

# Introduction



The Old Brooklyn and Brooklyn Centre neighborhoods are unique and distinct places within the City of Cleveland. In July 2006, the Old Brooklyn Community Development Corporation (OBCDC) and Old Brooklyn Neighborhood Services consolidated to service the two neighborhoods. One of the directives for the newly combined organization was to undertake a planning initiative to develop a clear set of objectives to guide future public and private investments in order to ensure these stable neighborhoods become even more vibrant and desirable.

Neighborhood sustainability requires land use planning practices that create and maintain efficient infrastructure, ensure close-knit neighborhoods and a sense of community, and preserve natural systems. In addition, it is necessary to strengthen the neighborhoods' social fabric and leadership capacity in order to successfully address change.

It is clear that Old Brooklyn and Brooklyn Centre are strong viable neighborhoods with some characteristics that are similar to adjacent suburbs. Yet, there are a number of city-wide issues that are present in these neighborhoods as well. It is important to distinguish and highlight the resources and assets in these two neighborhoods, capitalize on the reasons why Old Brooklyn and Brooklyn Centre

residents live here and choose to stay, and strategically address opportunities to attract new residents and investments.

The City of Cleveland recently completed the **Connecting Cleveland, 2020 Citywide Plan**. This Master Plan builds upon the Citywide Plan and identifies specific locations and strategies for implementing policies from the Plan that are applicable to the Old Brooklyn and Brooklyn Centre neighborhoods.

Wholesale changes are not anticipated in either of the neighborhoods – the patterns of development are fairly set, but there is the need for careful infill and adaptive re-use in strategic locations. The emphasis is on maintaining walkable, vibrant, mixed uses, and strong residential neighborhoods as the foundation for targeted development in the area.

## Concurrent Initiatives

Four other studies were commissioned in the Old Brooklyn and Brooklyn Centre area in 2007, which were underway simultaneously with the production of the master plan. Three of these were commissioned by the OBCDC, and the fourth was commissioned by the City of Cleveland. Recommendations from the

planning studies have been included in the overall neighborhood action plan so that the OBCDC has a comprehensive list of prioritized action steps to guide its endeavors.

**Lower Big Creek Greenway Redevelopment & Restoration Plan**

The OBCDC partnered with the City of Cleveland, Cleveland Metroparks and the Ohio Canal Corridor to retain the services of Floyd Browne Group to prepare the Lower Big Creek Greenway Redevelopment & Restoration Plan. This plan includes detailed concepts for future land use and economic development in the Lower Big Creek area, including locations for open space and trail linkages, public access, infrastructure, ecological restoration and environmental regeneration. This plan was completed in June 2008.

**Pearl Road/W 25<sup>th</sup> Street Transportation Corridor Plan**

City Architecture was retained to complete the Pearl Road/W 25<sup>th</sup> Street Transportation Corridor Plan, funded by a grant from NOACA's "Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative" (ILCI) program.

This study includes recommendations for the five mile stretch of Pearl Road from Lorain Avenue in the Ohio City neighborhood to Brookpark Road at the city's border with Parma. Much of the corridor is in the Old Brooklyn and Brooklyn Centre neighborhoods. The plan calls for major traffic calming and street enhancement efforts to be undertaken along this corridor and identifies nearby

redevelopment opportunities. This plan was completed in December 2008.

**Comprehensive Market Strategy**

As a companion piece to the Master Plan, the OBCDC retained the services of Anderson Economic Group to prepare the Old Brooklyn and Brooklyn Centre Comprehensive Market Strategy. The study, completed in June 2008, identified specific business and residential development opportunities in the neighborhoods. The findings from this report were used to inform the decisions made for the other concurrent studies as well as to refine the recommendations in the Master Plan.

**U.S. EPA Areawide Brownfield Assessment of Lower Big Creek Area (Phases I and II)**

In addition to planning studies conducted for the Old Brooklyn/Brooklyn Centre neighborhoods, the City of Cleveland secured a grant through the Region 5 Brownfield Assessment Program to perform Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments on several key properties in the Lower Big Creek Valley. The emphasis of the study was to assess the possible routes for a connector trail to link the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo with the Towpath Trail's Harvard Road Trailhead. The City of Cleveland retained Hull & Associates to perform these services.

## Previous Planning Studies

Over the last 15 or so years, there have been numerous planning studies conducted for portions of the Old Brooklyn and Brooklyn Centre neighborhoods. Many of the policies and implementation strategies advocated in the previous studies are still valid. This planning process began by reviewing the most recent studies and identifying policies and recommendations that remain relevant. The studies reviewed included:

- Big-Box Centers and Neighborhood Business Districts: Impact Analysis and Competitive Strategy; prepared by Michael J. Berne/MJB Consulting; for Cleveland Neighborhood Development Corporation, November 2006.
- Lower Big Creek Study Phase 2 Report; prepared by the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA), December 2005.
- Lower Big Creek Planning Initiatives Summer 2005 Update, prepared by NOACA.
- Pearl Road Corridor Study; prepared by NOACA, June 2005.
- Northeast Ohio Regional Retail Analysis; prepared by NOACA and the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission, 2004.
- Lower Big Creek Study Phase I Report; prepared by NOACA, December 2002.
- Ward 15 Commercial Revitalization Study; prepared by Basile Baumann Prost & Associates, April 2002.

In December, 2008, the City of Cleveland adopted the **Re-Imagining A More Sustainable Cleveland** policy plan that identified a number of strategies for reusing vacant land. The Plan highlights three categories of uses: holding strategies for vacant land that has market potential to be redeveloped; recommendations for improving green infrastructure for storm water management and green space; and approaches for productive land uses such as urban agriculture and energy generation. A number of strategies are suitable for the Old Brooklyn and Brooklyn Centre neighborhoods and are included in this plan.

## Planning Methodology

The Cuyahoga County Planning Commission was retained by the OBCDC to prepare the Old Brooklyn /Brooklyn Centre Master Plan.

Formulation of the Plan was a multi-phased process, beginning with an analysis of existing conditions and current development trends in the neighborhood. Through individual interviews and meetings, a list of issues to be addressed was created. This was followed by a community-based process to define a shared vision for the future, and then by the development of detailed strategies for overall neighborhood application as well as strategies for specific opportunity sites.

A master plan, in order to be the guide it is intended to be, must be tailored to the unique characteristics, needs and desires of the community. A plan is useful as a decision making tool only to the extent that it reflects the goals of the community. Therefore, the preparation of the Old Brooklyn/Brooklyn Centre Master Plan utilized a three-tiered structure: a project team, a community advisory committee and participation of the community-at-large:

The project team consisted of Cleveland City Council Members Kevin Kelley (Ward 16) and Brian Cummins (Ward 15), staff of the Cleveland City Planning Commission, staff of the OBCDC, representatives from Ohio Canal Corridor and the Cleveland Metroparks, and the consultant team from the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission.

The Advisory Committee consisted of more than 30 people, including the members of the project team. The Advisory Committee members were important participants who ensured that the goals and strategies ultimately embraced in the Master Plan were best suited to meet the needs of the community.

- First, the community has choices in resolving current issues, and community consensus is essential in determining which alternative policies should be pursued.
- Second, this consensus can best be reached through a structured format that both airs and respects diverse community opinions.
- Third, members of the advisory committee serve as a conduit to receive community concerns and

to disseminate ideas being considered and consensus reached.

The Advisory Committee met during key points in the process to review the progress of the work, evaluate technical conclusions and emerging directions, and process the opinions and ideas put forward by the community-at-large. Community-wide input occurred during various public meetings held during the study process.

The Advisory Committee identified the key issues to be investigated. From this, the County Planning Commission staff prepared the existing conditions analysis, in which a series of maps were created and shared which documented existing land use, zoning, as well as recent and proposed development projects within each neighborhood. Demographic data from the 2000 Census was compiled to provide an indication of population trends and key changes in the composition of the community.

Early on it was agreed that the neighborhoods had numerous assets which were underutilized.

Public meetings were held to share the advisory committee's work with the residents and other stakeholders. And attendees were given the chance to comment on the draft goals and visions for the neighborhoods and help identify priorities for action

Through the subsequent months, the economic consultant finalized the market strategy and the committee shifted to more focused discussion on

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potential development sites in the neighborhoods, where opportunities for change and development were possible.

These preliminary ideas were reviewed with the Advisory Committee and a detailed implementation strategy was developed.

The list of implementation strategies was shared with the Community and once again participants were invited to comment on the programs and initiatives they felt the OBCDC should focus on over the upcoming years.

Adoption of the final master plan by action of the Cleveland City Planning Commission is a critical objective to be achieved once the plan is finalized. Adoption institutionalizes the master plan, so that future elected officials, CDC staff, board members, residents, and other stakeholders will have a guide to direct their decisions. Their decisions will be in response to thoughtful consideration of issues related to the development and redevelopment of the community in order to achieve the shared “vision” of the future of Old Brooklyn and Brooklyn Centre.

The neighborhood master plan should be used as a guide to base future planning decisions, zoning amendments and capital expenditures.

Funding for this project was provided by Community Development Block Grant funds obtained by Ward 15 Council Member Brian Cummins and Ward 16 Council Member Kevin Kelley.

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