**Urban Framework Plan: 7-I-71 Walnut Hills**

**Walnut Hills**

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**Vision Statement**

This team focused on transforming Walnut Hills physically, culturally, and socially with the objective of creating an economically sustainable and diverse community. We intend to play off of the historical and cultural assets existing within the neighborhood presently to develop business nodes, cultural districts, residential quadrants and maximize the city’s infrastructure: from street car, light rail, vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian transportation modes; parks, streetscapes and green spaces; to historic properties, social and cultural centers, we intend to build up a distinct community identity within Walnut Hills.
Goals, Strategies and Actions

In regards to Economic Development, for the existing businesses, we mainly looked at the business district. We realized that the business districts rejuvenation, both physically and culturally. More businesses must be added to establish the community as a destination rather than just a passage from people’s homes to the interstate. We wished to retain existing businesses which represent the values and needs of the current residents.

For clean or green industry opportunities, we located several existing industrial sites that should be at least retained, if not expanded on. Also, there are many large, vacant lots near existing industrial sites which provide an opportunity for the development of green industrial eco-parks.

When considering new regional commercial opportunities, it can easily be seen that the area is nicely suited for regional employment centers. The lack of large corporations in the community leaves room for businesses to move in. The neighborhood also has many incentives that could be used to attract new corporations. Primarily, we want to introduce new commerce to the community in order to create jobs for the residents, as well as attract visitors from surrounding areas.

On the other hand, for new institutional employment centers opportunities, we first sought to identify the existing institutions that had a stake in the community and see what type of expansion are planning. A possible new route to take would be to make advancements in technology such as fiber optic and wireless internet community wide, to encourage the expansion of existing services.
For Neighborhood Redevelopment, we first looked at the housing segments. The existing community has a diverse housing stock that is concentrated in different sections. There are many deteriorating and vacated houses in the area, a very low number of owner-occupied houses, and a high rate of rental units, mostly by low and moderate incomes. Therefore, we sought to identify existing residential target areas, and look into strategies to help revitalize the area as a whole. Some solutions could be rehabilitation/demolition, and improving streetscape and infrastructure. This would allow us to develop new residences to attract new homeowners and families, including young professionals. The main strategies we want to keep in mind, however, are to protect the segment of the public residing in rental units and keep the displacements to a minimum. Also, we wish to retain the historic architecture which creates an identity for the neighborhood.

In regards to the neighborhood business districts, we will mainly focus on the district on Gilbert/McMillan, and on Lincoln/Gilbert. Both districts exhibit a state of disinvestment currently. Many of the building structures are deteriorating and becoming blight, with a high level of vacancy. This strongly hurts its attractiveness for business owners and visitors. We would like to encourage a walkable, safe, and pleasant area in both of the business districts. Creation of better streetscape and facades, as well as infrastructure improvements, including corner street parks, would create a safer, more welcoming environment for residents and visitors. We would also like to identify potential areas with opportunities for rehabilitation and infill.
We identified that cultural amenities are an excellent way of creating a community identity and connecting people. We felt that there was a lack of centers for residents to gather and experience cultural events in the area. Therefore, we would like to develop recreational amenities for schools and residents, located in close proximity to most housing. Also, we would want to develop attractions for visitors, which will be located centrally, with opportunities for parking and pedestrian access.

Regarding Environmental Improvements, programmed parks and recreation is a large impact. Existing in Walnut Hills, there are some “high-value” parks; however, they are not in proximity to residential clusters and business districts, causing them to not fully be utilized. Many parks are a system of naturally unusable areas of earlier development, which makes them very passive and feature few built amenities. We would like to identify what each park or space lacks and what can be done to enhance the space. We will try to provide passive uses near business districts, and active spaces around residential clusters.

For landscape and gateways, there is a major lack of effective landscape and not much of an identifiable gateway into the area. The existing landscape is very sparse and is often overgrown. Improved landscape is needed throughout the community, but most importantly in the neighborhood business districts. Better landscape and welcoming access would help the infiltration of the area and create a friendlier and more hospitable community. Eden Park in the south is a good opportunity for development, and to be a gateway into the community.

Storm water management has applicability within both the urban and residential areas. Vacant sites could be areas for infill and turned into sustainable “pocket parks” whose main
functions area dealing with water flow. Also, many small components can easily be adopted for sites, streets, and buildings.

Transportation and other infrastructure was a main focus of ours as well. For the highway design, we sought to find a highway alignment, specifically entrance and exit routes, which balance interaction with our focus area and privacy from large amounts of fast moving traffic. The interchanges in our area should be easily accessible to promote the vitality of visitors coming in as well as being convenient for residents. However, it shouldn’t become a high speed by-way for vehicular traffic.

When analyzing the street network, we realized that the major street paths are McMillan, Taft, and Martin Luther King running east to West, and Gilbert going North and South through them. These streets need to be able to move traffic through, as well as promoting access and activity within the business districts. We wanted it to be able to be safe for pedestrians as well as prevent it from becoming a high speed by-way through the neighborhood.

For the bus and rail routes in the area, we sought to locate stations and stops in areas of the neighborhood which are easily accessible to most residents. We would like to be able to create a viable route for a street car, as well as room for a new light rail. We wanted to also create a place for a hub that could connect the light rail and street car.

For bicycle and pedestrian access, we noticed that many of the residential clusters allow for, but do not necessarily facilitate proper movement and connection of bicyclists and pedestrians. The major arterials and business districts do not form a cohesive biker and walker
friendly community and does not provide a comfortable atmosphere for either. We sought to
decrease the speed limits or slow down traffic in order to promote safety and decrease the risks
of death or serious injury to bikers and pedestrians. We also wanted to provide proper on-
street facilities to improve/introduce well marked crosswalks, sidewalks, and bike lanes.

Rationale

The economic development plan for Walnut Hills has two major components: local,
culturally significant businesses and a large scale economic cornerstone for the community.
The stakeholder input from the 45206 plan is to keep the culture of Walnut Hills as a significant
selling point within the community. This will allow small business owners large potential
growth when the entire central business district remains community and culturally driven. It
will increase the local spending power and bring in residents that value culturally significant
neighborhoods, such as younger, trendy individuals and young professionals. These individuals
want their community to be very present in their daily lives and contribute significantly to who
they are as a person. This will also make older residents of the Walnut Hills community content
as their atmosphere will not change with an influx of younger residents and businesses.

The larger economic cornerstone and major draw for the area will be the introduction of
a large scale commercial retail and office district North of Martin Luther King and West of
Gilbert Avenue. This will be connected directly to the light rail and streetcar hubs in order to
provide citywide transportation to and from this commercial district. It will provide high-
quality, big-name brands into the community to draw residents from neighboring communities
in order to contribute revenue and taxes back into the Walnut Hills community. This will also be a major draw to the local cultural businesses in the central business district allowing for widespread growth across all of Walnut Hills major commercial districts.

Walnut Hills is one of Cincinnati’s oldest resident neighborhoods, and was originally, developed as an affluent suburb. Walnut Hills has had a wealth of the African-American culture since the middle of the 1800s, when a large black community settled in Walnut Hills due to its involvement with the Underground Railroad. Employment opportunities give this area a significant advantage for promoting this project with programs that celebrate this culture. During the 20th century Walnut Hills suffered a significant loss of population and number of housing structures became vacant or demolished. This great number of vacant or dilapidated structures in Walnut Hills creates problems for residential areas; notable is the Southwest Quadrant area, having a housing in a wide range of conditions, as well as many vacant buildings and lots. Through the years, plans were made to improve the conditions of housing in this area. As mentioned in the Mayor’s Institute on City Design, Walnut Hills has a potential to incorporate the idea of Artist Live-work spaces, hand in hand with the economic development to revitalizes the area. This is due to the abundant number of artists in the neighborhood. In continuation of the revitalization progress of Cincinnati, the main goals of the project is to create a campus like environment and establish a positive, creative presence in the community; to connect the work of artists to the revitalization of the community; to create a place for artist for the community to share their work and ideas; and to celebrate the community’s history and culture. This creates an opportunity for infill development on vacant or underused lots, as well
as making efficient use of run-down, vacant, and underused sites. It also allows room to enhance the sustainability by making efficient use of existing community amenities and infrastructure. Moreover, the site is currently well-located with access to Interstate 71, and the existing metro routes.

The Mayors Institute on City Design encourages the development of small art-related industries through activities such as: hosting a series of periodic open studio tours; encouraging artist live-work housing development with financial incentives; inviting neighborhood artist to enliven the neighborhood’s public spaces; and amending visual art businesses with performing art businesses, music and film production. The focus is to celebrate the community’s African-American history and culture. The African-American “Beecher Art Campus” project is an opportunity for infill houses for galleries, exhibition spaces, artists’ residences, transitional housing for those in need and a place where neighborhood latchkey children can congregate after school for a sense of community and a place to explore artistic expression. The project ranges from the single artist housing, where they can live and work space as well as home studio; to the other artist lofts and studios/galleries that will be located at the corner of the blocks and those that are located on McMillan; to the Art Museum and the Sculpture Park.

Housing is one of the main indicators of the economic condition in a community. Currently, Walnut Hill’s housing stock is in a range of different conditions, as well as many vacant buildings and lots; most of which are scattered throughout the neighborhood. The majority of vacant and deteriorating properties are concentrated in the Southwest Quadrant of the Neighborhood.
To remediate this situation, we want to increase the diversity of housing types and market housing opportunities to incorporate employees that are located in Walnut Hills, as well as those located in adjacent neighborhoods while maintaining the historic architecture of Walnut Hills. This will be accomplished by: increasing owner-occupied housing, marketing the Walnut Hills community as a “Great place to live and start a young family”, increasing housing opportunities in the Southwest quadrant of Walnut Hills and allowing residents to capitalize on incentives and resources provided by the City of Cincinnati. These incentives include opportunities for redevelopment/reutilize opportunities in the neighborhood’s vacant and deteriorating buildings and properties. In addition to the incentives offered, a Network of Civic-Cultural-Green amenities to enhance the existing environment and benefit current residents will be implemented. An art-cultural program called the “Beecher African-American Art Campus” that enhances the social interaction of residents within Walnut Hills as well as outside the neighborhood will be created in connection with the plan to provide civil amenities such as public parks and open spaces.

In conjunction with altering the existing streetscape for traffic flow improvements, the new designs will incorporate a large amount of green space in order to improve the appearance of the Walnut Hills community. The improved streetscape, renovation of low quality lots and the demolition of severely deteriorating homes will allow the open space to be reused. The green space created by the renovation of poor quality lots can contribute to the artist districts and residential infill being proposed. This “total body” approach will allow the residents of Walnut Hills a fresh look on how their neighborhood could look if the plan was slowly implemented throughout all areas of Walnut Hills. In order to properly incorporate a much
newer atmosphere in a historic district, several components of redevelopment will work together. The mixed-use offices and commercial zoning will complement each other in addition to modern high quality homes installed in the Northwest quadrant near the proposed tier 3 commercial district. The neighborhoods will be redesigned to better integrate mixed-use residential developments with proposed civic recreation centers, infill housing, and vacant properties being used as open-space to create meeting places for current residents. Finally, two specific proposed civic centers are the African-American “Beecher Art Campus” and the New-sole Glassworks area. The African-American “Beecher Art Campus” provides housing for local artists and creates studio space for artists to display their works of creativity. The New-sole Glass Works area will create open green space and unique streetscape designs immediately adjacent to the New-sole Glasswork Site. The proposed civic/recreation center, African-American Cultural Business District, the “Beecher Art Campus”, New-sole Glassworks Campus, Cultural gateways and the Artist museum will all independently contribute to the Walnut Hills community. However, if these six major areas of renovation can be connected into a cohesive single unit within the Walnut Hills community, the neighborhood will truly expand and prosper.

According to the Cincinnati Drill Down Study, there are 167 new units under construction within the boundary of Walnut Hills. The City will issue 60.8 rehabilitation permits for every 1000 housing units in the community. This gives an opportunity to both create new housing units, as well as gain permits to start to revitalize historic buildings that have been neglected. There are also a number of resources and incentives provided by the city that could be used to help the neighborhood of Walnut Hills.
While the renovation of Walnut Hills’ residential districts is important, the proposal would fail catastrophically without the renovation of the central business district as well. The central business district will be renovated and invigorated with small independently owned local business and with the recreation of a commercial core at Peebles Corner. This location is ideal for small business opportunities. With the application of a “Productive Storefront” program the area will experience exponential market expansion and safety within the Walnut Hills business district. The city will be very conservative of its historical commercial district due to its history of continuously demolishing historic buildings in order to replace the aging infrastructure with contemporary corporate structures in order to conserve funding. As mentioned within the MICD report, Walnut Hills' small business will capitalize on incentives such as historic rehabilitation and new market tax credits. These incentives will help to alleviate some of the rehabilitation cost of existing historical buildings and structures.
After observing and recording the current atmosphere of the Walnut Hills neighborhood it was apparent the environment needed improvement. Several ideas that were brought forth in an attempt to improve the environment were community parks, recreation centers, improved/updated streetscapes and more green space within the community.

Taking into consideration the 45206 plans, we proposed several community parks that will be placed strategically within the neighborhood to allow for maximum accessibility by the local residents. These “pocket parks” will be placed on several of the abandoned lots currently owned by Walnut Hills and private owners. There are several small “pocket parks” within the western corridor and central business community. These parks serve many purposes including: community gathering space, prettying up the neighborhood, increasing community loyalty, and trying to create a sense of pride within the community.

Green space is an essential part of the redevelopment of the Walnut Hills community. Green space is becoming an integral part of modern architecture and design within urban
environments. The proposals put forth would increase the green space of all areas of Walnut Hills. This includes the areas adjacent to the I-71 corridor, major arteries within the community and a large movement in creating new parks where there were once abandoned lots and decrepit houses.

Community gathering space allows for the residents to congregate in designated areas which can help relieve congestion in busy areas by keeping the residents secluded from heavy vehicular traffic. They also serve the purpose of drawing crowds into areas with commercial businesses and shopping opportunities. This helps local businesses by having their residents within close proximity to available goods. Community parks contribute to increasing the aesthetic qualities of the neighborhood by breaking up the harsh urban setting with a natural environment including native plants and animals. Community parks contribute to a “natural” setting and can attract potential residents which have strong interests in outdoor activities and environmental concerns. As the local residents begin to become more accustomed to the local community parks, loyalty and a sense of “Walnut Hills” will be associated with a naturally beautiful neighborhood. This “homey” feeling will contribute to increased interest within the residential districts and ultimately result in improving the neighborhood of Walnut Hills.

In addition to constructing community parks, several improved streetscape designs will be implemented with the purpose of varying the outdated urban atmosphere of Walnut Hills. The primary purpose of the re-designed streetscapes for Walnut Hills is to increase the aesthetic qualities of the road network while implementing new procedures to enhance pedestrian safety. After getting stakeholder input, we learned that a large goal of theirs was to keep their business district on McMillan a pedestrian area. This included widening several of
the adjacent sidewalks, adding parking lanes as a buffer between vehicular traffic flow and pedestrians. The additional green space also creates a few feet of essential buffer room between the constant flow of vehicles and bystanders. The improved green space of the streetscape design will marginally increase the air quality of Walnut Hills. The added signage within Walnut Hills will increase traffic flow efficiency and help non-residents find local businesses and places of interest.

The I-71 highway design that will be implemented is “Alternative S-2a Two-Way Service Road West of I-71”. We came up with this design after meeting with several stakeholders, specifically the traffic engineers. They informed us that it seemed fairly unrealistic to change Taft and McMillan to two way traffic streets, and then a way to alleviate traffic in the area would be to add an interchange to MLK. Therefore, the S-2a design was selected for its ability to connect Taft, McMillan and Martin Luther King in the most efficient manner. The two-way service road provides the best access and flow of traffic between all three of these major arteries.

While the S-2a plan requires the destruction of several adjacent businesses it allows for the preservation of several residences and businesses farther away from the I-71 corridor along Taft and McMillan. This will make the residents of Walnut Hill’s content as interstate traffic that is passing through the neighborhood can be rerouted off the Martin Luther King exit in order to relieve congestion throughout the neighborhood. The S-2a design also allows for additional green space on both sides of I-71 from McMillan to Martin Luther King. This will increase the “natural” beauty of the I-71 corridor in a very dense urban area. The additional
green space will help with air quality and will create a novelty with landscaping that applies to
the Walnut Hills neighborhood. The connecting roads between Taft and McMillan will allow for
a major increase in traffic flow providing increased volume for local businesses and industries
within Walnut Hills. This will create additional opportunities for businesses within Walnut Hills
and incentives to invest in the Central Business Corridor.

In conjunction with the S-2a highway plan it is assumed the light rail proposal for the
city of Cincinnati will be executed. The light rail system will provide Walnut Hills with a direct
link to downtown Cincinnati and the suburbs to the North. This can increase the revenue of the
local businesses in the immediate vicinity of the station being placed off of Martin Luther King
Avenue. Fortunately the route determined for the light rail is minimally invasive by preserving
Walnut Hill’s historical buildings and provides an excellent link to the mass transportation
system throughout the city of Cincinnati. In a phased plan with the light rail, the streetcar
proposal will be built according to the modified route.

The streetcar will go East down the major artery of McMillan turn North on Gilbert in
order to border the Central Business District then return to the station with the light rail system
on Martin Luther King. This proposal links all 4 major methods of transportation into one area:
Highway, Bus, Rail and Streetcar. The streetcar route was aligned next to the Central Business
Corridor in the attempt to spark growth within the business district and increase accessibility
for the residents. After taking into consideration the input from community representatives
and the city engineers several alterations to current roadway networks was considered.
These alterations include creating a median in the center of Gilbert Avenue from Martin Luther
King south to the entrance of Eden Park, and redesigning McMillan Avenue East of Gilbert to
Victory. This will allow for a more pedestrian friendly atmosphere in our proposed historical central business district. The proposed alterations are included in the illustrated examples area of this report.

**Framework Plan Proposal**

When discussing economic development, we first started by discussing what type of businesses/corporations we would eventually want to bring into Walnut Hills. To do this, we considered the following business model:

![Diagram showing short head and long tail market](image)

The short head of the market includes short term and trendy companies that try to make all their money while they can. The long tail, on the other hand, are companies that make smaller properties over a longer period of time. Most of the time, it turns out that the short head markets are simply not worth it; they require too much upfront cost for such short
periods of return. Therefore, we would like to focus on companies that are structured for long tail markets. We decided to break down our proposed businesses into three different tiers. The first tier includes businesses that create a unique business culture. These businesses should be places that creates a “buzz”, or spawns a sub-culture while establishing a loyal client base. Specifically, these might be pedestrian oriented, independently owned businesses. The second tier is businesses that serve the basic needs of people; quick food, gas, dry cleaning. These are auto-oriented, convenience based businesses that can catch and draw new customers, while also servicing their existing, regular customers. Finally, the third tier includes major regional retailers. These will be high density retail developments that will draw in customers from around the region. Tier 1 businesses will mainly be located in the central business district, on McMillan east of Gilbert; and in our Cultural Shopping District on Lincoln. Many of the tier 2 businesses will be placed near gateways into the community to attract potential customers as they enter the area. These areas will mainly be on McMillan, west of I-71; on the southern part of Gilbert; on McMillan near Victory Parkway; and along Gilbert by MLK. The main locations of our tier 3 companies will be scattered in the central business district; on Gilbert, near the proposed Civic/Recreation center; and in our proposed shopping center on the northwest corner of Martin Luther King and Gilbert.

With our proposed Interstate 71 interchange at Martin Luther King, the site of our shopping center will be at the crossroads of two major commercial arteries. The actual site is a little over 33 acres in size and features outstanding vehicular access to I-71, Martin Luther King, and Gilbert Avenues. Additionally, the site is contextually bordered by a handful of very important communities: Clifton, Corryville, Avondale, Walnut Hills, and Evanston. Hyde Park is
also in a close proximity to the site. The Cincinnati streetcar is planned to travel along Gilbert Avenue and turn west on to Martin Luther King, something which will extend the site access greatly. In addition, the proposed light rail line will travel along the eastern side of Interstate 71, a plan which will also provide outstanding site access.

Currently in the proposed area, there is a neighborhood nestled in between two overpasses and Interstate 71. The existing site is home to a very disconnected and isolated housing district, as well as an abandoned business district, and various industrial sites. The majority of the houses are single-family detached, and there are two sets of row homes. With the exception of a handful of homes, the majority are in very poor condition and possibly abandoned. On the western end of the site, a good portion of the homes will be demolished with the proposed highway alignments. Also, the larger of the two set of row homes will be demolished.

In regards to the infrastructure in the area, the site sits on some challenging topography. We would propose the construction of underground parking facilities, which would also bring the site to an appropriate grade. In the way of utilities, the site is well served by a combined storm sewer, as well as electricity and natural gas.

The development would consist of commercial businesses in the southern part, with a transit station and open space positioned just west of it. Also, there will be office buildings constructed on the western boundary of the development, bordering I-71. In the northern half of the development, there will be a mix of apartment buildings, row homes, and various open spaces.
Economically, there is a call for this type of development, especially considering that the bordering communities have a total spending power in excess of $450 million. Even in Walnut Hills, there is $146.5 million in economic potential in the area with an estimated $125.4 million leaving the community. Being able to keep some of the spending power in the community, as well as draw in consumers from other areas will greatly increase the revenue of Walnut Hills.

We wanted to create or embrace five main cultural amenities in Walnut Hills. These are: civic centers, institutional buildings, historical sites, commercial centers (specifically those with historical architecture), and function service galleries. To incorporate all of these amenities, we focused on several different areas in the community. First, we wanted to embrace the Eden Park Art Gallery in the south and use this as a cultural gateway into the community. Next, we sought to develop the area around the New Sol Glass Studio as an institutional/glassworks campus area. We also want to create a civic or recreation center around the schools, churches, and library in the eastern quadrant, north of Taft. Also, we sought to create an African American Cultural Business District (including the Bistro House) in the area around Lincoln. Next we wanted to add and Art Museum on McMillan, west of I-71. Finally, we focused the most on our African-American “Beecher Art Campus,” located between of I-71 and Gilbert, and south of McMillan.

The African-American “Beecher Art Campus” consists of five blocks of housing located south of E. McMillan Street and west of Gilbert Avenue. The 6.518 acres of land will include row of housings between May and Copelen St, south of the three blocks on McMillan, and three blocks between Wayne and Morgan Streets, immediate to the south. There will also
be a row of housing to the east of these blocks on Copelen St. This project would consist of Artist residencies, Artist’s live-work lofts, parks, and studio /gallery spaces. It will also incorporate the addition of a sculpture park and an Art Museum connection to the campus area with a green network of trees and green spaces. To see the success of this, we have to look at several assumptions of infill benefits, the services that it’ll provide and the concepts.

An example of this type of project is the Houston’s Project Row Houses established in 1993 on a site of 22 abandoned shotgun homes. Project Row Houses is a neighborhood-based arts and cultural organization, with programs that combine arts and cultural education, historic preservation, and community development. Its mission is to create community through the celebration of art and African-American history and culture. Since 1993, Project Row Houses has worked to restore and renovate a neighborhood of shotgun-style houses in Houston’s Third Ward, and transform the area to celebrate African American art and culture. Today, Project Row Houses has three main project areas: the Artists’ Projects, the Young Mother’s Residential Program, and the Education Projects. Project Row Houses pushes artists to consider themselves as vital contributors to visioning, building, and management of community development projects, rather than simply contributors to the aesthetic of the finished product.
After evaluating the central business district on McMillan, we decided to separate the street into two parts, Melrose/Copeland being the dividing line. To the east, we are proposing offices and mixed residential use. The west side of this, however, will be renovated to be a more updated business district with commercial retail. This will also involve making streetscape improvements and building new residential units on the upper floors of commercial stores. An important restoration we would also like would be to renovate the Paramount Building into a theatre.

An additional possible business district we focused on developing was a Black Cultural District/Mini-Neighborhood in the Lincoln and Gilbert area. This would involve embracing the Harriet Beecher Stowe Museum as well as developing/expanding some cultural shops and centers in the neighborhood.

In order to address the housing in the neighborhood, we have decided to create infill housing in several areas, as well as housing improvements in others. Specifically, we are planning to have infill housing and office use in the block from St. James to Gilbert. There will also be infill housing south of McMillan and west of Gilbert. Many of these new developments will be made available to those who may have been displaced because of the proposed shopping center off of Martin Luther King. Much of the space west of Gilbert, between McMillan and Taft, will be turned into office use, in the hope that it will be a campus like atmosphere.
We propose the building up of green spaces, infrastructure, and parks at varying levels -- from green streetscapes to large neighborhood parks, small district parks -- like this at Fulton and Gold streets in New York City -- to a network of backyard green spaces.

We are looking to create environments similar to those such as the active public street of Las Ramblas, in Barcelona, lined for blocks with varying merchants or Washington D.C.’s Eastern Market, with extra outdoor vendors on weekends.
For the neighborhood green infrastructure, we chose to focus on three different aspects. These are neighborhood parks, quadrant parks, and a backyard network. The neighborhood parks will be shared places for the community which will encourage social activity. These will be located in the New-Sol area, as well as in the new athletic park area. The quadrant parks will be small parks in each of the four quadrants that will be intimate parks where kids will be able to play, or people will take their pets out. Finally, the backyard network involves the creation of a private, aesthetically pleasing network of backyards that can also be used for storm water collection.

Environmental Improvements will be made to the streets as well. We will try to create better buffer zones, both between the highway and the neighborhood, and between street traffic and pedestrians. This will be done by enhancing the green space between the interstate and houses. Also, the street network will be enhanced to have medians where possible and improve the aesthetics along sidewalks and streets. This will help to create a coherent streetscape pattern.

By linking the green streets and green areas, we would be creating a green network throughout the city. This will help to achieve the triple bottom line of sustainability, as well as address issues such as noise pollution and storm water collection.

The main transportation changes we are proposing in the area have to do with our choice of highway alignment. We chose to use the S-2a design. This design involves adding a northbound exit ramp and southbound entrance ramp at McMillan/Taft, and a southbound exit
ramp and northbound entrance ramp on Martin Luther King. This design also incorporates a two way service road on the west side of 71 that goes from Taft to MLK. We chose this design because we believe that it will help to connect and ease transportation between McMillan and Taft, as well as ease some of their traffic by providing interstate access at MLK. The access road will also take some of the traffic that Gilbert would normally see, allowing for the proposed changes that we are making to Gilbert. This design also leaves space on the east side of the interstate for the light rail that we are expecting to be constructed there.

The main changes to the street network that we are proposing are focused on the streetscape on both McMillan (west of Gilbert) and along Gilbert. On McMillan, we would like to change the layout of the street from two lanes of through traffic and two lanes of on street parking, to two lanes of through traffic with one lane of on street parking and placing bike lanes on both sides of the street. This will allow for bikers to ride more safely through the area, as well as provide a buffer for the pedestrian movement on the sidewalks. On Gilbert, we would like to restructure the road to have two lanes in each direction and place a median in the center. This median will both provide a buffer to each lane of traffic, as well as allow for plants or trees to improve the streetscape of the road. Also on Gilbert, we will design for the addition of tracks for the street car route that we are proposing. Along with these two roads, we have plans to improve the streetscape of many other areas and streets in the neighborhood.

The biggest bus and rail improvements that we are proposing have to do with our street car and light rail proposals. First, our highway alignment leaves room on the east side of the interstate for the light rail to run along the length of it. The light rail will rapidly move large amounts of people from as far north as the 275 area, to the downtown/ northern Kentucky
area. In Walnut Hills, we will use street cars to connect the light rail riders to the rest of the community, as well as other surrounding areas. Our proposed street car route would be to travel east on McMillan, turn left to go North on Gilbert, and then finally take a left to go west on Martin Luther King. In order to connect the two, we are proposing constructing a hub on the eastern side of 71, just north of MLK. This hub will consist of a stop for the light rail on the lower level. On top of this, at ground level would streetcar and bus access, as well as parking and other amenities. This hub will bring people from all over the greater Cincinnati area into the community. This will also be a positive to bring prospective residents to Walnut Hills.

Light-Rail in Walnut Hills
Washington D.C. Metro

Extensive work on I-71 will allow Cincinnatians to rethink the way they commute. Currently, the Metro bus service is the only form of public transportation available in the city. When the funds are appropriated for the enhancements to the I-71 corridor highway, a great opportunity exists to also acquire property directly east. Following the recommendations within the I-71 Corridor Study, our team would like to see a right-of-way acquisition to allow enough space to construct Light Rail Transit alongside the east of the Interstate. During the upgrades to the roadway itself, sufficient property could be purchased and graded to prepare for rail lines. Also, a complete and through riparian buffer system could be place alongside the highway the reduce sight, sound, and air pollution into the Walnut Hills neighborhood.

Washington D.C. used a similar method of acquiring land, grading, and preparing land adjacent to the Interstate as packaged with roadway improvements. As the rail line was placed, transportation hubs were placed to link to other available transportation methods, thus creating potential for Transit Oriented Development. Our team seeks to use this precedent within our context. Within the I-71 Corridor Study, a major transit hub is placed at the corner of Liberty and Reading Road. A Light-Rail train can maintain efficiency with stops with separation of approximately 1 mile apart.
Approximately 1-mile north of a supposed stop at Liberty and Reading would place the next stop at the apex of Martin Luther King Junior Drive and Stanton Avenue. Following the Washington D.C. case study, we would suggest an underground terminal for the light-rail station. This stop would arguably be the most suited position to locate a transit hub in Walnut Hills. Much of the area is vacant and exists as unused riparian land. This location also has grading that dips immediately north of MLK and remains relatively low for about 200’ north, before inclining again. A Walnut Hills-Uptown transit hub drops perfectly in place with little cost or resistance from the existing topography.

Extensive redevelopment opportunities exist above grade. The site boundaries include the area between I-71 and Gilbert Avenue, north of MLK. MLK is one of the major east-west connectors in Cincinnati, and the site is just less than a mile from the University of Cincinnati and the Uptown Medical center cluster. To connect UC and the Uptown hospitals, our team proposes a Streetcar line that ultimately stops directly above the Light Rail station. The hub could also create a major bus stop for rail passengers and bus riders to transfer from one another. Directly north of such a hub structure, we propose a passive park area—for passengers to wait for the next arrival of the transit mode of choice—and a new commercial development.

A Study, and application, of Atlanta’s Belt-Line
An abandoned freight rail-line in the heart of Atlanta also provides our team a case study to increase the availability of bicycle transportation routes. Within our study area exists fragments of a decommissioned CSX Rail-line. Our team proposes to utilize the existing right-of-way to become a bike and walking trail. Many precedents exist throughout the country, including Cincinnati’s Miami Trail Bike line, and the Belt-Line in Atlanta. The intriguing Belt-Line manifested out of a community organization that pushed to reclaim the land with a bike and walking trail and an adjacent light rail system to connect the inner-city neighborhoods.

Merging the Interstate ramp upgrades with a multi-modal transportation link seems extremely viable with the encouragement of the referenced case studies. Directly east of the Interstate our team proposes a riparian buffer up to 25’ and at least 10’, followed by a light rail line adjacent, another 10’+ riparian buffer, then a bike and walking tail following the CSX right-of-way, with another riparian buffer of at least 25’ before development in the neighborhood.
Our survey of housing and residential areas defined four primary housing districts. Within our plan to connect the Green Infrastructure of the neighborhood, is a plan to place a major park to draw the neighborhood to community functions. The central Walnut Hills Neighborhood Park would is proposed to be located on the former site of Douglas High School. Our plan emphasizes adaptive reuse of the existing building, as reusing a building is certainly the most environmentally sustainable practice, factoring in the energy required for materials and construction. Small-scale renovation is required, however, this would be the opportune time to enhance the natural systems around the community center to develop a large-scale neighborhood park, which is to stretch down two blocks to the newly constructed Douglas School.

Streetscape Requirements

Along the major arterial routes—Walnut Hills, MLK, Gilbert, McMillan, W. H. Taft, and Victory Parkway, and I-71—an extensive build-up of street vegetation is proposed. Physically, introducing some form of forestry will continue green infrastructure along major pathways to connect individual parks, open spaces, and vacated lots. Subconsciously, the scheme of vegetation shall promote the idea that this street-way is a prominent path in the context of this neighborhood that links all of the major functions and uses of the community. Most often, these routes are to include green softscaped medians where possible and vegetation on either side of the roadway. Gateways are also created with such softscaping along these major arterials, as they mark all entrances and exits to the neighborhood.

Quadrant Parks

Each of the four residential districts is proposed to contain a block park, to provide a localized passive and semi-active space to be termed a “quadrant park.” Each park is placed near the geographic center of each residential district. These spaces would be programmed with passive uses to allow a resting spot and socializing grounds that residents within the given quadrant may visit day-to-day. Yet, semi-active uses may arise in such a quadrant park, potentially a block-party, or a family gathering.

Private Riparian Space

Greenscapes on privately owned land might provide the lowest amounts of contiguous vegetated space, however, when stringed together they form another important layer in our green infrastructure. In a case study, a not-for-profit company established natural settings in unused space in the private park yards of urban residents. The privately owners form an agreement to maintain the softscape for a number of years, and only absorb those resulting costs. The enhancements are to be enjoyed by native wildlife, to continue a diverse vegetated area, and to provide a scenic retreat to be enjoyed by abutting neighbors cooperatively.
Illustrative Examples