NORTHSIDE TRANSIT PARK
Northside
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Goal(s)
The goals of my project were:

1. To create an efficient area for those using the new transit hub.
2. To create a sustainable development that incorporates many sustainable elements.
3. To improve connectivity between Northside, South Cumminsville, and Cincinnati State.
4. To create a symbol for the neighborhood and be a catalyst for development.

In the previous Northside Framework project, there was a proposal to add a transit hub in a location along Spring Grove Avenue. That transit hub contained three stops on each side of the street for buses to pull off of the street for passengers to load and unload. Also incorporated in their proposal were bus shelters that could be used as a canvas for public art. When Cody Meyer and I further reviewed this board we kept the same idea of this transit hub however we moved it to a new location under the viaduct, which I later carried out in this final project.

This project addresses economic development because it will be a central transit hub for the areas around Northside including South Cumminsville and Cincinnati State. Being the central transit hub for these locations means it will bring the residents from these areas into Northside bringing business to the neighborhood. My project addresses neighborhood redevelopment because it is taking a vacant space used as storage and converting it into a symbol for the neighborhood and a destination for some. As far as environment improvements go, the site for this location is going to be very sustainable including elements such as: permeable pavements, bioswales, storm-water run off, a retention pond, among others. This transit hub will improve the transportation efficiency within the neighborhood and provide an opportunity to improve the streetscape along the surrounding roads. This proposal also includes an addition of a twelve-foot lane hanging off of the west side of the viaduct.

As far as economic and environmental sustainability is concerned, the project area is going to be focused on sustainability, incorporating many elements that will have limited maintenance eliminating these costs in the future. This project is socially sustainable because Northside is currently the second largest transit hub in the metro
system so there is the rider base in this area. There are also train tracks on the other side of the Mill Creek so this hub can easily be connected to those in the future if some sort of light rail system is implemented.

**Project Description**

Northside is a vibrant neighborhood that has a lot of good aspects but also has the potential to grow in many different areas. One of the main areas where Northside has the potential to grow is with the transit system in the neighborhood. As stated in the goals, Northside is the second largest transit hub in the City of Cincinnati. There is eight bus lines that run through the area: 15X, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 27, and 39 (Go Metro). The main problem with the transit lines in this neighborhood is that there are three main locations for bus stops. These bus lines do not stop in the same locations, which make it very inconvenient for the riders who have to transfer buses or go on a different route. The main location where the buses stop now is at Knowlton’s corner, which is at the corner of Hoffner and Hamilton. The buses that stop around this location are: 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 27, and 39. With this problem in mind, the Northside Community Council partnered with Metro to study the feasibility of two locations where a potential transit hub could be located, according to Tim Jeckering, President of the Northside Community Council (I could not find these studies to include). The locations were the American Can Building and under the viaduct by William P Dooley Bypass, Spring Grove Avenue, and Hamilton Avenue. The study found that the best location would be underneath the viaduct. According to Tim, Metro stated that they supported this location because it was all right turns for the buses, they would not have to add a new traffic light, and it would be the location where the least amount of time would be added to each stop.

With this in mind, I chose this as my location since Metro and the Northside Community Council, which could help with potential funding, supported it. The site itself for the project will be about 3.282 acres which currently only has one building on site that would have to be compromised for the project. It is a City of Cincinnati Health Department building located on the west side of the development. The building is 5,367 square feet and with the demolition of this building, it will bring about the opportunity to build a larger building, which according to Tim is what they would like to do. With their compliance on the demolition of their building, they would be allotted a certain footprint in the new development of about 7,500 square feet. The location itself is almost entirely owned by the City of Cincinnati, with a slight portion on the southwest side owned by a private owner, Lawrence Kelly. The portion that is owned by Kelly is simply an asphalt area that currently is used as parking for tractor-trailers.

Since Metro and the Northside Community Council have already approved this site, they will not have to be convinced that this is a good location for this project. Therefore, it is only about receiving funding and implementation, which will be discussed later. As far as design goes, this site is in a perfect location to be a symbol of sustainability for the neighborhood. It is located right next to the Mill Creek and is currently mostly vacant land so there would be minimal demolition and disruption of the current land.
With all the buses coming through a central location, it will be very efficient and convenient for the riders who currently have to travel to different locations to transfer buses. As well as bringing all the buses to come through one location, there will also be a retail development and shelter for added convenience to the riders. Following the idea of creating an efficient site for the riders, it will also be sustainable on many different levels. First, there will be lots of green space located throughout the development incorporating bioswales and storm water management techniques. The roads and parking lots will also be constructed out of permeable pavers, which will allow grass to go in between the bricks. I would also recommend that native plants be used in the landscaping because although they would be an initial higher cost they require minimal to no landscaping so over time that would save costs. Also, the new buildings that are developed on site would be recommended to incorporate sustainable aspects in them and seek LEED certification. These buildings would be recommended to be designed in order to incorporate lower operating costs and increase asset value, reduce waste sent to landfills, conserve energy and water, be healthier and safer for occupants, reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions, and qualify for tax rebates, zoning allowances and other incentives (USGBC).

Another element of the project is the addition to the viaduct, which would be a 12-foot lane. Within this lane, there would be a six-foot pedestrian path and two three-foot bike paths. The current viaduct layout has a four-foot sidewalk, which would be shifted to turn into a landscaped median. The purpose of this addition is to transform the viaduct into a bridge that pedestrians can use without fearing their safety and to improve the connectivity between Cincinnati State College and Northside. The proposed addition would have a short wall between the automobile travel lanes and the pedestrian/bike path. The purpose of this wall is to serve as protection for the cyclists and pedestrians from the automobiles. Also, the path will be tripled in size from what it currently is in order to allow easier travel between the two stated areas. With the safer feeling, wider space, and newly landscaped viaduct, it will be a more attractive and appealing connection bringing about more traffic between the areas.

Overall, this new transit hub and viaduct addition would be a symbol of change for the neighborhood. It would show the movement towards green infrastructure, reliable public transit, and improved connectivity between different neighborhoods. The hub could be utilized among not only the residents of Northside, but also South Cumminssville, students and faculty at Cincinnati State and many others looking for a central location of a transit hub. This development would be a catalyst for development along the business district in Northside and would increase property values near the transit hub, which could filter into South Cumminssville. With the backing from Metro and the Northside Community Council, this is an achievable project.

**Rationale**

As far as what the land is currently used for, on the east side it is used as storage space by the City of Cincinnati for all sorts of different things from a salt truck to pallets of stone. On the west side, it is the Cincinnati Health Department building, which is the 5,367 square foot building with 35 parking spots and surrounded by trees in the far corner (shown below).
This land is located around and under the viaduct, which has not made it a desirable location for development however, it works out to be a great location for this development.

Stakeholder input is where I generated a lot of my ideas from for this project. My community member that attended our studios and critiques was Tim Jeckering, who is the President of the Northside Community Council. Tim first gave me input when I was revising the previous studios framework plan of Northside and South Cumminsville. Tim was talking with Cody and I, and he told us that the two main projects he saw being accomplished in Northside were a wetland park at the new I-74 exit and a new transit hub at my location. With his input, Cody and I each chose to tackle these projects individually. At another meeting with Tim, I was discussing with him the demolition of the current Cincinnati Health Department Building and he informed that the Northside Community Council had also recommended this. The only stipulation was that they would be allotted spaced on the new development for a new building. I was unsure what to do with that building so that was a great piece of advice for me moving forward.

The proposed I-71 or I-75 changes did not play much of a role in my project however, the future changes of I-74 did. The exit on I-74 in Northside is being relocated to the corner of Blue Rock and Beekman Street, which will make Blue Rock the main street off of I-74 into Northside. Blue Rock is located near this transit hub, so potentially
this new transit hub could be utilized by persons outside of Northside traveling on I-74 who need to take the bus to another location but do not want to drive there.

This new proposal responds to citywide plans by providing easier and more efficient access to the bus lines traveling around this area. Northside is an area that is typically overlooked by citywide plans as well as neighborhood plans, which is seen by it not being included in the Uptown Transportation Plan. However, there are a lot of projects that include Burnett Woods. These projects are the Burnett Ave. redevelopment plan, the Uptown Parks Plan, and the Uptown Strategic Plan. These plans are the closest relating plans to the neighborhood of Northside and they focus on renovation and redevelopment near Burnett Woods. My proposed project is for a transit park development, which has similar aspects to the elements in Burnett woods such as a large pond that is a little bigger than the one proposed in my development. The City Light Rail plan has two rail lines that line I-74 and one that lines I-75, which are in close proximity to the new transit hub and could easily be incorporated into the development in a future phase. The proposed Cincinnati streetcar would also run right through Northside and would be incorporated into the development when the streetcar route is finalized.

**Implementation/Funding Strategies**

In order to achieve the overall goal of creating a sustainable and efficient transit stop for the riders, the project must be carried out in a specific order. A general order is as follows: 1 – obtain the land from the current owners, 2 – arrange funding for the project, 3 – clear the land and demolition of the Cincinnati Health Department building, 4 – layout the new road, curbs, and sidewalks, 5 – begin construction on new buildings and retention pond, 6 – add final elements and landscape site. This is a simple/theoretical look at the plan for implementation with this project.

Metro is a non-profit public service, which is maintained and operated by the Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA). About 2/3 of the money to operate Metro comes from local, state and federal tax revenue and about 1/3 comes from fares paid by the riders (Go Metro). Metro also has a contract with the City of Cincinnati under which the City of Cincinnati collects 3/10 of 1% of the earnings tax that is paid for by everyone in the city (Go Metro). What this means is that the City of Cincinnati has a stake in Metro and potentially is an option to seek funding since they are making a profit off of Metro. Metro does not receive any other local taxes. Metro runs on a $94.5 million budget a year and is primarily funded by Cincinnati’s city earnings tax, secondly by fares, and third by federal sources (Go Metro).

Although Metro is supporter of this new location for the transit hub, they do not have the funds to back this sort of project. The money for this project would need to come from the City and the neighborhood of Northside. However, Congressman Steve Driehaus requested $2.5 million to be allotted for a Northside Transit Center in his Transportation Authorization bill (Transportation). What this means is that the funding would be for the design and construction of the Northside Transit Center for the Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (Transportation). What this shows is that there is an interest out there in developing a transit hub in Northside and funds are being allotted for this development.
The American Can Building in Northside is being developed by Bloomfield, Schon, and Partners and they are using a $500,000 loan from the city and $750,000 environmental grant from the state to finance what they have done so far and city officials recently proposed a $1.6 million loan using Community Development Block Grants from the stimulus funding (Stimulus). They are also using New Markets Tax Credits equity and Private equity to fund the project (Stimulus). The Ohio Department of Transportation is not using any of their $105 million in total spending on the neighborhood of Northside (Stimulus). This project could be used as a source of where to get funding, i.e. Community Development Block Grants, and also could be used to show that there are projects and new things coming to this neighborhood.

**Precedent Studies (if applicable)**

Precedents that were used for this project were not necessarily research based but used in order to represent the idea of my vision for the development.

The picture shown below is from Los Angeles, California and shows their Union Station. This station used art as a streetscape, incorporates permeable pavers into the road, and loops the buses around a narrow area. These are all aspects, which I would like to see in my proposed development.

The next image comes from Cleveland, Ohio and is a proposal by GreenCityBlueLake to the Ohio Department of Transportation. Their idea behind this
concept was to incorporate a bike path on one of the innerbelt bridges that incorporates safety and wonderful views. These also are aspects that I would like to see brought about by an additional lane added to the viaduct.

![Diagram of bike path and innerbelt bridge](image1.jpg)

The last image is a fantastic representation of a parking lot that is very hidden. There are trees surrounding the parking lot and permeable pavers used which are what I would like to see in my development. This picture comes from Germany.

![Parking lot with trees](image2.jpg)
End Notes (if applicable)

With this project already being approved by Metro and the Northside Community Council, the framework is in place to get this project completed. There are a few more steps, stated above, that need to be taken by the Community Council in order to get the funding and see this project become a reality.

Bibliography

Bing Maps, Los Angeles Union Station. Photograph by Bing Maps. 2009.


Parking Lot in Germany. Personal photograph by Michaele Pride. 2006.

