

The College Hill Urban Design Plan consists of proposals and guidelines for the commercial development of the business district, the goal being to restore this commercial district to serve its appropriate future role.

College Hill sits on a hilltop overlooking the Mill Creek, the terrain falling away in all directions except to the southwest. It is essentially a single-family residential area, with single-family homes scattered throughout the community, but concentrated in the northeastern and western sections of the community. Multi-family housing is also scattered, but tends to be more concentrated along the Hamilton Avenue and North Bend Road corridors. Parks, recreation facilities and schools are located throughout the community. There are some agricultural uses in the eastern part and directly to the southeast, but no industrial, wholesale, or warehousing concerns. In 1970 College Hill had a higher mean (average) family income than the City as a whole, and higher than all of the nearby communities, except Finneytown. In the same year, College Hill had a higher percentage of families earning more than \$10,000 per year than the City as a whole. In fact, between 1960 and 1970, College Hill lost families making less than \$10,000 per year and gained families making more than \$10,000.

The neighborhood business district is the focal point of College Hill. It stretches along Hamilton Avenue, passing north and south through the center of the community. The main intersection is at North Bend and Hamilton where the main north-south and east-west arteries are. Adjacent to the business district are schools and churches, a firehouse, and a high concentration of housing for the elderly — all supporting the "focal point" image of the business district.

The College Hill business district is capable of attracting a middle- to upper-middle-income market. Its location and character provide real economic separation from the communities at the base of the hill. Residents are loyal to the neighborhood shops; they still work and go to church here. In fact, College Hill ranks in the top six Cincinnati neighborhoods in terms of socioeconomic indicators. The business district itself draws upon a large market area — Mt. Airy, Wyoming, Finneytown, North College Hill, and Mt. Healthy — while its principal convenience competition is the North College Hill business district.

The project treatment area is defined as Hamilton Avenue from the Presbyterian Church on the south to the Progressive Savings and Loan on the north.

For planning and marketing purposes, the current business district is being divided into three distinctly identifiable areas, each displaying a different character and image.

- 1) South End — this area should serve as the community focal point. It is comparatively pedestrian-oriented and is served by conveniences, service, and retail stores. The area is populated by the largest number of elderly residents in the City and contains four churches, a post office, and an elementary school. The long-range market potential should emphasize family shopping and entertainment.
- 2) North End — this area is more automobile oriented and has little particular community focus. It contains a major food store and a regional restaurant. The southeastern quadrant of the north end will require parking development in order to remain viable.
- 3) Middle Zone — this area contains a number of obsolete, deteriorating structures, both residential and commercial. Commercial retail is presently non-viable. Existing shops should relocate to the south end where

principal new construction and rehabilitation should occur. Long range emphasis in the middle zone should stress more housing, particularly multi-family, in order to provide a pedestrian market.

Goals of the College Hill Urban Design Plan

The business area must be reestablished as a focus of community life and activities by creating a shopping environment that is better organized and more convenient to the shopper. The following goals are directed toward this end:

- 1) The creation of high impact in the business district by channeling both public and private funds toward the development of the business district focal points.
- 2) The creation of an orderly design that recognizes the needs of shoppers: convenient and easily accessible parking; natural and pleasant pedestrian movement; public amenities such as benches, well-lighted transit stops.
- 3) The design of a shopping district which insures the economic viability of the individual shop owners: improved service areas, easy access, increased parking areas, and an attractive shopping environment.

- 4) The creation of a design which provides for the safety of both pedestrians and drivers: simple, adequate and well-organized traffic signals and lighting; lighting for pedestrians and parking lots; clear separation of pedestrians and vehicles; convenient and well-marked crosswalks.
- 5) The creation of an aesthetically pleasing shopping environment by the introduction of street plantings, the renovation of building facades by store owners, the elimination of signage clutter, utility poles and webs of overhead wiring, and the subsequent installation of underground utilities.
- 6) Capitalizing upon the unique qualities and potential of the present environment: view, landmarks, historical features, and vegetation.
- 7) Respecting the existing fabric of the surrounding environment.

Circulation Policies-Vehicular

The objective of the circulation plan is to increase safety and convenience for those using the business area, whether they arrive by automobile, by public transit, or on foot.

In the pedestrian-oriented blocks surrounding the intersection of Cedar and Hamilton the plan proposes a continuous loop of vehicular movement around the rear of the shops in all four blocks. This pattern will help relieve congestion at Cedar and Hamilton and will offer greater parking choices for the automobile driver. Entrances to parking areas will be aligned directly across from one another to encourage ease of auto movement from one parking area to another.

At the north end of the neighborhood business district (NBD) improvements are focused on the southeast corner of the Hamilton/North Bend intersection. The parking area in the rear of these shops is hampered by fences, barriers and poor access.

The plan makes three recommendations to improve the parking and auto circulation in this area:

- a) Remove the barriers that reduce the parking area into a number of little lots.

Circulation Policies-Pedestrian

In dealing with pedestrian areas the plan acknowledges the special needs of College Hill's large elderly population.

The two major intersections will deserve special surface treatment in the form of bold graphics or paving in order to assert the right of the pedestrian to cross at these areas. At Hamilton and Cedar, which is the focal point of pedestrian-oriented activities, an additional method of defining the pedestrian turf would be to ramp permitting ease of movement, particularly for the elderly and handicapped. This would warn drivers to be cautious.

The design plan acknowledges that Hamilton Avenue will continue to serve as a principal artery moving traffic from downtown to the outer suburbs. In order to keep an uninterrupted traffic flow, the plan recommends left-turn storage lanes at the proposed parking area entrances on Hamilton Avenue between Lindenfair and Cedar, and at North Bend and Hamilton.

In line with this, the plan encourages the elimination of as many unnecessary vehicular entrances onto Hamilton Avenue as possible.

Parking Policies

Development of the many small parking lots owned privately or by the parking association will be coordinated by:

- 1) Expanding the lots to meet future needs; sharing small parking lots now;
- 2) planning and structuring future commercial development to accommodate parking needs and the traffic flow;
- 3) coordinating the location of entrances to parking areas so that they are directly across from one another.

Service Policies

The overall strategy of these policies is to eliminate service zones from Hamilton Avenue both for convenience and safety and to improve the image of the business district.

In order to achieve these objectives it is recommended that the service zones be relocated to two alternate places:

- 1) in specially marked stalls or convenience lanes immediately behind the shops in the parking areas;
- 2) on the corners of side streets which intersect Hamilton Avenue. This location would allow service to shops near these corners.

The proposed parking expansion will be designed to allow easy access and movement of service vehicles.

The elimination of loading zones from Hamilton Avenue must be coordinated with the development of the parking areas and service loading accommodations behind the shops.

The plan also recommends that all trash collection points be located in the parking areas away from the rear entrances to the shops. Dumpsters and garbage cans should be concealed in attractive enclosures. These enclosures should be located conveniently for the people utilizing them and for trades servicing them, but should not be objectionable to shoppers. Joint usage and maintenance of these units would be encouraged. Existing alleyways could contain garbage cans, but the cans should be concealed from the shoppers' view.



Open Space/Amenities Policies

The south end of the business district is the area of most pedestrian activity. The objective is to create small pedestrian focal points of individual character spaced along Hamilton Avenue.

The dominant and highest quality open spaces are:

- 1) The center neighborhood court.
- 2) The College Hill Plaza.
- 3) The pedestrian walk-through in the Central Trust block, from the parking lot to Hamilton Avenue.

The neighborhood center court will be supported by the high activity of the center.

The College Hill Plaza will be located north of Cedar on Hamilton Avenue near the movie theater. The plaza will contain a transit stop and will be adjacent to both parking lots and a crosswalk. Daytime and nighttime use of the plaza would be encouraged. Facilities for passive games and minor children's play should be provided as well as newspaper stands, drinking fountains, mailboxes, and information boards. Ideally, a water fountain should be introduced in this area to create movement and sound.

The pedestrian walk-through is more private in character — evening-oriented activities for adults, such as a beer garden and a sidewalk cafe, will be developed.

Flower beds shall be introduced in these three open spaces and at all pedestrian mid-block crosswalks to define these as places where people are encouraged to be, and to add a touch of color and beauty to the shopping area.

Benches proposed at all bus stops and within the three open space areas shall fulfill the need for sequenced rest stations for pedestrian shoppers, particularly the elderly.

Tree-lined sidewalks in front of the neighborhood center and the College Hill Plaza will further signify their importance and sense of "place", and provide comforting shade. Trees will also line Hamilton Avenue where parking lots front on the street. They will help define the linear quality and the scale of Hamilton Avenue.

A line of trees will be placed along the rear of the shops where entrances face the parking areas. This acts as an element that physically unifies the disparate building facades so that a common familiar appearance is established.

A continuous line of pedestrian shelter in the form of soft, colorful nylon or canvas awnings shall be encouraged on all buildings along Hamilton Avenue. They will help to soften and

unify the character of the street and function as protection from the sun and precipitation. These same canopies are recommended at the rear of those shops facing parking areas.

Lighting Policies

Lighting is an integral part of an urban design plan. The lighting strategy includes vehicular lighting on Hamilton Avenue, special pedestrian lighting, and lighting for parking areas.

Vehicular lighting on Hamilton Avenue:

- 1) shall define the boundaries of the business district and respond to the special character of areas within it;
- 2) shall be in scale with the buildings;
- 3) shall focus attention on the Cedar/Hamilton and North Bend/Hamilton intersections as points of conflict between vehicles and pedestrians;
- 4) shall encourage more nighttime use of the business district.

Pedestrian lighting:

- 1) shall define as "pedestrian places" all crosswalks and intersections;
- 2) shall define special pedestrian walkways between parking areas and the street and

along the rear of the shops facing the parking areas.

- 3) shall define the location of transit stops as well as increase the sense of security for those using them at night.

Pedestrian plazas and mid-block walkways shall have intense and appropriate lighting to create pockets of activity where people gather in the evening.

The design plan recommends the use of illuminated display windows to enliven the street image, to advertise goods, and to add color. Lighting in the parking areas shall enhance security.

Development Staging

Development of the College Hill business district should take place in the following order:

- 1) Southwest corner of Cedar and Hamilton;
- 2) Southeast corner of North Bend and Hamilton and the connection between North Bend and Cedar along Hamilton Avenue;
- 3) Southeast corner of Cedar and Hamilton;
- 4) Northwest corner of Cedar and Hamilton;
- 5) Northeast corner of Cedar and Hamilton.

Regardless of any development a systematic inspection of all buildings, particularly those in the middle and southeast zones, is necessary.

The following economic considerations will influence both the types of development and the speed with which development takes place:

- 1) land costs;
- 2) availability of commercial loans — not only are interest rates high, but long term mortgage money is not readily available;
- 3) construction costs — new development probably should be at least two floors: first floor, commercial retail or service; second floor, office or residential;
- 4) current rental costs range \$1-4 per square foot

General Development Strategy

Several factors have influenced and will continue to influence planning and development decisions in the College Hill business district:

- 1) available commercial space is limited; most such properties are too small and obsolete;
- 2) assembling a site for development must be relatively simple and inexpensive or new commercial ventures become infeasible;
- 3) a willingness to invest substantially is essential to commercial success;

- 4) commercial ventures must be relatively well-managed in order to remain viable;
- 5) the level of financial capability which the newly-formed College Hill Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation can generate and its ability to interest a reputable developer will be critical.

Gross space for commercial ventures in the business district should probably decrease in the future. However, two avenues for commercial improvement do exist:

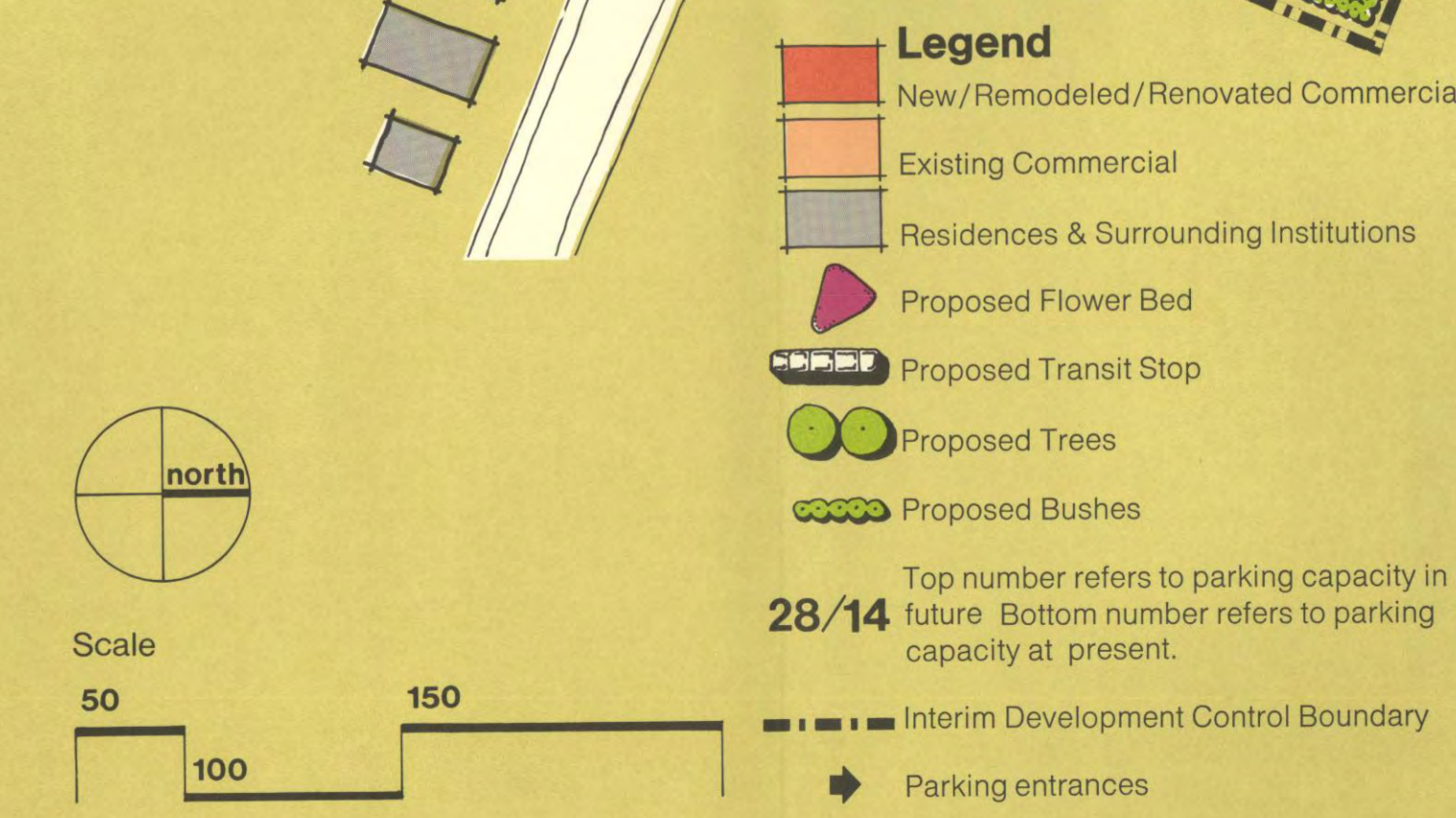
- 1) a number of facilities could be upgraded, thereby raising rentals and attracting higher quality establishments.
- 2) while gross commercial space decreases, it is realistic to expect a 10% increase in new or more competitive leasable space for commercial use. This will amount to 30,000-45,000 square feet of new construction, and will mean retaining the existing employment base and possibly adding 25-50 new jobs.

With these factors being taken into account it appears that public, together with private, investment should take place in the south end first. Public money, however, should be used as a catalyst for further private investment. In fact, future public funding will depend upon the degree of financial response elicited from the private sector.

Financial Sources

Estimated funding sources for the proposed development are as follows:

- 1) Community Development Grant funds: these funds are a catalyst to private investment and represent an ongoing City commitment.
 - 1975 — \$ 90,000
 - 1976 — \$300,000
 - 1977 — \$300,000
- 2) C.D. Revolving Loan Fund:
 - 1975-76 — \$ 30,000
 - 1976-77 — \$100,000.
- 3) Small Business Development Corporation: \$300,000.
- 4) College Hill Redevelopment Corporation:
 - 1975 — \$ 15,000
 - 1976 — \$ 25,000
 - 1977 — \$ 10,000.
- 5) Private Investment: \$1,000,000 - \$2,000,000.



College Hill Neighborhood Business District Long Range Urban Design Plan