

APPENDIX

AREA PLANS

- 2015 -



August, 2015

City of Independence, Ohio

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS PLAN

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APPENDIX

AREA PLANS

Contents

A. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS & STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Office Market Analysis
- Retail Market Analysis
- Strategic Recommendations

B. DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS ANALYSIS & STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

C. PLANNING WORKSHOPS MEMORANDUM

- Meetings Overview
- Workshop Results
- Workshops Appendix

D. OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY

- Meeting Summary
- Open House Appendix

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A. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS & STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Contents

Office Market Analysis

Retail Market Analysis

Strategic Recommendations



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OFFICE MARKET ANALYSIS: *Rockside Road Corridor*



Prepared for the City of Independence and the
City of Seven Hills

As input to Sub-Area Planning
By Planning-Next

September 11, 2014

Randall Gross / Development Economics

INTRODUCTION

An Office Market Analysis was completed for the city of Independence, with a particular focus on the Rockside Road Corridor that extends from Independence into Seven Hills. Ultimately, the purpose of the market analysis was to forecast office tenanting potential for rehabilitated, redeveloped and new space in mixed-use environments along the Rockside Road Corridor. This corridor has functioned as the premier suburban office node in Northeast Ohio for several decades, but faces increased competition from newer, mixed-use developments and renewed interest in Downtown Cleveland.

Findings from the market analysis were meant to help inform a sub-area planning effort led by Planning-Next that emerged from recommendations provided in the City of Independence's 2013 *Economic Development Strategic Plan* (EDSP). That *Strategic Plan* examined the economic development opportunities for the city and determined that there was a need to enhance the competitiveness of existing business nodes through existing building rehabilitation and upgrading, mixed-use redevelopment, and infill. A sub-area plan for the Rockside Road Corridor was meant to help provide direction on how to achieve a more competitive business environment. The effort was extended to include portions of Rockside Road in neighboring Seven Hills.

While the EDSP examined the economic development opportunities in depth, this office market analysis was meant to drill down further to determine the potential for office space and to identify the key types of office tenants that should be targeted for the corridor.

Section 1 of this report revisits office market trends in the region and the sub-market covering Independence, Seven Hills and the Rockside Road Corridor. Section 2 provides a summary of market forecasts for office demand within the market area, while Section 3 discusses the potential for specific types of office tenants in the Rockside Road Corridor. Finally, there is a discussion of the opportunities for development of an "Innovation Zone" concept for a green field site owned by the City of Independence within the Rockside Road area.

Section 1. EXISTING MARKET CONDITIONS

This section summarizes a review of existing office market conditions within the Northeast Ohio region and the Independence sub-market in particular. Office market trends are revisited and key findings discussed relating to shifts in the market for office space. These findings update the review of office market conditions conducted for the Economic Development Strategic Plan in 2013.

Cleveland & Northeast Ohio

Northeast Ohio has a total inventory of about 92.3 million square feet of office space, according to data provided by Team NEO and various brokers in the region. The Northeast Ohio Office Market, although cyclical in nature, has seen declining absorption on average since 2001. Overall, Northeast Ohio has absorbed an average of about 520,000 square feet of office space per year (300,000 in the Cleveland market), although annual take-up has ranged from negative 900,000sf to more than 1.4 million square feet of positive absorption. The market has emerged from the recession with office demand and positive net absorption of office space since 2012/13. However, the Cleveland market absorbed less than 100,000 net square feet overall in 2014.

Supply and Occupancy

According to data produced by Jones Lang LaSalle, Cleveland-area vacancy increased from about 16.4% in 2006 to a height of 22.0% in 2011, before falling back to 20.4% in 2014. Vacancy still hovers at around 20.3% in early 2015 (or 20.8%, according to NAI/Daus) and Cleveland is one of only four markets in the U.S. with office vacancies averaging more than 20%.

There has been very little new speculative office construction in the Cleveland market during the last several years, although there is some build-to-suit construction underway in the Southwest sub-market. Occupancy and rental rates have not yet risen to the level where demand would support new construction of speculative office buildings in most of the Cleveland market. At the same time that there is little new construction, several office buildings in central Cleveland are being converted to residential uses.

Rents

Cleveland-area rents have also fallen or stagnated since 2006. Rents reached \$20.00 in 2007 before falling back to \$18.93 in 2013 and \$18.98 in 2014. Rents are still lower so far, at \$18.95/sf, in 2015. Thus, despite the fact that supply has remained stagnant or even declined, demand has not pushed up rents on a regional basis. That being said, there is some differentiation in rents

by class. Rents for Class A space appear to be increasing slowly (standing at \$22.94/sf in Q1 2015) while those for Class B space are falling (\$17.36/sf) as companies move up and out of older space. Such shifts up and down in the market occur whether the overall market is growing or not.

Independence / Rockside Road

By virtue of its location and excellent accessibility to the regional interstate system, Independence developed as the region's major suburban office node and remains more competitive than other locations for attracting office tenants. This part of the South Cleveland Sub-market comprises a total office inventory of more than 4.0 million square feet, constituting about 5.0% of the regional Northeast Ohio market including Cleveland and Akron. Most of this space is concentrated in the Rockside Road Corridor. Full-service rents average about \$19 per square foot, which are among the highest in the metropolitan region. There is a large amount of available space, estimated at about 20%, including direct vacancy of at least 17%. Absorption averaged a respectable 79,000 square feet in the Independence sub-market in 2012.¹

The Independence Office Market has remained relatively stable, with slowly increasing net absorption of about 50,000 square feet per year on average since 2001. Nevertheless, Independence experienced negative absorption in about 6 of the last 12 years. The Rockside Road area is generally considered a stable market, accounting for an average of about 10% of total Northeast Ohio absorption. Location remains the key factor in Rockside Road's success in attracting businesses that draw employment from the regional labor market. The corridor's excellent geographic position between east and west, and between Cleveland and Akron-Canton, at the crossroads of the regional highway network, yields logistical advantages for companies drawing from the region's commuter shed.

Investment in Rockside Road office properties has increased during the past year, with real estate entities reinvesting in buildings resulting in higher occupancies and revenue yields. Building upgrades have included renovated lobbies, technology upgrades and other investments that help the area's buildings retain their competitiveness in the regional market.

Occupancy

As noted above, total office vacancy in Independence exceeds 20%, which is lower than it was two years ago but remains an unacceptably high vacancy rate. Between 2005 and 2013, the local vacancy rate gradually increased over time from about 21% in 3rd quarter 2005 to a peak of nearly 27% in 3rd quarter 2011. However, since that time, occupancy has improved fairly

¹ Based on data generated through CoStar.

consistently to the current 19/20% figure. In general, vacancy stayed within a range of 20 to 25% for seven years prior to 2014. In the broader South Sub-Market, vacancy had increased to a high of 26% in 2013 before falling back to 18.8% by 2014.

Thanks to reinvestment and upgrading of existing buildings, several tenants have relocated into Independence and the Rockside Road Corridor in the past year. GrafTech International, which is re-orienting itself towards the production of engineered graphite products for electronics, aerospace and energy industries, has relocated its headquarters and research activities from a 330,000 square-foot facility in Parma to 23,680 square feet in Independence as well as a 23,000 square-foot Innovation and Technology Center in adjacent Brooklyn Heights. While the relocation represents a gain for the Rockside Road Corridor, it results from a consolidation and a 25% cost-saving decrease in headquarters employment for the company in the broader Cleveland area.

Longbow Research, University Hospitals and the IRS have all recently relocated into or upgraded space in the Rockside Road Corridor. Longbow Research, which provides institutional asset management services including market research and data collection, is relocating from neighboring Seven Hills into Independence but remaining in the Rockside Road Corridor.

Rents

The broader South sub-market surrounding Independence offers average rents in the \$17.50 to \$18.50 range. Rents peaked at more than \$21 in 2001 and have not returned to that rate in 14 years. Rents fell to a low of \$15.63 in 2005 and remained relatively stagnant at around \$16-17 until 2013, when they finally exceeded \$18.00 per foot. Since then, rents have again remained relatively stable within the \$18.00 range in this sub-market. Thus, competitive rents in a desirable location have helped boost occupancy to levels that are higher than in other parts of the regional market.

Summary

The Northeast Ohio and Cleveland-area office markets are gradually recovering from the effects of the financial crisis and recession in 2010. However, the region's office market has not yet generated sufficient demand to fill vacant buildings and Cleveland is among only four markets nationwide with vacancy levels exceeding 20%. Rents remain lower than their peak years, and there is very little new construction of speculative office space. Overall supply is declining as office buildings downtown are converted into residential properties. Despite the decrease in overall supply and relatively low rents, overall vacancy remains high in this region.

The Rockside Road Corridor is still one of the most competitive locations for office tenants in the region. While buildings are aging, the City of Independence has taken pro-active steps to attract investors to rehabilitate office buildings, which has helped improve occupancy. In a stagnant regional market, much of the office leasing activity results from companies moving up into higher-class space or relocating due to consolidation or upgrading to a new location. Independence has benefitted from lateral moves - move-ups and relocations – but significant new demand has not yet been generated through net growth in the broader regional market.

Section 2. OFFICE DEMAND

Demand for office space was forecasted for the sub-market including Independence and Seven Hills. Office demand was calculated and forecasted based on projected changes in regional office employment, productivity and other economic factors affecting relevant office sectors as well as on regional absorption trends and the sub-market's capture of demand within the competitive market. The findings from this analysis are summarized below.

Regional Growth Drivers

Key office sectors will add about 1,000 jobs per year in the Akron-Canton MSA and 3,000 jobs per year in the Cleveland MSA over the next five years, based on projections generated by state and regional sources. Those jobs will generate demand for up to about 2.5 to 2.9 million square feet of office space in Northeast Ohio.

Table 1. OFFICE SPACE DEMAND IN KEY OFFICE GROWTH SECTORS, NORTHEAST OHIO, 2014-2019					
Industry	Jobs Per Year		Share in Office	Off Space Per Emp	2019 Office Demand (sf)
	Akron	Cleveland			
Finance/Insurance	100	320	0.59	235	291,150
Real Estate	40	160	0.59	235	138,650
Professional & Technical Svcs	230	1,010	0.59	235	859,650
Management of Companies	260	350	0.60	250	457,500
Administrative Services	320	1,020	0.78	190	992,950
Membership Organizations	70	210	0.65	190	172,900
TOTAL	1,020	3,070			2,912,800
Sources:	Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services; U.S. Economic Census; and Randall Gross / Development Economics.				

While there will be growing demand generated by these growth sectors, other sectors of the economy will continue to stagnate and office demand in those sectors will fall. As such, the overall net yield in office demand will be somewhat lower, forecasted optimistically at 1.6 to 1.8 million square feet region-wide. The purpose of focusing on the growth sectors is to illustrate the sources for the highest demand for office space in the regional economy.

The largest drivers of office demand in the region over the next five years will include the following, based on projected office-related employment growth for the two large northeast Ohio metropolitan areas.

Cleveland

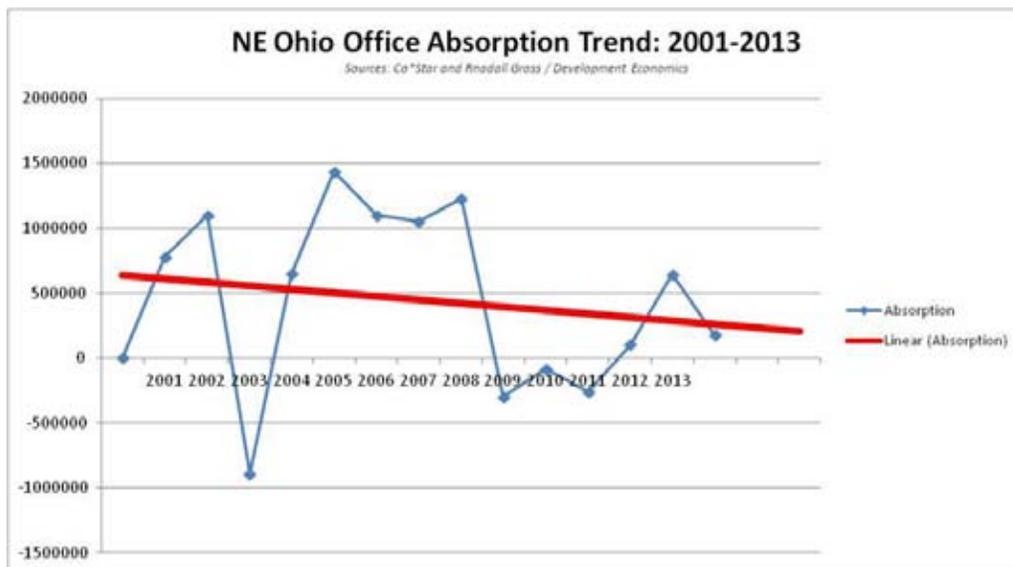
Within the Cleveland market, there will be sustained growth in administrative support services, including companies that supply employment or human resources (e.g. temp agency) services, business support services and other administrative support. There will also be substantial growth in professional and technical services, including computer systems design, management & research consulting services, scientific and technical services, architecture, engineering, accounting and tax preparation services, legal services, advertising and public relations. Other growth sectors including management support services, membership organizations and associations, and real estate. Downtown has been successful in retaining or attracting some of these sectors, such as legal services which tend to concentrate in the center city.

Akron-Canton

The Akron-Canton market will also see some growth in administrative support and employment services, engineering, accounting, management services, membership organizations and associations, and financial services.

Office Space Absorption

Office absorption averaged 480,000 square feet per year between 2001 and 2014. However, that period included several dramatic cycles with peaks in 2002, 2005-2008, and 2013; and valleys in 2003 and 2009-2012.



While there has been positive net absorption during 8 of the last 15 years, the overall trend generated through linear regression analysis suggests a gradual decrease in absorption over the long-term. Among the factors impacting on office absorption have been region's sluggish economic growth, especially among office demand-generating sectors, and an "over-hang" of Class B and C space that dampens the market. During 2014, the industrial sector saw some modest growth but office vacancies increased and absorption actually fell. Downtown Cleveland, the region's largest office sub-market, saw negative absorption of about 50,000 square feet. Meanwhile, suburban markets saw a modest net gain in absorption of 80,000 square feet. That amount is enough to support the typical floor plate of one large suburban office building but not enough to drive down the region's vacancy rate (estimated at 17% to 20%, depending on the source).

Based optimistically on *sustained* absorption rates, office space absorption of about **1.75 million square feet** is forecasted through 2019. This absorption pace is roughly equivalent to the office demand forecasted based on employment projections for office sectors, or **1.6 to 1.8 million square feet**. This number includes both leasable and built-to-suit office space demand.

Competitive Framework

There is significant competition for office tenants around Northeast Ohio. For many years, Rockside Road benefitted from the flight of tenants from Downtown Cleveland. But Downtown has been regaining some of its appeal for certain types of businesses. Several companies have relocated Downtown from the suburbs. At the same time, new mixed-use nodes on the east and west sides of Cleveland are drawing increasing numbers of office uses.

Chagrin Highlands, a 630-acre east-side corporate community in Beachwood is located in the I-271 Corridor. The competitive advantage of this location is proximity to executives who live in surrounding areas and therefore want easy access to their offices. Corporate headquarters for companies such as Eaton Corporation, along with University Hospitals' Ahuja Medical Center and extensive retail/commercial development have increased exposure for this location. Two office buildings with a total of 267,000 square feet offer leasable space for corporate and professional service tenants.

Crocker Park, in the Westlake area, offers an attractive mixed-use environment that is increasingly attracting corporate and other business uses. This west-side development offers proximity to Cleveland-Hopkins International Airport and to lake-front communities on the west side of the city. Financial services firms including Fidelity Investments, Morgan Stanley, Compass Bank, Huntington Bank, Merrill Lynch, Wells Fargo and others are well-represented here.

Office tenants and build-to-suit office uses are also attracted to various other locations throughout the Cleveland metropolitan area and to places towards the south/east like Hudson in the Akron-Canton area.

Rockside Road Office Growth Potential

Demand for office space in Independence and neighboring parts of Seven Hills was forecasted based on industry and employment forecasts yielding demand for office space in the region. This information was coupled with historic absorption trends, office inventory and supply, and an analysis of the competitive market framework.

Ultimately, the analysis determined that the Rockside Road Corridor is likely to capture ***net new demand*** for at least 265,000 leasable square feet over the next five years (2014-2019). This number does not include lateral shifts within the existing market, such as tenants moving from within Rockside Road (or consolidating from buildings somewhere in the region to a site in Rockside Road) but downsizing or occupying the same amount of space. Demand for office space in the corridor is still generated to a large extent based on the competitive advantages of the area's location and logistics, being served by the transportation network accessing downtown Cleveland, east and west suburbs, Akron-Canton, and Cleveland Hopkins International Airport. Accessibility to the broadest cross-section of the regional labor force is the key advantage for Rockside Road as a business location.

Innovation Zone

A site has been identified for creation of an "Innovation Zone" concept that would promote development of science & technology, research & development, and innovative clean manufacturing as a showcase for Independence's strengths as an innovation hub. The concept was tested through an "Opportunities Assessment" that reviewed the City's targeted industry base along with more detailed assessment of the region's technical industries.

The key science and technology sectors driving demand for office, R&D and related uses include Information Technology (IT) & Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), Engineering, and Life Sciences. The Cleveland MSA is projected to generate about 6,500 jobs in these sectors within the next five years, yielding an estimated demand for about 675,000 square feet of office, R&D and laboratory space. Despite the appealing qualities of Cleveland's life sciences brand (which is being marketed aggressively by local and state economic development agencies), by far the greatest demand will come from the IT sector and even the biosciences depend on information technology. Office demand generated by projected science and technology job growth is summarized below.

Table 2. OFFICE DEMAND GENERATED BY KEY SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY SECTORS, NORTHEAST OHIO, 2014-2019				
Key Sectors	Ann. Jobs	2019 Total	SF/Emp	Square Feet
Information Tech & BPO	605	3,024	190	574,608
Engineering	61	305	230	70,150
Life Sciences	24	120	240	28,800
TOTAL	690	3,449		673,558
Sources:	State of Ohio, BOMA, and Randall Gross / Development Economics			

Independence may have the opportunity to “target” perhaps 140,000 to 190,000 square feet of this tech-related demand for office, R&D and tech space, some of which would locate within the proposed “Innovation Zone.” The largest share of this opportunity would be generated by businesses engaged in information technology and BPO. The “target” represents a standard in terms of scale and phasing for such an endeavour. As noted in the 2013 *Economic Development Strategic Plan*, Independence has certain strengths for attracting engineering-related services such as aerospace, civil, computer hardware, environmental, and other engineering services; as well as companies engaged in information technology and BPO/business processing.

Section 3. ROCKSIDE ROAD TARGETS

Key recruitment targets for the Rockside Road Corridor are recommended based on the findings of the Market Analysis, combined with the recommendations of the Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Primary Recruitment Targets

The primary targets are described not as “industries” per se, but as company administrative and other functions that can exist among businesses in many different types of industries. Administrative support services, engineering, and management support services, which the Corridor has attracted successfully for years, remain key primary targets. In addition, companies engaged in professional and technical services, finance, and real estate are also important targets. Finally, the corridor is competitive for attracting membership-based organizations and associations which serve a regional or national base.

Innovation Zone

As noted previously, more than 6,500 jobs will be created in key sectors relating to information technology, engineering, environmental and health sciences. This growth is expected to occur despite stagnation in other sectors in the regional economy. As a result, it is important to target and recruit companies in industries that are most likely to experience growth in the near term. The largest numbers of jobs will be created in companies that hire computer systems analysts and customer support personnel. But there will also be significant job growth in software development, computer support, information security, bill and account collections, and various engineering fields. The table on the following page summarizes projected job growth in target activities relevant to Independence and the Innovation Zone.

Again, key target activities will have significant numbers of workers engaged in computer systems analysis and customer service / BPO, along with computer support, software development, information security, bill and account collections, and engineering. The latter category in particular includes civil, industrial, mechanical and environmental engineering. Other target employers are focused on actuarial services and database administration, among other activities. The technology, BPO, engineering and other services would be complemented by the attraction of manufacturing companies using “clean” computer-aided technology and tech-heavy production systems. Employment growth among these activities is summarized below.

Table 3. TARGET TECHNOLOGY-RELATED BUSINESS ACTIVITIES, INDEPENDENCE, 2019		
Sector/Service	Annual Growth Rate	Total Jobs
Computer & Info Science	3.9%	70
Computer Systems Analysis	2.5%	1,250
Software Developers/Systems	2.3%	830
Database Administration	2.1%	200
Network Systems Admin	2.6%	170
Computer Support Specialists	2.4%	660
Information Security/Web Dev	1.4%	560
Other Computer Support	1.7%	270
Actuarial Services	0.8%	160
Bill and Account Collections	1.1%	580
Customer Service	0.9%	1,300
Civil Engineering	0.9%	130
Industrial Engineering	0.5%	120
Mechanical Engineering	0.4%	100
Environmental & Health Sciences	2.9%	130
TOTAL		6,530
Sources:	State of Ohio, BOMA, and Randall Gross / Dev. Econ.	

“Clean” manufacturing would be an attractive use within the Innovation Zone. However, the *Economic Development Strategic Plan* and further research continue to suggest that Independence is in heated competition with other communities throughout Ohio for a limited number of such uses. Some of the best opportunities relate to food & beverage production, which is a growing and typically, “clean” industry that is attracted to logistical nodes like Independence. Product assembly is an opportunity and the region is expected to add about 40 assembly jobs per year in the next few years. Growth is also expected for machinists and computer-controlled machining.

Companies such as contractors engaged in testing, inspections, precision tooling, sorting, and sampling would be appropriate as part of an Innovation Zone business mix. Fabricated metal products, computer electronics, and transportation equipment production industries will continue to expand with the economic recovery.

Initial Marketing & Development Strategies

Strategic planning guidance for business recruitment has been provided in the *Economic Development Strategic Plan* (EDSP). This input is summarized below along with additional recommendations for reaching out to the target tenants for Rockside Road.

Building Product and Environment

As noted in the 2013 *Economic Development Strategic Plan*, preferences for office design, format and location are changing in some sectors. Open-space plans are becoming more popular as they are more efficient, reduce costs, and help promote staff networking and team-building. Urban, mixed-use locations are becoming more attractive than office parks for some businesses that are trying to recruit young “smart” tech and service workers. Downtown Cleveland is once again attracting large businesses due to its re-emerging “vibe,” central location and amenity value.

In order to attract office tenants and absorb space at a higher rate, it has been recommended that consideration be given to assisting investors and companies engaged in rehabilitating and upgrading their buildings. It was also noted that there is a need to consider reformulating portions of the Rockside Road Corridor to establish more walk-able, mixed-use nodes. The rehabilitation of office space can be accomplished where amenity value helps to sustain rents and build residual value for investors. Redevelopment is also an option, although infill may be most appropriate. Attention to Rockside Road’s product is important because of the need to sustain value and attract or retain Class A tenants. Such value in turn helps sustain the tax base and fund local services. New product allows existing tenants to “move up” and stay within Rockside Road and also for recruitment of potential “drop in” uses. Since the completion of the *EDSP*, the City of Independence has already taken steps to successfully attract investors through incentives to promote building rehabilitation.

The problem with new construction is that it would take 10 years at projected rates to absorb the 1.1 million square-foot “overhang” of rentable office space (or perhaps 700,000-800,000 square feet of competitive space) available in the South Sub-market, before demand warrants construction of new multi-tenant buildings. That situation does not discount the possibility of large “drop-in” and build-to-suit projects (such as companies relocating from Akron or other parts of the NE Ohio market for accessibility), or for the possibility of creating “move-up” space.

Strategic recommendations for strengthening the Rockside Road Corridor were produced in a separate Strategic Planning document, but the overall focus would be on identifying and targeting functionally-obsolete buildings and sites.

Nodes should be established for redevelopment including mixed-use, walk-able districts with supportive uses including restaurants and retail businesses.

Where target buildings and nodes intersect, efforts should be made to establish a framework for redevelopment. Where target buildings do not intersect with target nodes, focus would be on rehabilitation/enhancement of existing buildings and new infill commercial/mixed-use development within that node. New mixed-use development could include some new Class A office space that allows for existing tenants within the Rockside Road Corridor and South Sub-Market to “move up” to new space in an exciting new node. Such space would be developed almost as “build-to-suit” through discussions with existing area tenants.

Ultimately, the addition of some new office space will allow the Rockside corridor to retain the existing businesses that might otherwise relocate to newer Class A space. The new space could also help attract new businesses to the community. In that case, the creation of some new space would not have to result in a “zero-sum” game for retaining Rockside tenants.

It is important to create amenity value in support of office and other employment-generating uses such as through high-end residential and mixed-use development nearby. Over the longer term, if there is a market opportunity expansion of office space, it would be better to integrate office uses into mixed-use development.

Innovation Zone

The concept for an “Innovation Zone” for Independence at a City-owned site would be oriented to R&D, technology-based, and clean manufacturing businesses as an approach for diversifying the tax base. A separate Strategic Planning document has provided some detail on marketing, development and financing strategies for the Innovation Zone. The strategies build on initial recommendations as outlined below.

First, it is important to establish a strong anchor for the Innovation Zone site will be absolutely critical for marketing and attracting spin-off and other uses. Key anchors might include a research arm of a respected academic institution, the R&D division of a corporate brand, or a large government contractor.

To enhance the competitiveness of the Innovation Zone, a package of incentives and amenities would be offered and marketed pro-actively. Up-front site infrastructure would need to be put into place. As noted above, focus should be given to identifying an anchor use(s) that can establish the site and brand it as a center for innovation and production. Finally, the marketing niche would be oriented to engineering and information technology.

Downtown Independence

As the population and commercial base grows and downtown becomes more of an attractive destination, it could attract small office uses including potentially design, technology and professional service firms. However, the initial focus for office development and tenant recruitment would be concentrated in the Innovation Zone and Rockside Road Corridor.

RETAIL MARKET ANALYSIS: *Downtown Independence*



Prepared for the City of Independence and the
City of Seven Hills

As input to Sub-Area Planning
By Planning-Next

September 11, 2014

Randall Gross / Development Economics

INTRODUCTION

A Retail Market Analysis was completed for the city of Independence, with a particular focus on the city's Downtown area. The purpose of the retail market analysis was to forecast retail, restaurant, entertainment, and personal services potential for rehabilitated, redeveloped and new space or sites in Downtown Independence. The Downtown area no longer serves as the primary retail-commercial node for the city, so there is a need to look at potential for Downtown and to identify opportunities for reinventing its role within the competitive market.

Findings from the market analysis were meant to help inform a sub-area planning effort led by Planning-Next that emerged from recommendations provided in the City of Independence's 2013 *Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP)*. That *Strategic Plan* examined the economic development opportunities for the city and determined that there was a need to enhance the performance of Downtown due to its importance to the city's overall brand and as a the city's traditional business district. A sub-area plan for Downtown was meant to help provide direction on how to enhance the competitiveness of the area for business and also how best to integrate housing and other uses.

This retail market analysis was meant to define the potential for retail space and to identify the key types of retail uses that should be targeted for recruitment to the Downtown area.

Section 1 of this report summarizes the Downtown area's existing uses and analyzes its physical characteristics and positioning as a commercial business node. Section 2 provides a summary of market forecasts for retail demand within the broader trade area, while Section 3 discusses the potential for specific types of retail tenants and uses in the Downtown area. Finally, there is a discussion of the "recommended mix" of business uses that would help strengthen Downtown as a commercial and mixed-use node.

Section 1. SITE ASSESSMENT & EXISTING CONDITIONS

This section summarizes existing conditions and assesses the Downtown Independence area as a location for commercial business uses. Key characteristics including access and visibility, existing inventory and surrounding uses, building stock, marketing and others are assessed as they relate to the overall competitiveness of Downtown Independence as a retail and commercial business location.

Access and Visibility

The commercial heart of Downtown Independence is situated along several blocks straddling Brecksville Road, roughly between Daisy Avenue on the north and the Public Square, on the south side. Chestnut Street is the main cross street, providing access west into Seven Hills. However, the civic “heart” of Independence is actually located further south at the Community Campus west of Brecksville Road along Selig Road. In this area are located the City’s Fire Department, Police Department, City Hall, Public Library, and various recreation facilities including a large community center and an outdoor pool.

While Brecksville Road (Ohio Route 21) carries some commuter traffic north to Downtown Cleveland from the region’s southern suburbs, Most north-south commuter traffic is now concentrated on I-77, just a few blocks to the west. Brecksville Road daily traffic counts (ADT) averaged about 15,000 in Independence in 2013. This number compares with more than 90,000 on I-77. Furthermore, commercial uses on Brecksville Road compete with those located just a few blocks north on Rockside Road, which has ADTs exceeding 101,000, according to the Ohio Department of Transportation. Finally, there is only limited east-west traffic (connecting to I-77), generated primarily by local households in Independence and surrounding communities.

Interstates 77 and 480 provide excellent access from all directions to Independence, but Downtown Independence lacks direct access and exposure to I-77 and to other major traffic routes. Even Chestnut Street, the main cross street providing Downtown with access west into Seven Hills, provides no eastward access due to the presence of the Cuyahoga River and the Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP). Thus, even local access is constrained from the east. Existing Downtown traffic is likely to be sourced locally or from the south in Brecksville.

But more importantly, Downtown is isolated from and lacks exposure to the Rockside Road employment base, which is the primary driver for retail demand in the area. Those office workers account for an estimated 76% of the trade area’s retail market. Commuter patterns do not draw these thousands of

workers east and south to Downtown Independence, since it's much easier to access I-77 and I-480 directly from Rockside Road. Demand generated by area workers is siphoned off by retail businesses located along the Rockside Road Corridor. Because of the location of the Downtown business district and associated commuter patterns, Downtown draws its primary market from a narrow north-south trade area along Brecksville Road.

Existing Uses

Downtown Independence has a total inventory of approximately 110,000 square feet of commercial space, but only 40% of that space is utilized by retail businesses. Most space is either occupied by personal and other service businesses or is vacant. As a result, Downtown does not function as a true shopping district. Compounding this issue is the fact that Downtown does not serve as the civic hub of the community, with most City offices and public community functions concentrated at the Community Campus, located southwest of Downtown. With most retail and employment-generating businesses situated along Rockside Road, limited commercial use on Brecksville Road, and City Hall located elsewhere; Downtown Independence does not really function as the "Main Street" of Independence.

Table 1. EXISTING RETAIL INVENTORY, DOWNTOWN INDEPENDENCE, 2014		
Primary Category	Square Feet	Share
Convenience Goods	16,540	30.2%
Shopper's Goods	19,500	35.6%
Eating & Drinking	5,572	10.2%
Entertainment	1,200	2.2%
Personal Services	5,500	10.1%
Vacant	6,400	11.7%
TOTAL	54,712	100.0%
Sources:	Cuyahoga County Assessor, Businesses, Carnegie Companies, and Randall Gross / Development Economics.	

Among the largest anchor uses in Downtown Independence are non-retail service businesses such as Vodrazka Funeral Home. With less than 55,000 square feet of retail space (including 6,400 square feet vacant), Downtown Independence would barely qualify as a convenience center and is even smaller than most "neighborhood" centers (of 70,000 to 90,000 square feet). As shown above, about one-third of retail space is occupied by convenience uses such as the CVS drugstore and the flower shop, but without an anchor supermarket. About one-third is occupied by "shopper's goods" stores which draw from a

broader trade area, but with less than 20,000 square feet of these uses, there is no destination appeal. Further, the “shopper’s” goods stores in Independence are still geared mainly to a local market including Ace Hardware and the auto parts store. While there is some nominal space taken for restaurants and personal services, it is barely enough to support a handful of such businesses.

For all intents and purposes, there is no entertainment per se in Downtown Independence. The 1,200 square-foot Independence Community Theater has been included here for illustrative purposes but it is not really a commercial entertainment use, serving more a community purpose and operating as a not-for-profit entity. Coupled with eating & drinking opportunities, entertainment can help broaden the market for a Downtown area and increase its destination draw. Without these uses, Downtown is much more dependent on the local market base. And in the case of Independence, exposure is limited to the broadest share of the retail market base, driven by Rockside Road workers.

The City’s Middle School site offers opportunities for mixed-use redevelopment in the heart of the Downtown area. The site has good exposure on Brecksville Road and is located adjacent to convenient retail and commercial uses. Because the site is large, it does not require significant assembly of individual parcels. And because the site is under public control, the City can work with developers to help leverage redevelopment in a way that is suitable and acceptable to the community.

Surrounding Uses

The area surrounding Downtown on the west includes primarily single-family residential neighborhoods of Independence and, further west, Seven Hills. These tidy, well-manicured neighborhoods include some residents who originally moved to Independence decades ago and are “aging in place” in their homes. Just south of Downtown, as noted before, is the Community Campus which includes City Hall and several municipal offices and community functions. Further south is the city of Brecksville, which offers a somewhat more substantive downtown area including retail, residential and office uses.

Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP). East of Downtown is the massive Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP), which extends north along the Cuyahoga River and south towards Akron. The Canal Visitors Center, an important intake hub for the park, is located south-east of Downtown along the river at Hillside Road. The park provides a wonderful recreation resource for the region and a potential source of tourists, but also effectively creates a natural boundary for the trade area for Downtown Independence. Downtown is not likely to draw much traffic from the east due to limited access and the presence of this park.

Physical Characteristics

Most of the retail/commercial space in Downtown Independence is clustered within about four blocks along Brecksville Road between Daisy and Elmwood avenues (or the Public Square). Several commercial spaces were built as strip shopping centers, including the largest, Independence Square Plaza. Others were built as stand-alone buildings. Independence Square is oddly configured in a shape that is perpendicular to Brecksville Road, which has impeded effective marketing of this center. Retail spaces located closest to Brecksville benefit from good exposure and ample parking. But spaces located further towards the “back” or eastern end of the center lack exposure. The challenges inherent in marketing those back spaces are evident in the amount of vacant space concentrated at the eastern end of the center (as of summer 2014).

In addition to commercial spaces, there are several churches and office structures in the Downtown area. St. Michael Catholic Church is situated in a prominent place, anchoring the center of Downtown at Chestnut and Brecksville. As noted before, the Vadrzka Funeral Home is also a large anchor in the Downtown area, situated in a long building with excellent exposure near Valley View Drive. Several banks and office buildings are scattered throughout the area, including on side streets. Offices also occupy first-floor space in several of the shopping centers, which reduces the retail commercial activity fronting onto Brecksville Road.

The Public Square area is a relatively attractive park space with traditional buildings set back around the square. The large, attractive Independence United Methodist Church is located in this area. The old City Hall building is now utilized by the Independence Community Theater, as noted above. The theater helps provide an active use on the Square. Several buildings in the Downtown area offer the remnants of colonial design or features (such as the mini Liberty Bell on the shopping center) that once helped brand the city as a traditional small town. But overhead wires and lighting distract from that concept.

Downtown offers attractive sidewalks, brick pavers, and infrastructure such as bus shelters. Overall, Downtown is potentially walk-able but the lack of active retail frontage and pedestrian accommodation make walking and shopping less desirable. Strip centers with up-front parking also distract from the possibilities of Downtown offering a more intimate, walkable shopping experience in Independence as compared with the traffic-laden Rockside Road Corridor.

Marketing and Management

Downtown does not currently offer a mechanism devoted specifically to marketing, management or development. The streets, sidewalks and public infrastructure are well-maintained by the City. But there is little outreach

marketing or recruitment specifically for Downtown, nor a management entity focused specifically on Downtown development, financing, or management. The 2013 *Economic Development Strategic Plan* (EDSP) provided the specific recommendation for a Downtown Improvement Authority (DIA) to assist small business growth and help leverage private investment. The DIA would help package programs and incentives, provide technical assistance to businesses, and link with tax increment financing to achieve broader redevelopment objectives as outlined in the EDSP.

Summary

Downtown Independence offers the opportunity for a walk-able commercial district that is distinct from Rockside Road and attractive for residents and visitors alike. There are several businesses including a drugstore and a hardware store that provide necessary goods and services to the community. However, there is less than 50,000 square feet of occupied retail commercial space (as of summer 2014) and no anchors. The area lacks the kinds of dining and entertainment uses that help to strengthen the destination markets for downtowns and complement other uses including housing. A key question pursued in the sections that follow relate to the demand for more anchor retail uses, dining and entertainment in the Downtown area.

Section 2. RETAIL TRADE AREA DEMAND

Demand for retail space was forecasted for Independence with a particular focus on Downtown. Retail demand was calculated and forecasted based on projected household demographic patterns in the Downtown Independence Trade Area, as well as on potential expenditures generated by tourism, workers, and inflow for destination uses. The findings from this analysis are summarized below.

Trade Area Definition

As noted in the previous section, the Downtown Independence Trade Area (from which Downtown draws at least 80% of its sales) is relatively constricted. The Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP) provides a natural boundary on the east. Rockside Road forms a northern boundary and I-77 bounds the trade area on the west. Only to the south does the trade area extend for some distance towards the city of Brecksville, from where some commuters and others travel north into Independence and to Rockside Road for work, business or shopping.

For the purposes of this analysis, the trade area has been disaggregated into five sub-areas. Sub-Area A is the central business district (CBD) or Downtown area, including surrounding neighborhoods within walking distance that form part of the primary trade area. Sub-area B is the Brecksville Road corridor, the other portion of the primary trade area. Sub-area C is the Rockside Road Corridor where there are significant numbers of workers who form part of the potential market for Downtown Independence. Sub-area D is the community of Seven Hills, which is accessible to Downtown from the west and forms part of the market for Downtown Independence retailers and other businesses. Finally, Sub-area E comprises the Brecksville area and south-west, which form part of the Brecksville Road commuter-shed. Other areas are considered as part of the “destination” market or inflow to the trade area for Downtown Independence.

Demographic Trends

Downtown Independence Trade Area demographics have remained relatively stagnant, but incomes are increasing in the area. Between 2000 and 2014, population within much of the trade area declined. The most significant decrease was in Sub-Area B, which comprises a significant part of the primary trade area along Brecksville Road. This area saw a population decrease of nearly 400 or 6.5%. Within the Downtown area itself, population fell by about 20 or 0.3%. But population also fell in the Rockside Road area and in Seven Hills. The only portion of the trade area with growing population base was Brecksville. Demographic trends are summarized in the following table.

Table 2. DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS, RETAIL TRADE AREA, INDEPENDENCE CBD, 2000-2014					
Factor	2000	2010	2014	2000-2014 Change	
				Number	Percent
<u>Trade Area A</u>					
Population	5,690	5,731	5,672	(18)	-0.3%
Households	2,136	2,220	2,206	70	3.3%
HH Income	\$ 98,158	N/A	\$ 80,419	\$ (17,739)	-18.1%
<u>Trade Area B</u>					
Population	5,789	5,521	5,410	(379)	-6.5%
Households	2,080	2,063	2,043	(37)	-1.8%
HH Income	\$ 165,601	N/A	\$ 111,073	\$ (54,528)	-32.9%
<u>Trade Area C</u>					
Population	1,435	1,402	1,361	(74)	-5.2%
Households	543	550	535	(8)	-1.5%
HH Income	\$ 94,820	N/A	\$ 83,621	\$ (11,199)	-11.8%
<u>Trade Area D</u>					
Population	6,693	6,645	6,539	(154)	-2.3%
Households	2,603	2,740	2,698	95	3.6%
HH Income	\$ 93,370	N/A	\$ 79,759	\$ (13,611)	-14.6%
<u>Trade Area E</u>					
Population	7,594	8,135	8,157	563	7.4%
Households	2,953	3,286	3,300	347	11.8%
HH Income	\$ 126,650	N/A	\$ 104,717	\$ (21,933)	-17.3%
Note:	Income expressed in constant 2013 dollars.				
Sources:	Nielsen. and Randall Gross / Development Economics.				

The household base within the trade area is not large, but it has been increasing. While population fell in most of the trade area, the household base actually increased in some places. In Brecksville, the number of households increased by nearly 12% (or 400). The household base also increased in the Downtown area and in Seven Hills. The number of households increased, even with a decrease in population, because of declining household size. In areas like Downtown Independence, the aging of the population means that there are more households with fewer people (especially children).

Due to the effects of the recession, household incomes fell throughout most of the trade area. The highest incomes are found in the Brecksville Road Corridor (\$111,000) and in Brecksville itself (\$105,000). The lowest incomes in

the trade area are in Seven Hills and in the heart of Independence, both of which have household incomes of about \$80,000. Again, an aging population signals a decrease in household incomes as two-wage earning households become more dependent on pensions or savings. The Brecksville Road Corridor saw the largest decrease in household incomes since 2000, at nearly one-third (in constant dollars – adjusted for inflation). Meanwhile, households near the Rockside Road Corridor saw the smallest real decrease in incomes (about 12%) since 2000.

Demographic Forecasts

Over the next five years, the trade area is expected to continue seeing a decrease in population. But importantly, growth in the household base will slow if fewer young families move in to the area to complement the aging households and balance the demographic mix.

Table 3. DEMOGRAPHIC FORECASTS, RETAIL TRADE AREA, INDEPENDENCE CBD, 2014-2019				
Factor	2014	2019	2014-2019 Change	
			Number	Percent
<u>Trade Area A</u>				
Population	5,672	5,609	(63)	-1.1%
Households	2,206	2,189	(17)	-0.8%
HH Income	\$ 80,419	\$ 82,421	\$ 2,002	2.5%
<u>Trade Area B</u>				
Population	5,410	5,293	(117)	-2.2%
Households	2,043	2,015	(28)	-1.4%
HH Income	\$ 111,073	\$ 117,292	\$ 6,219	5.6%
<u>Trade Area C</u>				
Population	1,361	1,318	(43)	-3.2%
Households	535	519	(16)	-3.0%
HH Income	\$ 83,621	\$ 93,675	\$ 10,054	12.0%
<u>Trade Area D</u>				
Population	6,539	6,431	(108)	-1.7%
Households	2,698	2,655	(43)	-1.6%
HH Income	\$ 79,759	\$ 88,448	\$ 8,689	10.9%
<u>Trade Area E</u>				
Population	8,157	8,197	40	0.5%
Households	3,300	3,320	20	0.6%
HH Income	\$ 104,717	\$ 112,895	\$ 8,178	7.8%
Note:	Income expressed in constant 2013 dollars.			
Sources:	Claritas, Inc. & Randall Gross / Development Econ.			

The total number of households within the trade area is expected to fall by about 84, despite the addition of about 20 households in Brecksville. Households or “rooftops” are a primary indicator of retail demand since households generate retail expenditures. That being said, household incomes are also an important measure of demand, since more disposable income can generate more retail expenditures even if the population and household base are declining.

As the region and the nation continue to recover from the 2010 recession, household incomes will increase. All portions of the trade area will see an increase in household incomes over the next several years. The biggest increase will be among households in the Rockside Road area, where incomes will grow by about 12%. Incomes will increase by 11% in Seven Hills. But the area surrounding Downtown Independence will only see modest income growth of about 2.5%, again partly due to the aging of the population base.

Household TPI Forecasts

Based on the demographic projections, total personal income (TPI) within the trade area can be forecasted. Between 2014 and 2019, TPI will increase by \$65.2 million or 6.5% to a total of \$1.075 Billion.

Table 4. TPI FORECASTS, INDEPENDENCE CBD PRIMARY TRADE AREAS, 2014-2019				
Trade Area	TPI (000)		2014-2019 Change	
	2014	2019	Amount	Percent
A	\$ 177,404	\$ 180,420	\$ 3,015	1.7%
B	\$ 226,922	\$ 236,343	\$ 9,421	4.2%
C	\$ 44,737	\$ 48,617	\$ 3,880	8.7%
D	\$ 215,190	\$ 234,829	\$ 19,640	9.1%
E	\$ 345,566	\$ 374,811	\$ 29,245	8.5%
Total	\$ 1,009,820	\$ 1,075,021	\$ 65,202	6.5%
Notes:	Total personal income (TPI) expressed in thousands of constant 2013 dollars.			
Source:	Randall Gross / Development Economics.			

Thus, despite the expected decrease in population and household base, growth in incomes will sustain an increase in total personal income (TPI). The fastest growth in TPI will be in Seven Hills, where TPI will expand by 9.1%. However, the largest share of income growth will be in Brecksville, which will add nearly \$30 million in total personal income over the five-year period.

Household Expenditure Potentials

Trade-Area demand (or expenditure potential) represents that share of total income available for the purchase of retail goods and services. This amount is calculated based on the share of income spent in each specific type of retail business or service establishment. Between 2014 and 2019, trade area retail expenditure potential is expected to increase by \$52.6 million or 15.4% to a total of \$394.2 million. Again, the largest share of this growth in expenditure potential will be concentrated in Brecksville, which is located within commuting distance to Downtown Independence.

Tourism Retail Demand

Retail demand generated by visitors to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP) was also calculated. The number of out-of-town visitors totals an average of about 1,969,000 per year. The average spend per visitor was \$64.23 in the regional economy, excluding lodging and transportation.

Table 5. TOURISM-GENERATED RETAIL DEMAND, DOWNTOWN TRADE AREA		
Factor	Factor	Total
Annual Tourists		1,969,063
Total Spend	\$ 64.23	\$ 126,478,000
Restaurants	\$ 19.66	\$ 38,702,852
Retail Trade	\$ 6.87	\$ 13,529,402
Entertainment	\$ 6.68	\$ 13,157,642
Sources:	U.S. National Park Service, Smith Travel Research, and Randall Gross / Development Economics.	

About \$38.7 million is spent by tourists on restaurants, another \$13.5 million on retail shopping and \$13.2 million on entertainment. This demand represents a potential market for Downtown Independence due to the proximity of the park's visitor centers to Downtown and the possibility of co-branding and tie-ins that could increase exposure for Downtown businesses. It is important to note that, while representatives of existing businesses have not garnered significant sales from tourists, none are really oriented to that market. There is nevertheless the opportunity to increase capture of such sales potential given the proximity of Downtown Independence to CVNP.

Rockside Road Employee-Generated Demand

As noted earlier, Rockside Road workers generate a significant share of the demand for retail goods and services in Independence. It is estimated that those workers currently generate about \$82 million in retail, service and eating & drinking expenditures. The amount is expected to increase by \$3.5 million to \$85.5 million by 2019.

Table 6. EMPLOYEE-GENERATED RETAIL DEMAND, ROCKSIDE ROAD (\$000)			
Type of Business	2014 (\$000)	2019 (\$000)	Change (\$000)
Convenience	42,335	43,849	1,514
Shopper's Goods	29,842	31,062	1,220
Entertainment	416	436	20
Eating & Drinking	6,564	7,205	640
Personal Services	2,822	2,921	98
TOTAL (\$000)	81,980	85,473	3,493
Sources:	Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA); Rockside Road businesses, and Randall Gross / Development Economics.		

The largest share of employee expenditures is on convenience goods and services (e.g., gas stations, convenience or take-out food, etc). There are a number of sandwich and take-out convenience food establishments in the area that form part of this mix. About one-third of worker expenditures are generated for a wide variety of shopper's goods ranging from apparel and accessories to auto parts. To some extent, such needs are not necessarily being met in the Rockside Road Corridor at present. Full-service dining and personal services round out the types of retail needs that are generated by Rockside Road workers.

Summary

Downtown Independence has a primary trade area that is constrained on three sides by highways, corridors or parks which form boundaries over which consumers do not by necessity travel. As such, the trade area is elongated south along Brecksville Road into Brecksville, which forms an important source market for goods and services in Downtown Independence. Downtown businesses also generate some sales from Independence residents living near Downtown, from those in the Brecksville Road Corridor, residents of Seven Hills and those living and working in or near the Rockside Road Corridor. Since 2000, this area has generally experienced demographic stagnation, as the population is

aging and fewer young professional families are moving into the area. Population and incomes fell, although declining household size temporarily boosted the number of households. Within the next five years, household growth will slow but incomes are gradually picking up as the region and nation emerge from one of the nation's worst recessions. The growth in incomes will generate higher total personal income within the trade area as well as higher disposable income available for retail purchases. Aside from household expenditures, there is also a large source of potential tourist sales sitting on Downtown Independence's doorstep, in the form of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Further, there is significant purchasing power concentrated among employees in the Rockside Road Corridor. The problem is that Downtown Independence is not located within the commuter shed favoring retail sales near Rockside and I-77.

Section 3. DOWNTOWN INDEPENDENCE RETAIL POTENTIALS

This section summarizes findings from a competitive framework analysis that determined the potential for Downtown Independence to capture sales generated by households, workers and tourists within its trade area. An analysis of the competitive position of Downtown within the regional retail base was conducted and Downtown capture assessed for each type of retail or service business in the current market and by 2019. The findings from this analysis are summarized below, followed by recommendations on the appropriate retail business mix for strengthening Downtown Independence as a location for retail businesses and mixed-use opportunities.

Competitive Framework

The Rockside Road Corridor is the primary competitor for everyday expenditures including groceries, pharmacy and other convenience goods. Rockside Road also competes for lunch-time worker expenditures on take-out food and restaurants. Downtown Brecksville is probably the most important competitor for the specialty market and as a downtown area located within or near the Downtown Independence Trade Area. Seven Hills also has commercial corridors that compete for convenience and shopper's goods sales, but is less competitive for the specialty market. Other specialty centers and small town "Main Street" retail throughout the region is competitive for the specialty purchase. But Independence has the competitive advantage of being located adjacent to the CVNP and is not far from the region's transportation crossroads.

Downtown Independence Potentials

The retail market analysis determined that there is an existing gap or demand for about 40,000 square feet of additional retail uses in the Downtown Independence area. The addition of this amount of retail/commercial use would help Downtown qualify as a neighborhood center. However, the analysis also forecasted potential for another 90,000 square feet if a more pro-active effort were made to recruit anchors, market Downtown as a destination, and draw workers and residents to a mixed-use, walk-able small town environment.

"Local" Retail Potentials. Under a scenario where Downtown is promoted and marketed to attract new tenants, Downtown Independence could be expected to attract up to about 40,000 to 50,000 square feet of retail and service businesses serving the existing trade area. Much of this demand would be captured for some additional shopper's goods (which is severely lacking in Downtown) as well as additional convenience goods uses. There is a slight over-

supply of personal services use in the Downtown area, so additional beauty salons or barber shops are not warranted at this time.

Type of Good	Gross Demand (SF)		Existing Uses	Warranted Demand
	2014	2019		
Convenience	32,700	33,704	16,540	17,164
Shoppers Goods	50,495	52,127	19,500	32,627
Eating/Drinking	8,293	8,541	5,572	2,969
Entertainment	1,173	1,213	1,200	13
Personal Services	5,125	5,304	5,500	(196)
TOTAL	97,787	100,890	48,312	52,578
<i>Existing Vacant</i>			6,400	
Net New Space				46,178
Source:	Randall Gross / Development Economics.			

“Destination” Retail Potentials. In a scenario where a more pro-active approach is undertaken to recruit anchor tenants and market Downtown as a destination, then Downtown could attract closer to 100,000 square feet of additional retail uses. This number would include nearly 50,000 square feet of shopper’s goods space, about 22,000 square feet in convenience goods, nearly 20,000 square feet of restaurants and 12,000 square feet of entertainment use.

Type of Good	Gross Demand (SF)		Existing Uses	Warranted Demand
	2014	2019		
Convenience	36,988	38,167	16,540	21,627
Shoppers Goods	64,838	67,617	19,500	48,117
Eating/Drinking	19,982	21,769	5,572	16,197
Entertainment	11,527	13,011	1,200	11,811
Personal Services	6,043	6,254	5,500	754
TOTAL	139,378	146,819	48,312	98,507
<i>Existing Vacant</i>			6,400	
Net New Space				92,107
Source:	Randall Gross / Development Economics.			

A more detailed summary of potential by specific use is shown in the Appendix of this report. Unfortunately, the market analysis does not forecast sufficient potential to support a full-service supermarket. There is however, sufficient demand to warrant smaller specialty stores including a hobby, toy and game shop; gift and souvenir stores; antiques or other home furnishings; and sporting goods stores. There is also the potential opportunity for full-service restaurants and entertainment uses including live music. Again, the Appendix provides more detail on the specific potentials for each type of business.

Recommended Business Mix

It is recommended that Independence pursue the concept of the DIA as introduced in the *Economic Development Strategic Plan*. The DIA or the City, working with private developers, could pursue the redevelopment of key sites including the Middle School site as well as reconfiguration and/or upgrading of the shopping center. Working through the DIA, the City would recruit businesses that are geared to creating a specialty destination district oriented to local residents but also to CVNP tourists and Rockside Road workers. While Downtown Independence is not likely to attract significant numbers of Rockside Road workers on a regular basis, there is the opportunity to capture some of those worker's after-work expenditures on specialty shopping as well as on full-service dining and entertainment. The recommended business mix would be oriented towards these specialty markets that are not otherwise part of the Rockside Road business mix or other business districts within the area.

Table 9. OVERALL RECOMMENDED RETAIL MIX DESTINATION MARKET, DOWNTOWN INDEPENDENCE, 2019	
Type of Business	Square Feet
Town Center Grocery / Specialty Food / Café	8,500
Gas/Convenience	4,500
Apparel/Accessory/Shoe	3,200
Home Furnishings/Antiques & Garden	4,200
Expansion of Existing Hardware/Bldg/Garden Supply	3,800
Independence Used Bookstore	1,500
Gift/Vintage/Novelty Stores	3,500
Hobby/Toy/Game Store(s)	5,000
Office/Stationary	1,200
Outdoor/Sporting Goods/Expanded Bike Shop	2,600
Fast Food/Takeaway	2,500
Full-Service Restaurants	12,000
Entertainment/Cultural Venue	12,000
Liquor/Wine Shop	3,200
Total	67,700
Source:	Randall Gross / Development Economics.

The recommended mix includes a specialty food market, convenience uses, antiques/home furnishings, hobby/toy, office supply, full-service restaurants and entertainment. Apparel & accessories, specialty bookstore, gifts/novelties, and expanded outdoor sporting goods stores are also recommended in addition to the businesses that already exist.

Key Concepts and Strategies

The market findings suggest the need and opportunity to create a “destination” appeal for Downtown Independence. The recommended business mix includes uses that lend themselves to destination branding and marketing. Recommendations on investment and business support were provided in the *Economic Development Strategic Plan* completed in 2013. More detailed recommendations relating to the marketing concepts are provided below.

Destination Themes and Associated Tenants

The recommended mix of businesses is oriented to several key marketing themes, including “healthy living,” “outdoor recreation,” and “antiques and hobbies.” Being located near the visitor center for the Cuyahoga Valley National Park suggests that Downtown take advantage of the brand and theme of the park, which is oriented to the enjoyment of nature, trails, healthy living and outdoor recreation. Being near an important tourism generator but also supplying an aging population may suggest the opportunities for businesses that specialize in antiques and hobbies.

To reiterate, the tenant mix focuses on fresh food concepts, dining, culture and entertainment, antiques and home furnishings, hobbies and outdoor recreation. Such uses would complement and co-brand with the CVNP but they would also appeal to the younger workers and those with disposable income who work in the Rockside Road Corridor. Independence can also be a weekend destination for antiquing and visiting the park.

Use of Space

There is a need to focus tenanting on the ground-floor spaces, which should be universally oriented to retail, restaurants and other active uses rather than as “blank wall” offices. As noted earlier, there is also the opportunity to establish new, mixed-use spaces on underutilized sites. The Middle School site provides an opportunity for mixed-use redevelopment including retail and housing. The shopping center provides an opportunity for re-configuration and upgrading to accommodate more restaurants and specialty shops.

Housing

A housing “opportunities assessment” determined that there are opportunities for developing housing in the Downtown area of Independence. Housing can be integrated into both of these sites and at other locations in or surrounding the Downtown area. Ultimately, the integration of housing can help strengthen Downtown by adding “rooftops” and generating some sales, but mainly by enhancing the overall street life and activity that makes for an exciting destination. Infill, adjacent housing could be developed for empty nesters as well as for professionals. Target typologies include clusters and patio homes, condominiums and mixed-use developments. Ultimately, the key is “maintenance-free” living, which is a desirable product in the Cleveland suburbs.

Civic or Cultural Hub

In order to market Downtown Independence as a destination, it is essential that a civic or cultural hub be established in the Downtown area. There is a need to re-establish Downtown as the community’s civic “heart,” since most civic and community uses have been relocated outside of Downtown to the Community Campus. Downtown is already home to a small community theater. There are opportunities to build on this small venue to create more destination cultural uses that draw people to Downtown Independence to live, shop, work, and dine. Such venues might be a unique cultural venue that includes rehearsal spaces, performance stages and café or full-service dining. The market potential for this specific use has not been tested, but the opportunity is there to establish an anchor use. Ultimately, such uses help put the Downtown area “on the map” and create synergies that draw attention to an isolated commercial district that otherwise lacks exposure.

APPENDIX

Table A-1. WARRANTED RETAIL DEMAND BY USE, DOWNTOWN INDEPENDENCE, 2014 & 2019				
Type of Good	Gross Demand (Sq Ft)		Existing Uses	Warranted Demand
	2014	2019		
<u>Convenience</u>				
Grocery	5,111	5,252	-	5,252
Convenience	2,288	2,380	-	2,380
Specialty Food	7,464	7,697	4,315	3,382
Health/Pers Care	12,391	12,790	10,725	2,065
Gas/Convenience	4,398	4,543	-	4,543
Florist	1,018	1,051	1,000	51
Liquor/Smoke	4,317	4,453	500	3,953
Sub-Total	36,988	38,167	16,540	21,627
<u>Shoppers Goods</u>				
Apparel	1,989	2,125	1,000	1,125
Accessories	291	337	-	337
Jewelry	1,068	1,102	-	1,102
Shoes	369	418	-	418
Furniture	1,534	1,586	-	1,586
Home Furnishings	2,365	2,446	-	2,446
Appliances	2,078	2,147	-	2,147
Hardware/Bldg/Home	9,815	10,137	8,400	1,737
Garden Supply	3,543	3,662	-	3,662
Other Bldg	8,232	8,491	1,500	6,991
Department Store	6,163	6,365	-	6,365
Gen Mdse	2,914	3,033	-	3,033
Auto Dealers	428	443	-	443
Auto Supply	7,611	7,854	6,500	1,354
Electronics/Comp	637	658	-	658
Books/Music	1,016	1,064	-	1,064
Camera/Photo	154	174	-	174
Gift, Novelty, Souvenir	3,098	3,385	-	3,385
Hobby/Toy/Game	6,037	6,334	1,000	5,334
Luggage/Leather	164	169	-	169
Office/Stationary	1,209	1,246	-	1,246
Sewing/Piece	690	712	-	712
Sporting Goods	3,433	3,730	1,100	2,630
Sub-Total	64,838	67,617	19,500	48,117
<u>Dining & Entertainment</u>				
Restaurant-FF	5,948	6,493	3,600	2,893
Restaurant-FS	11,141	12,237	-	12,237
Drinking Establishmt	2,894	3,039	1,972	1,067
Entertainment	11,527	13,011	1,200	11,811
Sub-Total	31,509	34,781	6,772	28,009
<u>Personal Services</u>				
	6,043	6,254	5,500	754
TOTAL	139,378	146,819	48,312	98,507
<i>Existing Vacant Net New Space</i>			6,400	92,107
Source:	Randall Gross / Development Economics.			

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

For Independence Sub-Area Plans

Strategic recommendations for development, marketing, management and financing are provided below for each of the sub-areas and in general for the Rockside Road Corridor to help inform planning and development within Independence.

It is recognized that the sub-area planning process emerged from recommendations contained in the *Economic Development Strategic Plan* prepared by Randall Gross / Development Economics for the City of Independence. That strategic plan identified a need to reconfigure portions of the city's traditional office environments as lively, mixed-use, walk-able places to appeal to an evolving work culture and ensure that the Rockside Road Corridor remains relevant and competitive for attracting high-quality jobs. The *Strategic Plan* already provided a number of recommendations for development, marketing, management and financing, some of which are referenced here as they relate more specifically to the planning sub-areas. New recommendations are also made based on the findings of the office and retail market analyses conducted for the sub-areas.

The recommendations are organized by sub-area for the sake of clarity, although it is recognized that by doing so there is some degree of duplication. As a result, policy or program recommendations common to multiple areas are referenced back to the sub-area where they are first mentioned.

Rockside Road Corridor

The *Economic Development Strategic Plan* prepared by Randall Gross / Development Economics and the planning recommendations established by Planning-Next clearly emphasize the need for upgrading existing buildings and enhancing the overall environment within the corridor as an approach for retaining the city's strong business mix while allowing it to accommodate shifting business recruitment and operational requirements. As stated in the Economic Development Strategic Plan:

The economic analysis has determined that Independence will gradually lose some of its competitiveness for attracting and retaining office employers unless office space is upgraded and the office environment changes to encourage more of a sense of place. Independence residents understood and agreed that, if the City is to remain competitive in the shrinking Cleveland market, then it must modernize its office stock. This (report) provides recommendations for encouraging the development of mixed-use business nodes (such as through zoning and land use regulations),

encouraging the rehabilitation and redevelopment of office building stock through development of a special incentives or CRA district, and through marketing and recruitment of businesses to under-performing or newly redeveloping office space.

Nationwide, there is an awareness that the traditional patterns of office park development no longer appeal to a growing number of businesses. Surveys conducted by Randall Gross / Development Economics indicate that a shift in lifestyle choices has been most pronounced among well-educated millennial workers, especially those in growing technology-driven fields. Many of these workers are making employment choices based on lifestyle rather than solely on job title and salary. Today's workers understand that job security is fleeting and therefore, employment choices are made as much on where people want to live and work, as they are on how much they will be paid.

Acknowledging the Challenges. Regardless of the shift in market dynamics, it is clearly challenging under the best of circumstances to enable physical change in existing business environments. It is much easier to just let property owners make their own decisions. Experience suggests, however, that property owners will not band together to enable the types of building and infrastructure improvements that may be required.

In reality, the challenges associated with aging office parks are not very different from those seen in most downtown or central-city revitalization projects. Yet, downtown areas often benefit from revitalization efforts, especially now that market demand has returned to many downtown areas. The Rockside Road Corridor, which once benefited from the collapse of Downtown Cleveland as a business node, must now compete with a revitalized Downtown for certain types of growing businesses.

The following strategy suggests approaches for moving at least several steps forward with implementation of rehabilitation and revitalization in the Rockside Road Corridor as recommended in the *Economic Development Strategic Plan*. The financing and incentive recommendations focus on infrastructure improvements and selected business recruitment incentives not already addressed through the marketing recommendations in the *Strategic Plan* or through branding exercises that the City has already completed. In addition, recommendations are provided for long-term approaches to redevelopment within more specific nodes yet to be determined. These recommendations can also be applied to the Lombardo Center business district in Seven Hills, which is considered a part of the Rockside Road Business Corridor.

Management Approach

The following overall approach is recommended to guide rehabilitation and revitalization within key areas of the Rockside Road Corridor over time. The City

has access to a large parcel in the Northwest Quadrant for green field development and there are ample opportunities for upgrading of existing building space. As such, it is not anticipated that the City of Independence will focus urgently on redevelopment in the next few years. Over the long-term, as the Northwest Quadrant site develops and existing buildings are fully functional, Independence will have few options for business development and employment growth other than through targeted redevelopment.

Short-term Rehabilitation Focus. In order to enhance the competitiveness of the Rockside Road Corridor, initial steps would focus on encouraging the rehabilitation of existing building stock and establishing some amenity value. To accomplish this task, the City's Economic Development Director would engage with stakeholders such as by meeting with property owners, businesses, and real estate brokers to initiate discussions about appropriate buildings for rehabilitation, existing infill opportunities, and ways to enhance amenity value.

A suggested format for this engagement would include initiating meetings with brokers to gain insights on appropriate buildings and areas that would benefit from rehabilitation; followed by one-on-one meetings with individual area property owners and developers to gauge short-term interest in rehabilitation, infill and amenity development. The key advantage communicated to property owners is the potential for **increasing the value of their properties**, through:

1. **Rehabilitation of buildings** to a higher standard to generate higher rents and long-term value.
2. **Establishment of sites for higher-density infill development** which, in turn, enhances the overall value of properties that otherwise contain a "sea" of under-utilized (and lower-value) parking lots.
3. **Public amenities and mixed-uses** which help to re-establish and strengthen the market for Rockside Road as a business destination and therefore, increase asking rents and cash flow, which translates into higher long-term asset value.

Long-Term Redevelopment Approaches. Since this planning effort did not produce redevelopment plans for Rockside Road, a long-term effort would be undertaken in the future to identify and prioritize those areas that are best suited to phased redevelopment through a CRA (as detailed in the *Strategic Plan*) or other approach. Longer-term management approaches for redevelopment are summarized in the Appendix of this report.

Corridor-Wide Marketing & Management Entity. It is recommended that the City of Independence and the City of Seven Hills collaborate on marketing, management and infrastructure financing within the Rockside Road Corridor. By doing so, both jurisdictions stand to gain from the broader market penetration

and economies of scale that could be achieved for the corridor. The management component of such an entity might relate to the coordination of agreements between the two communities as well as oversight of specific management issues that may impact on the corridor as a whole. The entity could be established under a JEDD or other mechanism to be determined jointly by the two cities. Regardless of the specific mechanism, a collaborative approach will benefit both communities. Ultimately, most office use will be concentrated in the Independence portion of the Corridor, but joint marketing approaches (aside from each community's individual company recruitment efforts) will benefit both communities by raising the overall profile of the Corridor.

Financing & Incentives

Infrastructure financing is one area where the two communities could work together to improve the traffic problems and enhance the amenity value of Rockside Road. Planning-Next has recommended the following physical-related improvements along the Rockside Road Corridor:

1. Improve connectivity for pedestrian and vehicular traffic
2. Develop an approach to the redevelopment of aging office buildings that increases connectivity, promotes walkability, and encourages vertical mix of uses.
3. Allow for the infill or parcels within existing development (as illustrated through the Physical Demonstration)
4. Identify and develop park and gathering space opportunities
5. Improve the overall aesthetics of the corridor
6. Develop the parcels in the Northwest of the planning area with competitive product that maximizes the area's potential (note: The Northwest Sub-Area is discussed separately in these recommendations).

In the short-term, efforts should be focused on rehabilitation and upgrading of existing building stock, and on the development of new amenities that add value to the corridor as a place to work. Over time, there are opportunities for redevelopment and for financing the broader infrastructure improvements recommended in the sub-area plan.

Rehabilitation of Existing Buildings. The recommendation for building rehabilitation originates in the *Strategic Plan*, which suggests that the City develop a package of incentives to encourage rehabilitation as part of the CRA. The incentives are discussed in detail in the *Strategic Plan*, but include such programs as:

- Capital Access and Linked Deposit programs
- Grants
- Green Building / Energy Efficiency programs (such as through the State's SEID program – special energy improvement districts)

- Tax abatements
- Density/FAR bonuses for buildings that meet key thresholds
- Expediting Permitting for building rehabilitation

The Strategic Plan had also recommended that quality standards be put into place and recognition & rewards given for those buildings that meet high quality standards set by the City. It was also recommended that the City encourage rent-to-own programs and condominium ownership in certain buildings to increase owner occupancy and longevity.

Infill within Existing Parcels. There may be opportunities to encourage infill in existing parcels, as recommended in the sub-area plan. The City would engage with property owners and developers to discuss the opportunities for infill on specific sites, such as where there is surface parking and access beyond what may be required for an existing building, or where there are opportunities for shared parking. Rent structures may not yet warrant construction of significant new speculative infill office space, but there is a need to encourage development of owner-occupied space in the City. Thus, the City can work as “matchmaker” between existing property owners who may have underutilized land, and prospective companies that the City is recruiting to Independence. Some of the same incentives noted above for building rehabilitation could be applied to new infill construction.

Parks and Gathering Spaces. The *Strategic Plan* emphasized the need for public gathering and event spaces as a desirable amenity within the business areas. Capital development of public spaces can be woven into the roadway improvements package and included in TIF financing. In order to reduce the long-term burden on the City of Independence for maintenance of such amenities, which are primarily oriented to benefitting office workers, it is recommended that development agreements be reached with the master developer to ensure that property owners will contribute to a maintenance fund for ongoing upkeep of any event spaces, parks, or other open space amenities in these areas. Beyond these local / site-serving amenities, the City should also ensure that there are opportunities for Independence to connect to the regional trail system from the Rockside Road business areas.

Longer-term Road and Streetscape Improvements. The list of sub-area improvements implies a number of longer-term physical infrastructure improvements with an emphasis on connectivity and promotion of a street “grid” that improves walk-ability while increasing the number of potential infill development pad sites. By reducing the surface parking area within a given office park and instituting some elements of a street grid, there is the opportunity to create a number of higher-density infill sites that would add significant value to properties.

Since none of these areas involves the green-field development of roads, the likely scenario is the building of roadways linking existing dead-end streets or creating streets in areas that are already paved as surface parking lots. To enhance walkability, these new streets (along with any existing streets within the redevelopment districts) would be lined with sidewalks and pedestrian-oriented streetscape amenities including street trees, cross-walks, benches, gateway signage, and identity lighting. Many of the streetscape improvements can be used to enhance the “aesthetic” qualities of the office environment. Stormwater improvements and associated infrastructure would also be a part of this roadway development program.

As already detailed in the *Economic Development Strategic Plan*, Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is recommended for financing such road improvements. Ultimately, it can be argued that the development of a road grid from Rockside Road will help distribute traffic and reduce overall traffic congestion along the Rockside Road Corridor. In doing so, such roadway construction serves a public good and is meant not just to benefit the individual property owners within the redevelopment district but all of the residents and workers in Independence. Further, the roadway improvements will help establish a new context for development and enhance the overall marketability of Independence for attracting new business.

Finally, new businesses will generate additional income and property tax revenue to support the city’s services. Therefore, investment in new roads that provide connectivity within these redevelopment districts should be publicly-financed. TIF allows the City to fund the improvements over a set period based on the potential net new tax revenues generated rather than by raising taxes on residents and businesses.

Major road and infrastructure projects that benefit the overall marketing and redevelopment of the Corridor might also be financed through the use of a JEDD or other mechanism in coordination with the neighboring community of Seven Hills. If such infrastructure costs are shared, then both communities could reap benefits through a lowered tax burden. Furthermore, new green field mixed-use development in Seven Hills or higher-intensity office development in Independence could result in traffic impacts that affect the entire corridor. Through joint investment in infrastructure upgrades, there are opportunities to avoid or ameliorate such impacts.

Incentive Packages for “Support Uses”

The type of incentive that might benefit both Seven Hills and Independence is one that helps strengthen the overall market in the corridor. As noted previously, attracting high-concept restaurants, entertainment and activities that help create a “buzz” serve to replicate (on a smaller scale) the efforts of Downtown Cleveland to attract and retain creative industry, technology and other

workers. Thus, if both Seven Hills and Independence were to provide an equivalent incentive to attract high-concept full-service restaurants, entertainment, and other “support” activities that bolster the overall “live-work-play-recreate” concept for the corridor, then the effort may ultimately help establish Rockside Road as a “place to be.”

Appropriate incentives for attracting such uses might include property tax abatements or other capital financing, loans or tax abatements aimed at these specific types of uses. Such incentives would of course be tied to lease agreements and investments in capital could revert back to the City that issued the incentives should the business falter.

If Independence and Seven Hills work together and target incentives to the uses that benefit the entire corridor, both communities stand to benefit. This approach contrasts with the more commonly-used tactic of using direct, negotiated financial incentives to more broadly attract large businesses in a competitive regional bidding process. This is not to say that either Independence or Seven Hills should necessarily abandon those negotiated incentives. Rather, the approach recommended here is to add a corridor-wide “incentive layer” that helps market the corridor more broadly to those retail, restaurant, entertainment, recreation, and other complementary uses that support core business development efforts in both communities.

Northwest Quadrant Sub-Area: The Independence Innovation Zone

The City of Independence has had the foresight to purchase one of the last remaining large parcels of undeveloped land within its borders in order to guide its development and maximize the economic and fiscal returns to the City. The City has also taken a major step forward in visioning the potential development of this site as a mixed-use business center that provides a modern product appealing to businesses and residents alike. As a green field site, the “Northwest Sub-Area” offers opportunities for diversifying the city’s product mix and offering that cannot be easily or quickly achieved elsewhere.

Concept Plan Development Program

The 70+ acre site plan programs build out with 4.6 million square feet of “mixed use employment space” plus 400 to 450 residential development units, internal open space, and sufficient room to accommodate a large corporate “drop in” employment-generating use. The plan is conceptualized with buildings built to the edge of blocks in a grid, which helps distribute traffic and creates a walk-able “urban” mixed-use environment.

The market analysis indicated that the City should target recruitment of 140,000 to 190,000 square feet of office, R&D and tech use within five years of

initiating marketing for the Innovation Zone or by about 2020. This number does not include any institutional uses or other “non-market” anchors that are recruited to spur development of the zone. Nor does this number include any “drop-in” uses such as a large company relocating its offices or manufacturing facilities to Ohio. Ultimately the first 5-year phase of development would be focused on developing infrastructure and creating amenity value, recruiting institutional or other anchor uses, and attracting up to 200,000 square feet of solid, exciting tech-oriented uses that help to establish the context and brand for this Innovation Zone.

Marketing and Development Strategy

The Northwest Quadrant Sub-Area would be marketed and developed as the city’s “**Innovation Zone**.” As such, the marketing concept draws on the strengths of the location and of growing institutions and innovation-driven industry in Northeast Ohio. The Market Analysis noted that the Cleveland MSA will create 3,500 jobs in the information technology (IT/IS), business process outsourcing (BPO), engineering and life sciences by 2020, generating demand for 650,000 square feet of laboratory and advanced manufacturing/engineering space.

The Market Analysis suggested that Independence could target capturing demand for 140,000 to 190,000 square feet of this demand at the Innovation Zone. Independence offers particular marketing strengths for attracting engineering-related services: aerospace, civil engineering, computer hardware, environmental; as well as information technology and business process outsourcing. The city as already proven itself as the regional anchor for administrative and management functions.

The analysis also indicated that the Innovation Zone is an appropriate location for advanced manufacturing. While the region’s manufacturing base has been declining for decades and there is heated competition for any new high-value manufacturing, Independence offers some competitive advantages for attracting food & beverage production, product assembly, machining and computer-controlled machining, testing, inspections, precision tooling, sorting, and sampling. The region retains its strength as a production center for fabricated metal products, computer electronics and transportation equipment manufacturing. Independence, like many communities in Northeast Ohio, can compete for growth and expansion within these regional industries.

Conceptual Business Mix. Based on the findings of the Market Analysis, it was recommended that marketing and recruitment for the Innovation Zone focus on a mix of information technology (IT/IS), business process outsourcing, engineering-related services and high-value product assembly for distribution. It was also recommended that sites be established to accommodate “drop in” uses including relocations within the region and State-generated leads. The proposed

concept plan has accommodated this opportunity. While it can take many years to capture a large “drop in” use, Independence will remain competitive if it has a “shovel-ready” site in a high-quality mixed-use park environment to accommodate such uses.

Recruiting Anchor Uses. Having a large green field site without services does not provide Independence with much of a “leg up” on the competition for business recruitment. Certainly having serviced, “shovel ready” sites in an attractive environment with excellent access to the interstate system (without traffic congestion) will provide a major marketing benefit. But to leverage the market and initiate marketing efforts, it is highly recommended that the City work on recruiting an anchor use that would strengthen the Innovation Zone brand, making it more than just words on a plan. In other words, the City should recruit a name or use that is synonymous with innovation.

Examples of such an anchor use might be the research arm of a respected educational or other institution. Having a technical college, while not research and development-oriented, would nevertheless help establish the site with an institutional presence and an on-site, ready workforce. Attracting the research & development, BPO, or product testing division of a large or recognized corporate brand would certainly place the Innovation Zone on the map. Finally, attracting a large government agency or a government contractor to the site, particularly one focused on information technologies, engineering, or health care, would also help establish the innovation brand on a regional level.

Management

Initially, marketing and planning for the Innovation Zone would be managed by the City’s Economic Development Director. The City would issue an RFP for a master developer, who would submit plans that must be consistent with the sub-area planning principles and marketing recommendations outlined in this sub-area plan.

The City would develop and offer a package of targeted incentives for locating in the zone, with such incentives tied closely to the production of high-paying jobs in key sectors. Management of the zone might be organized under the auspices of a public development authority appointed by the City of Independence to guide the zone’s development (or “CIC” as indicated in the *Economic Development Strategic Plan*). The authority would be established with a “sunset clause” that ensures it ceases to exist once the site is mostly (80-90%) developed. However, a strong development management agreement with a master developer could achieve the same aims without requiring the establishment of government oversight. The City must determine whether there is sufficient oversight to ensure that the site is developed in a way that is wholly consistent with the City’s intentions of maximizing the number of high-paying jobs.

Infrastructure & Financing

The sub-area plan appears to require the establishment of a roadway grid, along with the associated stormwater and streetscape design elements. The site would also require water and sewer extension. It is not clear as to whether additional capacity is required to service the site, but for the purposes of this conceptual planning phase, it is assumed that overall capacity is sufficient. The City would work in partnership with the master developer to finance basic infrastructure improvements such as roads, water/sewer and streetscaping. The City could employ tax increment financing (TIF) to finance key bulk infrastructure projects such as water/sewer mains and trunk roads, to leverage private development investment in reticulation services and streetscape. Unlike green field residential projects, it is in the City's interest to leverage long-term job-rich private development in a premier location like the Innovation Zone.

As part of the broader Rockside Road management entity (through JEDD or CIC), the City of Seven Hills might consider making improvements to Lombardo Center as a gateway into the Innovation Zone site. Improvements made to that road would not only benefit the development of Independence's Innovation Zone but also would help in marketing of the Seven Hills businesses and sites along Lombardo Center. In fact, it could be argued that development of the Innovation Zone will have spill-over benefits to the City of Seven Hills and would theoretically increase the value of Seven Hills properties along the west side of Lombardo Center.

In addition to roadways, streetscape, and reticulated services, there are several other hard and "soft" infrastructure elements. First, it is imperative that the City implement a fiber strategy that will guarantee sufficient bandwidth to support the marketing of the site for intensive BPO, IT and other communication service users. If the site is to be marketed for technology uses, including advanced manufacturing capabilities, then there will be a need to ensure capacity for high-volume communication networks. To finance any upgrading or extension of fiber, the City might enter into contract agreements with suppliers that would be interested in entering the market to serve the great potential of existing and future clients in the Rockside Road Corridor.

There is the opportunity to establish an "open innovation platform" along with IT support services at this site as a service to companies that wish to locate there. Open platforms allow for the sharing of innovations and testing of products online with public support. Housing a platform at the Innovation Zone and providing IT/IS support services would provide a marketing advantage for the zone. Such services might be provided initially through the City, which could eventually spin-off the service within the zone. Innovation platforms would be developed at nominal expense through the City's Economic Development division.

The IT infrastructure might also allow for logistics support, such as a monitoring system or networking capabilities that could be shared by companies located within the zone. Such networks could save companies on overhead costs for developing their own systems.

Finally, while not “infrastructure,” per se, the site would need to accommodate amenities including site-serving retail, restaurants and public spaces. These uses have been indicated in the sub-area plan as conceptualized.

Incentives. The “package” of incentives offered in the Innovation Zone should be as strong and targeted as possible. As noted earlier, it is not in the City’s best interest to create directly competitive incentive programs that would cause or encourage relocations from Seven Hills or other neighboring communities into Independence. Rather, incentives should be oriented first towards attracting the anchor uses noted previously. Some of those uses, such as institutions or government offices (with spin-off contractors) would not require financial incentives but would benefit from partnerships with appropriate agencies at state and federal government levels.

Technology-oriented and advanced manufacturing uses would benefit from the site’s location and infrastructure as proposed above, but tax and financial incentives would help “seal the deal.” Among the incentives, as mentioned earlier, are accelerated depreciation on real estate (for developers or companies that construct build-to-suit, owner-occupied buildings) and on technology equipment and laboratory uses. Low-interest loan programs could be established to help finance laboratory equipment and/or to seed a venture capital fund for businesses located in Independence. The City should include in the package programs associated with Innovation Fund of Northeast Ohio, which offers pre-seed funding for technology-based start-ups and entrepreneurs. The City’s own VC-type fund could be used to “top-up” or complement the regional program.

Downtown Independence

Downtown Independence is critically important as a traditional business and civic node for the city, not only to accommodate the needs of residents but also as part of the city’s “brand” that helps attract and retain businesses citywide. Even if workers never visit Downtown Independence, they should be made aware of Downtown as the city’s historic heart and its identity.

Concept Plan Development Program

The proposed concept plan for downtown focuses on 90+ acres and includes a 450,000 square-foot mixed-use district (with 60 to 80 residential units) plus a mixed-density residential district bordering downtown with 160 to 180

single-family, patio, and row houses. The plan also recommends a professional home office district allowing single-family homes to operate as small offices. Finally, there are new internal and external street connections that improve the overall pedestrian and traffic flow between downtown and neighboring areas.

Marketing and Development Strategy

The Downtown Market Analysis determined that Downtown Independence has 110,000 square feet of existing business space, but only 40% is used for retail/commercial businesses. As such, Downtown does not function as a true “shopping” district. It also lacks the traditional “Main Street” civic uses and anchors that help generate pedestrian traffic in a small downtown area. Those uses are located nearby, but are physically separated from the heart of downtown. Further, the business mix is convenience and personal-service oriented and lacks destination oriented businesses that are an important draw for most downtowns to be successful.

Downtown Independence currently draws its market from within a narrow trade area extending north and south along Brecksville Road. Downtown also lacks exposure to major traffic generators, I-77 and the Rockside employment base (which generates 76% of the city’s retail market demand). Trade-area demographics are relatively stagnant, but incomes are increasing. The Market Analysis found that, at present, there is demand for about 40,000 square feet of retail use, which is roughly equivalent to what exists in existing retail businesses.

However, if Downtown was marketed as more of a destination, then there is potential for 90,000+ square feet of retail use within the next five years, drawing more daytime workers and Cuyahoga Valley National Park tourists. The businesses for which there is market potential include specialty grocery, convenience, home furnishings, hobby/toy stores, office supply, full-service restaurants and entertainment. Destination uses would include apparel and accessory stores, specialty bookstore, gifts/novelties and an expanded outdoor sporting goods store.

Destination Marketing & Business Mix. Several destination marketing themes or concepts have been developed for Downtown Independence. These concepts focus on healthy living and outdoor recreation, as well as antiques and hobbies. “Destination” retail does not necessarily mean a large use or a “box.” There are small stores (1,500 to 4,000 square feet) that are unique in the broader regional market and therefore draw inflow from a much larger trade area (and are thus, “destinations”). An example would be a store that sells hand-made goods or a unique independent bookstore. The target business mix for recruitment to Downtown Independence would include a fresh “healthy” food store, full-service restaurant, culture & entertainment uses, antique & home furnishings stores, and outdoor recreation & sporting goods stores. There are opportunities for activities

that can complement and be co-branded with the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

The specific mix and square footage for Downtown is detailed in the Retail Market Analysis Report. The City should be focusing the recruitment of destination retail uses in the Downtown area (as noted above) in order to help build Downtown's market base. Infill uses located in Rockside Road would be focused more on convenience retail, meeting or conference spaces, and on the types of physical amenities – parks/plazas, trails, concert venues – that help to bring workers people together during lunchtime and occasionally after work for professional and social networking. Ultimately, we also want those workers to visit Downtown sometimes for their nighttime dining and entertainment.

The City's Economic Development division should take an active role in recruiting key retail uses to the Downtown area. In the past, retail was not considered "economic development" and in Ohio, big box retail can generate a net loss in fiscal impacts. However, a strong walkable downtown is beneficial to the overall fiscal and economic health of the community. Small retail uses in a walk-able environment become amenities that attract positive investment and, because downtown is more walk-able, there is less of an impact on streets and City services than other, more suburban retail models.

Finally, there is the need to attract or establish a civic or cultural use in Downtown Independence as the community's "heart." There is one small theatre located in the Downtown area, but there are opportunities for a larger cultural venue as a driver for destination marketing. Efforts should be promoted to create a cultural center or related use.

Development. The City should help encourage the use of ground-floor spaces in existing and potential new buildings for retail stores and restaurants rather than office space. Retail and restaurants help activate the street and generate pedestrian traffic that enlivens Downtown. New, mixed-use spaces are encouraged in otherwise under-utilized or vacant sites as demonstrated through the sub-area plan. Also as proposed in the concept plan and supported by the Housing Market Assessment, there is the opportunity for development of infill and adjacent housing targeted to empty nesters and professionals. New housing development will help strengthen the "primary" market for retail and businesses in the Downtown area.

Management

It is recommended that Independence pursue establishment of a non-profit Main Street or similar organization to help focus Downtown efforts in marketing and management. Main Street organizations can help leverage resources from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and grant funding from other organizations to support its efforts. Main Street organizations can be

quite strong on management, particularly in assisting existing businesses become more competitive in the marketplace.

The City would work with developers of proposed mixed-use and residential projects, similar to the master developer concept proposed at the Innovation Zone (Northwest Quadrant Sub-Area). The City would have oversight to ensure implementation conforms to the vision and principles outlined in the sub-area plan.

Financing

The Economic Development Strategic Plan recommended that the City “consider establishing a Downtown Improvement (or Development) Authority (DIA) to assist small businesses growth and to leverage private-sector investment in the Downtown area. The DIA would offer businesses access to small grants, low-interest loans, and/or matching grants to help them invest in the building stock and fund expansion within Downtown. Businesses could use the funds to make capital improvements and for other purposes. The DIA could also have authority to use City assets to help leverage development and private sector investment. The DIA could be used for clustering various Downtown programs, development projects, and incentives that the City may want to pursue. In other words, the DIA helps geographically define a small business district where business owners can receive a variety of incentives and benefits to enable growth and development. The DIA should overlap with one of the City’s TIF districts in the event that financing for specific capital projects is required to support business development.”

The Downtown Sub-Area Plan has indeed recommended capital improvements, including new internal and external street connections. The plan also recommended that the streetscape along Brecksville Road be improved and that opportunities be reserved for park space and trail connections. Capital investment could also include the City’s commitment to assist in acquisition and/or construction relating to a civic or community cultural use in the Downtown area. Again, for capital improvements in the Downtown area, the *Strategic Plan* has already recommended the use of TIF to help leverage private investment.

Independence Community Campus Sub-Area

A Sub-Area Plan has been prepared for the “Community Campus” area that includes City Hall, the Recreation Center and other public facilities. The plan suggests that the objective of this plan is to “maintain the area as a centrally-located civic, recreational and educational community campus,...to find the best utilization of the existing and future land uses with complimentary amenities...and to develop pedestrian and vehicular connectivity through extension of trails and boulevard enhancements.” The plan includes accommodation of an “independent/assisted living” facility, although the specific

scope, scale and location for such a facility has not yet been determined. Market analysis for this facility was not undertaken for this sub-area plan. As a result, the economic recommendations relate primarily to public uses.

Concept Plan Development Program

The Concept Plan proposes that an evaluation be undertaken of opportunities to acquire vacant or undeveloped land adjacent to the campus. The plan also recommends relocation of the City's service facility and connecting the campus to local and regional bike trails and improving north-south access. Beyond the general concept of an independent or assisted living facility, there are no other major development proposals introduced into the Community Campus as yet.

Marketing and Development Strategy

Since most of the existing facilities house government operations, and the concept is for a "community campus," marketing is less relevant for this sub-area. A market assessment was completed several years ago that indicated demand for the concept of an independence/assisted living facility. However, the City would need to assess the availability of sites, as proposed in the sub-area plan. Then perhaps the City would confer with various graduated care facility developers to identify an approach that best suits the interests and needs of the community.

Management

It is assumed that the City's service agencies would manage development and/or operations of their facilities. The City's leadership, economic development and finance directors would identify prospective graduated care facility developers, gauge interest in the campus and request development proposals from interested teams. A key requirement of the proposals would be a market analysis, financial feasibility analysis, and proposed marketing strategy that addresses the City's interests and concerns.

Financing

It is assumed that City facilities would be financed through direct City capital funding or general obligation bond finance. ODOT and the regional MPO invest in local and regional bike trails, and there are opportunities to link into National Park Service funding for trails associated with the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Opportunities to "improve access and navigability" could require some investment in roadways, presumably financed through the normal municipal finance structure. A graduated care facility should be privately financed, developed and operated but according to planning and other

parameters established by local government. Local control can be strengthened if discounted Municipal land is used as leverage to attract a developer.

East Pleasant Valley Road Sub-Area

Strategic recommendations for development, marketing, management and financing in the East Pleasant Valley Road Corridor were included in the Economic Development Strategic Plan. Those recommendations focused on establishing industrial “districts” for marketing purposes in East Pleasant Valley Road and the Cloverleaf Area. Somewhat more detail is provided below, based on the content of the sub-area plans, which focused on the need to “strengthen the corridor as a ‘key center’ for business, secure and improve the district’s fiscal performance, develop a unique identity, improve the area’s aesthetics, and proactively address vacancies and business retention (issues).”

Concept Plan Development Program

The Concept Plan identifies “opportunities” to improve the streetscape along the corridor, connect to the Towpath through the sub-area, and introduce gateway features along the corridor. There were also business development concepts which echo recommendations in the *Strategic Plan*.

Marketing and Development Strategy

As noted in the Economic Development Strategic Plan, “the East Pleasant Valley area is already a relatively stable and successful business district with a solid mix of office, distribution, R&D and some light manufacturing. Several large companies have major operations in this corridor.

The area has a relatively high-quality physical environment, with buildings set back in forested or landscaped settings. There are opportunities to attract logistics / distribution, warehousing, light manufacturing (i.e., specialty food and catering companies) as well as research and back office to this corridor because of its good transportation access without major traffic congestion. This corridor is primed for branding as the “Pleasant Valley Business Corridor” through physical design elements such as gateways, signage, and other infrastructure improvements” as incorporated into the sub-area plan.

East Pleasant Valley Road is largely built-out. Development of any remaining vacant land in this corridor would be encouraged in order to enhance the corridor’s fiscal returns. The sub-area plan recommends marketing of an “industrial campus” on vacant land at the eastern edge of the corridor. That site, while perhaps appropriate for certain industrial uses, may not be large enough to accommodate a significant “campus” or industrial park, but could accommodate several uses of similar scope and scale as other uses in the corridor. As with other business areas, the City’s Economic Development efforts should include

outreach and recruitment for any vacant buildings and land (such as the “industrial campus”) in this corridor.

Management

At present, the corridor’s business properties are individually managed and there is no joint marketing. The Strategic Plan recommended the establishment of a consistent brand and identity for the corridor which can be used in marketing materials and for outreach and recruitment purposes. That branding, along with outreach and recruitment, is managed by the City’s Economic Development division. The City would also oversee the implementation of gateway signage and other identity elements to help strengthen the corridor’s identity for marketing purposes and to provide physical definition.

Financing

There are only limited capital improvements recommended for this corridor, including gateways and other identity signage along with extension of the towpath. There are some other undefined efforts recommended to improve aesthetics, although the area is already fairly attractive with significant tree cover and well-maintained business properties. Gateways and identity signage should be funded out of the City’s Economic Development budget or discretionary funds, but designs and placement should be subject to review by businesses and/or property owners in the corridor. As noted earlier, ODOT and the MPO provide funding for trails in the region.

Cloverleaf Sub-Area

As noted in the *Economic Development Strategic Plan*, the Cloverleaf area “provides the City’s only real opportunity for heavier industries, such as the construction supply activity that already anchors this area. That being said, the visual streetscape along key corridors such as Brecksville Road and Old Brecksville Road on the east side of I-77 can be enhanced as a gateway into the City of Independence. Again, especially along Brecksville Road, there are opportunities for signage and gateway treatments to help give this area definition as an attractive business hub, with a focus on industrial uses.”

Concept Plan Development Program

The Concept Plan identified the opportunity to evaluate site options for relocation of the City’s service facility and the need to evaluate the existing infrastructure. There is also the opportunity to improve the streetscape along granger and Schaaf Roads, and adding gateway features to enhance the overall aesthetic quality and identity of the area. The planning effort sought to explore potential development and redevelopment opportunity sites and identified an

opportunity to connect to the western rail line. There is also the opportunity for strengthening the West Creek Conservancy collaboration.

Marketing and Development Strategy

As noted in the *Economic Development Strategic Plan*, this area has “superior exposure to both I-77 and I-480. As such, there are marketing opportunities for businesses located in portions of this area to reach a broad market base. Unfortunately, the area lacks immediate ingress and egress from either I-77 or I-480, which intersect near this area. Nevertheless, there is access to I-77 from Brecksville Road further north, so there remain good opportunities for clean distribution, warehousing, and light industrial uses (e.g., food production, catering, wholesale supply, etc) that require access to the interstate system. Target opportunity sites and buildings should be identified within the area for marketing, and an effort made to provide the area with more physical definition for branding and marketing as the City’s ‘Center of Industry.’” Recommendations for physical definition included the gateway signage and streetscaping discussed as part of the sub-area plan.

Generally, the area requires physical definition as well as a marketing identity to enhance its marketability as a business district. The marketing identity suggested in the Strategic Plan focused on the area’s strategic location at the center of the region’s transportation network and on the area’s orientation primarily to light and heavy industrial uses. Without specific sites to market for development or redevelopment, marketing is limited to enhancing the identity of the district and retaining existing businesses. The sub-area plan suggests the need to evaluate redevelopment opportunities of land on both the east and west sides of I-77. If there are appropriate physical redevelopment opportunities, then these sites can be packaged for marketing to the types of industrial users outlined above.

Management

The City’s Economic Development Director would work with existing property owners in this area, focusing on the two sites identified above, to assess redevelopment opportunities and prioritize sites for marketing. Economic Development would also work with other City agencies to manage the implementation of gateway signage programs in the area, in cooperation with private businesses and property owners.

Financing

“Heavy” streetscaping may be a lower priority because the return on such investment may be lower among heavy industrial users than it would be from high-value commercial uses (such as in Rockside Road) or mixed-use redevelopment and revitalization (such as in Downtown Independence).

Incentives for development of industrial sites, both in the Cloverleaf sub-area and in the East Pleasant Valley sub-area, could be developed if the City deems such efforts as necessary to generate a substantial return on investment. Because of the shift upwards in automation and productivity per worker, industrial activities in many sub-sectors are generating lower employee yields per square foot. Nevertheless, it is important for Independence to retain a diversified economic base that includes manufacturing and other industrial activities. Incentives, whether capital, financing or fiscal, should be closely tied to employee yields, wages and salaries in order to maximize fiscal returns.

APPENDIX: Rockside Road Corridor Long-Term Redevelopment Approaches

Stakeholder engagement would be essential to initiate any public-private process of redevelopment (e.g., demolition of older office buildings to create a larger, developable site or pads in a walk-able district). Such engagement would operate from the premise that a master developer model would be utilized in those areas where redevelopment is possible and supported. Stakeholders should also be made aware that the City could participate, along with a CRA (and/or CIC) model, as outlined in the *Economic Development Strategic Plan*, in financing infrastructure improvements that would enhance the overall value of the properties in the area and leverage new infill development opportunities. The City of Independence would work closely with the City of Seven Hills on infrastructure and marketing that benefit the entire corridor and respond to broad development impacts, as noted in this report.

Finally, it should be made clear that a focus would be on improving connectivity and aesthetics, leveraging infill development and mixed-use, and establishing some public amenity spaces. If property owners were willing to participate, then the City might consider financing or other incentives for building rehabilitation as outlined in the *Strategic Plan*. The prioritization process itself, involving the City and stakeholders could include the following steps;

- Identify and target buildings that are functionally obsolete and are likely to remain non-competitive without major re-investment.
- Identify appropriate sites or nodes that, from a planning and economic perspective, offer the best opportunity for exposure and transportation access, and for establishing a walk-able mixed-use commercial node within the Rockside Road Corridor.
- Where target buildings and nodes intersect, establish a framework for redevelopment. Where target buildings do not intersect with target nodes, focus on rehabilitation/enhancement of existing buildings and new infill commercial/mixed-use development within that node. New mixed-use development could include some new Class A office space that allows for existing tenants within the Rockside Road Corridor and South Sub-Market to “move up” to new space in an exciting new node. Such space would be developed almost as “build-to-suit” through discussions with existing area tenants.

- Work with the City of Seven Hills on broad infrastructure improvements and marketing efforts that serve to reduce traffic congestion, leverage redevelopment, and enhance overall marketability for the Corridor.
- Ultimately, the addition of some new office space will allow the Rockside Road Corridor to retain the existing businesses that might otherwise relocate to newer Class A space. The new space could also help attract new businesses to the community. In that case, the creation of some new space would not have to result in a “zero-sum” game for retaining Rockside Road tenants.

Long-Term: CRA / CIC or Redevelopment District. The next stage would include establishment of a CRA or redevelopment district to help focus efforts within the prioritized redevelopment zones. The approved *Economic Development Strategic Plan* calls for the establishment of Community Reinvestment Area(s) (CRA) to encourage office reinvestment, rehabilitation and reinvestment. The CRA would help leverage infrastructure redevelopment, direct incentives for property improvements, and promote development of public amenities. The CRA would benefit from establishment of a non-profit Community Investment Corporation (CIC) as detailed in the *Strategic Plan*.

Long-Term: Redevelopment District Plan. Once a district has been established, then a redevelopment concept plan should be established on the principles outlined in the *Strategic Plan* and this *Sub-Area Plan* document. The planning effort for the district would engage primarily with the property owners, real estate community, and businesses currently located within the district boundaries. The plan would establish a vision and parameters for infrastructure improvements, public amenities, as well as private redevelopment or rehabilitation concepts as applicable. The plan would be used as an input to a master developer selection process.

Long-Term: Master Developer. As noted earlier, the master developer model is most efficient and appropriate for garnering the support of property owners, for financing improvements that cross multiple boundaries, and for meeting objectives and implementing a broad-based vision as established through the stakeholder engagement process. It is recommended that the City, in concert with the property owners (and, as applicable, businesses) help develop an RFP for developers. As in the case with the Seven Hills sites, Independence would have direct input in the selection of a master developer who would have deep, regional or national experience with this type of redevelopment project.

B. DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS ANALYSIS & STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS



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Memorandum

To: Jamie A. Greene, AIA, AICP
planning NEXT

Date: May 4, 2015

From: C. Gregory Dale, FAICP
McBride Dale Clarion

File Loc: 3365

Re: Independence, Ohio

Introduction

This memorandum summarizes our analysis of the zoning implications of the Independence Area Plans that planning Next has prepared for the City of Independence. The purpose of this memo is to provide insight and guidance as to the types of zoning tools that are needed to help implement the land use elements of the plan.¹

This memorandum focuses on the Downtown and the Rockside Northwest Quadrant Site areas, since those are the two focus areas that are the subject of specific land use and design related recommendations. It also addresses potential infill development along the Rockside Road corridor.

Assumptions

The Independence land use patterns and zoning regulations are characteristic of many suburban communities that grew during the suburban boom of the last 50 years. Like many similar communities, it is centered on a historic downtown core, but its land use and development policies have been based on the idea of separating what were perceived to be incompatible uses from each other, and on limiting residential development to single family neighborhoods. This is not unusual, and reflected development and demographic trends of the times.

Like many suburban communities, Independence now faces changing forces and development trends. As it is nears build out, future growth will be more in the form of redevelopment and infill, rather than “greenfield”. Further, demographic changes such as the aging baby boomers and the emerging millennials are changing tastes and demands in community design. The new Independence Area Plans address these issues in a thoughtful and deliberate manner. It calls for capitalizing on strategic opportunities to respond to evolving trends in certain well defined areas such as Downtown and Rockside. The area plans contain specific recommendations including the following, which are assumptions for the recommendations in this memorandum.

¹ This memorandum focuses on zoning issues. We understand that the city charter contains provisions related to land uses, including non-single family uses that will also have to be addressed as part of an overall implementation strategy, but the charter issue is beyond the scope of this memorandum.

1. Downtown is recommended:

- As a mixed-use district with residential opportunities
- With a connected street network to improve circulation
- For improved pedestrian orientation
- For a diverse range of residential opportunities and types
- For several different but integrated development forms including:
 - Downtown Core with vertically mixed uses including office, residential, and commercial uses
 - Mixed Use with a mixture of single family and attached townhomes
 - Traditional Neighborhood with a mixture of single family detached and single family attached
 - Professional Home Office with single family structures used as professional offices

2. Rockside Northwest Quadrant Site is recommended:

- To develop into a dense mixed use district with residential opportunities
- For a transportation framework to enhance connectivity
- To create a twenty-four hour district with amenities for workers and residents
- To have dedicated green space for active and passive recreation, including connections created by environmental amenities
- To accommodate corporate headquarters
- For several different but integrated development forms which are desired including:
 - Mixed-Use Employment Center with vertically mixed uses including retail and office, residential, supporting retail and other related uses
 - High Density Residential

3. Rockside Road is recommended:

- To accommodate infill and redevelopment in the suburban office park environment, potentially in the form of redeveloping large parking areas with more intense uses, potentially incorporating structured parking facilities.

In addition, the following general assumptions were made relative to how development is envisioned to proceed in the future:

1. It is possible that the Downtown and Rockside areas will undergo master planning by a single large developer, but it is more likely that the plan will be implemented incrementally over time by multiple developers on individual sites. Zoning is needed that promotes consistency in implementation over time.
2. The objective of the zoning is to enable development as called for in the plan. The city desires to allow flexibility and minimize regulatory barriers, but it is not the city's intent to mandate alternative development types identified in the plan.

Scope of Work

In conducting our analysis and developing our recommendations, we did the following:

- Reviewed the existing zoning regulations
- Consulted with city planning and legal staff
- Consulted with planning Next
- Viewed the properties and neighborhoods that are subject to the plan recommendations
- Reviewed the plan recommendations
- Drew from our experience with similar situations in Ohio and around the country

Findings

The following is a summary of our findings related to the existing zoning in Independence, and in particular as it relates to the Downtown and Rockside areas.

- The current planning and zoning code has no doubt served the city well for its time – the city has many fine neighborhoods and is home to one of the premier employment centers in the region.
- However, the base of the code is over 50 years old and in need of updating; it appears that the current base zoning code dates to 1960. One consequence of this is that it has many dated regulations – for example, the code includes many obsolete uses such as “dry goods” and “tanneries”, which is an indication that the uses and regulations have not kept up with modern development practices.
- Many provisions that are standard elements in modern zoning codes do not exist in the code, such as basic landscaping requirements and basic design standards.
- The code has been updated many times over the years, creating concerns about internal consistency. For example, the code includes zoning definitions that are in both the zoning code and the subdivision regulations that were added at different times, with a provision that in the case of conflicts the most recent definition applies.
- The code includes a U-2 Downtown Overlay District which on the surface appears to be a tool that could begin to align with the plan recommendations for the Downtown area, but that district has never been used and may have actually been repealed.
- There is no Planned Unit Development (PUD) or similar flexible tool that allows for alternative approaches to development. Planned unit development regulations are standard tools that are used in most zoning codes to allow for flexible approaches to alternative development concepts. While the use of PUDs as a zoning tool has its potential drawbacks as discussed below, it is unusual for a suburban community such as Independence to not have such a tool.

- The code appears to imbed a presumption that change is not desired, such as:
 - The charter provisions that are incorporated into the zoning code:
 - Require a vote of the electorate for any non-single family uses.
 - Require a vote of electorate for any amendment that allows any uses previously prohibited in the zoning code.
 - The code requires a three-fourths majority of a council vote on certain zone amendments when a certain percentage of property owners object.
- Mixed uses are clearly not contemplated in the zoning code, especially as envisioned in the plan, with several possible exceptions:
 - There is a provision that U-3 uses can be permitted in any other district as a “special permit” approved by city council (Section 1141.04). The U-3 uses are limited, but do include an open ended provision for similar uses to be approved as special exceptions. This may provide some opportunity, albeit very limited, to allow mixtures of uses.
 - The code includes a district known as U-5 High Rise Mixed Use District that allows for offices, restaurants, and retail uses, but the main reason for the “mixed use” designation appears to be to allow for restaurants, service businesses, fitness centers, etc. to be located inside of office buildings.
- There is very little in the development regulations that address overall quality and character of development beyond the rudiments of use regulations, setbacks, height, and others. This is not unusual for traditional zoning that focuses on separating uses, but mixed use approaches require more attention to quality of design. The exception in Independence is that the city has an Architectural Review Board (ARB) that addresses architectural quality. (The ARB and its regulations are not in the planning and zoning code, but rather are in the general code of ordinances.) This does provide an important safeguard that addresses overall development quality. However, there is very little in the way of standards to guide the ARB in its review. The ARB is charged with applying “proper architectural principles” using their “architectural judgment”, to promote development “in keeping” with their surrounding areas. With a plan that is calling for changes to the environment, a basic standard of “in keeping” with the surrounding area is not always appropriate.
- As the city has administered its development regulations, it has done so by and large without full-time professional planning guidance. While the city has good professional planning and design expertise on its staff, planners or designers do not have an active role in planning commission meetings and do not prepare professional planning staff reports. While we understand that the city’s boards and commissions have been diligent and dedicated in their work, the lack of professional planning advice can hinder the long term ability to implement newer alternative development types as called for in the plan.

- In practice, our understanding is that the success that the city has had in maintaining and improving the quality of development has been the result of a negotiated process where the planning commission, the ARB, and city council have pushed for high quality through a combination of the zone change process and the ARB review process. While the city has made the best of its existing tools, if the city hopes to implement the recommendations of the plan, which call for alternative mixtures of uses and a higher quality of new development, the existing practices and the existing regulations will not be adequate. Further, a negotiated process creates uncertainty for applicants and can result in inconsistent decisions over time.
- The code is also lacking in tools to manage and implement infill and redevelopment of Rockside Road in general, beyond the Northwest Quadrant Site. Infill can bring substantial benefits in the form of increased activity, vitality, and economic development, but it can also be viewed negatively by surrounding property owners who fear increased traffic congestion, parking problems, and other negative land use impacts. Retrofitting a suburban office land use form requires zoning tools to address a myriad of issues related to parking garage design, building form, landscaping, signage, and other compatibility issues. At this point the city does not have the tools in place to manage this process.
- In general, the code does not appear to anticipate or allow the approaches recommended in the plan or in the administrative approach to zoning. While the approach that the city has used in the past may have served the city well for what it was trying to accomplish, new approaches that help the city thrive in changing times will require a rethinking of how the city conducts the development review process.

In general, the land use regulations are not adequate to ensure that the plan is implemented efficiently and successfully.

Successful Elements of Mixed Use Zoning

As discussed above, the city's zoning regulations focus on aspects of development that are characteristic of post WW II suburbs, including use, bulk, area, and setbacks. The intent of such regulations is generally to separate uses, spread out development, and maximize setbacks, reflecting the desires and market forces of the times. More recently, however, communities have realized that other forms of development are needed to reflect changing demographics and tastes. Specifically, this plan call for alternatives to the single use form of development, not as a substitute, but as an alternative in the Downtown and Rockside areas. In the case of Downtown, the intent is to strengthen and build on the historic role of Downtown. In the case of Rockside, the intent is to encourage compatible mixtures of employment, commercial, residential and open space uses to promote sustained economic success of the area.

With the introduction of mixed use options in the Downtown and Rockside areas of the city comes a need to establish the parameters for requirements that should ultimately be incorporated into the city's zoning and development standards. As the city considers updates to its land use regulations, the following are characteristics of successful mixed use development that should be

translated into land use regulations that fit the City of Independence. Mixed use development should embody the following:

- **Complementary Uses.**
Allow for a complementary mix of land uses that support each other, offer opportunities for multiple purpose trips, and create an environment where high quality investment is enabled.
- **Critical Mass.**
Include densities and intensities that are high enough to create a critical mass of economic viability while also being compatible with surrounding areas, especially any adjacent residential neighborhoods.
- **Form.**
Have buildings oriented to streets rather than parking lots.
- **Context.**
Be compatible with any historic or traditional context (most applicable in the Downtown area).
- **Connectivity.**
Promote both internal and external vehicular and pedestrian connections.
- **Walkability.**
Provide safe and comfortable pedestrian and bicycle access and orientation through the design of complete streets.
- **Street Frontage.**
Establish active street frontages with high quality streetscape design.
- **Vehicular Traffic.**
Accommodate automobile traffic and parking in a safe and efficient manner, but not allow parking or vehicular areas to dominate the design of the site.
- **Shared Parking.**
Provide opportunities for shared parking to minimize unnecessary over parking.
- **24/7.**
Promote round the clock safety through the presence of people.
- **Housing Choice.**
Provide a variety of housing choices for evolving demographics.
- **Public Spaces.**
Include publicly accessible spaces and amenities.

- **Civic Uses.**
Promote compatible civic uses, such as public buildings.
- **Scale.**
Include human scaled building design.
- **Natural Resources.**
Conserve and integrate environmentally sensitive resources into the design of the development.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis and assumptions summarized above, the following recommendations for zoning and overall capacity are offered for consideration.

Zoning

There are two alternative zoning approaches that we suggest be considered, with the first alternative preferred:

1. **Comprehensive Code Update.** The preferred alternative is to update the overall zoning code to modernize it and incorporate the policies recommended in the plan. As discussed above, the zoning code is out of date and in need of updating. There is very little in the existing code that would advance the plan recommendations; in fact, existing code provisions could actually conflict with plan recommendations. (For example, the subdivision regulations have “planning criteria” that may actually be counter to the plan recommendations, such as encouraging cul-de-sacs.)

As part of a comprehensive update the city should develop standards that accomplish the characteristics of mixed use development described above. It should also establish clear, fair, and predictable procedures for both the development community and the Independence community at large. It should achieve a balance of discretionary and non-discretionary review and standards that allows for a mix of flexibility and predictability that works for Independence.

There are many tools that can be incorporated into an overall code update to accomplish the plan. These include:

- Improved development standards that apply across the board such as site design standards, landscaping requirements, parking lot design standards, signage standards, lighting standards, building form and orientation requirements, intensity standards, resource protection standards.
- Planned unit developments regulations with clear guidance to supplement the general development standards (see discussion of freestanding PUDs below).

- Overlay districts that provide supplemental regulations in addition to underlying zoning districts.
- New separate special purpose districts, such as a new “downtown mixed use” or “Rockside mixed use” with customized standards for those specific areas only.
- Standards to manage infill and redevelopment of suburban office parks in the Rockside Road corridor. Infill standards should be incorporated into a comprehensive code update. This could occur by incorporating infill standards or guidelines into the general development standards of the code, as part of a PUD process, as part of an overlay zoning approach, or as part of new specialized districts. The key will be to establish standards that mitigate potential negative impacts related to intensification, such as traffic impact, infrastructure capacity, and loss of parking while achieving the positive benefits of increased activity and synergy.

This is the preferred alternative. It would result in a comprehensive approach to integrating the area plans into the city’s development regulations. It would also provide the benefit for updated land use regulations for the city overall, which are needed.

2. **Freestanding Planned Unit Development.** If it is not feasible to do a full update to the zoning code, the second alternative is to prepare a separate freestanding planned unit development ordinance that allows for alternative forms of development in accordance with the plan. This would allow for the rezoning of property as a PUD on a case by case basis. While on the surface this would appear to be the simplest approach, the disadvantage of this alternative in the absence of an overall code update is that each PUD would need to address all aspects of the development. With an old zoning code with many incremental updates over the years, there is the potential for internal inconsistencies in applying the current code to new development types. With a comprehensive code update, overall development standards related to landscaping, resource protection, parking design, pedestrian orientation, and others could be relied on to supplement a PUD. Without a comprehensive code update, each PUD would have to carry the full weight of regulating all aspects of the development. Over time this could become a complicated and inefficient enforcement and administrative burden on the city.

Development Review Capacity

Just as the zoning regulations need to be updated and modernized, the way in which the city goes about reviewing development should be assessed. The way in which the city has reviewed development proposals in the past may have served the city well for that chapter of its history, but it is highly unusual for a community with the quality and aspirations of Independence to not have active professional planning advice in its regular board and commission process.

As part of implementation of this plan, the city should be prepared to expand the professional planning and design capacity that serves the city’s boards and commissions. The policies of the plan will require an increase in planning and design sophistication in the development review process, requiring increased professional review and participation in the development review process.

Likewise, the planning commission, the ARB, and city council will require training and education on the new concepts in the plan and any new development regulations.

Conclusion

The new plan provides a vision for how the city can position itself to preserve and protect that which it desires, to strengthen its historic core, and to promote long term economic health of its employment center. It respects where the city has come from while responding to new forces and trends. The next step is to make adjustments as needed to the regulatory tools and procedures to align them with the plan.

C. PLANNING WORKSHOPS MEMORANDUM

Chapter Contents

Meetings Overview

Workshop Results

Workshops Appendix



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MEMO

To: The Independence Area Plans Steering Committee
From: Kyle May
Re: Results of Area Plan Workshops

November 1, 2014

This memorandum summarizes the Planning Workshops conducted for the Area Planning Process for the cities of Independence and Seven Hills. It is organized into the following structure:

- 1. Overview**
 - a. Purpose of the workshops
 - b. Workshop format
- 2. Workshop Results, What we Heard**
 - a. The Future of Rockside Workshop
 - b. The Downtown and Beyond Workshop
- 3. Appendix (includes results and materials from each workshop)**
 - a. Full comments collected from opportunities map boards
 - b. Presentations
 - c. Participant packages

1. Overview

A. Purpose of the Workshops

The Planning Workshops for the cities of Independence and Seven Hills took place over a two-day period on September 15 and 16, 2014. The workshops were designed to inform the ongoing area planning process for four districts within the City of Independence and one district (the Rockside Road Corridor) shared by Independence and Seven Hills.

The first meeting focused on those districts contained within Independence. The “Downtown and Beyond Planning Workshop” included a discussion of the Downtown planning area, the East Pleasant Valley Road Corridor, Cloverleaf district and Community Campus. The meeting began with a presentation from the planning team on the impetus to begin the process followed by a short introduction to each district’s key conditions and trends. The break out session which followed was an interactive discussion between participants and the planning team set around large maps illustrating the context and opportunities.

The “Future of Rockside” workshop, on the following day, was a joint meeting between the cities of Seven Hills and Independence. The focus was on the 1,000 acres shared along the Rockside Road Corridor. The format was identical to the meeting hosted on the previous night and included a brief presentation and interactive activity.

The workshops were open to the public and publicized through various forms of media. A number of themes emerged from the discussion that will be used to inform the final recommendations of the five area plans.



B. Workshop Format

- **Introduction and Welcome** –The workshops began with a welcome from the Mayors of each community involved. The Future of Rockside meeting was initiated by Mayor Greg Kurtz of Independence and Mayor Richard Dell’Aquila of Seven Hills. Following this, Jeremy Rowan (Economic Development Director for the City of Independence) provided a background on the Economic Development Strategic Plan completed last year, and the motivation to begin the area planning process.
- **Project Overview** – The planning team outlined the progress made to date and outlined the next steps in the process. The team provided a background to the process of area planning and its importance for communities, and shared several examples of successful processes from around the country.
- **Existing Conditions** – Following the project overview, the planning team then presented the existing conditions for the areas under consideration. These findings included the size of the area, its dominant uses, its current viability, and other key indicators.
- **Area potential** – The team presented a number of scenarios for each district based on varying levels of intervention. These were intended to spur the conversation of the participants to follow, and provide some context and possibilities for each of the considered districts.
- **Break-out sessions** – Participants were asked to leave their chairs and review a series of information boards prepared for each planning area. Each area was illustrated through a general context map, and a key opportunities map. The context map helped participants visualize the boundary of the planning area on top of a recent (2013) aerial photograph. Major

roads and landmarks were included to help orient the participant's view. The opportunities map included the street and parcel structure of the focus area along with several key issues or opportunities unique to the district. Information included vacancy, ownership, land use, accessibility and available land. Several "Did you know" facts were prepared for each district to give participants more information for their input and help stoke the conversation.

2. Workshop Results, What we Heard

The following section summarizes the input received during the Downtown and Beyond and The Future of Rockside planning workshops. The input will be used with the technical research to develop the strategic recommendations for each of the planning areas. The focus of the workshops was to inform the public of the process, and provide an opportunity for them to contribute directly to conversation. They were asked to share their hopes, concerns and what they saw as missing opportunities for each district. Between both workshops, more than 200 people were in attendance (150 during the Future of Rockside, 50 during Downtown and Beyond).

A. The Downtown and Beyond Workshop

September 15, 2014, 7 to 9 PM, Independence Community and Civic Center

Participants offered a number of ideas for the future of the Downtown core as well as the City's other non-residential districts. A healthy and vibrant downtown, they suggested, will require many improvements and developments. Some overarching themes included walkable streets framed by buildings of mixed uses that emulate the existing neighborhood character, large areas providing new entertainment and recreation options, newer housing options for future residential demand and connectivity to surrounding cities and towns.

The community would also share its thoughts for the three other non-residential districts (East Pleasant Valley Road Corridor, Community Campus and Cloverleaf) during the downtown meeting. Themes for these areas included beautification initiatives, improvement of signage and the addition of new compatible uses.

The following summarizes the input received during the Downtown and Beyond planning workshop and is organized by the four planning areas. The themes are organized by their frequency and represent the most resonant points mentioned during the meetings.

The key themes for each planning are organized as follows:

Key Theme (# of mentions): Elaboration on comments that were received during the workshop.

DOWNTOWN

The planning area includes roughly 70 acres at the geographic center of Independence. Participants were asked to share their hopes, concerns and missing opportunities with the planning team. The following were the key themes that emerged.

Mix uses in development (8): Citizens are very concerned with the vitality of the City center. The mentioned frequently the need for the City to attract new residents and visitors. They view a family-friendly commercial area of mixed uses including office, retail, housing, education, restaurants and more as a desirable place for people to spend their time and money. The “mix” of these uses would not only be horizontal, but vertical (residential above retail or office).

Provide more amenities (6): Many examples were shared of cities in the region that have improved their downtowns and, as a result, attracted visitors and new residents. Providing more amenities like restaurants and shops would help make the downtown more a desirable destination for residents and visitors alike. Some specific uses that were mentioned included a microbrewery, shopping center, and new Italian restaurant.

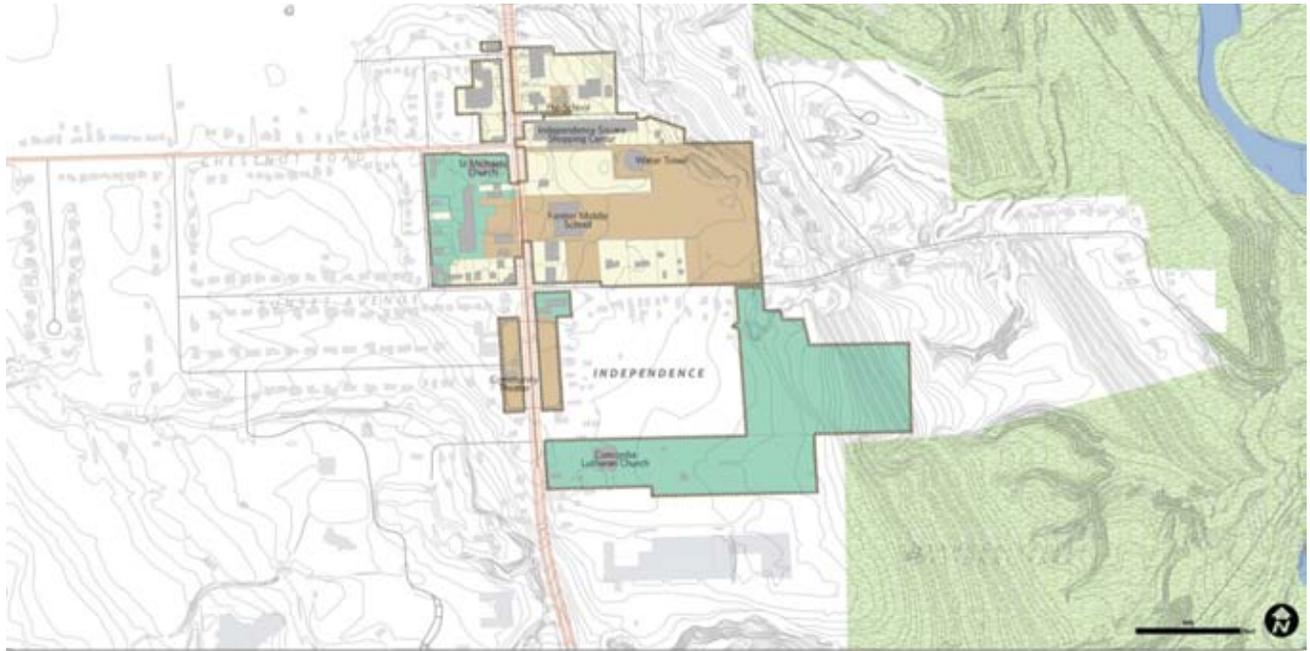
Develop alternative housing (5): A key component of the mixed-use urban core is the multi-unit housing. Participants identified young professionals and senior citizens as ideal residents of future downtown housing complexes. They further defined the type of housing that might be attractive to this demographic as attached or multi-unit. Many qualified this further by mentioning that the units could be owner-occupied, or condominium style developments.

Preserve downtown charm (3): Participants mentioned that new development should fit the context of the City’s downtown and not destroy the community’s charm. Development should be well considered, well designed and occur at a manageable pace.

Figure 1: Downtown Context Map



Figure 2 Downtown Opportunities Map



Legend

- Parcel Owned by City of Independence
- Parcel Owned by a Church
- Downtown Study Area
- Area with Excessive Slope
- Cuyahoga Valley National Park

DID YOU KNOW?

2 Intersections
Prevalent along Streetscape



Brickville Road includes Four Travel Lanes and a Turning Lane



75%
Percent Owned by Church or City

67 Total Acres

1 Vacant Middle School located in the Downtown Study Area

3 Churches Are located in the Downtown Study Area

Abundant Surface Parking with Frontage on Brickville Road



11 Homes Are located in the Downtown Study Area

COMMUNITY CAMPUS

The planning area includes roughly 170 acres at the center of Independence. Participants were asked to share their hopes, concerns and missing opportunities with the planning team. The following were the key themes that emerged.

Library/Community Center (5): The location of the Library was debated among participants. Some saw the potential for an expansion and redesign of the Civic Center should the Library relocate to downtown or another location. Several parcels from the surrounding neighborhood were identified as prospective land acquisitions to expand the area for community activity.

Senior Center/Housing (4): Many citizens are concerned by the lack of senior housing in Independence and viewed the Community Campus as an ideal location for this use. A senior center was another use offered by participants. This could be developed in conjunction with the current Civic Center.

Figure 3 Community Campus Context Map



Figure 4 Community Campus Opportunities Map



Legend

- Owned by City of Independence / Independence City Schools
- Community Campus Study Area
- Area with Excessive Slope
- Copperage Valley National Park

DID YOU KNOW?

14 acres
Average Parcel Size

10
Athletic Fields

83%
Percent Owned by City/Schools

157 Total Acres

Rural Network Returns Little Connectivity to Rest of Community

Diverse Park Amenities such as sports fields, park, horseshoe pits, tennis courts, playgrounds, bike/courts, etc.

- 3 Large Residential Parcels
- 100 Community Garden Plots

EAST PLEASANT VALLEY CORRIDOR

The planning area includes roughly 230 acres in the southeast of the City. Participants were asked to share their hopes, concerns and missing opportunities with the planning team. The following were the key themes that emerged.

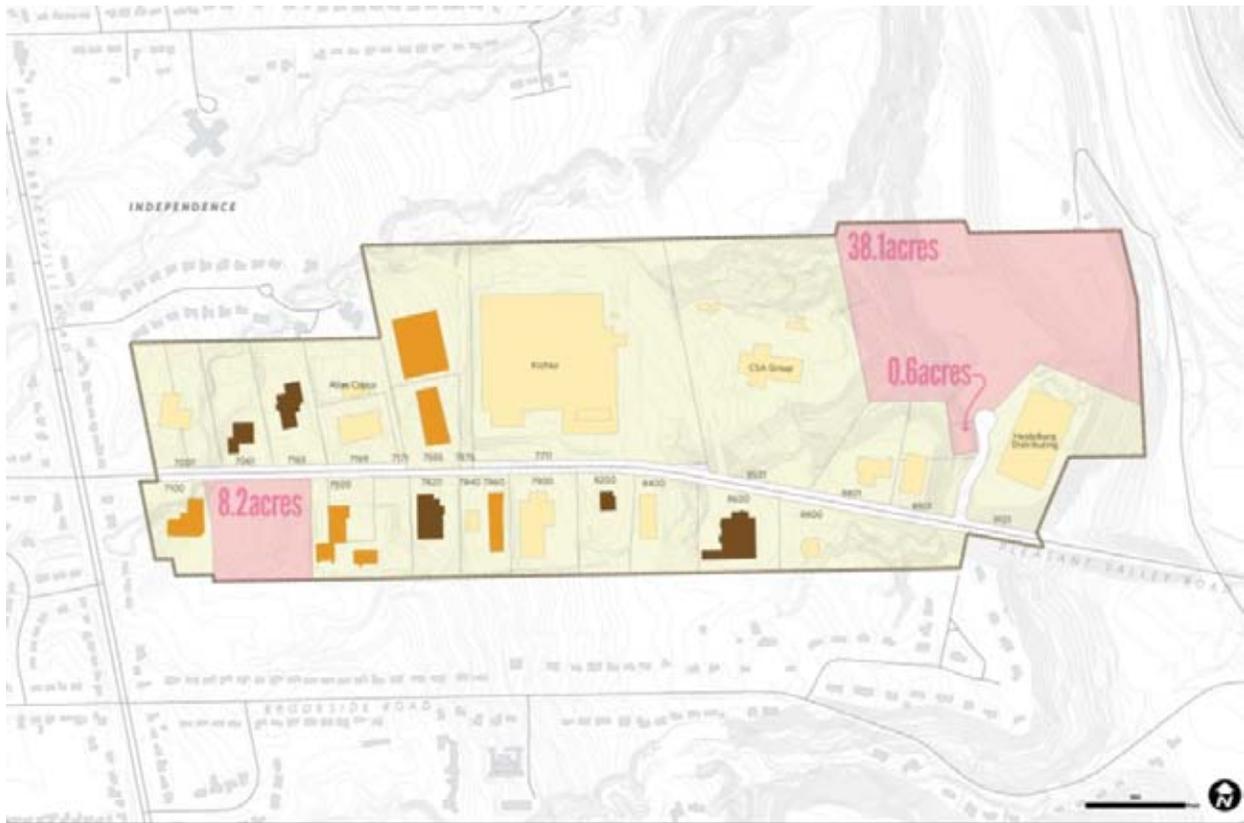
Public park/trail system (5): Many areas along the East Pleasant Valley Road corridor were identified as ideal areas for public open space and recreation paths. In addition to providing activity centers, green space would alleviate EPA concerns and improve area aesthetics.

Connectivity (2): During review of this corridor, participants acknowledged the area would benefit from better connections to the surrounding community. This could be achieved through better/more access points, public transportation, and various traffic alleviation schemes.

Figure 5 East Pleasant Valley Corridor Context Map



Figure 6 East Pleasant Valley Corridor Opportunities Map



Legend

- Occupied Facility
- Partially Vacant Facility
- Vacant Facility
- East Pleasant Valley Road Address
- Parcel Open for Potential Development
- East Pleasant Valley Road Corridor Study Area
- Area with Easement Strip
- Cuyahoga Valley National Park

DID YOU KNOW?

1975
Average Year of Building Construction

±28
Developable Acres

12%
Current Vacancy Rate

230 Total Acres

1 Facility is one of the Largest Employers in the City

93,934 Average Building Square Footage

1 East Pleasant Valley Road will be a Freeway/Loop to be completed 2022

91% of Acres zoned Light Manufacturing

CLOVERLEAF

The planning area includes roughly 290 acres in the far northern most part of the City of Independence. Participants were asked to share their hopes, concerns and missing opportunities with the planning team. The following were the key themes that emerged.

Gateway (7): The Cloverleaf area is seen as an entrance into Independence and participants felt this gateway should be embraced. New entertainment options, connections to local bike trails, clean connections to the river and landscape beautification projects would shine a new light on the area. To complete the rehabilitation of the Cloverleaf area, several saw multi-unit housing options as a necessary addition.

Housing potential (4): Several participants saw the district as a potential location for future multi-unit housing. Views of downtown and available land were examples offered for the area's suitability. Some also saw the district as suitable location for more amenities similar to the bowling alley and existing restaurants.

Figure 7 Cloverleaf Context Map



Figure 8 Cloverleaf Opportunities Map



- Legend**
- Industrial/Commercial Zoning
 - Cleveland Study Area
 - Area with Exceptional Slope
 - Cuyahoga Valley National Park

DID YOU KNOW?

Barrier of I-480
Separate Cleveland and the City of Independence

Few Access
Points via the various interstate connections

83%
Percent Zoned Commercial and Industrial

289 Total Acres

West Creek Watershed Restoration Project in Cleveland Study Area

Close to Towpath Trail and other regional recreational amenities

B. The Future of Rockside Workshop

September 16, 2014, 7 to 9 PM, Holiday Inn Ballroom, Independence

The Rockside planning workshop was hosted at the Holiday Inn Ballroom and gathered just over 150 participants. After a presentation from the planning team meeting attendees offered their hopes, concerns and fears for the 1,000 acres within the Rockside planning area. This was a joint workshop and included the City of Seven Hills (190 acres within the planning area) and the City of Independence (850 acres within the planning area).

The following summarizes the input received during the Future of Rockside planning workshop. The themes are organized by their frequency and represent the most resonant points mentioned during the meetings.

The key themes for each planning are organized as follows:

Key Theme (# of mentions): Elaboration on comments that were received during the workshop.

Traffic (11): While new development is a welcomed idea for the Rockside corridor, many citizens voiced concerns over the impacts of increased traffic demands due to such growth. A few congestion alleviation schemes were offered but most mentioned a comprehensive traffic study that would likely need to accompany any large-scale development plans. Some participants mentioned congestion might be alleviated by improving the internal and external street connectivity.

Smart Growth (11): Development within Rockside should be well considered, tasteful, and fit the existing context. This concern involved the many impacts of development including: large development opportunities such as hotels, a convention center, and the pros and cons of retail supercenters; buffering of new development areas and existing residential neighborhoods; providing a Safety and Visitor Center to house Police, Fire, and EMS personnel; appropriate and inclusive zoning practices; and utilizing local resources to accomplish development goals.

Bike-ability/Public trails (7): Local resources such as the CVNP trails, towpath trails, and Cuyahoga National Park were provided as examples of activity centers and paths that could be connected through the area of Independence and Seven Hills. Community park land and paths as well as on-street bike lanes were considered lacking in general.

Multi-family Housing (7): The Rockside corridor provides many opportunities for new development and local residents are interested in seeing housing projects suitable for young professionals and seniors as well as affordable housing options. Several commenters mentioned the Rockside district as the most suitable for area for a more dense alternative housing opportunity.

Walkability (5): Participants would like to see the Rockside corridor transition into an appealing place to live and play and walk. They view sidewalks as a necessary step towards this goal. In addition to wider sidewalks and more street trees, a shuttle service was mentioned as an effective method of increasing walkability.

Figure 9 Rockside Context Map

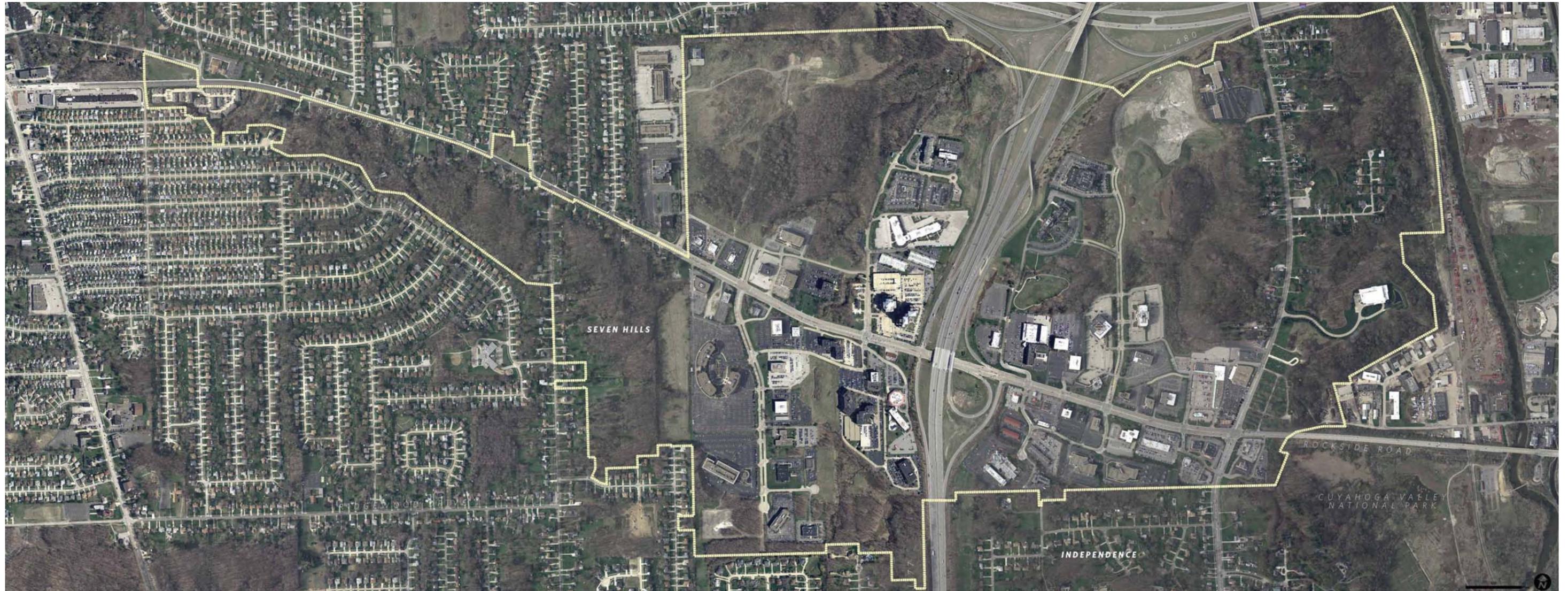
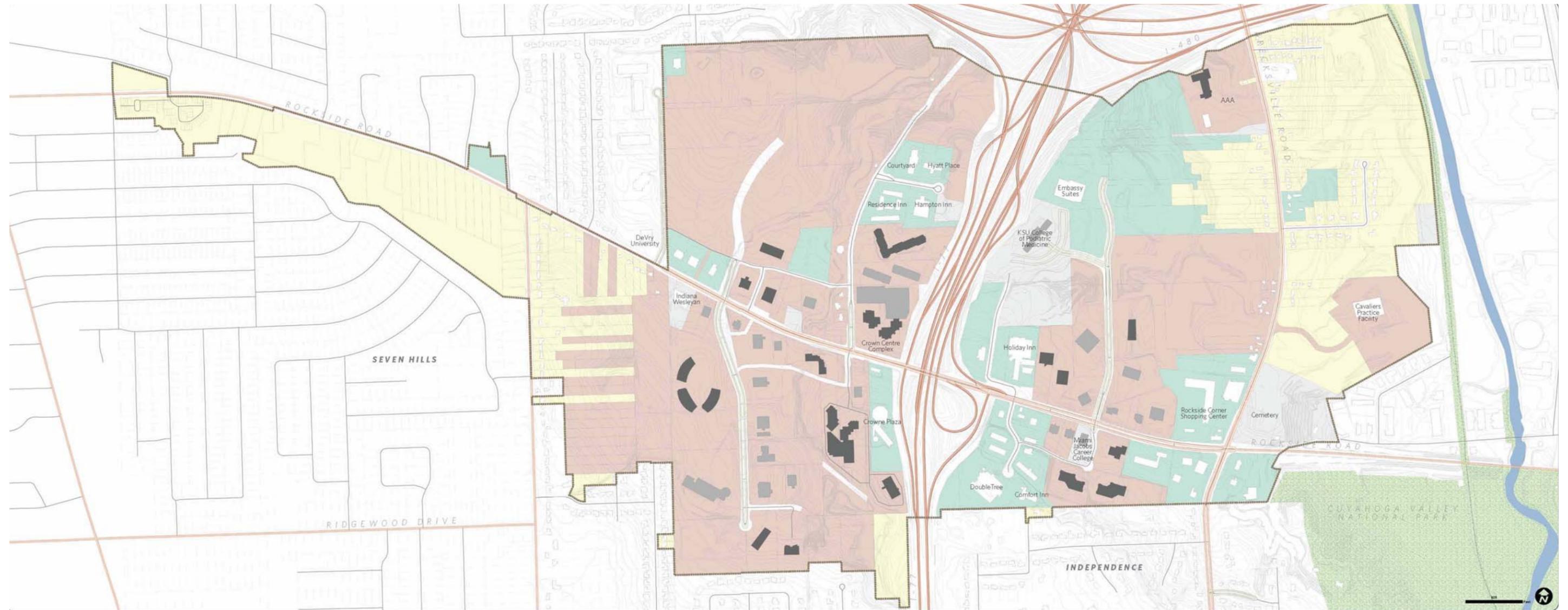


Figure 10 Rockside Opportunities Map



Legend

- Residential Zoning
- Commercial Zoning
- Retail Zoning
- Government / Utility / Educational Zoning
- Rockside Road Study Area
- Class A Office Space
- Class B Office Space
- Building with No Class Information
- Area with Excessive Slope
- Cuyahoga Valley National Park

DID YOU KNOW?

1987
Average Year of Building Construction

Over 200
Developable Acres

4 Million
Square Feet of Class A
and Class B office space

961 Total Acres

25,000 People per day
commute for employment
to Rockside Road

66,303 Large Average Building
Square Footage

Two Communities working together
on a singular and cohesive Planning Effort

12 Hotels

Several Office Class Rankings
have Dropped from A to B

422 Total Number of Parcels

2002 Year of most recently Constructed
Multi-Tenant Office Building

15 Minute drive time to both
Hopkins International Airport
and Downtown Cleveland

Rockside Road features
Six Travel Lanes and
One Turning Lane

Appendix

The following appendices contain the materials, raw data and verbatim responses from the Downtown and Beyond and The Future of Rockside planning workshops hosted on September 15th and 16th. This section is divided into the following parts:

- A. Full comments collected from opportunities map boards
 - a. The future of Rockside
 - b. Downtown and Beyond
- B. Workshop Presentations
 - a. The future of Rockside
 - b. Downtown and Beyond
- C. Participant packets
 - a. The Future of Rockside
 - b. Downtown and Beyond

A. Full comments collected from opportunities map boards: **The Future of Rockside**

Unique No.	Area	Dot	Dot Location Description	Category	Cell Location	Comment
RO1	RO	Y	West side	H	A1	Joint Safety and Visitor Center (Police/Fire/EMS)
RO2	RO	Y	West side	H	A2	IKEA, Trader Joe's, Multi-unit housing in 7Hills
RO3	RO	N	West side	H	A2	Complete Rockside Wood North through to Brecksville Rd
RO4	RO	N	West side	H	A3	Bike/Hike trails with easy access to entire area (west-east)
RO5	RO	N	West side	H	A7	Bike-ability, bike access to CVNP trails?
RO6	RO	N	SW Privately owned parcel	H		I'd like to reed the woods behind my house (216-926-7123)
RO7	RO	N	West side	H		Fire Station
RO8	RO	N	West side	C		Quarry North of E Dartmoor, South of Rockside- Do Not Develop!
RO9	RO	N	West side	MO		Work around the colleges DeVry area, microbrewery, coffee shop
RO10	RO	Y		H	A1	Opportunity for multi tenant housing
RO11	RO	Y		H	A2	Res. connectivity to avoid congestion
RO12	RO	N		H		Provide proper buffering for any new development
RO13	RO	Y		C	B1	Concerned about transition from single family to Apt housing
RO14	RO	Y	NW Rockside Rd	C	B2	Traffic and noise concern with growth
RO15	RO	Y		C	B3	Aren't Nursing Home Zoning
RO16	RO	Y		C	B6	Traffic
RO17	RO	Y	NW Rockside Rd	MO	C1	Lack of green space
RO18	RO	Y	North border	H	A1	New exit ramp to 480
RO19	RO	N		H	A2	Major road clover leaf- see general comment card
RO20	RO	Y	North of Miami Jacobs Career Center	H	A3	Please offer shuttle service to make city more walkable
RO21	RO	N		H	A4	Walkability
RO22	RO	Y	NW corner	C	B1	Adjacent property being developed for housing
RO23	RO	Y		C	B2	Increase traffic impact on residents
RO24	RO	Y		C	B3	Ultimate transition to Section 8 hosing if it became housing (recently)
RO25	RO	N		C	B6	Homeowner displacement Southside of Rockside Rd
RO26	RO	N		C	BB	No middlemen developers- like Seven Hills did before or Rockside Corridor, Direct development only
RO27	RO	Y	Near Embassy Suites	MO	C1	4 season water park and hotel
RO28	RO	N		MO	C2	General jogging path perimeter
RO29	RO	N		C		Traffic Congestion along Rockside?
RO30	RO	Y	Intersection	H	A1	The street is very wide and sidewalks narrow, which doesn't seem inviting to walk. Need bike lanes, sidewalks, trees to make it more appealing for live & play. Make corridor to get to Cuyahoga National Park.
RO31	RO	Y	Rockside Rd near DeVry Uni	H	A2	Need sidewalks to promote live & play and accessibility to corridor
RO32	RO	Y		H	A3	Seven Hills does not have enough public parks. Would love to see a park-like area with maybe some 1st floor business/retail and 2nd, 3rd, etc. floor condos or apartments for workers.
RO33	RO	Y		H	A3	The staggered land could make for some nice trails behind the mixed used business/apt buildings. Business would allow for income taxes. Business could be white collar, retail, galleries, or restaurants. I'd like a walkable food out area, think Ohio City and Tremont.
RO34	RO	Y	South of DeVry	H	A4	Buy out residents and increase commercial park space. Do not have businesses access off cross view, access all off Rockside.
RO35	RO	Y		C	B1	Entire Seven Hills area is heavily green w/ words, trees, and grass. Lots of deer in the area. As development occurs the deer need to be culled otherwise accidents and health concerns increase.
RO36	RO	Y		C	B2	Rockside/I-77 is only close highway access for us as we live off Crossview. Concern for increased traffic and congestion.
RO37	RO	Y		C	B3	Lot's of space here. Don't want IKEA, Walmart or a mall built. Small businesses are what I want to see.
RO38	RO	Y		C	B6	Don't become trashy.
RO39	RO	N	6155 Crossview	C	B6	What will become of next door? (216-926-7123)
RO40	RO	Y	Seven Hills wooded area	H	A1	Please consider building young professional and empty nester housing here.
RO41	RO	Y	Seven Hills wooded area	H	A2	Please consider building young professional and empty nester housing here.
RO42	RO	Y	Rockside Rtd	H	A6	Rockside between Crossview and Broadview will be too narrow - traffic jams!
RO43	RO	Y	Cuyahoga Valley National Park	H		Build a large hotel/convention center on Rockside going down into the Valley
RO44	RO	Y	Rockside Rd	H		Close intersection on Rockside Rd and build new road one block north

A. Full comments collected from opportunities map boards: **Downtown and Beyond**

Unique No.	Area	Dot	Dot Location Description	Category	Cell Location	Comment
DT1	DT	N		H	A1	Tear it all down and start our low rise apartments with commercial like university circle
DT2	DT	N		H	A2	Destination type Italian restaurant
DT3	DT	N		H	A3	Some sort of mixed use office, open space, retail, historical education, housing
DT4	DT	N		H	A4	ADD senior housing around churches
DT5	DT	N		H	A5	Should we keep the "charm" of the downtown district. (more like the historic Dublin?) Don't put large high rises. Need a sense of community
DT6	DT	N		H	A6	Go to Arlington heights.com (Chicago) and see what I would like to see here
DT7	DT	Y	Former Middle School	H	A6	Please do something with the school or demolish it. Add multi-family housing about retail
DT16	DT	Y		H	A1	Mixed use downtown: residential, offices, shops, restaurants and bars. Downtown Hudson or Chagrin Falls
DT17	DT	N		H	A2	1st - get 5 gal red paint and paint a heart on the water tower "the heart of Cuyahoga County!"
DT18	DT	N		H	A3	2nd - Council is bad with housing initiative for downtown area. Get the ball rolling in the right direction, move on this!
DT19	DT	N		H	A6	3rd - Make downtown a desirable place to go so people that work in town will stay and spend to uplift the area more active for the city and economy
DT8	DT	N		C	B1	Sanitary sewer infrastructure
DT9	DT	N		C	B3	Over development. We don't need downtown NYC in Independence. Just the right amount
DT10	DT	N		C	B6	I second that (comment from DT9)
DT11	DT	N		MO	C5	Add amenities that draw people to downtown. Small retail shops, historic flavor, family friendly
DT12	DT	N		MO	C1	absolutely (comment from DT14)
DT13	DT	N		MO	C4	Draw people from other cities to visit, develop a central market district that is non like existing office space (retail, medical)
DT14	DT	Y	Independence Square Shopping Center	MO	C2	Micro brewery in shopping center
DT15	DT	N		MO	C3	Housing for young professionals
CL1	CL	N		H	A1	Update cloverleaf entertainment: keep bowling, add laser tag, other, bar/club (young)
CL2	CL	N		H	A2	Rework cloverleaf area, it is an entrance to Independence, beautification
CL3	CL	N		MO	C1	A residential component
CL4	CL	N		MO	C2	Housing, condo's and townhouses
CL5	CL	N		MO	C3	A connection to the towpath to this district
CL6	CL	N		MO	C4	Multi unit housing - rooftop decks!
CL7	CL	N		MO	C5	Drainage to confluence project is free and clean
PV1	PV	N		H	A1	Maintain aesthetic appeal of property
PV2	PV	Y	potential development parcel	H	A4	Creative use for 38.1 acres on North side. Park? Exercise area?
PV3	PV	N		C	B1	Easy access, public transportation, traffic
PV4	PV	Y	S	C	B2	EPA concern
PV5	PV	N		MO	C1	A "loop" for connectivity for this district
PV6	PV	Y	East end of Pleasant Valley Rd	MO	C2	Towpath connection
PV7	PV	Y	North of Kichler facility	MO	C4	Trail easement around "fronts" "backs" of property
CC1	CC	Y	Library	H	A1	Move school admin here
CC2	CC	Y	SE Privately owned parcel, civic center	H	A2	Expand and update the Civic Center and keep Library where it is connected to the civic center unless it becomes the senior center and library moves
CC3	CC	Y	Civic Center	H	A3	Relocate library to downtown area and expand civic center for additional community activity
CC4	CC	Y	NW privately owned parcel	H	A4	Consider purchase of private property and use for senior housing
CC5	CC	Y	NW privately owned parcel	H	A5	Please consider placing the senior housing in this area
CC6	CC	Y	SE privately owned parcel	H	A6	Purchase this land for an arts related use
CC7	CC	N		H	A6	Keep the area kid, noise and fun oriented!
CC8	CC	Y	Civic Center, NW privately owned parcel, baseball fields	C	B1	Lack of senior housing in our wonderful city is a missed opportunity and a big concern of many people
CC9	CC	Y	SE Privately owned parcel	MO	C1	City owned/controlled land at SE corner of Selig
CC10	CC	Y		MO	C2	Community Center - alpha theatre, outdoor covered
CC11	CC	Y	SE Privately owned parcel	MO	C3	Please consider purchasing this land for future use

B. Workshop Presentation: **The Future of Rockside**

INDEPENDENCE | SEVEN HILLS

Planning Workshop

Future of Rockside
September 16, 2014 | 7-8:30pm

Welcome

Why are we here?

Why are we here?

1. City completed Economic Development Strategic Plan in 2013
2. Rockside Road is healthy...but aging and could gradually become less competitive
3. Regional trends
4. Paradigm shift
5. Ability to evolve and capture emerging trends
6. Increased competition

EDSP Key Objectives

1. Diversify employment and tax base
2. Strengthen and retain existing industry
3. Focus on growth industries
4. Focus on high-wage jobs
5. Reduce "footloose" nature of the existing business base
6. Exploit the City's competitive advantages
7. Strengthen Downtown Independence
8. Retain and enhance Independence's high quality of life
9. Ensure the EDSP is consistent with the community's vision

EDSP Key Recommendations

1. Build on strengths through target business recruitment
2. Enhance amenity value
3. Update the office product
4. Enhance infrastructure & site "readiness"
5. Attract talent & promote entrepreneurship

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Why are we here?
3. How will we proceed (Introducing the Area Plans)
4. Development Analysis and Opportunities
5. Next Steps
6. Break Out Sessions



Why is Seven Hills supporting this effort?

- City is 95% developed
- 2002 Master Plan (many items completed)
- Steps taken to position the Rockside Road land for economic development, yet the area has not experienced significant development
- This coordinated approach allows a fresh and market driven, economic, and regional perspective.



How will we proceed?

Introducing the Area Plans

What is an "Area Plan?"

A vision for the future a district that is based on an understanding of conditions and possibilities and includes steps to achieve the vision.

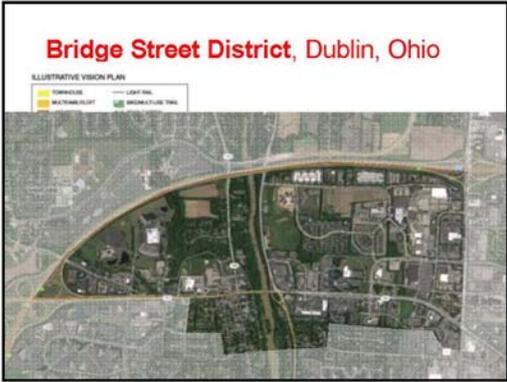
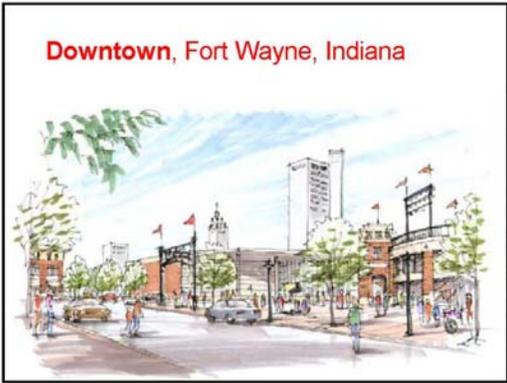


Successful Examples

- Lane Avenue, Upper Arlington, OH
- Downtown, Fort Wayne, IN
- Historic Dublin, Dublin, OH
- Bridge Street, Dublin, OH

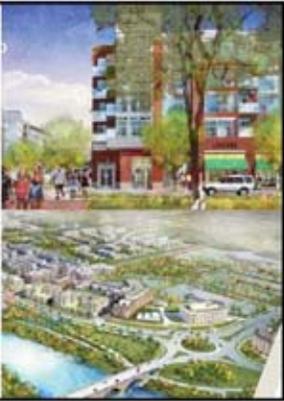
Lane Avenue, Upper Arlington, Ohio





Bridge Street, Dublin, Ohio

In 2013, developer proposes \$300 million mixed-use development, under new district zoning, City funds Infrastructure Improvements



Legacy Town Center, Plano, TX




Legacy Town Center, Plano TX

“Ten years ago, this land next to the Dallas Tollway was just a field. Today it’s arguably the most successful development in North Texas. Recently it has landed some of the biggest office projects in the region. But it’s the shops and restaurants - almost 600,000 sq ft - and the almost 3,600 apartments that Legacy Town Center is best known for. An estimated 4 million people a year visit the project.”

Research Triangle Park, NC




Research Triangle Park Master Plan, NC

The Plan calls for better connections to transit, housing opportunities within the park, greater density at strategic points, allocations for walkable retail, and many other amenities. The aim is to maintain the promise of the park while introducing the characteristics sought by 21st century research workers.

Retrofit: Novo Nordisk (office), Boston Area

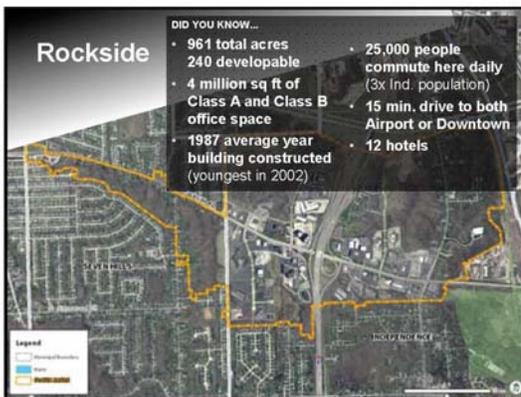


Retrofit: Cloud 9 Sky Flats, Minneapolis Area



Overview of the Area

This work will look at 1,000 acres of the Rockside Road corridor shared between the cities of Seven Hills and Independence.



Next Steps

Where are we headed?

Next Steps

1. Document input from tonight
2. Conduct the Planning Workshop, Part 2 (Rockside)
3. Brief planning committees
4. Meet with city councils
5. Develop recommendations
6. Complete plan by Dec '14

Break Out Session

Break Out Session

At your own pace...

1. View maps / information for each area
2. Consider the future of the areas
3. Share hopes, concerns, or other thoughts...
 - Use post-it notes for comments
 - Use blue dots to identify locations on map
 - Write corresponding number on each

B. Workshop Presentation: **Downtown and Beyond**

INDEPENDENCE

Planning Workshop

Downtown and Beyond
September 15, 2014 | 7-8:30pm

Welcome

Why are we here?

Why are we here?

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2. Rockside Road is healthy...but aging and could gradually become less competitive
3. Regional trends
4. Paradigm shift
5. Ability to evolve and capture emerging trends
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EDSP Key Objectives

1. Diversify employment and tax base
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6. Exploit the City's competitive advantages
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9. Ensure the EDSP is consistent with the community's vision

EDSP Key Recommendations

1. Build on strengths through target business recruitment
2. Enhance amenity value
3. Update the office product
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Agenda

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How will we proceed?

Introducing the Area Plans

What is an “Area Plan?”

A vision for the future a district that is based on an understanding of conditions and possibilities and includes steps to achieve the vision.



Successful Examples

- Lane Avenue, Upper Arlington, OH
- Downtown, Fort Wayne, IN
- Historic Dublin, Dublin, OH
- Bridge Street, Dublin, OH

Lane Avenue, Upper Arlington, Ohio



Lane Avenue, Upper Arlington, Ohio
“commercial (construction) activity skyrocketed to an astounding \$39.9 million” as compared to slightly more than \$10 million five years earlier—prior to the study area plans.

Downtown, Fort Wayne, Indiana



Downtown, Fort Wayne, Indiana

The city recently inaugurated Harrison Square which includes a minor league baseball park, a new hotel, retail, a parking structure, and residences with an easy walking distance from the downtown core.



Dublin, Ohio (Historic Dublin)



Dublin, Ohio (Historic Dublin)

South corner Bridge and High streets, developed 2003 (top)
North corner Bridge and High streets developed 2009 (bottom)

Bridge Street District, Dublin, Ohio



Bridge Street, Dublin, Ohio

In 2013, developer proposes \$300 million mixed-use development, under new district zoning. City funds infrastructure improvements.

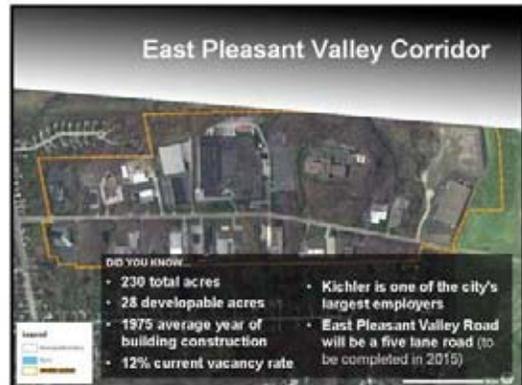
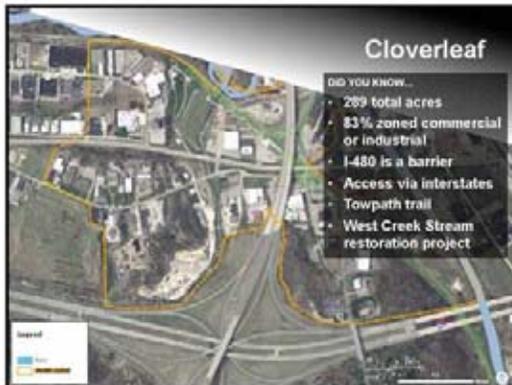


Overview of the Areas

This work will look at five of Independence's non-residential districts.



Development Analysis and Opportunities





Market Perspective - Downtown

1. 110,000+/- sq ft of commercial space, but only about 40% is used for retail; mostly convenience and service-oriented, does not function as a shopping district.
2. Draws from a small Trade Area with little exposure to the massive market on Rockside due to physical barriers.
3. Some demand for additional retail, but building a housing base and establishing it as a destination make it stronger. As a destination, downtown could attract 40,000 to 70,000 sq ft of retail, restaurant and entertainment uses.

Market Perspective - Downtown

4. Recovering housing market... Independence is one of the strongest in the region. Relatively little new housing in Independence oriented to the large professional employment base (or any) market.
5. Independence housing prices are artificially high, at 100% more than the south suburban market average, due to high demand from office workers coupled with the lack of supply.
6. Downtown could support about 180-200 housing units, targeted to empty nesters (age 55-74) and young professionals. Cluster homes, patio homes, condominiums, mixed-use, or other "limited maintenance" housing appropriate.

Market Perspective - Downtown

If marketed as a mixed-use destination with housing for empty nesters and young professionals...

7. It could eventually attract small office uses including design, technology and professional service firms.
8. It could provide a higher level of community retail and services

Market Perspective – Innovation Zone

An "Innovation Zone" at a City-owned site...

- Oriented to R&D, technology-based, and clean manufacturing businesses as an approach for diversifying the tax base.
- Key sectors include Information Technology (IT) & Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), Engineering, and Life Sciences.
- Growth in these sectors will generate demand for space over the next 5-10 years; could attract 140,000 to 190,000 sq ft.
- Likely target uses might include engineering and technical service firms, testing companies, food processors and others.
- Marketing would likely rely on attracting one or more "anchor" uses such as a respected academic institution, the R&D division of a corporate brand, or large government contractor

Next Steps

Where are we headed?

Next Steps

1. Document input from tonight
2. Conduct the Planning Workshop, Part 2 (Rockside)
3. Brief planning committees
4. Meet with city councils
5. Develop recommendations
6. Complete plan by Dec '14

Break Out Session

Break Out Session

At your own pace...

1. View maps / information for each area
2. Consider the future of the areas
3. Share hopes, concerns, or other thoughts...
 - Use post-it notes for comments
 - Use blue dots to identify locations on map
 - Write corresponding number on each

C. Participant Packages: **The Future of Rockside**

Future of Rockside Planning Workshop

City of Seven Hills and Independence Area Planning Process

Agenda

SEPTEMBER 16, 2014 7:00-8:30 PM

LOCATION: THE HOLIDAY INN BALLROOM, 6001 ROCKSIDE RD

Purpose: Introduce the Area Planning process. Share initial findings from the market and general conditions analysis. Present development concepts and gather preferences from meeting attendees.

1. WELCOME	Mayor Richard Dell'Aquila & Mayor Greg Kurtz	7:00pm
2. WHY ARE WE HERE? <ul style="list-style-type: none">Motivation for the project	Jeremy Rowan	7:10
3. HOW WILL WE PROCEED? (Introducing The Area Plans) <ul style="list-style-type: none">What is an "Area Plan"?Successful examples	Jamie Greene, pN	7:20
4. ROCKSIDE ROAD TODAY <ul style="list-style-type: none">Existing conditionsMarket analysis	Jamie Greene, pN Randall Gross, RGDE	7:30
5. ROCKSIDE ROAD TOMORROW <ul style="list-style-type: none">Character potentialDevelopment approaches	Jamie Greene, pN	7:45
6. NEXT STEPS <ul style="list-style-type: none">Where are we headed?	Jamie Greene, pN	8:00
7. BREAK OUT SESSIONS	All	8:05

Supporting Material

- Focus area base maps

Notes: The planning team is being led by planning NEXT (pN), with the support of Randall Gross and McBride Dale Clarion. Jeremy Rowan is the Economic Development Director for the city of Independence.



www.planning.next.com



Answers to frequently asked questions

1. What is an Area Plan?

An Area Plan is a targeted assessment of the conditions and possibilities for a district within a jurisdiction. The Area Planning process will analyze five of Independence's non-residential districts, including one area in Seven Hills: Rockside Road Corridor (Including 150 acres in Seven Hills); Downtown; Cloverleaf Area; East Pleasant Corridor; and Community Campus. This analysis will assess the physical environment, review the existing zoning code, examine the market potential for office, housing and retail, and provide a set of strategic recommendations for future growth and development.

2. Why do we need this process?

For Independence: Over the past several decades, the city of Independence has enjoyed a well-deserved reputation as nice place to live and work. The city's significant office development—and the associated high payroll tax collections—has provided the city with very solid fiscal health. City leaders have realized prosperity is not guaranteed and, in fact, have observed significant, negative trends in recent years. The Economic Development Strategic Plan (2013) revealed that changes in office demand along with the relative age of the city's office product could adversely affect the competitiveness of the city's employment areas, and its fiscal health. The Area Plans will address the underlying issues and future potential in these areas.

For Seven Hills: The city completed its Master Plan in 2002. Rockside Road was one of several focus areas identified in that plan as opportunities for considered growth and development. The City of Independence recently began a planning process that includes more than 800 acres along Rockside Road and shares a border with Seven Hills. Rather than produce potentially competing plans, the cities will work together to complete an Area Plan for Rockside Road corridor that includes both jurisdictions.

3. How will this affect me as a citizen?

The Area Planning Process is focused on the non-residential areas. As a citizen your home will not be part of the analysis. A successful plan will create a framework for the city to grow and develop land in these focus areas that meets the market demand, produces an attractive environment, and ensures the continued prosperity of the city and most importantly, its residents.

4. Who's involved in the planning team?

The planning team is made up of city staff from the Economic Development Department as well as a consulting team led by planning NEXT. The staff and consultants are working with a committee of residents, land owners, developers, and business leaders.

5. How long will the Area Planning process take?

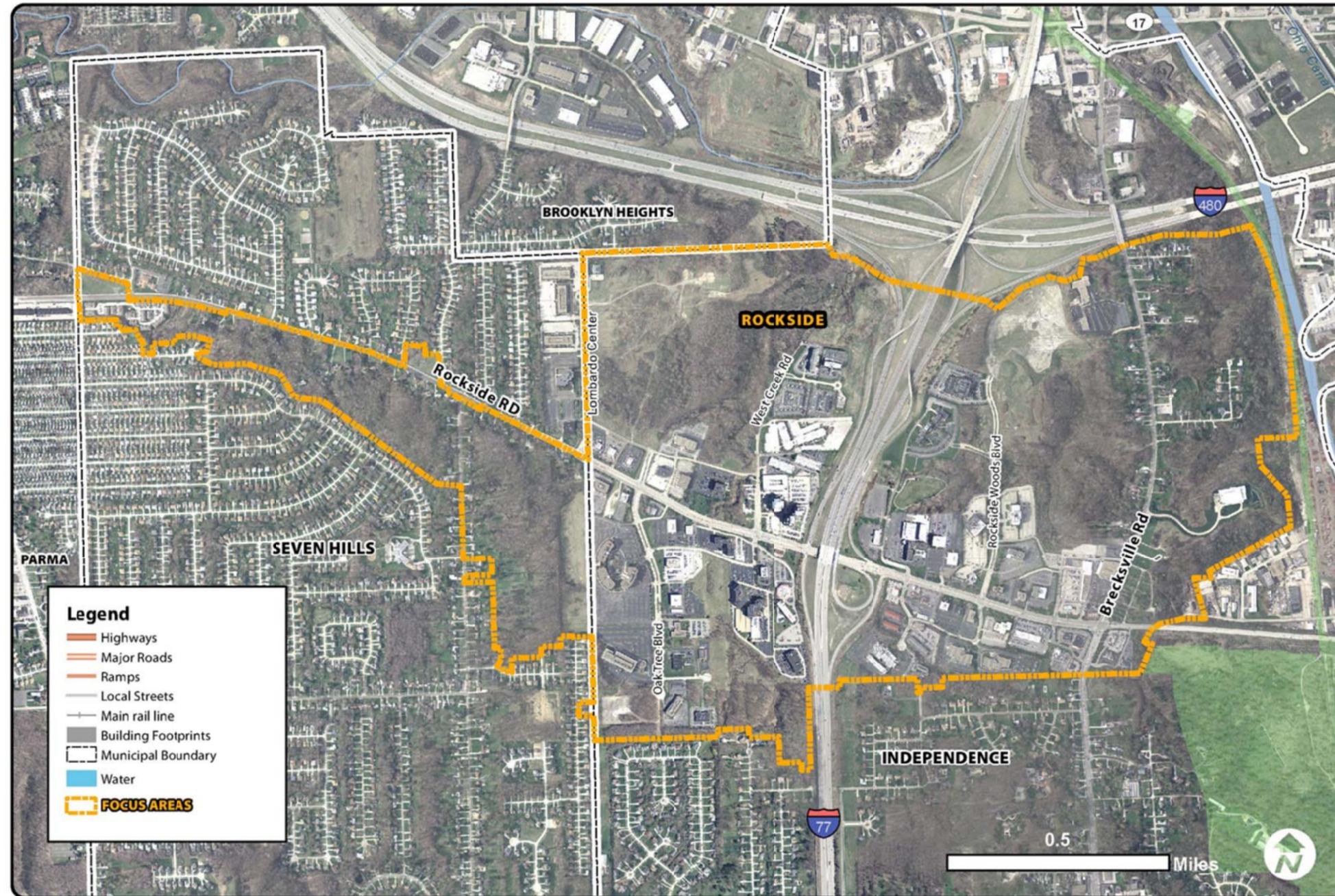
The process is scheduled to take six months and conclude early in 2015.

6. What will be the outcome?

The final area plans will include strategic recommendations for each of the five focus areas. These recommendations will include development scenarios, marketing concepts, methods for management, financing options and suggestion for modifying the development regulations. The final plans will serve as a framework for future growth and development—including redevelopment—within the focus areas and set clear expectations for developers or investors.

Rockside Road Focus Area

City of Seven Hills and Independence Area Planning Process



C. Participant Packages: **Downtown and Beyond**

Downtown and Beyond Planning Workshop

City of Independence Area Planning Process

Agenda

SEPTEMBER 15, 2014 7:00-8:30 PM

CITY OF INDEPENDENCE CIVIC CENTER, 6363 SELIG BLVD

Purpose: Introduce the Area Planning process. Share initial findings from the market and general conditions analysis. Present development concepts and gather preferences from meeting attendees.

1. WELCOME	Mayor Greg Kurtz	7:00 pm
2. WHY ARE WE HERE? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Economic Development Strategic Plan• Next steps for Independence	Jeremy Rowan	7:10
3. HOW WILL WE PROCEED? (Introducing The Area Plans) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is an "Area Plan"?• Successful examples• Overview of the areas	Jamie Greene, pN	7:20
4. DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS & OPPORTUNITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Downtown• Cloverleaf• East Pleasant Valley Corridor• Community Campus	Jamie Greene, pN Randall Gross, RGDE	7:40
5. NEXT STEPS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where are we headed?	Jamie Greene, pN	8:00
6. BREAK OUT SESSIONS	All	8:05

Supporting Material

- Focus area base maps

Notes: The planning team is being led by planning NEXT (pN), with the support of Rancall Gross and McBride Dale Clarion. Jeremy Rowan is the Economic Development Director for the city of Independence.

www.planning-next.com



Answers to frequently asked questions

1. What is an Area Plan?

An Area Plan is a targeted assessment of the conditions and possibilities for a district within a jurisdiction. The Area Planning process will analyze five of Independence's non-residential districts:

- [Rocksides Road Corridor](#) (Including 150 acres in Seven Hills);
- [Downtown](#);
- [Cloverleaf Area](#);
- [East Pleasant Corridor](#); and
- [Community Campus](#).

This analysis will assess the physical environment, review the existing zoning code, examine the market potential for office, housing and retail, and provide a set of strategic recommendations for future growth and development.

2. Why do we need this process?

For Independence: Over the past several decades, the city of Independence has enjoyed a well-deserved reputation as nice place to live and work. The city's significant office development—and the associated high payroll tax collections—has provided the city with very solid fiscal health. City leaders have realized prosperity is not guaranteed and, in fact, have observed significant, negative trends in recent years. The Economic Development Strategic Plan (2013) revealed that changes in office demand along with the relative age of the city's office product could adversely affect the competitiveness of the city's employment areas, and its fiscal health. The Area Plans will address the underlying issues and future potential in these areas. The region's stagnation means the competition for jobs and investment may only intensify. The area plans are a method of addressing this growing competition and shift in demand by creating a development framework aimed at keeping Independence attractive as a center of employment in the future.

3. How will this affect me as a citizen?

The Area Planning Process is focused on the non-residential areas. As a citizen your home will not be part of the analysis. A successful plan will create a framework for the city to grow and develop land in these focus areas that meets the market demand, produces an attractive environment, and ensures the continued prosperity of the city and most importantly, its residents.

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The planning team is made up of city staff from the Economic Development Department as well as a consulting team led by planning NEXT. The staff and consultants are working with a committee of residents, land owners, developers, and business leaders.

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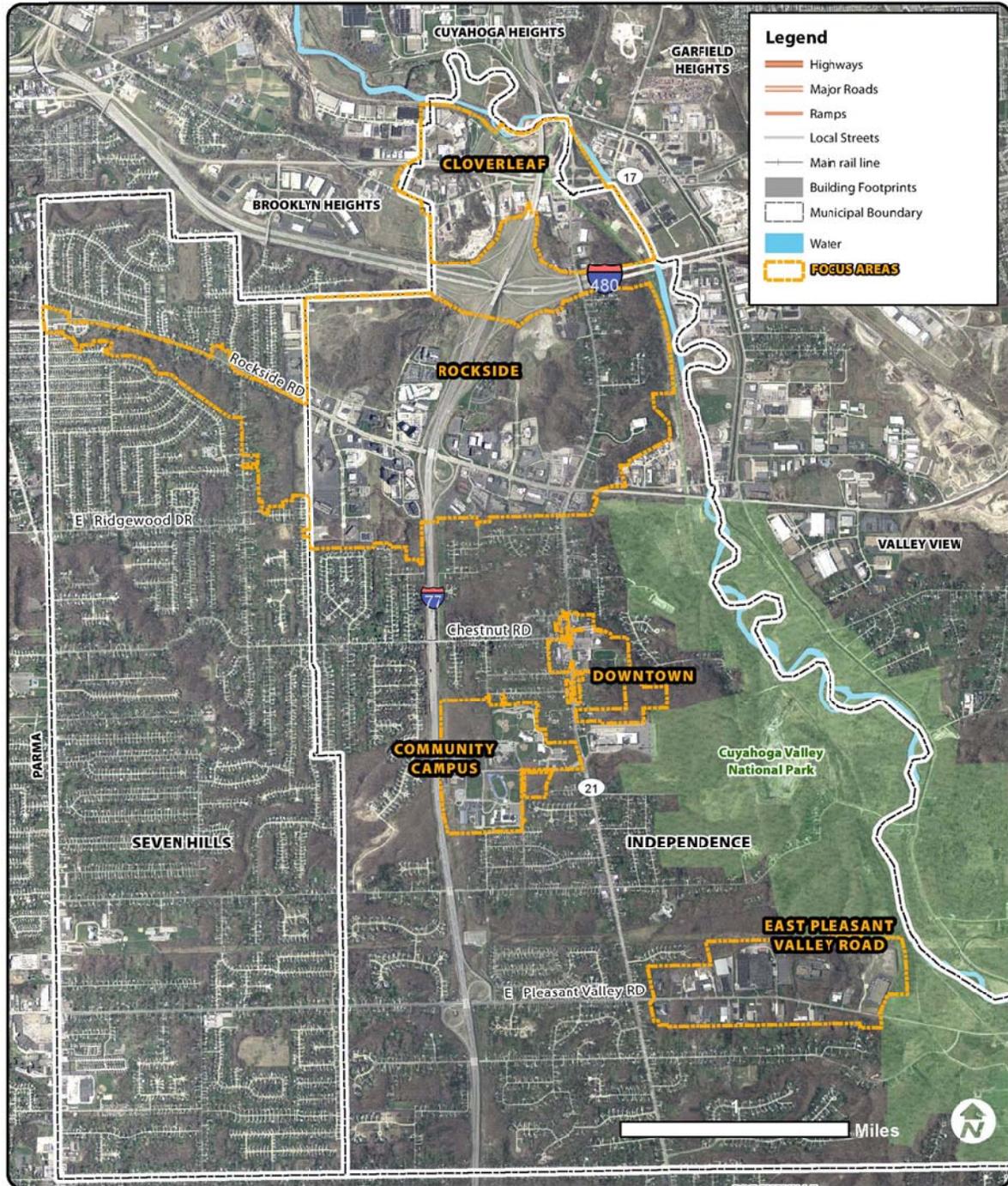
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Focus Areas

City of Seven Hills and Independence Area Planning Process



D. OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY

Chapter Contents

Meeting Summary

Open House Appendix





MEMO

To: The Independence Area Plans Steering Committee
From: Kyle May
Re: Results of Area Plan Open House

May 21, 2015

This memorandum summarizes the Open House conducted for the Area Planning Process for the City of Independence. It is organized into the following structure:

- 1. Overview**
 - a. Purpose of the Open House
 - b. Open House format
- 2. Open House Results, What we heard**
- 3. Appendix**
 - a. Comments collected based on display boards
 - b. Display boards
 - c. Presentation

1. Overview

A. Purpose of the Open House

The Open House for the City of Independence took place on May 20, 2015 at the Community and Civic Center and had a total of 75 attendees. These participants generated close to 100 comments on the draft Area Plans. The Open House was designed to update the public on the progress of the Area Planning process and share the draft recommendations. The meeting was open to anyone interested in the future of the city's five planning areas. These areas included Rockside Road, Downtown, East Pleasant Valley Road, Community Campus, and Cloverleaf. Following an assembly period, attendees were encouraged to engage with the Planning Team and share their views on the draft recommendations.

The recommendations were generated from two major resources: technical research and public engagement. Technical research, primarily completed by the planning consultants, includes the analysis of the existing physical and market conditions in the community, review of existing development regulations and planning material, and the mapping of environmental constraints. Public engagement helped to generate the substance of the plan's recommendations through the work of the Planning Committee, community stakeholders, and the more than 200 attendees from the two public workshops held in November, 2014.



B. Workshop format

- **Introduction and Welcome** – The Open House began with a welcome from Mayor Kurtz of Independence. The Mayor stressed the importance of the community’s direct involvement in the formation of the plan and the need to help with its implementation.
- **Overview of the Planning Process** – The Planning Team provided a brief overview of the process and outlined the next steps following the night’s meeting.
- **Plan Recommendations** – Following introductions, the Planning Team then presented the draft recommendations for each area.
- **Review of the Displays and Provide Comments** – Attendees were then invited to walk around the room, review display boards illustrating the draft recommendations, and provide written comments of support or concern. These comment cards were then collected and reviewed by the Planning Team for consideration within the final plan documents.

2. Workshop Results, What we heard

The comment cards collected during the Open House were processed and reviewed by the Planning Team. The following indicates the strongest themes from the attendee's feedback. These are organized by comments of support, concern, and general comments.

Support (23 comments, 32% of total comments)

- Walkable downtown development with a mix of uses and housing options
- Adding more and improved bicycle and pedestrian access to trails
- Increasing aesthetics throughout the city via landscaping improvements
- Support for housing options ranging from multi-family condos and apartments to small single family homes
- Rockside Road and Downtown identified as key areas for development

Concern (26 comments, 36% of total comments)

- Cost associated with relocating the service center
- Traffic and congestion concerns along Rockside Road
- Apprehension towards losing the quaint character of Independence due to over development
- Repercussions of development such as increased schools, fire, and police as well as stress on existing water and sewer infrastructure
- Appropriate accommodation of the aging population with senior housing conveniently located

General Comments (23 comments, 32% of total comments)

- Mentions of an improved technical network for the city, including city-wide Wi-Fi or Google Fiber
- Funding concerns for suggested improvements and interest in tax incentives and abatements
- Questions regarding the next steps for redevelopment, pending approval of the plan

3. Appendix

The following appendices contain the materials, raw data and verbatim responses from the City of Independence Open House hosted on May 20, 2015. This section is divided into the following parts:

- A. Comments collected based on display boards
- B. Display boards
- C. Presentation

A. Comments collected based on display boards

Independence Comment Cards

from Open House May 20, 2015

<i>I am in support of...</i>	
ID #	COMMENT
1	NA
2	NA
3	Confining your improvements to Rockside and Possibly some of Cloverleaf.
4	NA
5	NA
6	NA
7	NA
8	We don't need all of this.
9	No multifamily housing.
10	More trees downtown
11	Downtown vision.
12	Senior housing in the middle of town.
13	NA
14	Downtown redevelopment- take it in small stages.
15	NA
16	All looks wonderful.
17	What's planned for downtown? Right now there is a missed opportunity so I am pleased it is being addressed. Having lived in San Francisco and being able to walk to everything this plan would be much enjoyed.
18	The concept of adding better pedestrian and bicycle access especially trails that access regional trails such as the towpath on Henbeck Road and the power lines.
19	Limited and specific growth.
20	Downtown development with retail/housing/central location for community. Really want the downtown development to happen soon.
21	Renovating Rockside Rd. and the traffic patterns.
22	No changes for our perfect city!!!
23	Aesthetic improvements (ie trees and greenspace).
24	Downtown Plan, am for it, like Crocker Park feel.
25	Prioritizing the 5 areas for development if this has not been done already. Base priority on what areas would provide the best outcomes for Independence (not just tax revenues).
26	Well planned single housing in downtown area and explicit plans to allow current residents first choice. Invest in people first. No federal subsidized.
27	Keeping the lovely homes on Rt. 21 north of Rockside. When you come into the city from 77 it gives you a feeling of a warm hometown coming from Downtown Cleveland.
28	NA

Independence Comment Cards

29	NA
30	Senior housing. Small, homes on small lots. Not apartments. I like the development across from St. Basil in Brecksville.
31	Redeveloping Downtown.
32	Every proposal. Great planning- innovative ideas. We are in desperate need of mixed use opportunities- especially housing! Love the downtown concept! I live close by and as we age would love to walk for all my errands- meet friends and support local business. Can you start tomorrow? I turn 60 next year and will be ready.
33	New residential opportunities including apartments, condos, and small lot cluster homes. Like mixed use plan for downtown.
34	NA

I am concerned about...

ID#	COMMENT
1	Traffic, building "shops" and no one staying in Independence, traffic in the square, better traffic flow on Rockside
2	The whole city looking like Crocker Park. That is the trend now- 20 years?
3	Cost, possible back door to senior housing, taking on more when so many other things aren't done, some of your ideas are just crazy. Pushing people off Brecksville Rd, leave downtown alone, leave campus alone.
4	Folks on Lowgawo have expressed concerns that they will lose the residential character of their neighborhood.
5	NA
6	NA
7	NA
8	Access road by Red Robin and Chase Bank is not needed. Would bring people too close to residents.
9	Moving Service Center not a good idea at all. Very costly. Development of Center of Town, as long as the trucks coming up Stone Rd continue not a good idea.
10	Multifamily housing downtown- no! Presentation had 200, poster 400-450- which is it?
11	Would like a place for seniors.
12	NA
13	A possible move of the service area. The amount of \$ it would cost is one thing in particular. The service center is well situated right now because it is away from residents and businesses as it should be. What would be done with the land if center was moved and where do you propose to move the service center?
14	Increased schools, fire, police needed.
15	NA
16	How much of this depends upon a vote by the people? Would you build first and hope for renters and people to shop?
17	Housing for seniors that is accessible. Housing above retail or business is okay but for seniors the steps could be prohibitive.
18	Overdevelopment in downtown that would lead to too much short term residents.
19	Ruining the quaintness of Independence.

Independence Comment Cards

20	All good. Need to happen soon- just concerned about traffic in NW corridor (Rockside).
21	Our aging water and sewer pipes- can they accommodate the increased usage new development will entail? Also, will we end up with a lot of empty buildings when everything is done and the developers take their money and leave?
22	Must we change our zoning laws for condo's and apartments in Independence?
23	Over development of our City. The negative impact of past development. Financial dependency of income tax revenue.
24	Seven Hills- will they come on board to school system in Independence?
25	Overemphasis on growing the tax base within Independence. Where will it get us- more business taxes, more income taxes, more proliferation of City services when we have plenty (too much) already. The rise and fall of the the Independence Empire!!!
26	On 77 S Pleasant Valey exit eeds 2 lanes so we are not traveling on the imaginary lane.
27	NA
28	The city becoming a landlord. Purchase of property for expansion is fine. But there's a lot of empty storefronts, square footage and buildings for sale that no one wants. Even with low interest rates. Let someone else purchase buildings.
29	Do not want problems of Rockside Gardens Garfield Heights (Rockside and Turney) to become a problem here (theft, etc.)
30	Too much development planned for downtown. Don't need a legacy village in Downtown Independence. Just knock down middle school- maybe put senior housing there. Small homes with small lots, ideally about \$250,000 price range.
31	moving the city service center to Pleasant Valley and taking commercial property off the tax base is a bad idea.
32	NA
33	Priorities. I see Downtown and Rockside with mixed use properties as critical, followed by E. Pleasant Valey and Cloverleaf. Community Center expansion and assisted living lowest priority. Independent senior living not needed with mixed use residential in other areas.
34	NA

General Comments

ID#	COMMENT
1	NA
2	Weak presentation- weak analysis. How much was paid for these recommendations? Anyone could have come up with these staple comments.
3	Why can't we put a venue/park below embassy, why aren't we looking at Google Fiber.
4	NA
5	Now that the City owns the acerage off Rockside, it should be highest priority to make sure it is developed.
6	What are costs involved with moving service department? EPA, Wetlands. What are disadvantages of moving to edge of town?
7	Interesting scope but, should focus be on one area? Does total economic development really serve the needs of residents?
8	NA
9	NA

Independence Comment Cards

10	How does today's presentation differ from those of similar topics a few years ago? Seems to be a repeat= develop office buildings, bring in younger workers, etc.
11	NA
12	We take in \$30 million in revenue and it goes right back out in wages for the many many city workers. Where is the money coming from to fund each and every one of the projects that were discussed today at the meeting.
13	NA
14	Glad you added Cloverleaf entry/improvement
15	I would like to see citywide wifi. I would like to see the current old Middle School be saved and renovated into office condos.
16	Living on Rockside would take away housing from Independence downtown- the NEW one. Seven Hills built bussiness condos and they're mostly vacant.
17	Keep up the planning but would like to see some of this process started along 21.
18	I appreciate the effort the city is taking to develop the city to keep it attractive to business and residents while maintaining the "charm" of the community. I don't want Independence to be overdeveloped.
19	Downtown requires tax incentive and abatement.
20	Need better pedestrian walkability. If developing NW corridor= what do you do with traffic which is already a huge concern.
21	A lot of planning seems to have gone into this but will there be the businesses who want to come here? There's a lot of empty offices along Rockside especially where Seven Hills built their "plaza."
22	Most small home owners hate condos and apartments for Independence!
23	NA
24	Feel comfortable with Downtown plan and Campus plan.
25	The proposed plans to develop/redevelop the 5 areas of Independence appear to be the "last Hurrah" for the city. As an "Inner Ring" suburb, how much land is left in Independence to be developed? If very little acreage remains, all that will be left will be to redevelop/rezone commercial etc will be current residential property which would lead to a decreased quality of life.
26	Downtown business' need to focus on specialized need stores or specialty stores like orthopedic shoe specialty store.
27	Is the city planning to purchase plots of land to facilitate these economic ideas? Where will these funds come from?
28	NA
29	NA
30	NA
31	If Council approves this plan, how does this redevelopment proceed? Does the City do it? Do private developers do it? Or do we do what we have done in the past- put it on a shelf and try again in 10-20-50 years?
32	NA
33	Political will of mayor and council to provide the necessary leadership to effect change and make things happen. Too many years of "It's complicated."
34	Suggested slogan: Independence! Where 4 interstates cross, 7,000 work and 20,000 live 20 minutes from a major Midwest city.

B. Display Boards

CLOVERLEAF
INDEPENDENCE AREA PLANS
Spring 2015

VISION

Cloverleaf will be strengthened as an industrial and manufacturing district through the maintenance and improvement of its infrastructure, the appropriate enhancement of its streetscape and aesthetics, and the cultivation of a unique brand for marketing purposes.

Development and redevelopment will leverage the district's unique visibility and access to the greater region. Finally, the West Creek Confluence Stream Restoration project will be supported and strengthened to enhance the unique amenity and promote it as a regional recreational attraction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Explore creative development and redevelopment opportunities.**
Creative redevelopment will be necessary to make use of transitional or vacant spaces over time.
- Improve the streetscape and general aesthetics throughout the district.**
Stakeholders and business owners within the Cloverleaf district have expressed an interest in initiatives to beautify the area.
- Develop a unique identity for the district.**
The Cloverleaf district should cultivate an identity based on the unique characteristics that distinguish it from other commercial/ manufacturing districts within the city and throughout the region.
- Evaluate existing infrastructure.**
To ensure the long-term viability of the district, the city should consider Cloverleaf as a special infrastructure zone.
- Support West Creek Conservancy.**
The city should recognize this project as an important new amenity, work with the West Creek Preservation Committee to streamline future projects, and identify programs or activities to help activate the new park.

Key Findings

289 Vacant lots in the district

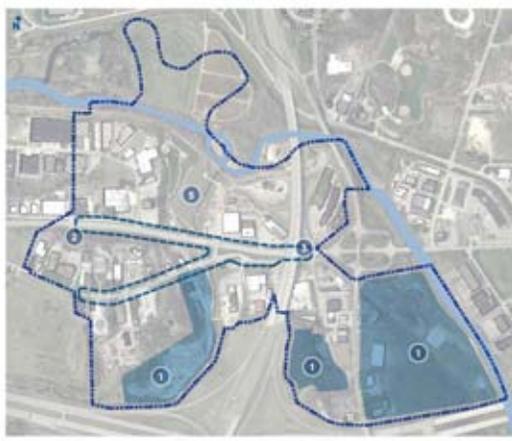
83% of vacant lots are less than 10,000 sq ft

100 Vacant lots are currently zoned for industrial or manufacturing uses

The address of connection points provide both an opportunity and a challenge to form a district. The opportunity provides a wealth of visibility with increasing connectivity and with the boulevard and Courthouse Front.



RECOMMENDATIONS DIAGRAM



Building an Identity

AN IDENTITY CREATED BY UNIFORM DESIGN

Changes in building design and materials availability for a district such as Cloverleaf with a wide range of uses and users. Rethinking and signage provide a clearer navigation method for the community, and unified a common theme throughout. Examples for the right show several solutions that have been developed for other industrial districts.



An Environmental Connection

WEST CREEK CONFLUENCE

Restoration of the site will provide significant improvements in water quality and habitat for the watershed.

Forward the 20-acre site-based parking lots and a few new buildings. This, the confluence area between West Creek and the Courthouse Front is being restored for future open water storage as well as habitat restoration.

West Creek Conservancy is working in partnership with the Northwest Ohio Regional Sewer District and the City of Independence to begin the restoration.



COMMUNITY CAMPUS
INDEPENDENCE AREA PLANS
Spring 2015

VISION

The Community Campus will maintain its role as the activity center of the city by considering the incorporation of uses that complement its existing civic character and strengthen its viability as a cohesive district.

The Campus will consider the non-conforming uses within its borders and examine the costs and benefits of a possible relocation. Additional parcels within the planning area, not currently owned by the city, will be considered for possible consolidation into the Campus. City leaders will also consider the merits of exploring independent and/or assisted living facilities within the Campus planning area. Greater accessibility into and out of the area will be a priority and include not only vehicular traffic, but pedestrian and cyclists as well. Streetscape and gateway improvements will improve the aesthetics and identity. Overall, the Community Campus will continue to serve as the center of activity for the city by supporting existing uses, considering the relocation of non-conforming facilities and the incorporation of new complementary uses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Evaluate acquisition opportunities for vacant or undeveloped land adjacent to the campus.**
Undeveloped parcels adjacent to the campus should be considered for purchase by the city when available, to improve the land area and feasibility of the campus in the future.
- Improve access and navigability.**
A new connection could run north-south from Chestnut and Hillside Roads. The connection should be located within affected neighborhoods, and scaled (full service road or multi-use path) based on the leadership's best judgement.
- Explore an independent/assisted living opportunity.**
The city should carefully explore the development of an independent and/or assisted living housing facility in the Community Campus study area.
- Connect the campus to local and regional all-purposes trails.**
A connection across the campus from the future Hennock Creek Trail could occur along Selig Drive and then continue south and west until meeting with the existing regional trail system in the City of Seven Hills.
- Consider the relocation of the city's service facility.**
Moving the city's service facility to a more appropriate area of the city would remove any potential conflicts and also create an opportunity for repurposing the site's best access.

Key Findings

161 Vacant lots in the district

83% of vacant lots are less than 10,000 sq ft

10 Vacant lots are currently zoned for industrial or manufacturing uses

Recent a single development encompasses the area site provides a full of development scenarios. The recommendations are based on feasibility studies to locate a facility within the campus. Before exploring any of the suggested site options further, city leaders will need to reach consensus on the idea of housing an independent/ assisted living facility within the Community Campus.



Independent / Assisted Living Scenarios

SCENARIO A: Parcel on potential parcel along Selig Blvd with the service facility does not move.

SCENARIO B: Assume the service facility relocates and the housing takes its place.

SCENARIO C: Assume the service facility relocates and another residential use occupies a portion of the site.

SCENARIO D: Assume the city moves to purchase the 20-acre site at the north of the parcel of developing the housing.



DOWNTOWN

INDEPENDENCE AREA PLANS
Spring 2015

VISION

Downtown should emerge as a vibrant, competitive town center that attracts residents and visitors, and captures the spirit of its community.

The district will consider the form of development just as closely as its function. Great care will be taken to ensure that new buildings meet the character of a traditional downtown and bolster the reputation of the district as the vibrant community center. Housing will play a critical role in this transformation. A range of options will be included, helping to build a captive market for retailers along Brecksville Road Improvements

to the streetscape will calm traffic and provide a more enjoyable and safe experience for pedestrians. Commercial investment will seek to leverage proximate assets to the downtown, including the 20,000+ workers along Rockside Road and the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. In all, the Downtown area will transform into a walkable and vibrant town center that serves residents, and attracts visitors to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Improve the streetscape along Brecksville Road

The width of Brecksville Road creates a challenging environment for pedestrians. By decreasing this curb-to-curb distance, Brecksville Road will begin to balance the need to accommodate vehicular traffic with the desire to improve pedestrian safety.

2 Reserve opportunities for park space and trail connections

Small, centrally located park spaces should be reserved as the district is slowly developed.

3 Institute regulatory controls to guide development

To achieve the goals of the Downtown development concept changes to the city's development regulations will be necessary.

4 Develop a marketing concept for Downtown Independence

Marketing of the Downtown district is a basic component of successful examples from the region. A brand and communication tools will help regionally expose the area, and incentivize further investment, while attracting visitors and residents.

2 Encourage the location of a civic or community use

Currently, the vast majority of the city's civic buildings are located within the Community Campus. These facilities work well as a downtown setting as their constant foot traffic provides an additional market for retailers, and their services are walkable for downtown residents.

3 Develop diverse, high-quality housing options

By allowing for the development of more diverse housing opportunities, the city can create a market for its emerging downtown and provide a wider set of housing options for its current and future residents.

4 Implement the Downtown development concept

The development concept for Downtown Independence provides a framework for future investment. The concept was developed to capture the community's vision for the district and provide a tool for the plan's implementation.



DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

The development concept for Downtown Independence provides a framework for future investment. The concept was developed to capture the community's vision for the district and provide a tool for the plan's implementation. Different from a more rigid plan, the concept is a visualization of a possible future for the district, should the recommendations be fully realized. It is intended to inspire future development or redevelopment, but is not the only envisioned scenario.

DEVELOPMENT MARKET

Between the Downtown character area there is an opportunity to meet the current market demand of 80,000 to 100,000 sq ft of additional retail space and 100 residential units in the Downtown District. As market demand increases over time, the development concept provides opportunity to develop additional retail, office, and residential units within Downtown.

THE CORE (DOWNTOWN)

A shared gathering place at the center of the city with a mix of diverse uses.

Small blocks with structures designed to encourage pedestrian activity.

Parking is located from the street to surface or structured lots.

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD

Single family residential streets with diverse housing types on small lots.

Low-rise streets network.

Clubs or community facilities are integrated into the neighborhood.

Higher scale development to the downtown center.



MIXED DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

An integrated mix of single-family homes on small lots and townhomes.

Walkable and adjacent to downtown.

Density generally decreases with distance from commercial uses.

Good fit street pattern with secure corridors through blocks and structured parking where necessary.



PROFESSIONAL HOME OFFICE

Professional offices allowed within existing residential structures.

Character and structure of existing single family homes would not be altered.

Medium scale allowed for office towers.



EAST PLEASANT VALLEY ROAD

INDEPENDENCE AREA PLANS
Spring 2015

VISION

The East Pleasant Valley Road Corridor will be strengthened as a key center for business that improves the overall fiscal health of the city.

Through enhancements to the area's aesthetics and identity, the corridor can be effectively marketed to minimize vacancy, and improve the environment for workers. There are great

opportunities within the corridor to create new recreational uses such as trails and open space. These should be explored and strategically implemented.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Improve the streetscape and general aesthetics along East Pleasant Valley Road

Lighting, vegetation, and pedestrian amenities, along with strict code enforcement can help to build a safer corridor for pedestrians and a more beautiful district for the city.

2 Review or develop additional incentives to fill existing or future vacancies

Simple incentive packages are a standard method for attracting new investment into vacant or underdeveloped areas of a city.

3 Market an industrial campus for remaining undeveloped parcels

While future opportunities for redevelopment may emerge, these sites are logical development options for the near-term.

4 Explore recreational and open space opportunities

To take advantage of its natural setting and proximity to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, the city should consider strategies to strengthen the connection between the district, the park, and the regional trail system.

5 Develop a unique brand for the corridor reinforced through physical signage and marketing materials

The corridor should cultivate an identity based on the unique characteristics that distinguish it from other commercial districts within the city and throughout the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS DIAGRAM



Key Findings

Year	Population	Employment
1990	93,934	1975
2000	99,000	2000
2010	105,000	2010



Creating a Sustainable Street

INDUSTRIAL STREETSCAPES
Landscaping in a light industrial district should include medium-sized species, that are aesthetically pleasing, and require low maintenance. Tall grasses, herbs, and grasses create all-weather sidewalks and break up the asphalt. The ground surface parking lots. This promotes the capacity of the street to absorb and store water. The street should be designed to be a place where people can walk, bike, and drive. The street should be designed to be a place where people can walk, bike, and drive.



Building an Identity

FLOWER ISLAND GATEWAY
The Gateway, both as an identity and as a gateway to the community of that community, is a key element of the district's identity. The Gateway is a key element of the district's identity. The Gateway is a key element of the district's identity. The Gateway is a key element of the district's identity.



ROCKSIDE ROAD

INDEPENDENCE AREA PLANS
Spring 2015

VISION

The Rockside Road corridor should leverage its reputation as a premiere office location in metropolitan Cleveland to launch a new development concept that meets the emerging demand from businesses and their employees for a more walkable, and mixed-use office district.

This new pattern should be emphasized in new development projects, and also encouraged when redevelopment occurs. The Rockside Road corridor, in the far east, should be allowed to transition from a residential district to a commercial

center, as has been pressured by the market and developers. By adding a network of open spaces and pedestrian connectivity, Independence could cooperate with Seven Hills on initiatives of mutual benefit to create the desired neighborhood.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Improve connectivity for pedestrian and vehicular traffic.**
Connections across the district are key to improving the level of service for Rockside Road in the future. Presently, there are limited east-west connections for motorists and few options for pedestrians.
- 2. Continue to market key development sites.**
A zoning change in this area could result in a district with more consistent uses. This area also provides an opportunity for small businesses to consider owning property in the Rockside Road district.
- 3. Consider rezoning the residential parcels along Rockside Road north of Rockside Road.**
A zoning change in this area could result in a district with more consistent uses. This area also provides an opportunity for small businesses to consider owning property in the Rockside Road district.
- 4. Develop an approach to the redevelopment of aging office buildings that increases connectivity, promotes walkability, and encourages a vertical mix of uses.**
When aging buildings reach the end of their useful lives, redevelopment should be consistent across the corridor and meet the emerging demand for walkable, mixed-use office districts.
- 5. Create an allowance for the infill of parcels within existing development.**
Allowing for a greater intensity or utilization of a parcel may incentivize property owners to reconsider unproductive spaces on their land.
- 6. Identify and develop park and gathering space opportunities in the area.**
The corridor has no public parks, open spaces, or gathering spaces. A suitable location should be identified in each quadrant to provide a future opportunity.
- 7. Improve the overall aesthetics of the corridor.**
The identity and aesthetics of the Rockside corridor could be improved through strategic initiatives that add visual interest to the public realm.
- 8. Develop the parcels in the northwest of the planning area with a competitive product that maximizes the area's potential.**
The northwest part of the planning area contains approximately 70 acres. This constitutes one of the largest amounts of developable land in the planning area, and the city.
- 9. Work with Seven Hills to develop mutually beneficial development program along Rockside Road.**
The City of Seven Hills worked collaboratively with Independence to develop its own area plan for undeveloped parcels along Rockside Road. The final development program will help improve the overall competitiveness of the Rockside corridor. In the long term, the two cities should pursue an agreement to work together to improve the corridor.

RECOMMENDATIONS DIAGRAM



Building a Stronger Identity

PUBLIC ART - DORLIN DRUG
"Public Art Center" through the community, various artists and spaces are being brought through the arts."
The public art program in Dublin has received attention at both the state and national level and has gained praise throughout central Ohio markets. The program is supported by the City of Dublin, as well as the Ohio Arts Council, although funds have been generated through the National Endowment for the Arts.
The award program sets the modeling for use for potential sites, but also funds classes, workshops, and other arts and culture events. This provides an outreach program for the City of Dublin and provides information to the arts community for more opportunities of the Dublin location.



Making Room for Greenpace

POCKET PARKS
Pocket parks offer an opportunity to provide public spaces to connect between blocks in other moments of people.

ROCKSIDE ROAD

INDEPENDENCE AREA PLANS
Spring 2015

DEVELOPMENT PRIORITY AREA

The northwest part of the planning area contains approximately 70 acres. This constitutes one of the largest amounts of developable land in the planning area, and the entire city. In 2014, Independence purchased two parcels within the area comprising approximately 33 acres. A conceptual development framework has been developed for this area and the surrounding parcels. This concept includes a potential development yield for the area and aligns with the emerging market for walkable, mixed-use employment centers.



INNOVATION ZONE

The area should be marketed as an innovation zone which would draw attention to the location. Marketing the innovation zone is a key to growing in the business. Examples: employments that

are engineers, software technicians, professional researchers, as well as information technology. The market analysis also suggests Independence as an appropriate location for advanced manufacturing.



DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

The existing street grid is the basis for the future development of the Northwest Quadrant of Rockside Road. This long-term vision divides the area into multiple new blocks, connected by existing and proposed roads. Each block has been assigned a development character type. These character types are based on the built environment and existing land use functions. This results in a consistency in the relationship of the buildings to each other and the street, along with a walkable road network.



DEVELOPMENT FELD

The anticipated market suggests the development priority area build out will likely occur in several phases. The concept will include:

- Between 1.5 and 1.8 million sq ft of mixed-use employment space. This would allow for a diversity of uses including office, retail and residential.
- Innovation Zone uses such as laboratories and advanced engineering/manufacturing will also be accommodated within the mixed-use employment zone.
- Approximately 400 to 450 mixed residential units. This housing will occur in a core area at the northern portion of the site and will also be incorporated into the mixed-use employment center.

DEEP IN USES

Allowing flexibility within the conceptual framework will offer the ability to accommodate larger companies and facilities. By providing a street-level large site, Independence may attract a corporate headquarters or other business to the priority area. Creating a mix

of development and design standards would help to ensure that deep in user's facilities would match the character and feel of the rest of the proposed neighborhood.

MIXED-USE EMPLOYMENT CENTER

This character type is an office district that accommodates a mix of retail, restaurant, and entertainment uses within a compact and walkable street pattern. The district integrates three core uses: vertically mixed-use buildings, retail and dining, and commercial office. This district is walkable to the existing innovation zone and is a key to growing in the business.

- Office buildings with a mix of uses including retail, restaurant, and entertainment.
- High-rise office buildings with a mix of uses including retail, restaurant, and entertainment.
- Retail and dining uses within a compact and walkable street pattern.



MIXED-DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

This character type is a mix of housing in close proximity to the mixed-use employment center. Housing types include townhouses or large multi-unit buildings, and should include a mix of uses including retail, restaurant, and entertainment.

- Large multi-unit residential buildings.
- Residential uses with a mix of uses including retail, restaurant, and entertainment.
- Retail and dining uses within a compact and walkable street pattern.



PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

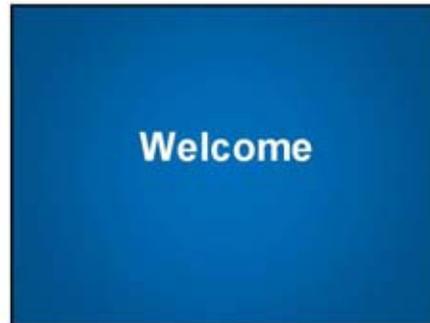
The character type is a mix of open spaces and parks. Parks and open spaces may be incorporated into the development and should include a mix of uses including retail, restaurant, and entertainment.

- Dedicated parks for active and passive recreation.
- Parks and open spaces that are integrated into the development.
- Parks and open spaces that are integrated into the development.



C. Presentation

5/20/2015



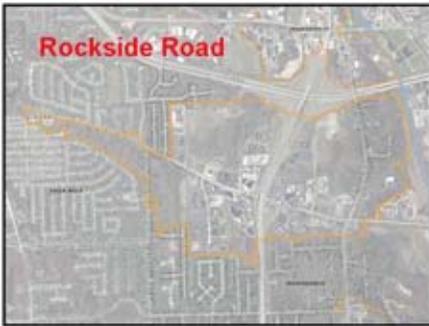
Why are we planning?

- ❖ Enhance the quality of life for current and future residents
- ❖ Provide long-term fiscal strength
- ❖ Create environments that attract high-paying jobs
- ❖ Address demand for housing options
- ❖ Diversify the tax base with new opportunities

How did we get here?



Key Recommendations



Rockside Road

Recommendations

1. Improve connectivity for pedestrian and vehicular traffic
2. Continue to market key development sites
3. Consider rezoning the residential parcels along Brecksville Road north of Rockside Road
4. Develop an approach to the redevelopment of aging office buildings that increases connectivity, promotes walkability, and encourages a vertical mix of uses
5. Create an allowance for the infill of parcels within existing development

Rockside Road

Recommendations

6. Identify and develop park and gathering space opportunities in the area
7. Improve the overall aesthetics of the corridor
8. Develop the parcels in the northwest of the planning area with a competitive product that maximizes the area's potential
9. Work with Seven Hills to develop mutually beneficial development program along Rockside Road

An Innovation Zone: The Rockside Road corridor could support a mix of research, IT, and high tech manufacturing. A market for roughly 140k sq ft could be absorbed.

Rockside Road

Development Intent

- ◆ Develop into a denser, mixed-use district with residential opportunities
- ◆ Implement a transportation framework to enhance connectivity in the area
- ◆ Create a 24-hour district with amenities for workers and residents
- ◆ Dedicate green space for active and passive use as well as connection opportunities to the surrounding natural amenities
- ◆ Offer flexibility to accept a corporate headquarter campus



Downtown

Market Drivers

- ◆ 43% of ground level commercial space (110,000 sq ft total) is used for retail purposes. (This contributes to the lack of pedestrian traffic in the area.)
- ◆ A market for roughly 200 housing units of various types, exists for Downtown. The demand is generated by young adults and retirees/empty nesters
- ◆ The addition of this captured market would support the development of additional downtown commercial uses
- ◆ 40,000 sq ft of retail, restaurant, and entertainment space could be supported in the downtown over the next five years

Downtown

Recommendations

1. Improve the streetscape along Brecksville Road
2. Reserve opportunities for park space and trail connections
3. Institute regulatory controls to guide development
4. Develop a marketing concept for Downtown Independence
5. Encourage the location of a civic or community use
6. Develop diverse, high-quality housing options
7. Implement the Downtown development concept

Downtown

Development Intent

1. Develop into a mixed-use district to serve as the heart of the community
2. Establish a street network to improve circulation
3. Improve the streetscape of Brecksville Road for pedestrian and vehicular traffic
4. Offer a diverse set of new residential opportunities for future and existing residents of Independence
5. Increase downtown housing base to support future retail



East Pleasant Valley Road

Development Intent

- ◆ Strengthen the corridor as a key center for business
- ◆ Secure and improve the district's fiscal performance
- ◆ Develop a unique identity
- ◆ Improve the area's aesthetics
- ◆ Proactively address vacancies and business retention



Recommendations

1. Improve the streetscape and general aesthetics along East Pleasant Valley Road
2. Review or develop additional incentives to fill existing or future vacancies
3. Market an industrial campus for remaining undeveloped parcels
4. Explore recreational and open space opportunities
5. Develop a unique brand for the corridor reinforced through physical signage and marketing materials.

Community Campus

Development Intent

- ◆ Maintain the area as a centrally located civic, recreational, and educational community campus
- ◆ Explore the introduction of complimentary uses and amenities
- ◆ Improve pedestrian and vehicular connectivity through extension of trails and boulevard enhancements

Recommendations

1. Evaluate acquisition opportunities for vacant or undeveloped land adjacent to the campus
2. Consider the relocation of the city's service facility
3. Connect the campus to local and regional all-purpose trails
4. Explore an independent/assisted living opportunity
5. Improve access and navigability



Cloverleaf

Development Intent

- ◆ Strengthen the district as a working center
- ◆ Develop creative approaches to redevelopment
- ◆ Develop a unique identity
- ◆ Improve the area's aesthetics
- ◆ Proactively address vacancies and business retention

Recommendations

1. Explore creative development and redevelopment opportunities
2. Improve the streetscape and general aesthetics throughout the district
3. Develop a unique identity for the district
4. Evaluate existing infrastructure
5. Support West Creek Conservancy

