COLEMAIN AVENUE LIVE-WORK DISTRICT
Camp Washington
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Goals

Vision Statement
A district of live-work, mixed-use properties with storefront space for artisans, creative professionals, and independent proprietors that serves as both neighborhood center and visitor destination. District is anchored by a niche supermarket and repurposed products center.

The Colerain Avenue Live-Work District relates to the goals of the Camp Washington Framework Plan as described below. For a complete list of goals and strategies pertaining to the framework plan, see the Camp Washington Framework Plan handout.

Sustainable industry goal 1: A healthy industrial job base enhanced with new sustainable industries and research facilities that offer white and blue collar employment opportunities.
The Colerain Avenue Live-Work District complements fellow Niehoff Studio student John Wischmeyer’s project Camp Washington Industry-Institution Tech Village project with a proposed repurposed products center at 2841-49 Colerain Avenue.

Neighborhood business district goal 1: An enhanced neighborhood business district that provides a wider range of products and services.
The Colerain Avenue Live-Work District is born directly from strategy 1 in the neighborhood business district revitalization category from the Camp Washington Framework Plan: “Encourage greater utilization of existing storefronts along Colerain Ave and encourage new infill mixed-use development where there exist holes in the NBD street wall.” This will manifest as a live-work district of artisans, creative professionals, and independent proprietors on Colerain Avenue between Marshall Avenue and Hopple Street. The proposal for this district includes attracting a niche supermarket into the former Kroger store at 2828 Colerain Avenue and a repurposed goods center at 2841-49 Colerain Avenue.

Housing goal 1: An enhanced, expanded, and diversified housing stock.
The Colerain Avenue Live-Work District plans for the rehabilitation of a modest number of residential units above target storefronts in mixed use buildings along Colerain Avenue. Otherwise, this goal from the Camp Washington Framework Plan is more relevant to two projects by other Niehoff Studio students: Camp Washington Industry-Institution Tech Village by John Wischmeyer and the political science research report by Joe Wilkens. The tech village proposal includes substantial residential infill and adaptive re-use projects. Joe Wilkens’s project provides an analysis of housing issues in the neighborhood and how to encourage housing revitalization.
Transportation goal 1: More frequent and attractive transit connections to and from Uptown, downtown, and other parts of the metropolitan area. This goal is most relevant to Zach Fein and Kelly Hogg’s proposal for a transit-oriented development at the Cincinnati Public Works site at Colerain Avenue and Monmouth Street: the Camp Washington Connector.

Transportation goal 2: A more intuitive and non-intrusive connection between Hopple Street and Spring Grove Avenue. We believe this goal is satisfactorily met by the proposal for a ramp connection between the Hopple Street Viaduct and Spring Grove Avenue, as proposed by Urban Design Associates in their Revive I-75 Analysis. This ramp connection is referenced in the framework plan.

Economic Development
New business along Colerain Avenue will increase sales tax revenue and the availability of jobs. This is particularly the case for the district’s anchor projects, the niche supermarket and repurposed products center, but is also for the small-scale artisans, creative professionals, and independent proprietors. The proposed building rehabilitations and infill projects will increase property tax revenue.

Neighborhood Redevelopment
The Colerain Avenue Live-Work District focuses on rehabilitation of mixed-use properties and storefronts as well as new infill construction. It is expected that new uses in vacant and underutilized properties will generate enhanced pedestrian street activity.

Transportation and Other Infrastructure
Transportation is a major component of the Camp Washington Framework Plan, but not the focus of the Colerain Avenue Live-Work District proposal. However, fellow Niehoff Studio student Emily Hasley’s A Place for Public Space project outlines streetscape improvement design and Xijia Wang’s Complete Street of Camp Washington Tech Village project outlines a strategy for street network improvements that account for environmental sustainability and multi-modal usage.

Social Sustainability
The project proposal encourages a more vibrant business district, including a grocery store to tie neighborhood residents together and keep them in the neighborhood. The project also broadens the social diversity of the neighborhood by growing Colerain Avenue’s budding community of theatre and arts professionals.
Environmental Sustainability

The repurposed products center speaks to ideas presented by Arup Director for Global Planning Peter Head in his lecture at DAAP on February 25, 2010: Retrofitting Cities for the Ecological Age. The other anchor project in the district, the niche supermarket, will allow more Camp Washington residents to fulfill their grocery needs without using an automobile. The smaller rehabilitation projects harness the embodied energy of the existing building that would be lost through demolition (Moe, 2008). Re-use of existing structures and materials is a priority of the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification program (U.S. Green Building Council, 2010). New infill projects would be encouraged to follow sustainable principles; at minimum they will follow the compact spatial and mixed land use pattern of Camp Washington, which are also priorities of LEED certification.

Economic Sustainability

Though further economic feasibility study needed, the proposed niche supermarket is expected to occupy a sustainable and growing market niche due to its compact size. The hypothesis held by Camp Washington Community Board community organizer Joe Gorman is that the Kroger supermarket that occupied this space until 2004 was popular among the older segment of the population, which is growing as the baby boomer generation ages.

Owner-occupied live-work properties in the proposed district are less likely than rented storefronts to go vacant in the future as occupants are more invested in their spaces, the overhead of which will decrease as a proportion to the cost of living, as time passes. Furthermore, new artisan and creative professional storefront tenants/owner-occupants are less dependent on a critical mass of customer foot traffic in the neighborhood to support their ventures. They would nevertheless benefit from the boost of new residents proposed by John Wischmeyer’s Camp Washington Industry-
Institution Tech Village and Joe Wilkens’s political science research report.

**Project Description**

The Colerain Avenue Live-Work District proposal is anchored by two major interventions, which are complemented by more incremental investments in rehabilitation and new infill construction along Colerain Avenue between Marshall Avenue and Hopple Street.

**Repurposed Products Center**

The first anchoring intervention is the repurposed products center, which is inspired by ideas presented by Arup Director for Global Planning Peter Head in his lecture at DAAP on February 25, 2010: Retrofitting Cities for the Ecological Age. This center would be a facility where “raw” materials – refuse – would be brought into the center, transformed into new products utilizing minimal processing, and either shipped to customers outside the area, or sold locally. ReCORK, a company that transforms used wine corks into soles for sandals, is an example of this emerging sector (ReCORK, 2010). Proximity to the reconfigured I-75 Hopple Street exchange and the Queensgate rail yard would facilitate this transfer of materials and goods. It is expected that the companies using the facility would focus on wholesale distribution and/or mail order, but that they would use their storefronts as showrooms for occasional walk-in business.

The target property is currently occupied by Direct Express courier service, whose facility makes poor use of its historic façade along Colerain Avenue. The repurposed products center proposal involves renovating the façade to uncover the storefront spaces currently bricked over between the historic cast iron pilasters. Parking and loading dock are located on the sides and back of the building.

**Niche Supermarket**

The second anchoring intervention is a niche supermarket at 2828 Colerain Avenue. The building is roughly 12,000 square feet, making it an optimal site for a small supermarket with a niche customer base that prefers smaller supermarkets. The site
was originally developed as the Camp Washington Kroger, which closed in 2004. The property is still configured to function as a supermarket and would need minimal renovation to accommodate this function. The current occupant is Small Smiles Dental Clinic.

Artisans, Creative Professionals, and Independent Proprietors

The first strategy to this component of the project is to attract artisans, creative professionals, and independent proprietors to occupy currently vacant buildings in the district as owner-occupied live-work properties, using storefronts for retail, workshop, and/or studio space, with living quarters above. 2860, 2861, and 2873 Colerain Avenue are all good candidates for this scenario given that they are all 2-2.5 stories of moderate size (average 1358 square foot footprint). In fact, 2873 Colerain Avenue was until 2007 the home and office of Becky Bredwell of the Design Resource Center until Ms. Bredwell died that year.

The second strategy under this heading involves attracting new tenants to non-owner-occupied storefront buildings and rehabilitating those storefronts as necessary. 2869-71 and 2945 Colerain Avenue are available and ready for tenant occupation. 2801, 2805, 2819-21, 2900-02 Colerain Avenue are vacant, but may need rehabilitation before they are ready for tenant occupation. 2806, 2815, 2820, 2838, 2867, 2904, 2908, 2912-14 Colerain Avenue are being used for residential (considered an under-utilization of storefront space in the district) and would be targets for new commercial tenants upon vacation by current residential tenants. An example of non-residential underutilization includes 2911 Colerain Avenue, which is a former theater currently occupied by Three Rivers Sheet Metal.
The third strategy under this heading is infill construction where there exist vacant lots along Colerain Avenue in the district. There are two types of vacant land in the district: single lots of less than 4500 square feet that are sandwiched between other storefront buildings and contiguous lots of either single or multiple owners that may be assembled for larger projects. In the first category are 2803, 2811, 2814, 2870, and 2910 Colerain Avenue which are all optimal for infill buildings of in-kind dimensions and scale. 2846-56, 2862-64, and 2854-58 are all available for either smaller in-kind projects or larger projects.

**Synergy**

The proposed anchoring developments will serve as a catalyst for the smaller, more incremental investments to be geared toward artisans, creative professionals, and independent proprietors. Moreover, the increased attention and traffic may encourage existing artisans and part-time storefront proprietors to make their storefront activities more visible and their spaces more open more often. Conversely, those incremental investments and blossoming storefront uses will bring more residents and visitors to Colerain Avenue, strengthening the anchoring developments in turn. Finally, as the Colerain Avenue Live-Work District strengthens economically, owners of live-work properties and less-contributing storefront tenants may feel the economic push to move their operations to upper-floor spaces, freeing up valuable storefronts for more neighborhood-serving businesses.

**Rationale**

**Responding to Existing Conditions and Stakeholder Input**

The budding community of arts and theatre professionals along Colerain Avenue present social opportunity for the neighborhood to grow into a thriving district as described above. The Colerain Avenue Live-Work District seeks to harness their co-operation in revitalization efforts and rely on their word-of-mouth promotion potential to market the district. Examples of owner-occupant theatre professionals, artists, and artisans along Colerain Avenue include Jonn Schenz, owner-operator of Schenz Theatrical; Duke and Laura, set designers and owner-operators of White Sparrow thrift shop and gallery; Chris
Cain, owner-operator of Chris Cain Furniture, and Robert J. Morris, owner-operator of Dicere Gallery. Examples of theatre professionals renting storefronts include Dana Hamblen, costume designer and owner-operator of Chicken Lays an Egg fashion gallery and Stacey Vest, owner-operator of Sweet Hayseed Wearable Wonders (art wigs and accessories).

The vacant storefronts, buildings, and land along Colerain Avenue present physical opportunity for rehabilitation and new infill construction. The most significant owner of vacant buildings and otherwise occupied buildings with vacant storefront space is Middle Earth Properties, which is currently liquidating all of their properties and Camp Washington, save Machine Flats. Those properties are either currently on the market or tied up in foreclosures or lawsuits (Gorman, J. personal interview, February 22, 2010). The second-most significant owner of vacant buildings in the district is Roy Orling of Orling Real Estate. His properties have been cited by CWCB as problem properties in the past and are currently vacant. The most significant owner of vacant land in the district is Larry Rogers, doing business as Camp Washington Properties. Rogers assembled the vacant lots at 2852-56 and 2864 Colerain Avenue in anticipation of reselling to Osborne Coinage. That deal never materialized and Rogers may be motivated to sell his properties (Gorman, J. personal interview, February 22, 2010).
A basic analysis of the dynamics surrounding the 2004 closure of the Camp Washington closure provides a rationale for attracting a new niche supermarket into its former home. Kroger’s practices make it clear that their corporate business plan has moved beyond smaller stores like the Camp Washington location, which is only 12,000 square feet. Their current efforts focus on stores of at least 100,000 square feet and equipped with gasoline retail pumps. CWCB organizer Joe Gorman’s hypothesis is that the location can do well with a niche market attracted to smaller supermarkets. This hypothesis is supported by the addresses of 191 former customers who signed a petition in 2004 to keep the store open. Spatially juxtaposing the locations of their homes with the locations of other Kroger and IGA supermarkets in the area suggest that many of those customers were passing up larger supermarkets to patronize the smaller Camp Washington location. Moreover, the 2007 Cincinnati Neighborhood Market DrillDown study cites an unmet demand for groceries of $13 million annually in the neighborhoods most populated by former Camp Washington Kroger customers (p. 18, 69, 87, & 96). These results invite a more in-depth market analysis to explore the economic viability of a niche market in Camp Washington. Moreover, news regarding the site’s current occupant, Small Smiles Dental Clinic, suggests that they may be downsizing, which would prompt CWCB to develop a strategy for finding a new occupant for the property. Small Smiles is currently under federal investigation and subject to a multitude of lawsuits nationally for malpractice (American Broadcasting Company, 2010 & CBS, 2010).

**Responding to Proposed Light Rail and I-75 Changes**

The redesign of the I-75 Hopple Street interchange makes Camp Washington more accessible to motorists who will be attracted to the Colerain Avenue Live-Work District as a destination. The planned freeway improvements also include a light rail alignment. The Camp Washington Framework Plan and the Camp Washington Connector project by fellow Niehoff Studio students Kelly Hogg and Zach Fein offer two alternative concepts for how this alignment may interact with Camp Washington. The framework plan’s proposal would give the live-work district convenient access by putting a subway stop at Hopple Street and Colerain Avenue - at the north end of the live-work district.

**Responding to City Wide Plans**

The proposed repurposed products center in the Colerain Avenue Live-Work District and the tech village proposed by fellow Niehoff Studio student John Wischmeyer for the northern end of Camp Washington fulfill the GO Cincinnati report’s plan for an “eco-industrial park” in the lower Mill Creek Valley neighborhoods (p. 53). The student proposals, however, stray from the report by proposing pedestrian-friendly environments as opposed to the “drivable sub-urban” called for in the report (p. 53).

The 2007 Cincinnati Neighborhood Market DrillDown study cites an unmet demand for groceries of $13 million in the neighborhoods most populated by former Camp Washington Kroger customers (p. 18, 69, 87, & 96). These neighborhoods are Camp Washington, North and South Fairmount, South Cumminsville, and the West End. Camp Washington accounts for $1.4 million of this total (p. 18). Moreover, the study contends
that Camp Washington is economically capable of sustaining 4,217 square feet grocery retail by itself (p. 33), which does not account for the niche visitor market referred to above or the employees who work in Camp Washington, which, according to the Camp Washington Industrial Area Plan, is the city’s second-largest employment center (p. 1).

**Responding to the 2009 Camp Washington Industrial Area Plan**

The 2009 Camp Washington Industrial Area Plan’s priority areas cover the heavily industrial segment of northern Camp Washington and do not directly affect the Colerain Avenue Live-Work District. Regardless, this proposal meets three of the plan’s goals. The first goal is to return vacant, contaminated, or underutilized land to productive use. The second goal is to enhance overall quality of life in the community. The third goal is to attract new businesses and foster the expansion of existing businesses in order to increase the availability of jobs and increase the tax base.

**Implementation/Funding Strategies**

The overarching strategy to implementation of the Colerain Avenue Live-Work District is the National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street Program four-point approach. The first is organization, which would rely on a program director from the Camp Washington Community Board overseeing a governing board and standing committee of volunteers from the business and residential community within and near the district. The second point is promotion, which, as discussed earlier, would market to artisans, creative professionals, and independent proprietors and would harness the power of word of mouth from the existing theatre and arts community in the district. The third is design, which includes façade rehabilitations as well as streetscape improvements designed by fellow Niehoff Studio student Emily Hasley in her project A Place for Public Space. The fourth is economic restructuring to meet current economic trends toward sustainable industry and the creative service economy. Ongoing management of the district would be handled by a new business improvement district (BID) formed as a partnership between the newer businesses in the district as well as the more long-standing businesses closer to Hopple Street. Members of the BID would pay regular fees to cover management and maintenance costs above and beyond those provided by the city and CWCB.

The Phasing strategy is as follows:

1. Implement niche market and repurposed goods center to establish a southern anchor to match Hopple Street as northern anchor
2. Rehabilitation and infill Marshall Avenue to Bader Street
3. Rehabilitation and infill Bader Street to Hopple Street

The CWCB may use nuisance abatement lawsuits under the state of Ohio’s receivership law to effect one of three results in regards to neglected vacant properties: 1) convince property owners to take care of their properties and make them productive; 2) convince property owners to sell their properties to buyers willing to maintain them; or 3) take the properties through the entire receivership process, at which point they will be awarded to
CWCB. The CWCB has a record of success using nuisance abatement lawsuits in Camp Washington (Camp Washington Community Board [CWCB], 2009). Targets for this procedure include 2860, 2861, and 1900 Colerain Avenue.

A tool available to CWCB for passing properties to moderate income property owners is their credit enhancement program. This program is ideal for potential low-capital artisan and independent proprietorship live-work properties in the district. In this process, CWCB co-signs the mortgage and is removed from said mortgage after 3-5 years of steady payments. CWCB has a successful history of using this tool to make homeownership available to many long-standing Camp Washington renters (CWCB, 2009) and under the current proposal it may also be used for mixed use properties.

To fund storefront rehabilitations, façade improvements, and other non-residential repairs to the mixed use buildings in the district, the neighborhood may lobby the city to implement a Small Business Investment Fund (SBIF) tax increment financing (TIF) district in Camp Washington. This model has been pioneered in Chicago (Weber & Goddeeria, 2007) and may prove a valuable tool for harnessing locally generated tax increments from modest investments. Instead of floating a bond as is usually the case with traditional TIF dealing with mega-developments, the SBIF model relies on smaller loans from local banks to front-load the fund. If no local bank is willing to participate, CWCB may need to enter a “CRA agreement” with a local bank (Schwartz, 2006, p. 243). The TIF funds are given as grants to small business owners to make needed improvements and repairs. As property values in the district increase as a result of the rehabilitations, the tax increment is used to pay back the bank loan. In Chicago, businesses must claim less than $1.5 million in annual sales and must not be classified as a fast food or sexually-oriented business to be eligible for SBIF TIF subsidy.

Resident stock ownership is one of PolicyLink’s resident ownership mechanisms (ROM) and may be useful in acquiring the future home of the niche market. Resident stock ownership involves selling shares of a CDC-initiated business venture to local community members. In this application, CWCB would be instrumental in acquiring the former Kroger store property and organizing the shareholding entity. CWCB would need to use a community-oriented planning process to decide upon shareholder eligibility requirements. Requirements may include maintaining primary residence within Camp Washington and adjacent neighborhoods and/or maximum income level. It would also need to be determined how transferable a share will be once it is initially purchased by a community member. There may be geographic or income requirements associated with transfer of shares as well.

The planning process would also need to designate the legal structure of the shareholding entity. Residents may decide on a limited liability corporation (LLC) model or real estate investment trust (REIT). Once shares have been sold, shareholders must decide upon a balance between short-term returns on their investment versus long-term benefits associated with re-investment of initial profits. Projecting the venture twenty years into the future will help shareholders with this visualization. The CWCB would also need to account for the costs of this planning and implementation process that go above and
beyond their normal operating costs. These costs may need to be met with additional city, state, and federal grants. This model has never been fully implemented, so Camp Washington may enjoy the notoriety of being the first. However, there are risks involved and those risks must be made clear to resident shareholders.

There are at least three tax incentive programs that would be available to rehabilitation and new infill construction projects within the district. The New Markets Tax Credit provides incentives to banks and investors to offer low-interest financing in designated areas and these credits are worth as much as 39% of the loan over 7 years. This tax credit was utilized by Middle Earth Properties in their Machine Flats project (Gorman, J. personal interview, February 22, 2010). There are also federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives administered by the National Park Service and the Internal Revenue Service in co-operation with the Ohio State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). To be eligible, the property must either be listed individually in National Register of historic Places or be designated as a contributing building within an historic district. Furthermore, the rehabilitation must adhere to the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation (a private consultant would do this work and submit the application to the SHPO). This program offers an income tax credit equal to 20% of cost of rehabilitation. The state of Ohio has its own Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit, which has the same eligibility requirements, plus the developer must prove that the rehabilitation project would not occur without the subsidy. This tax credit is equal to 25% of cost of rehabilitation. To use either of these historic preservation tax incentives, it would be necessary to nominate structures along Colerain to the National Register or to designate a new historic district. Machine Flats received the federal tax credit, so the precedent exists on Colerain Avenue in the neighborhood (Gorman, J. personal interview, February 22, 2010).

**Precedent Studies**

The first of two precedent studies for the Colerain Avenue Live-Work District is the East Market Street District in Louisville, Kentucky. The district spans multiple neighborhoods along Market Street between downtown on the west and Highlands neighborhood on the east. Relatively sudden and high-profile investment has focused on the district in the last two years, drawing attention. All the investments have been either made or attracted by wealthy New York City investors Gill and Augusta Holland (Howard, 2008). An investor group headed by the Hollands purchased ten buildings in the district at once and has been phasing their redevelopments by block (Boyd, 2008). When the Hollands started new infill construction on their vacant properties, they applied for and expect to receive New Markets Tax Credits (Boyd, 2009). The centerpiece of the Hollands’ redevelopment is the “Green Building,” which is a simple 15,000 square foot three floor traditional main street mixed use building that has been rehabilitated to house creative business office space and a storefront restaurant (The Green Building, 2010). The building is marketed as a green attraction with its “vertical garden” in the rear and expected LEED platinum certification (The Green Building, 2010).
The East Market Street District is an example of the power of the free market to make massive private investments in economically-depressed areas. It is also an example of a drastic turnover and consolidation in ownership and control of a neighborhood and in that sense does not serve as a model to emulate in Camp Washington. Nevertheless, the East Market Street District demonstrates the importance of an anchor development to the marketability and attraction of a district-level revitalization effort.

The Fruitvale Neighborhood in Oakland, CA, conversely, is an example of an intentionally equitable commercial stabilization project (PolicyLink, 2010). The neighborhood is characterized in part by its Hispanic population. Until stabilization efforts in the 1990s, Fruitvale had suffered from disinvestment similar to Colerain Avenue in Camp Washington. The stabilization effort was headed by a Neighborhood Main Street Initiative that manifested as a partnership between Local Initiatives Support Coalition and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It involved coordinating matching grants as reimbursement to small merchants and property owners for façade improvements. The initiative also organized what became an annual Dia De Los Muertos festival to bring new customers into the neighborhood. Fruitvale serves as an example of how small grants to small business and property owners can be utilized to make a significant impact as part of a greater coordinated revitalization effort. The proposal in Camp Washington would utilize TIF funds from SBIF (see above). It also shows how stabilization, as distinct from gentrification, can be achieved in a neighborhood business district without displacement.

**End Notes**

All square footage figures for buildings and parcels taken from the website of Hamilton County Auditor Dusty Rhodes. The petition to keep the Camp Washington Kroger open was provided by CWCB community organizer Joe Gorman.

**Bibliography**


