Walnut Hills: Rebuilding a Tradition

Walnut Hills
Chris Bender – Civil Engineering
Gabe Seidel – Urban Planning
Kevin Mertens – Civil Engineering
Niraj Kapadia – Architecture
Tim De Messemaccker – Urban Planning

Frank Russell

Vision Statement

PRINCIPLES / GOALS
- Create congruent identity that builds off of Walnut Hills’ history
  - Image/Value/Character of Neighborhood
  - Gateways to neighborhood
  - Increase revenue to benefit all members of Walnut Hills
- Create a safe, sustainable, harmonious yet multifarious destination to live/work/play
- Integrated design: one design solution to meet all of the goals.
- Make it a destination
  - More attractive/desirable place for people to live
  - Civic/amenities/natural areas expanded and improved (e.g. Eden Park)
  - Connectivity to downtown and uptown

SUSTAINABILITY
- Opportunity to improve sustainability
  - Green business provides revenue

**IMPROVE SAFETY
- Underlying principle of all design interventions
  - Green spaces that improve walkability
  - Walkability improves public perception

Goals, Strategies and Actions

Economic Development

Retain/Expand/Remove Existing Businesses of Various Types – Under many of the proposed freeway interchanges, an existing arts district between Taft and McMillan will be interrupted. These businesses will be offered an alternative location in the stretch of land between Gilbert and Florence for a new arts district.

The community is already aware that Kroger will be leaving the current location. The proposed plan offers a redesign of that the Gilbert/McMillan intersection that provides a more intelligent layout for a new grocery store.

Clean or Green Industry Opportunities – Clean or green industries will be promoted in the community. This will be especially important in the new tech village and institutional employment centers at the North and South of the community.
New Regional Commercial Opportunities (Office/Retail) – Currently there are industrial and commercial zones located along I-71 at the North and South end of the community. The South end of the community already houses a very strong business district that the proposed design can build upon. The North end of the community will benefit from the renovation of the Historic Ford Factory. This will be the location for the North side tech village. Hospitals and the University of Cincinnati are located just on the West side of I-71. These businesses will be promoted to expand to the area around the Ford Factory.

New Institutional Employment Centers Opportunities – The South end of the community already houses a very strong institutional employment village and this existing structure will be built on.

Neighborhood Redevelopment

Housing (all segments) – Maintain diversity in the Walnut Hills community. Keep housing affordable while increasing the amount of owner occupied housing.

Neighborhood Business Districts – A main neighborhood business district will be located along McMillan and Gilbert. This business district will be divided into slightly larger scale businesses that are located around the current location of Kroger, and smaller shops and service businesses that branch off from the main district. Understanding that a small neighborhood cannot realistically absorb too much retail establishments, the proposed design introduces centralized high-density storefront retail with auxiliary service business such as accountants, lawyers, medical offices, etc.

Cultural/Civic Amenities – Walnut Hills already has a rich cultural identity and a number of historical buildings. The biggest problem is that these are sites are either unknown or underutilized. For this design, cultural amenities will be spread throughout the community and revolve around the history of Walnut Hills. A main spine will be created along Gilbert. In the South will be Eden Park, just north of this will be the relocated arts district, at the center will be a park built around the history of the church bell tower, slightly further North will be a historic district structured around the various historic buildings and land, and to the far North is the Walnut Hills cemetery. Since improvements will need to be made to infrastructure as this plan is implemented, new roads and accompanying amenities will not only be constructed to a high standard but also maintained to a high standard. A community recycling program will be implemented.

Environment Improvements

Programmed Parks and Recreation – Eden Park is a strong anchor for the community that will be built upon to promote community events and interaction. This design proposes a “saw tooth” pattern of green spaces that create a sense of congruity throughout the community. Programmed green spaces are designed to line the two main streets of Walnut hills, Gilbert and McMillan. The parks will alternate sides of the street depending on context and building use. Also, various smaller-scale parks will be spread throughout the community that will be capable of hosting events and attracting crowds.

Brownfield Mitigation – Brownfield mitigation is not a factor in Walnut Hills as there are no significant brownfields.

Green Infrastructure: Landscape and Gateways – Landscape will be an important factor in the saw tooth pattern of green space. The McMillan-Taft Roundabout serves as a significant gateway to the community. Other gateways exist along Taft, McMillan, Gilbert and MLK. The gateways will be designed in order to portray a positive, welcoming image on the Walnut Hills community.

Green Infrastructure: Stormwater Management – Utilize federal or city funding that is available to incorporate stormwater management into new construction. Green spaces will help to absorb rainwater that would otherwise enter the sewer system.
Green Infrastructure: Natural Areas – The center of the roundabout will host a green space that will help to provide a positive gateway to the community. Natural areas are a strong component of the saw tooth pattern of green spaces that will be integrated into the community.

Transportation and Other Infrastructure

Highway Design - Observing the proposed interchange as it relates to McMillan and Taft, it can be seen that the traffic flows in an inefficient circular pattern. The proposed design solves this issue by redirecting the traffic flow into a single roundabout that will be integrated into the proposed interchange.

Street Network – Both Taft and McMillan will be returned to two-way traffic in order to improve access to the newly developed business districts and slow down the traffic to promote a pedestrian-friendly environment. This two-way traffic will function well with the roundabout. Gilbert will be developed as the spine that unites and strengthens the community.

Bus & Rail – Walnut Hills currently has a strong bus infrastructure. This infrastructure will be maintained and improved by integrated it with bicycle paths, and creating specialized bus shelters at strategic locations (such as Gilbert and McMillan). The new light rail system would benefit from having a stop in the Walnut Hills area. However, even the proposed stop at I-71 and McMillan/Taft could prove to be an important opportunity to connect the neighborhood with its surroundings.

Freight – Freight will be a very necessary commodity for the businesses and industries that are to be located along I-71. The routes for freight deliveries will be designed in such a manner to provide a minimal inconvenience to the public.

Bicycle & Pedestrian – Bicycles paths will be incorporated into all primary streets. Sidewalks and streetscape will be developed to encourage pedestrian traffic. This is especially true on McMillan and to a lesser degree on Gilbert.

Rationale

Economic Development

Retain/Expand/Remove Existing Businesses of Any Type – Under many of the proposed freeway interchanges, an existing arts district between Taft and McMillan is going to be interrupted. If these businesses are to be removed, they should be offered an alternative location to help keep them in the community. The community stakeholder was very strong in stating that it is important that any business or residence that is disrupted by proposals be offered an alternative to help keep them in the community. The stretch of land between Gilbert and Florence just south of their point of convergence is the perfect setting for a new arts district. This will help to infill vacant land and buildings that are located there. Eden Park, a strong business corridor and residential area is located directly to the east of this strip of land. The arts district will integrate well with this structure to help fortify and augment it. Also, this arts district will help to form a stronger link between downtown and Walnut Hills. Currently there is a void between the two, even though there is an easy transportation route between them.

There is currently a Kroger located north of McMillan and East of Gilbert. This Kroger is the only grocery store that services Walnut Hills. Walnut Hills has been informed that the Kroger is planning to leave the
community. The community representative felt very strongly that it was a necessity for Walnut Hills that a new grocery store be established in their community before the Kroger leaves the area, especially given that a significant portion of the population is older and has limited means of transportation.

The addition of the roundabout to the I-71 interchange will help promote the economic development of the existing businesses in the area. As the interchange currently lies, it is rather difficult to gain access to the various sectors of the Walnut Hills area from the highway. The current businesses will see improved access to their stores both from the highway and within the community given these interventions. The roundabout will ease the travel entering and exiting the highway, but also calm traffic on Taft and McMillan. It will slow traffic down enough to encourage patronage to the businesses that lie on these respective roads.

This proposal follows closely those goals set forth in the community’s own plan entitled Cincinnati 45206: Template for Tomorrow in terms of the retention, expansion, and removal of existing businesses. Goal 1 relates to economic development states, "Strengthen and improve the economic viability in the '06 community business districts" by "bringing new technological infrastructure into the community". This plan proposes a tech village which will do exactly that. With the tech village will come fiber optics, high-bandwidths and other technological items vital to a business's success in today's market. Goal 2 of the 45206 plan for economic development calls for the maintaining of the existing historic and architectural character of the business districts, which this plan pays close attention to. The proposed plan takes great care in not only maintaining, but restoring historical buildings and places that the community holds dear, such as the old library, the old Ford factory, Peebles corner, and the First Presbyterian Church tower. Goal 3 involves improving safety, cleanliness, and visual identity by "identifying all vacant buildings and lots in the business areas available for rehab and reuse or recommend demolition where appropriate". The saw-tooth greenspaces planned will replace these "eyesores" and havens for criminal activity. These pocket parks will be beautiful gathering places that will improve not only the visual attractiveness of the area, but also the safety and cleanliness.

Clean or Green Industry Opportunities – Green industries are a modern growing commodity. Currently there is a significant amount of funding for expansion of green industries. Socially, the presence of these industries in Walnut Hills will create a positive image for the community. They increase the potential of better job opportunities with bright futures, which will help bring in more residents. Economically, given the recent rise of green industries, these opportunities will bring in industries on the rise that will last. These industries will bring in tax revenues as well as creating new, better job opportunities that will bring in new, fresh residents to the area as well as providing incentives for the current residents to stay.

The I-71 intervention and Taft and McMillan will have the effect of increasing access to the area, thus improving the area as a potential site to locate a business. Similarly, the proposed changes to
be made on MLK will further increase access to the area, particularly near the tech village, which is the target area for these types of businesses to establish themselves. This intervention coupled with the coming tech village will prove to be an excellent combination to promote the area to the huge emerging green industries. The tech village would be an ideal location for any green or clean industry to locate themselves within it. The light rail, which is scheduled to run from downtown up along 71 through the area and beyond, will provide an artery from Walnut Hills to the rest of the city, particularly downtown to its thriving business districts. This coincides with the 45206 goals to develop new technological infrastructure to the area, which will also help market

New Regional Commercial Opportunities (Office/Retail) - Currently there are industrial and commercial districts located along I-71 at the North and South end of the community. While I-71 does divide the community, the visibility from I-71 will be promoted as a strength for many businesses. The businesses will benefit not only from visibility but also from easy access to the freeway thanks to the new proposed interchange. Walkable zones of influence will be developed around the businesses to allow employees to walk during breaks to get lunch, complete errands, etc. The South end of the community already houses a very strong business village and this existing structure will be built on. The North end of the community will benefit from the renovation of the Historic Ford Factory. This will be the location for the North side tech village. Hospitals and the University of Cincinnati are located just on the West side of I-71. These businesses will be promoted to expand to the area around the Ford Factory. The community representative informed our group that Walnut Hills owns a bank of fiber optic cable that ends in this region of the community. The hospital and University are both highly technical businesses that should be attracted to this connectivity.

Locating such strong industries at both the North and South end of the community will not only bring jobs to the community, but it will help to infill currently underutilized land. In addition to the employment benefits for the community, employees will be encouraged to take residence in Walnut Hills. The connectivity of Walnut Hills to downtown, uptown, Xavier, Hyde Park, etc. is attractive to both businesses and residences.

As with green industry opportunities, improving access to the area, which is huge factor in improving regional commercial opportunities, is the goal of the highway interventions. The combination of the roundabout added at Taft and McMillan and the proposed MLK changes will create new opportunities for these regional retailers to thrive in Walnut Hills. Traffic problems will decrease and flow will improve, as well as the visibility to and from the highway, increasing opportunities to any businesses located in the study area. Similarly, the addition of the light rail system will further increase access to and from the area to the rest of Cincinnati.

The four goals laid out by Cincinnati 45206 to promote economic development would all improve new regional commercial opportunities and all four goals are accounted for in this plan. Whether it be through improving safety and cleanliness in the area, converting Taft and McMillan back to two-way traffic,
maintaining the historical and architectural aspects of the buildings, or improving the technological infrastructure; these things should help improve opportunities for regional commercial businesses.

New Institutional Employment Centers Opportunities – See the rationale for New Regional Commercial Opportunities (Office/Retail) above.

Neighborhood Redevelopment

Housing (all segments) – Increasing owner-occupied housing will create a positive perception on Walnut Hills. Owner-occupied housing will ensure that residents stay in the community for a long time. It will establish Walnut Hills as a destination rather than a pass-through community. The community representative established this as a required component of the plan. This increase in owner-occupied housing will have significant social and economic implications. Owner-occupied housing tends to be nicer and more well-kept since the owner has a vested interest in how the property appears and functions. Socially, this will improve the overall feel and look of the area. The residents of the community will take more care in their properties and in public spaces as well. Since housing is one of the first indicators of the economic condition, property values should increase in the area with improved housing conditions. This increased property values will allow for higher tax revenues.

Access is key to any residential area. Living in an area frequented with traffic problems, backups, and inefficient street layouts is obviously not ideal. The improvements being proposed at the I-71 interchanges will help alleviate these problems that currently plague Walnut Hills. With access improved, the area will be a more desirable place to live. Given its central location within the city, improved highway access will be vital to those living in the area to improve transportation to work or other amenities outside the Walnut Hills area.

The neighborhood plan devotes an entire section to improving the housing situation within the area. Goal 1 states "Increase owner-occupied housing in the '06 community". The plan outlined here is intended to do exactly that, through the various interventions. Goal 4, which sets to "Encourage the renovation and/or demolition of vacant buildings and the upgrade and maintenance of all housing to meet City code; preserve the historic and architectural character and ensure on-going beautification efforts in the '06 community" is also one this plan to great effort into including. The historical locations within the city were noted and every effort was taken to ensure that these buildings remained, while the vacant lots are to be removed to make way for "pocket parks", which will help make Walnut Hills a "place to live and raise a family", which is goal 3 of 45206.

Neighborhood Business Districts – Neighborhood business districts (NBDs) are designed to encourage the outside public to come and explore the community. The business district is important because it establishes the community as a destination and brings in a significant amount of revenue. Neighborhood business districts are
places of interaction. In these locations, the residents from both within the community, as well as those from other communities who travel from afar to visit, come together to interact socially. Through these districts, a sense of community pride and involvement can develop and prosper. This betters the entire community. Economically, the implications to improving local NBD's are rather obvious. These districts serve as local employment opportunities as well as ways to bring money and taxes into the area. Instead of residents traveling outside their community to shop, they spend it in the community, which helps increase tax revenues and improve the area.

The community representatives stated this as a key factor to any plan for the area. The community wants a neighborhood business district that prioritizes the local residents in lieu of mainly trying to bring in outsiders. The district should be convenient, centrally located, and easy to get to, especially since Walnut Hills has a large elderly population. This NBD should be able to easily serve that population, but have room to expand in the event it becomes exceedingly popular to outsiders and is outgrown.

The changes proposed to the I-71 interchanges in the area would not have a huge affect initially to any developing neighborhood business districts in terms of shoppers. As the NBD's are initially designed to serve the local residents, the highway changes would occur outside most residents' paths to and from the NBD. It will help with shipping and receiving. Trucks will have easier access from the highway to the businesses. It would also affect the NBD in terms of outsiders who wish to visit and shop there. They would find easier access to the district from the highway from these changes.

Within the 45206 plan laid out by the community, these neighborhood business districts fall in with the other economic development sections, including new regional commercial opportunities and clean or green industry opportunities. The 45206 plan proposes several goals, including improving safety, cleanliness, technological infrastructure, parking, access, aesthetics, etc. to help achieve these goals. The proposed plan also takes into account all these considerations and incorporates them in one fashion or another.

Cultural/Civic Amenities - The community of Walnut Hills has been a diverse community for a long time. Due in part to this diversity, the community is full of historic buildings. The history of the area helps to develop individual districts that each have their own identity but still supplement each other. Eden Park to the south and the Walnut Hills Cemetery to the North will anchor the green civic amenities. A spine of amenities will be created along the Gilbert corridor to help promote connection. In the South will be Eden Park, just north of this will be the relocated arts district, at the center will be a park built around the history of the church bell tower, slightly further North will be a historic district structured around the various historic buildings and land, and to the far North is the Walnut Hills cemetery.

Each of these sectors will be encouraged to hold activities that the residents and public can take part in. Since improvements will need to be made to infrastructure as this plan is implemented, new roads and accompanying amenities will not only be constructed to a high standard but also maintained to a high standard. A community recycling program will be implemented. The community representative stressed the importance
of maintaining the absolute diversity of Walnut Hills. By offering strong civic and cultural amenities, interaction will be encouraged among all districts and classes.

As with every other item, the highway interventions will help improve access to the various cultural and civic amenities in the Walnut Hills area. With these changes, people from all over Cincinnati will be able to conveniently and easily access the many amenities Walnut Hills has to offer. This access will also ease the efforts of the recycling program with transportation and distribution.

**Environment Improvements**

**Programmed Parks and Recreation** - Walnut Hills benefits from having two wonderful large green spaces bordering the North and South ends of the community. Future green space has a “saw tooth” design that helps to form a spine between the large green spaces. Having green space spread throughout the community will increase the perception of the community as well as promote walkers. Encouraging the public to utilize green space and walk throughout the community will help to improve public safety. In addition to bridging the areas between the main green spaces, green spaces located in residential sectors will anchor neighborhood business districts.

Programmed parks and recreation have many benefits socially, environmentally, and economically. Socially, the existence of parks and recreation promote social and community involvement and pride. The residents of the community are out and interacting with one, which benefits all. This activates the local neighborhood business districts, and improves their performance. Environmentally, it decreases the use of vehicles, as well as the use of air conditioning or heating. The decrease of these items decreases the burning of fossil fuels and helps with the carbon output.
 Niehoff Urban Studio | Fall 2009 | Great Streets and Gateways | 1-71 and 1-75 Community Plans

The community stakeholder acknowledged the benefit to having green space at the extreme North and South end of the community. She believed that this is and would be an excellent attraction for families in the community.

45206 contains a goal of "Stabilize and expand leisure opportunities for residents in the '06 community". It proposes to develop walking, hiking and bike trails through the 06’ community. While this plan didn't develop trails in the traditional sense, it does create "urban trails" by taking advantage of the already existing wide sidewalks along the major roads and adding streetscape and slowing down traffic significantly. The pocket parks created will also increase the amount of outdoor space available for recreation and leisure use.

Brownfield Mitigation – Brownfields are abandoned or underused industrial and commercial facilities available for re-use. After checking with the Ohio registry of Brownfield's, it was determined that there currently are no registered brownfield's within the Walnut Hills community. Because of this, brownfield mitigation was not considered in the design.

Green Infrastructure: Landscape and Gateways – For Landscape rationale, see the Programmed Parks and Recreation rationale.

Gateways act as an important first impression to the community. The design of gateways will help to give a positive first impression and to establish Walnut Hills as a destination. The community representative acknowledged the negative impact of the fact that Walnut Hills is currently a drive-through community. For the success of the community, it needs to be established as a destination.

Green Infrastructure: Stormwater Management – Stormwater management is necessary because Cincinnati has a large problem with combined sewer overflows. By engineering new buildings to high stormwater management standards, Walnut Hills will be doing its part for the environment and will also qualify for funding. Funding is important because it will make these plans more attainable.

Figure 14 - Existing Gateway in Walnut Hills (by authors)

The improvement of stormwater management has benefits environmentally, particularly in Cincinnati given the current CSO (combined sewer overflow) problem. Cincinnati sewage and stormwater systems are combined systems, collected in sewers and taken to one of two treatment facilities locally. Under normal conditions, this does not cause a problem. In the event of a large rainfall, the treatment plants become overwhelmed and must dump the water directly into the river untreated. This poses a rather serious environmental problem given that raw sewage is being pumped into natural flowing waters. This problem is not easily remedied, as the necessary corrections to the system have an astronomical cost associated with them.

Through smart design, this plan proposes to help alleviate the problem at minimal costs. The proposed pocket parks will expand the percentage of permeable surface, enabling rainwater to be absorbed into the ground, in lieu of flowing into the sewers. While this isn't a cure-all solution, it does help reduce the amount of water that the already overburdened sewer and treatment systems must handle. While 45206 does not
specifically mention this problem or goals relating to the CSO problem in Cincinnati, this design does incorporate these measures to attempt to alleviate the problem.

Green Infrastructure: Natural Areas – For Natural Areas rationale, see the Programmed Parks and Recreation rationale.

**Transportation and Other Infrastructure**

**Highway Design** - Observing the proposed interchange as it relates to McMillan and Taft, it can be seen that the traffic flows in an inefficient circular pattern. By compressing the circular flow into a single roundabout located directly next to the freeway, the traffic will flow smoother and the amount of land disrupted will be minimized. The roundabout will create a unique gateway to the community that can help establish a sense of character. Under the proposed interchange, the entrance and exit to the access roads came from Taft only. This plan is not beneficial for the community of Walnut Hills, nor is it favorable for access to the other surrounding communities and businesses. Creating access to both McMillan and Taft from the freeway, as well as access to both I-71 Northbound and Southbound from both roads will also help traffic flow.

A more efficient highway design has significant social, environmental, and economical implications. By making the highway more efficient, the amount of time spent in traffic is reduced. Environmentally, this is less time spent idling, which equates to less pollution emitted. Economically, residents who spend less time in traffic save fuel costs and have that money to spend elsewhere. Socially, it is detrimental to a community if it is difficult to access because of highway traffic. By improving the efficiency of the highway, one also improves access to the connected areas.

The community representative felt this was vital to revitalizing the area. She stated improved access to and from the highway to Walnut Hills was essential. She qualified that statement by noting that most of the designs currently on the table disrupt the existing neighborhood far too much. She noted that several historical buildings must be demolished, including the old library and the old Ford factory, which is unacceptable in her opinion. 45206 made no reference to any highway intervention. The goals within the transportation section focused mainly on street networks and public transportation as opposed to highway intervention.

**Street Network** - Improvement of the efficiency of a street network can have great positive contributions to a community. Socially, well designed street networks help avoid traffic congestion throughout the community, which can be a major cause of frustration. It makes it easy for people to move around and get out into the community, whether it be to visit a local shop or head to the park with the family. Environmentally, less traffic means less idling time for vehicles, which in turn is less automobile pollution emitted into the atmosphere. Also, it will promote the use of alternative forms of transportation, such as bike or walking, which have large benefits for the environment. Similarly, less gas wasted is more money in the consumers pocket yielding large economic benefits.

Adjustment of the street network was a priority to the community representative, particularly the return of Taft and McMillan to two-way traffic. She noted that these two roads began as two-way, but were switched to one-way many years ago. Immediately following that transformation, the local businesses began to deteriorate. This change from two to one-way traffic destroyed the community, turning Walnut Hills into just
another drive-through on the morning commute. She believed that changing them back would turn Walnut Hills back into the destination that it once was.

This plans proposed changes to the I-71 interchanges and the proposed adjustments to the street network should work hand and hand at improving the overall efficiency of the transportation networks. The two-way streets of Taft and McMillan will flow seamlessly into the roundabout, as will the on and off ramps from the highway. This dance of cars should improve overall access to the area, as well as decrease the traffic problems that currently plague the community.

Cincinnati 45206 has specific goals which are designed to help improve transportation in the area. Goal 2 states, "Develop a strategy for the implementation of two-way traffic on East McMillan and William Howard Taft Road west of Victory Parkway". Through this intervention, it hopes to bring business back to the once thriving NBD's as well as improve the traffic problems. The plan also references a desire to turn the area into a "walkable district". Through the addition of streetscape, the slowing down of traffic, and other changes, this proposal hopes to do exactly that.

**Bus & Rail** – The city of Cincinnati has bus routes that are very prevalent in Walnut Hills. These bus routes need to be designed to function properly with the two-way traffic along Taft and McMillan. Also, bicycles and pedestrians will be ubiquitous along the streets so plans must ensure their safety. The community representative questioned the possibility to design more direct routes to the west side of Cincinnati. When routes are altered for two way traffic and new “hot spots,” this discussion could occur with the city. The community representative mentioned that extending or altering the light rail proposal to include Walnut Hills would be a direct benefit to the community.

45206 does reference a desire to improve all modes of transportation. A central hub for the bus system as well as a hub near the highway for the light rail system would improve accessibility to the area. 45206 states these hubs would be ideal, but qualifies the statement by noting the community should not have to sacrifice air quality, nor lose any historically or socially significant landmarks that made the area what it is.

**Freight** – Freight deliveries will be frequent to businesses that are located along I-71. Freight distribution routes will be imperative to keep freight off of the streets and clogging up the public perception. The integration of this essential freight with the proposed changes to the street network, highway interchanges, and business developments will be essential to the overall success of the community.

**Bicycle & Pedestrian** – Bicycle and pedestrian transportation are greatly increasing in popular and emphasis. Most, if not all designs, put a great deal of focus on these modes of transportation and push their use. The reasons are many. Socially, these forms of travel have the effect of calming the street, slowing people down to create a sense of community. They produce no noise or air pollution and have proven to cause decreases in crime. Overall, they make the area a great place to work, live and play. Environmentally, they get people out of their vehicles, thus decreasing the amount of pollution being put off into the environment. Economically, they have the effect of slowing people down. They are able to see what the local businesses have to offer and are able to find stores that they otherwise would have zoomed by at fifty miles an hour without given it a moments glance.

Currently, Walnut Hills is not a very pedestrian or bicycle friendly place. While the existing sidewalks are actually quite wide, pedestrians simply do not feel safe on them. The main problem lies on the road itself.
Vehicles often reach speeds over fifty miles per hour on the major thorough-fairs of Taft, McMillan, and MLK. That speed coupled with the sheer number of vehicles during most portions of the day and the lack of adequate streetscape do not provide a pleasant environment for pedestrians. The community representative noted this fact, giving them yet another reason for two-way traffic.

Again, 45206 put emphasis on the creation of better paths for both pedestrians and bicyclist. Their plan proposed the installation of bicycle racks, a street grid design that supports the '06 community as a "walkable community", and the improvement of vehicular and pedestrian circulation through the development of safe pedestrian crossings.

**Framework Plan Proposal**

Walnut Hills has a rich heritage, full of history and culture. Unfortunately, that heritage is somewhat unrecognizable. In lieu of rewriting that heritage, this proposal attempts to bring it to the surface. In doing so, we will recreate that once iconic community and make it something her residents can be proud of. By accounting for all three aspects of sustainability, social, economic, and environmental; this proposal will revitalize the community. The effects will be felt well into the future.

Walnut Hills at one time had Peebles Corner, a local neighborhood business district that "served as a beacon of economic prosperity known throughout the city" (45206). This proposal seeks to recreate a similar NBD that will serve to reinvigorate the community and economical stimulate the area. Centered at the intersection of Gilbert and McMillan, this NBD will serve as the unofficial center of Walnut Hills. It will have all the amenities needed by the residents. Storefront appeal will be utilized to attract consumers to the NBD and bring revenue to not only local businesses, but also the area.

Upon first inspection of Walnut Hills, it was observed that the area suffered from severe dislocation. The major arteries of William Howard Taft, East McMillan, Martin Luther King Drive, and Gilberts are serving to effectively slice the area into varying sections, each seemingly independent of one another. They created a thoroughfare to move traffic through. Businesses began to deteriorate due to the movement of traffic through the area and not to the area. This proposal plans to reunify all of Walnut Hills back into a single, sustainable community. Distinct gateways will be placed at each of the four main entrances. At the intersections of McMillan with I-71 and Gilbert, retail gateways will be used. These gateways will be NBD's with much storefront appeal to invite the consumer into the neighborhood. North and south of Walnut Hills on Gilbert, green gateways will be placed, which will contain proper signage and beautiful landscape, creating a warm and inviting gateway to whomever is traveling through.
To help combat this dislocation, Taft and McMillan are to be restored to two-way traffic. Many believe the changing of Taft and McMillan from two-way to one-way served as a catalyst to this deterioration. In doing so, both will create multiple images and options for the community. Two-way traffic will help to frame multiple views of the community depending on the direction visitors are traveling. This will in turn increase the visibility of new and existing neighborhood businesses. One of the major reasons to oppose two-way traffic is the amount of vehicles that flow through the community. By switching to two-way traffic, congestion will be created that will force the through traffic to find different routes around the community. By relocating these vehicles, Walnut Hills will become a destination instead of a drive-through community. It will also have the effect of slowing the traffic down, which is the major cause of the Walnut Hills dislocation. It will be safe once again walk along and across the street, as well as travel via bicycle.

Another method to slow vehicles down and make the area a more beautiful and healthier place to live is the replacement of vacant and underutilized with pocket parks, creating saw-tooth like pattern of functional and aesthetic greenspaces for pedestrians. These pocket parks will be in and adjacent to the newly created neighborhood business districts, primarily along both McMillan and Taft. The combination of these small parks with the currently existing greenspaces (namely Eden Park and Walnut Hills cemetery), will create a more comfortable and inviting feel. It will help socially invigorate the community, allowing convenient and comfortable places for the residents to meet and socialize.

Environmentally, through intelligent design, the installation of these parks will also help combat Cincinnati's CSO problem. Through the use of permeable hardscape and softscape, these parks will provide a lot of square footage for the capture of rainwater. Traditionally, with non-permeable hardscape, rainwater falls from the sky onto the non-permeable surface, such as concrete, and then into the sewer system. These parks will take advantage of permeable surfaces, such as various types of pavers, grass, or membrane, to trap that water and prevent it from reaching the sewer system, thus lessening the burden on Cincinnati's treatment plants.

To build off the "green" theme, the area
will be made far more pleasant for both pedestrian and bicycle traffic. It was observed that the majority of the sidewalks along the major thoroughfares were quite wide, yet highly underutilized. There was no streetscape and they had fallen into disrepair. To alleviate this problem, better lighting, trees, plants, and updated storefronts will be installed to better promote these alternative forms of transportation. A buffer between the moving traffic and the sidewalks will be added through the use of a parking lane. Benches, bicycle racks, and other pedestrian amenities will also be added throughout, particularly in the business areas to further promote pedestrian use. Clearly definable pedestrian crosswalks will ensure that pedestrian traffic can move not only along the business districts, but through them as well. This will help remove the dislocation that currently is apparent throughout.

Given the lack of access that currently exists from the highway to the study area, it was determined that something must be done there. The construction and implementation of a very European solution is what is proposed. The use of a roundabout in this location, connecting I-71 to both Taft and McMillan, is a viable option for this location. The idea first came about from the observation that a rudimentary roundabout already exists on the four streets of McMillan, Taft, Essex, and May. Unfortunately, this "roundabout" is an unintentional one, thus very inefficient. The group decided that if a more efficient and effective roundabout could be designed, it would greatly benefit the community through accessibility.

Another benefit of this roundabout is its lack of disruption to the existing buildings. The other highway plans proposed disrupted the existing area a great deal. Many required the removal of the newly renovated "Old Ford Factory" while others calls for the removal of the old library. The community representatives felt these options were unacceptable given what they would cost, so other options were explored. The roundabout has an advantage of being quite narrow, thus leaving the surrounding areas virtually undisturbed. The few areas that are disturbed are to be relocated into either the proposed arts district and/or tech village. As can be seen in the images above, this roundabout will provide both on and off-ramps from I-71 to both Taft and McMillan in an efficient manner from. Proper signage would have to be established given that this is the first major intersection in the area to utilize a roundabout.

Residential housing was another major focus of the community representatives. A key component of this plan is to increase the amount of owner-occupied housing. Currently, the area is dominated by rental-occupied housing which is bad for the community. Also, the area is divided into distinct districts, each segregated according to income level. The overall goal is to improve access and make these districts more diverse, so that there exists only a single, large residential district. The implementation of pocket
parks and the slowing down of traffic along the major thoroughfares in the area should help diversify the area. The vacant properties that the proposed pocket parks will replace are blighted eyesores that have a negative effect on the housing of the neighborhood. It makes it more difficult for owner-occupied housing to move in. Similarly, the unsafe conditions along the major thoroughfares do not promote this type of housing that the community seeks to help improve life there.

Great care was taken to ensure that the new highway designs did not disturb the existing community as little as possible. Unfortunately, one area that is unavoidable is the small arts community that lies near the highway. These arts businesses are to be relocated and consolidated into a single arts district that runs along Gilbert Avenue. Similar to those in San Diego and Portland, this arts district will contain studios, galleries, retail business, and a variety of other establishments that will promote culture and the arts. This arts district is surrounded by residential and small business, making it an excellent location for such a place. It will have an immediate consumer base to occupy and visit the district.

The University of Cincinnati has a large technical building within the Walnut Hills area, with a large supply of fiber optic cable extending throughout. To build off of this already existing network and concept, this proposal seeks to create a tech village in the northwest corner of Walnut Hills, extending into Corryville. This "tech village" would be a dedicated area within the community specifically designed for technology-based companies. This would include businesses that deal with biomedical, green or clean technologies, electronics, etc. The idea is to group companies in related fields into one distinct district to promote cooperation and partnerships amongst the members of the district. By promoting and bringing these types of companies into the area, they will provide not only new and exciting job opportunities for the residents, but needed tax revenue as well. This village will also have several parks and a small business district incorporated within it, to serve the tenants of the village. They will have all the amenities necessary to occupy the space.
Illustrative Examples

One-way to Two-Way Streets

**Best Practice Example:** Switching one-way streets to two-way streets is not an easy task. One-way streets generally come in pairs and used to be a beneficial way to increase traffic flow in dense urban areas. Today, one-way streets tend to confuse drivers and are not as necessary or effective as they used to be. In addition to this, traffic tends to flow at higher speeds and create a dangerous situation for pedestrians. In Raleigh, North Carolina, they realized this and returned some of the main downtown corridors back to two-way traffic. The two-way traffic helped businesses along the streets and developed a much safer pedestrian experience (Raleigh.gov).

Neighborhood Business District

**Best Practice Example:** Alley24 is a large, LEED Certified mixed-use development in Seattle, WA. The development is comprised of 172 residences and 180,000 square feet of office space built on top of 28,000 square feet of retail space. This building renovated existing structures as well as designed new structures to meet extreme sustainability standards. Alley24 was able to achieve a 49 percent reduction in energy consumption and also boasts a near 100% occupancy (Howard, 2009).

Cultural Amenities

**Best Practice Example:** Nashville, TN was ranked third nationally for cultural amenities by Bizjournals.com. The only cities that beat out Nashville were San Francisco and New York City. Nashville ranks strong due to their Civil war history, museums and galleries, and variety of performing arts. The Schermerhorn Symphony Center is a $123 million dollar performing arts facility that helped to establish Nashville’s recent cultural amenity identity (Bryant 2008).
Civic Amenities

**Best Practice Example:** Lexington, KY is ranked as the number 25 green city in the United States as surveyed by bizjournals.com. They received a perfect score for their Recycling/Perspective. They received this ranking based on the fact that Lexingtonians recycle everything from surplus electronics to scrap metal, and they listed the environment as their third most important concern (behind only employment and public safety)—the highest ranking in the survey (Svoboda, 2008).

Saw-tooth Greenspaces / Pocket Parks

**Best Practice Example:** Governor's Park in Versailles, Kentucky, is a beautiful, yet functional pocket park located in the downtown area adjacent to the city hall. While small in size, it has had a large impact, both economically and socially since its creation in the 1990's. It serves as a gathering place for the local residents while also drawing tourists in from around the area to photograph and enjoy the atmosphere created. The recently renovated mural helps take one back to simpler times all can appreciate. It fits in perfectly with the Versailles main street, which has an 1890's feel to it. To top it off, this park was built by the local volunteers some 15 years ago. Meaning that while this small park cost the taxpayers very little, they are still able to reap the benefits.

Arts District

**Best Practice Example:** The Pearl District, located in downtown Portland, Oregon, is a former industrial area transformed into an urban arts district. Thought of as a model for urban neighborhoods throughout the country, the area is filled with various art galleries and institutions, studios, upscale shops, restaurants, and even housing. Within the district lies a park which sees tremendous use and is one of the most popular additions to the area. It also contains the largest bookstore in the country, dubbed "Powell's City of Books" which regularly sees thousands of customers daily. The Pearl District was seamlessly integrated into the surrounding community, as well as tied into the public transportation systems, which includes both streetcar and rail. The district was included on a list of "60 of the world's greatest places" by Project for Public Spaces.

http://www.pps.org/great_public_spaces/one?public_place_id=663
Roundabout

Best Practice Example: The Los Alamitos Traffic Circle in Long Beach, California, was one of the first roundabouts in the United States. Originally designed to accommodate the increased traffic that was expected for the 1932 Summer Olympics as a traffic circle, it was later reconstructed in 1993 to become the first modern roundabout in the country. Today, with an outside diameter of approximately 450 feet, it handles over 60,000 vehicles per day, most of which are travelling on the commute from Orange County to the South Bay area of Los Angeles. Aside from decreasing both traffic problems and accidents, the L.B. Circle has become a landmark to the area, bringing in outsiders to travel along the historic circle. It endures as an international precedent for directing traffic through urban multiple-entry dynamic intersections.


Tech Village/Science Park

Best Practice Example: The Hong Kong Science and Technology Park is one of the leading technology parks in the world. Its tenants are on the cutting edge of developing new sustainable technologies and advancements in such fields as nano-technology, biotechnology, precision engineering, green technology, and electronics. Its tenants include such companies as DuPont and LPI. This year's major feat was the development of thin-film photovoltaic technology in cooperation with DuPont. Tenants at the facility can enjoy engineering and technical support services as well as establish partnerships with leading scientific research centers, universities, and top technology corporations worldwide. The park has become a hub for innovation and design worldwide.

http://www.siteselection.com/issues/2008/jul/Cover-Research-Parks/

Bibliography

Boyer, Di. "Governor's Park" Project for Public Spaces.


