Queensgate II

In the mid-1960s, early development plans for Queensgate continued to promote demolition and new construction. An about-face of the total demolition/new construction policy began in 1971, when the city undertook the Queensgate II Town Center Project. As originally conceived, the Town Center was a $20 million project combining office, educational, cultural and residential uses in a two-block area between Central Parkway, Ezzard Charles, 12th Street and John Street, where the Cincinnati Hospital once stood.

While the plan’s focus was largely on Music Hall, several elements were proposed in the West End. The Crosley Telecommunications Center including Cincinnati’s public television and radio stations WCET (now CET) and WGUC-FM, the Queen City Vocational Center, the Gray History of the Wireless Museum and a parking garage were all part of the first phase, completed in 1976.

In the proposed second phase of the Queensgate II project, a large number of buildings along Central Avenue, Chestnut, and Elizabeth were to be eliminated and replaced with new mixed-use structures. But 51 existing structures were targeted for renovation for both residential units and office or commercial use. This was the first proposed plan that called for substantial rehabilitation of buildings.

Longworth Square

Rehabilitation of historic buildings in the Betts-Longworth Historic District was to be a part of the Queensgate II development, beginning in the 1960s. Unfortunately lack of funding and attention left many vacant buildings languishing, and time ran out. In 1985 the city sold a few houses in the Betts-Longworth Historic District to residents of the neighborhood and “urban pioneers.” But by the late 1980s, many buildings were beyond repair, and thirteen were demolished in 1988.

About that time the tide turned, however. The city’s community development officer Mark Jones launched an aggressive campaign to achieve rehabilitation with private developers and to build new townhomes. By 1993, 88 homes had been renovated and 60 new market-rate townhomes were built at the south end of district, known as Longworth Square. Designed with brick facing, front stoops and cornices, these townhouses were based on historic prototypes and proved very popular with buyers. The project won many prestigious awards, including an award for Excellence in the Urban Environment from the Brunner Foundation in 1993.

Betts-Longworth Historic District

In 1981 Council Member Arti Berti asked the Historic Conservation Board to study the Queensgate II area for designation of an historic district. Historic Conservation staff researched the history of the area and its architecture, reviewed redevelopment plans and housing policies, defined district boundaries and developed design guidelines.

After a series of public meetings involving community groups, property owners and the West End Community Council, City Council designated the Betts-Longworth Historic District in 1983. It was named after the two early large landowners, William Betts and Nicholas Longworth.