to the Central Business District and the Over-the-Rhine communities. It is a proud community with a strong family heritage. Many famous people came from the West End. Ezzard Charles Avenue is

named for the heavy weight champion who grew up and trained there. The West End has endured many changes notably, the construction of the interstate 75 highway and the construction of public housing at Laurel Homes and Lincoln Court.

The original development of the Laurel Homes and Lincoln Courts housing projects marked the beginning of project based public housing in the West End. Although the total project sites take up less than one quarter of the residential land area in the community, it began a trend of public housing development throughout the neighborhood. Today there are six public housing projects in the West End, on more than fifty percent of the land area. The West End residential community is largely a public housing market with both scattered site and project based units. There is however, a stable market for historic properties in the Dayton Street Historic District where residents are capitalizing on the federal historic tax credits.

The West End today is still a diverse community. Recent developments of City sponsored single-family homes construction adds to the racial and income mix of the families in the community. New homes valued as much as \$300,000 dollars (CitiRama 2000) now adjoin renovated historic properties (Betts Longworth Historic District) and public housing (Existing Lincoln Court).



Low-income housing adjacent to recently constructed new single-family homes and historic renovations. Mound Street looking north to Clark Street

These developments required City subsidy to attract private investment. The community still exists under poor economic conditions. Long-standing neighborhood businesses are relocating outside of the area. Unemployment and poor housing remain prominent issues to residents. Newer upper income homeowners are concerned that adjacent deteriorated housing stock may affect their future home values.

The New Laurel Homes and Lincoln Court

HOPE VI

The HOPE VI project is the latest in the revitalization efforts in the community. In 1998, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded funding to the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority from the HOPE VI grant program. In separate grant proposals, CMHA calls for the demolition of the older subsidized rental units at Laurel Homes and Lincoln Court and their reconstruction on the same sites, as new mixed-income rental and homeownership units. The proposal also includes new and renovated rental and homeownership units at “off-site” locations, integrated into the existing housing fabric of the West End.

The HOPE VI project for the West End, is one of many significant investments targeted for the community. In June 2001, the City of Cincinnati agreed to support CMHA with the construction of public improvements and for the development of the new Laurel Homes. The agreement includes the use of Tax Incremented Financing (TIF)¹, initiated through municipal legislation as part of an urban renewal plan. This Urban Design Plan serves as that legislative tool.

¹ *Tax Increment Financing (TIF)* - State legislation allows the City to accept service payments in lieu of property taxes from a developer to fund public improvements, which would benefit a specific project area determined to be eligible as an urban renewal area.



Artist Rendering of Laurel Homes Streetscape

Source: Torti Gallas and Partners



Artist Rendering of New Seniors Building at Lincoln Court

Source: Glaser and Associates, Inc.

Existing Land Use Conditions

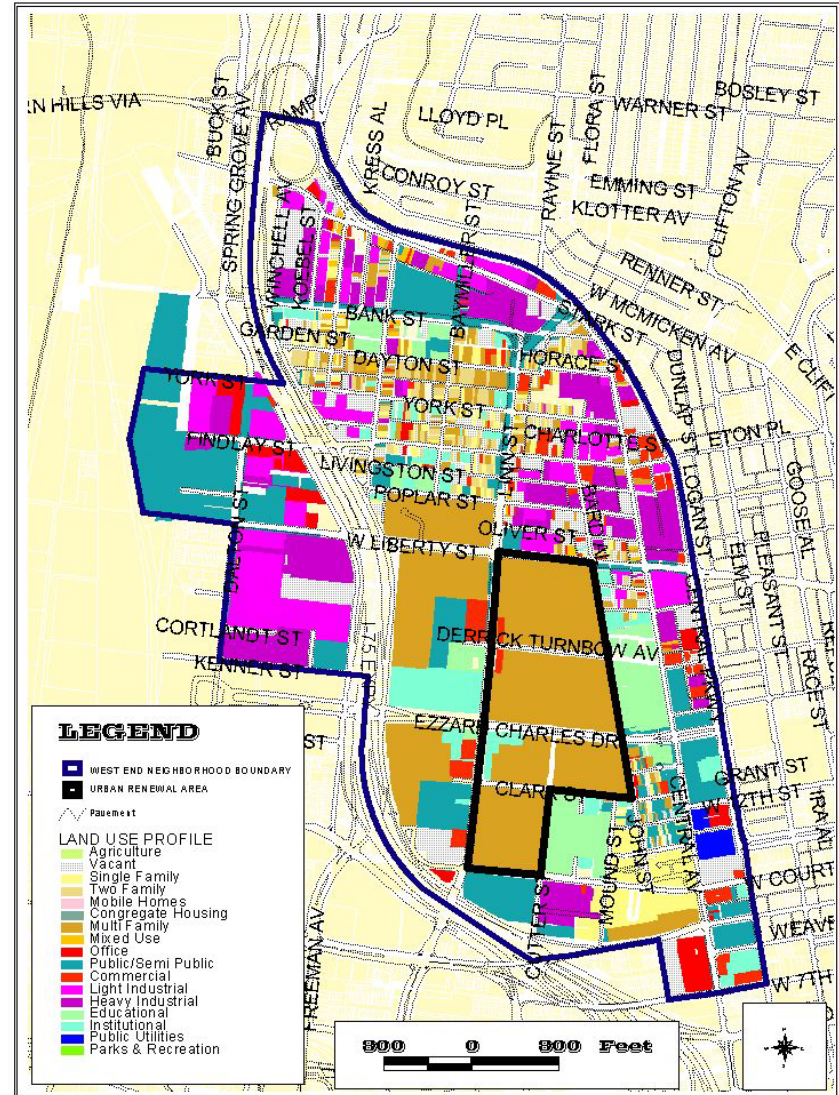
WEST END LAND USE

The existing land use in the West End neighborhood is a mix that ranges from low-density single family to medium and heavy industrial. Single-family uses are concentrated in the northwest quadrant and the southeast quadrant of the neighborhood. Both areas are part of local historic districts, the Dayton Street Historic district, located northwest and the Betts Longworth Historic district located southeast. There are several vacant and blighted lots and structures throughout the Dayton Street area. Similar conditions existed in the Betts Longworth area, until construction of the three CitiRama² projects from 1995 through 2000. Developers demolished deteriorated and blighted structures to create vacant land for new single family units.

A large portion of the West End land use is multi-family residential. The greater concentrations exist at six separate public housing projects sites. The remaining multi-family units are scattered throughout the Dayton Street Historic area north of Liberty Street and east and west of Linn Street.

Industrial land uses abut residential uses north and east along Central Parkway and Liberty Street. Many of the buildings and land in the area are in a vacant and/or deteriorating blighted condition. The other industrial land uses, west near I-75, are stable with some newly constructed buildings.

² CitiRama is a partnership of City of Cincinnati and the Cincinnati Homebuilder's Association (CHBA) that builds market rate housing. The name "CitiRama" is a registered trademark of the CHBA.



Commercial land uses, churches, parks and recreational uses are located in the residential and industrial areas. Neighborhood schools sites also integrate into the blocks of residential use.

PROPOSED URBAN RENEWAL AREA LAND USE

The land use inside the proposed urban renewal area is predominately multi-family residential. This includes the Lincoln Court and Laurel Homes. The remainder of the boundary is comprised of a strip of one-story commercial uses at Linn Street and St. Joseph Church, the neighborhood Catholic Parish on Ezzard Charles Drive.



Recent school closing site

Washburn Elementary School corner of Linn Street and Derrick Turnbow



Proposed school closing and relocation out of the West End

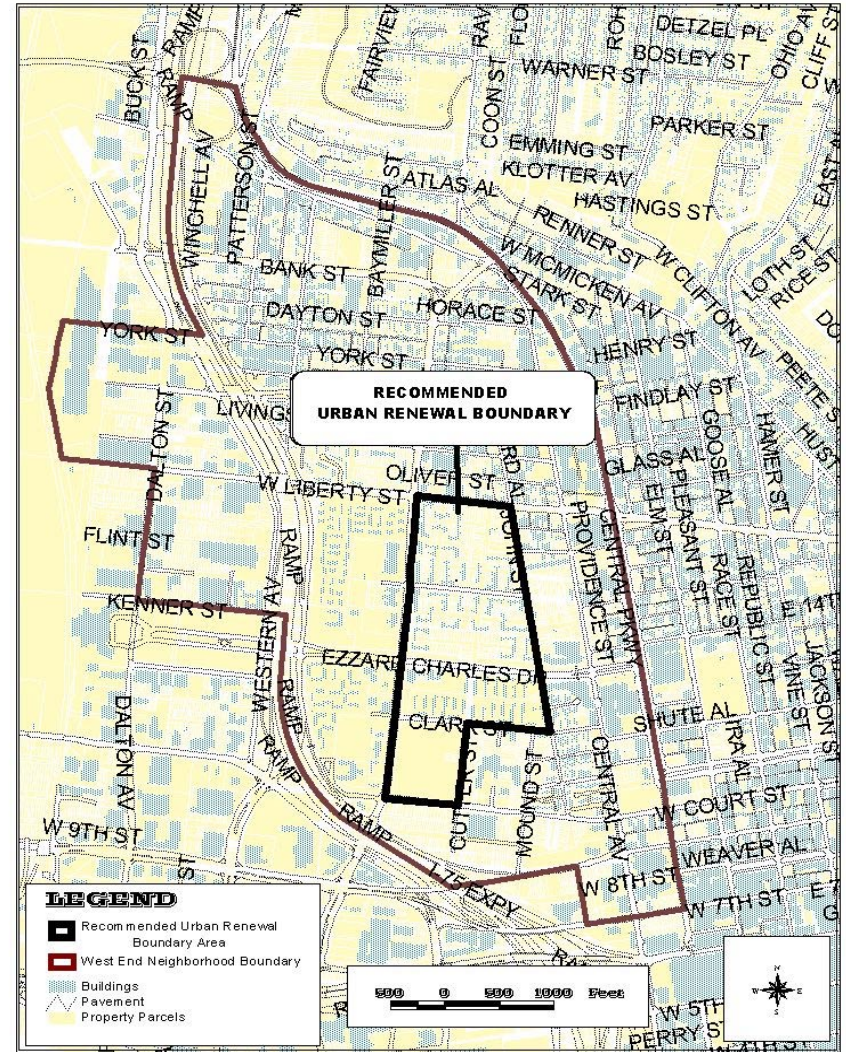
Sands Montessori Academy on Poplar Street

Existing Conditions

Proposed Urban Renewal Area

The Urban Renewal area recommended by this plan is the current Lincoln Courts and Laurel Homes public housing. The blight study documentation for all buildings and infrastructure has determined that the Lincoln and Laurel sites qualify as a deteriorating and blighted area.

The existing structures at both sites are dilapidated with out dated plumbing and electric facilities. The infrastructure that supports the area is more than 50 year old. Infrastructure cost to maintain units at Lincoln and Laurel is a growing financial burden for the CMHA organization. The HOPE VI revitalization will eliminate the blighted conditions and bring new life to the residents of the Lincoln Courts and Laurel Homes projects.



Revitalization Strategies

Future Land Use

HOPE VI

The revitalization strategy for the plan incorporates the following areas:

1. The demolition and reconstruction of the Lincoln Court housing units as a mixed income homeownership and rental apartment complex.
2. The demolition and reconstruction of the Laurel Homes housing units as a mixed use homeownership and rental apartment complex.

The goal of the Urban Renewal Plan supports the development of the HOPE VI new mixed-income housing development. The objective of creating modern rental and homeownership units in a single community follows the change in direction nationwide in the delivery of public housing.

The new housing unit designs for HOPE VI expect to attract both market and subsidized tenants. The design concept provides for housing, commercial retail and park settings at one site.

Lincoln Court – Demolition and Reconstruction

The Lincoln Court development will demolish all of the existing project area. This includes a total of 53 three and four story residential buildings, a Community Relations office, existing site improvements, utilities and roadways.



The New Lincoln Court Site Plan

Source: CMHA HOPE VI Lincoln Court Application

The development includes 500 new units designed to integrate with the surrounding community's architectural scale. All new utilities are under ground with a new roadway plan that reopens a portion of Elizabeth Street from Linn Street to Cutter Street. CMHA hopes to capitalize on the current strength of the market for homes in the West End.

The new Lincoln Court includes two and three story brick townhouses with parking courts and a senior building. The new building façade designs compliment the historic character of the West End.



Typical Building Façade at Betts Longworth Historic District
Central Avenue looking north to Ezzard Charles Drive



Typical Building Façade of new Lincoln Court Units
Court Street looking west toward Linn Street

Laurel Homes - Demolition and Reconstruction

The plan at the historic Laurel Homes site includes demolition of 21 structures of three and four story residential buildings. Demolition also includes several one story commercial structures on Linn Street. The recently renovated units at the northwest corner of Liberty Street and Linn Street will remain. The new Laurel Homes houses 630 units, including the recently renovated area and combine 372 family rental units, 157 public housing units, 161 market rental units and 128 homeownership units.

As in the Lincoln Courts, the new Laurel Homes offers a mixed-income housing opportunity in the City of Cincinnati. The plan for Laurel Homes includes a broader mix of unit types.

The design concept of the new Laurel Home buildings promotes two and three story-attached townhouses, detached single-family homes and mansion flats. The flats are oriented towards the public street and include individual front stoops, garages or parking pads at the rear, accessed by limited use narrow roadways. The goal of the design is assimilation into the existing building environment of the mostly historic West End Community.



The New Laurel Home Site Plan

Source: Torti Gallas and Partners



Artist Rendering of Laurel Homes Streetscape

Source: Torti Gallas and Partners

The HOPE VI Laurel Homes plan provides open space with parks and broad street vistas. The new infrastructure of public streets and narrow passageways frame the buildings in small blocks and tree lined pedestrian walkways.



Artist Rendering of Laurel Homes Streetscape

Source: Torti Gallas and Partners

Retail Mix

The HOPE VI project includes an element of economic development CMHA is promoting a strategy of economic growth at its sites along the Linn Street corridor. The demolition of the existing retail at Linn Street makes way for a revitalized business district between Ezzard Charles Drive and Derrick Turnbow Avenue. The new economic development area serves residents of the new Lincoln Court and Laurel Homes.



Artist Rendering of Mixed Use Commercial/Residential Streetscape at Linn Street

Source: Torti Gallas and Partners

Implementation Partnership

The HOPE VI development in the West End is a financial partnership of Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority, the Community Builders (TCB), the City of Cincinnati and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. It is also a community partnership of the residence councils from the Laurel Homes, Lincoln Court public housing and the West End Community Council. Together these partners help transform public housing into lively sustainable communities with a mixed-income resident base.

Relocation options were of vital importance to the HOPE VI implementation. CMHA and the residence councils developed a process that assured existing residents various options for relocation. Existing residents in both the Lincoln and Laurel housing could:

1. Remain at the project site by either,
 - Moving into temporary housing
 - Moving to new housing after construction or
 - Purchasing a unit through the homeownership program.
2. Rent a unit in the West End that is owned by CMHA but outside the site.
3. Rent a unit not in the West End that is owned by CMHA, or
4. Receive a Housing Choice Voucher to rent private-market housing.

Self-Sufficiency Program (SSP)

CMHA plans to embark on an aggressive, results oriented self-sufficiency program (SSP) for the new residents of HOPE VI that will expand the welfare-to-work initiatives of the State of Ohio and Hamilton County. The program will prepare residents for jobs and homeownership and provide daycare, after-school programs, transportation and counseling on maintaining self-sufficiency.

Related Activities

Other major projects have committed to development in the West End. The plans for many of these developments have determined the site in the neighborhood. A new YMCA facility is planned for Liberty Street west of Linn. The new Community Action Agency “Head Start” program will build it’s new facility on Richmond Street directly adjacent to the Lincoln Community Center. The Cincinnati Recreation Commission has committed to the renovation of the Lincoln Community Center. CMHA in partnership with the City of Cincinnati Recreation Commission plans a \$2.7 million renovation and expansion of the center in conjunction with the HOPE VI project.

Plans are underway to expand the West End Health Center complex on Ezzard Charles Drive, and the Otto Budig Academy of Cincinnati Ballet is expanding its facility on Central Parkway. The City of Cincinnati plans for streetscape improvement at Linn Street. The committed project list represent the various interests involved in the revitalization of the West End.

The planning department is working with the West End Community Council and other neighborhood stakeholders on the Context Plan. It will develop an overall community redevelopment strategy.



Lincoln Community Center

Targeted for expansion through a partnership of CMHA and Cincinnati Recreation Commission

Conclusion

The Impact of HOPE VI

AN IMPROVED WEST END COMMUNITY

The Blight Study conducted by the City of Cincinnati determined the West End eligible for Urban Renewal declaration as a blighted and deteriorating neighborhood. The expectations of the HOPE VI development are to remove a large area of blight (existing sites of Lincoln and Laurel) from the West End community. It is a major effort in revitalizing the West End community. The total financial investment in the community of more than 82 million dollars is the largest single redevelopment project budget to date in the community. The impact of the investment is a renewed interest in West End neighborhood development.

The actions described in this plan outline the effort of the partners in HOPE VI to remove blight and assist in the revitalization of a neighborhood. The total area of approximately 44 acres of new and renovated residential and commercial properties is a catalyst for growth and rebirth in the West End. The goal of mixed-income housing offers a new approach to residential development in the City of Cincinnati. The economic development plans at Linn Street complements this aggressive approach to public housing delivery.

The combination of semi-public development, supported by City sponsored public improvements is a catalyst for other Cincinnati communities. The creative use of Tax Incremented Financing is an example of City and business collaborating to implement proposed development. The success of this project creates a spirit of rejuvenation in a community long thought to be depressed and forgotten.

Appendix

Blight Study

DOCUMENTATION OF CONDITIONS

The following pages are the executive summary of the blight study conducted by the City of Cincinnati, Department of Architecture and Urban Design. It will show the scope of the blight study and criteria used to determine the blighted conditions. A full copy of the study is available for viewing upon request from interested parties.