Mount Auburn | Valencia Hollow

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Urban Framework
4 | Vision Statement
5 | Proposed Site Plan
6 | Intervention Locations
   | Neighborhood Conditions

Neighborhood Analysis
11 | Project Location
12 | Existing Conditions
14 | Site Analysis

Program
18 | Location and Limits
   | Goals and Objectives
19 | Suggested Land Uses

Valencia Hollow Urban Plan
20 | Proposed Site Plan
22 | Connectivity
23 | Features, Visibility, Proximity
24 | Phasing and Implementation

Architectural Characteristics
26 | Goals and Objectives
27 | Typology and Character
28 | Valencia Commons
32 | Park Residences

Restrictions and Conformance Analysis
34 | Zoning Restrictions
40 | Historic District
42 | Hillside Overlay Plan
45 | Community Plans
Promote a safe, affordable **community** through sustainability that fosters economic, environmental, and social diversity.
Intervention | **Auburn Avenue Improvements Corridor**

**Location**
Auburn Avenue is the main spine of Mount Auburn, running in the North-South direction through the neighborhood. It connects Euclid Avenue on the North with Sycamore Street at the South. The intersection at Dorchester, Sycamore, and Auburn is a key location in the neighborhood and for surrounding areas. These streets serve as main arteries for vehicular traffic to Interstates 71 and 471.

**Existing Land Use**
The existing zoning and land use along Auburn Avenue is quite varied though the majority of buildings are commercial and industrial. Health facilities, law offices, and varied private sector companies are based along Auburn. Additionally, Christ Hospital dominates the Southwest quadrant of the area. There are some residential areas along the corridor though most buildings are multi-family and large enough that they are cohesive with surrounding buildings. Other major landmarks along Auburn Avenue include Planned Parenthood, the Taft Historical Site, and the Juvenile Detention Center.

**Proposed Land Use**
Land Use and zoning are to remain unchanged along Auburn Avenue with street improvements occurring to revitalize the area. Such improvements may be boulevarding the area, creating manicured green spaces, and a providing a several new buildings with larger footprints at the North end of the street that are more aligned with the corridor than the existing smaller buildings.

**Quantities**
New buildings along Auburn Avenue are to be no more than 2-3 stories to match the existing typology. Square footages are roughly 3,000-6,000 square feet. Six new buildings are proposed along this corridor and densities are to match the existing.
Intervention | **Jackson Hill Plaza at Auburn Place**

**Location**
Jackson Hill Plaza is defined by Jackson Hill Park at the west, Christ Hospital and Mason Street on the north, Auburn Avenue on the east side, and Sycamore Hill to the south. It is centrally located within the neighborhood of Mount Auburn and the eastern boundary is heavily used by vehicular traffic at the intersection of Dorchester, Sycamore and Auburn. Additionally, this intervention area includes the Northeast corner of this intersection.

**Existing Land Use**
This intervention area’s existing use is scattered with single family and multi-family residential dominating the occupied buildings. A business district can be found at the east side of this area, but the majority of buildings are dilapidated and vacant. The entire area lacks in terms of walkways, and pedestrian paths while Jackson Hill Park is an under-utilized amenity.

**Proposed Land Use**
The urban framework plan calls for reconfiguration of this area in regards to both zoning and buildings. The area is to be mixed use, with more residential on the north side. The residential in this area will be geared toward two-family or multi-family buildings. A commercial center is to be created at the existing commercial district, but it is to expand toward the west along Dorchester, connecting the Auburn commercial areas with Jackson Hill Park.

**Quantities**
With mixed use at Auburn Place, the dozen new residential units on the north side are to be 2-3 stories and less than 3,000 square feet. Mixed use areas at the south of this block should have 2 stories maximum of housing with first floors occupied by restaurants, retail, and business. The buildings at the top of Sycamore Hill on Dorchester are to be 5-6 stories of primarily commercial functions, as should the intersection of Dorchester, Sycamore, and Auburn.
Site Analysis | Existing Land Use

All land uses based on information from the Hamilton County Auditor’s Website.
SITE ANALYSIS

EXISTING PROPERTY VALUE

Value Unavailable

All Values based on information from the Hamilton County Auditor's Website.
Information based on property signage.
Program | Valencia Hollow

Location and Limits

The Valencia Hollow project site is located in the basin of Mount Auburn with a western boundary of Vine Street. The eastern edge of this area is defined by Sycamore Hill and topographically severed from the other areas of the neighborhood. The northern edge of Valencia Hollow is defined by Inwood Park while the southern boundary disappears at Mulberry Street due to the curvature of the hill and Jackson Hill Park’s location above.

Also included in this site is the proposed location of the Inwood Place development. Encompassing Le Roy and Glencoe, this proposal assumes the Glencoe project will continue as proposed with luxury condominiums. For this reason, areas discussed here will not address this portion of the neighborhood.

Topography is an extremely limiting factor in this region due to steep slopes, exposed bedrock, and unbuildable sites. Transportation routes through the neighborhood are defined by the stepping topography, thus explaining the lack of east-west connections.

Goals and Objectives

Revitalization and redevelopment of the Valencia Hollow area focuses on the promotion of a safe, affordable community through sustainability that fosters economic, environmental, and social diversity. It is the goal for this area to become populated to its full capacity and exist as a healthy, primarily residential neighborhood.

Because the site is physically separated from the rest of Mount Auburn, it is isolated in many aspects. This proposal looks to address this issue and aims to make a place in Valencia Hollow.

Additionally, it is important to understand the difficulties in working in a low-income neighborhood such as Valencia Hollow, and that revitalization isn’t possible with low-income housing alone. For this reason, the target market of Valencia Hollow includes young professionals, empty nesters, new immigrants, and others who work in the surrounding neighborhoods and downtown. From rental to home ownership, low to moderate incomes and beyond, at attached versus detached single and multi-family units, this neighborhood provides housing options for all types of people.
Suggested Land Uses

It is planned that Valencia Hollow remain largely residential with a small scale mixed-use area on the southwest corner of the site. Many vacant lots occur throughout the entire area with several cul-de-sacs and dead end streets that create a sense of isolation. It is proposed that density be increased to fill in some of these places where the topography allows. The area that the now-closed Taft Elementary School occupies will be redeveloped to conform to the character of the remainder of the neighborhood with both residential and mixed-use functions.

A major part of this proposal focuses on the creation of new alleyways and roads that will enhance the sense of place and community in the area. Topography is a limiting factor in creating these vital links but an effort has been made to create smaller neighborhood blocks and reduce the sense of isolation throughout the area.

In order to help the neighborhood reach its full population capacity, it is estimated that the area may triple from its current density with the addition of single family and multi-family dwellings. Houses should match the existing vernacular in size at 2-3 stories. Where the topography is extreme, structures up to 5 stories may be proposed to facilitate architectural navigation of the slope. It is understood that the area currently consists of a residential mix with both single family and multi-family housing. This proposal hopes to point new development toward an economically and socially diverse neighborhood through housing types and social clusters within the community.
Residential Mews Section Perspective [Looking East]

Valencia Park [Looking East]
Connectivity is the main idea behind this site design. Seen with black dashes in the diagram below, the connections facilitate both pedestrian and vehicular movement throughout the site. These connections not only bring people into the site, but guide them as they move throughout as well as to other destinations.

By facilitating non-vehicular connections to a major arterial like Vine Street, residents of Valencia Hollow are able to easily access bus stops within walking distance of home that can take them to work or entertainment destinations. Providing safe environments and appealing walking routes also encourages non-vehicular resident mobility to surrounding destinations like Christ Hospital, Auburn Avenue, Vine Street, Jackson Hill Park, and Inwood Park.
Site Features

The framing of Valencia Park with both natural features and built form formalizes this space and makes it the unique feature and focal point of Valencia Hollow. Streets and walkways in Valencia Hollow facilitate movement to the park to keep it an active social gathering place. The park amenities include a playground and swing set, natural climbing wall, covered pavilion, community garden, chess tables, and a life size chess board and pieces.

Visibility

Large, major vehicular streets like Vine and Mulberry border the site on the west and south and serve as major thoroughfares around the site. By providing textured crosswalks and light pole banners around Valencia Hollow, visibility about the site is enhanced and connections can be made into the neighborhood. Using techniques like texturing, building facades, lighting, landscaping, and signage, visibility within Valencia Hollow can also be upgraded. By making it known that one is entering or in a different neighborhood, this creates a sense of place that residents in which residents can take pride.

Proximity

Mount Auburn's location within the City of Cincinnati is ideal due to the adjacencies created to the central business district and the uptown area that includes the University of Cincinnati and several large hospitals. The diagram at right shows the major areas serving this region and what places are within a quarter, half, one, and two miles of Valencia Hollow.
Phasing and Implementation

In a plan as large as this design for Valencia Hollow, phasing for implementation of the strategies is crucial to the overall success of the project. As seen below, there are three large scale phases proposed for the revitalization of Valencia Hollow.

*Phase One* includes the conversion of part of the existing Vine Street Elementary School into a Cincinnati Police sub station. The remainder of the school is to be demolished and replaced with he proposed structures that conform with the character of the neighborhood more than the large school. Residents who may be displaced in later phases have first priority in securing this housing so as to keep existing residents in the community.

*Phase Two* creates the heart of Valencia Hollow by moving Rice Street and formalizing the park space. Additionally, Valencia Commons, Park Residences, and other important framework building occur in phase two.

*Phase Three* is slightly more open-ended than the two previous phases as far as building construction is concerned. The residential mews created during this phase and lays the groundwork for smaller developers who may choose to rehabilitate existing homes, build new structures, and create and urban fabric in this area that is diverse and continually open to change.
Valencia Hollow | **Architectural Characteristics**

**Community**

While connectivity drives the overall urban plan for Valencia Hollow, a place for community and interaction are primary architectural goals for the neighborhood. Valencia Hollow can be seen as a cohesive whole yet small neighborhood clusters begin to emerge through architectural choices and design as well as from the large-scale planning techniques used. These clusters utilized interaction and promote a sense of ownership and identity that are fundamental in this design.

**Topography**

One of the major challenges in the design of Valencia Hollow is the extreme topography found throughout the site. Architectural designs should be directly related to a desire to use the complex landscape in such a way that it becomes an asset for the area. The stepped aesthetic that can be found in the design for Valencia Commons and throughout the neighborhood aims to navigate the topography so to create spaces that fulfill the plan’s goals of connectivity and community.
Focus | Valencia Commons

Description

Valencia Commons is a neighborhood cluster that offers a wide variety of rental housing including single family residences and multi-family complexes. Through the creation of a “green” pedestrian street, residents have a sense of ownership in the shared space. The use of textured pavements, site lighting, and vegetation also help to indicate the public and private relationships.

A variety of units are available within Valencia Commons. The entire project includes twenty-five 900 s.f., two bedroom units, four 1,150 s.f., 3 bedroom units, and eight 1,375 s.f., two bedroom units with an additional den.
The plans shown here are for the corner lot of Valencia Commons. Incorporating a variety of square footages and amenities, this building is meant to be a typical model for the others in the neighborhood cluster.
Valencia Commons Conceptual Section

Valencia Commons Section Perspective [Looking South]
Focus | **Park Residences**

**Description**

The residences located to the west of Valencia Park are designed to accommodate families in the affordable housing market. The owner-occupied stacked duplexes offer many amenities including three bedrooms, and two and a half baths, to this market and their design aims to be both economical and extremely livable.

The design of the stacked duplex aims to create ownership and private space while capitalizing on the economic benefits of the shared walls found in multi-family housing. Residents of the upper unit enter into the living space with a kitchen and balcony off the eating area. Moving down to the private level, three bedrooms, two baths, and a laundry space can be found. The lower units has a very similar design where residents enter into the living space on the first level and move up to the private areas, where the master bedroom includes a balcony. This “sandwich” of sleeping spaces also benefits the residents acoustically to put distance between noisy, daytime activities and enhance the sense of privacy.

In the two areas to the west of Valencia Park where this stack duplex typology is to be used, fifteen homes are planned creating thirty 1,680 square foot units.
The Park Residences feature three bedrooms, two and a half baths, balconies, and 1,680 s.f. of living space.

The building has a shared common spaces and may maintain some sort of homeowner association to maintain these spaces but each unit has access to a garden or private green space.
Zoning | **Multi-Family Districts**

**Interpretation**

The project site falls into the Multi-Family District of the Cincinnati Zoning Code. Within this district there are two types of multi-family zones; RMX Residential Mixed and RM-0.7 Multi-Family. Each of these districts has specific building requirements which are found in the following tables. The existing zoning will not conflict, but rather coincide with the development we are proposing.

**Specific Purposes of the Multi-Family Subdistricts**

The specific purposes of the RM Residential Multi-family subdistricts are to create, maintain and enhance neighborhood residential areas with multi-family housing that are typically located near the city’s major arterials and characterized by a mix of attached housing, small and large multi-unit buildings and community facilities, where appropriate. Future development will be primarily residential in character, although some small-scale public and non-residential uses on the ground floor in a mixed use building on an arterial street may be allowed with specific limitations. Four RM District subdistricts are established:

(a) RMX Residential Mixed. This subdistrict is intended to create, maintain and enhance areas of the city that have a mix of lot sizes and house types at moderate intensities (one to three dwelling units). Existing multi-family buildings of four or more units are acknowledged but new construction is not permitted. The minimum land area for every dwelling unit is 2,000 square feet.
(b) RM-0.7 Multi-family. This subdistrict is the most intense residential district and it will normally consist of tall multi-family or condominium structures. The character is intended to be urban and should be used where high intensity residential is needed to provide a residential base for important commercial areas. The minimum land area for every dwelling unit is 700 square feet.

**Land Use Regulations**

Schedule 1405-05 below prescribes the land use regulations for RM Districts. The regulations for each subdistrict are established by letter designations as follows:

(a) “P” designates permitted uses. These uses may be subject to additional regulations as indicated.
(b) “L” designates uses that are permitted, subject to certain limitations. Numeric suffixes refer to limitations listed at the bottom of Schedule 1405-05.
(c) “C” designates uses permitted only after review and approval of the conditional use by the Zoning Hearing Examiner. These uses may be subject to additional regulations as indicated.

Use classifications are defined in Chapter 1401, Definitions. Use classifications not listed in Schedule 1405-05 below are prohibited.
### Schedule 1405-05: Use Regulations - Residential Multi-Family Districts [condensed]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use Classifications</th>
<th>RMX</th>
<th>RM-0.7</th>
<th>Additional Regulations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Residential Uses</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Child day care home</td>
<td>L4</td>
<td>L4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Covenants and monasteries</td>
<td>P</td>
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<td>Patient family homes</td>
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<td>Shared housing for the elderly</td>
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<td>Single family dwelling</td>
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<td>Two-family dwelling</td>
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<td>Three-family dwelling</td>
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<td>Clubs and lodges</td>
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<td>Cultural institutions</td>
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<td>Parks and recreation facilities</td>
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<td>Public safety facilities</td>
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<td><strong>Commercial Uses</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Business services</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>L6,7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food markets</td>
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<td>L7</td>
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<td>Medical services and clinics</td>
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<td>Parking facilities</td>
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<td>Personal services</td>
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<td><strong>Accessory Uses</strong></td>
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<td>Home occupations</td>
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<td>Commercial vehicle parking</td>
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<td>Commercial services</td>
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<td>Fences and walls</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exterior lighting</td>
<td>P</td>
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<td>See 1421-39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Special Limitations

L1 The minimum lot area for every resident is 500 square feet and the minimum living area for every resident is 250 square feet.

L3 Multi-family dwellings of four or more units must be legally established prior to the effective date of this Zoning Code. The use has the rights of Chapter 1447, Nonconforming Uses and Structures except for the provisions of §1447-09 Expansion of Nonconforming Use and §1447-11 Substitution of a Nonconforming Use.

L4 Fencing, a minimum of four feet in height must be provided for purposes of securing outdoor play areas which must be located in the rear yard only.

L5 Not to exceed 3,000 square feet in floor area.

L6 Permitted only on arterial streets.

L7 Permitted on the ground floor occupying less than 2,500 sq. ft.; more space requires a conditional use approval.

L11 One commercial vehicle completely enclosed in a garage may be parked or stored on the lot with the following exceptions:
   a. An unlimited number of commercial vehicles conveying the necessary tools, materials and equipment to a premises where labor using such tools, materials and equipment is to be performed during actual time of parking.
   b. One commercial vehicle with current license owned by a resident of the residential property on which it is stored or parked not to exceed two tons in capacity.
   c. Recreational vehicles, watercraft and personal trailers may be parked on the lot beyond the front yard.

L15 Attached single-family dwellings and Rowhouse single-family dwellings of four or more units require conditional use approval.

Development Regulations

Schedule 1405-07 below prescribes the development regulations for the RM Districts, including lot area for every unit, minimum lot width, setbacks and maximum height. Figure 1405-07 illustrates the setbacks for the RM Districts. Where an overlay district applies, the provisions of that district take precedence if there is conflict with the standards of this Section.
Schedule 1405-07: Development Regulations - Residential Multi-Family Districts [condensed]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Form and Location</th>
<th>Lot Area (sq. ft.)</th>
<th>Lot Area/Unit (sq. ft.)</th>
<th>Lot Width (ft.)</th>
<th>Front Yard Setback (ft.)</th>
<th>Side Yard Min/Total Setback</th>
<th>Rear Yard Setback</th>
<th>Maximum Height (ft.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RMX single-family</td>
<td>2,500</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>RMX rowhouse exterior</td>
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<td>RMX rowhouse interior</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2,500</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>3/6</td>
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<tr>
<td>RMX other</td>
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<td>RM 0.7 single-family</td>
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<td>RM 0.7 other</td>
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<td>0/5 4</td>
<td>25 2</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. Additional 1-foot of setback for each 1-foot of building height above 35 feet.
2. Additional 1-foot of setback for each five feet of building height above 35 feet.
3. Addition 0.5-foot of minimum side yard and 1-foot sum of side yard setback for each 1-foot of building height above 35 feet.
4. Additional 1-foot of minimum side yard and 2-foot sum of side yard setback for each five feet of building height above 35 feet.
The Over-the-Rhine Historic District touches the corner of the intervention area just North of Mulberry between Loth and Rice streets (See Map)

**Interpretation**

The small portion of the Over-The-Rhine Historic District that lies within the project site is will not have an impact on the zoning. Any proposal will comply with the base zoning. The historical District Guidelines are specific to building composition which deals with architectural design specifics. Also, because we are not proposing any new development on the part of the site that lies in the OTR North Historic District, we should be aware of these specifics, but not entirely concerned at this point.
The whole Valencia Hollow site falls into this district with the exception of a triangle which follows the contours of the land. This site is located off of Vine Street just South of Thill, extending to East Street. (See Map)

**Interpretation**

The Hillside District Regulations says that the maximum building envelope is to be determined either by the underlying base zoning district or adjacent structures. The base development requirements state architectural design specifics which must be followed when development or proposed building design is finished.

**Specific Purposes of the Hillside Overlay District**

The purpose of the Hillside Overlay District regulations is to establish standards to assist in the development of land and structures in existing hillside areas and procedures for the review of proposed development, so that development will be compatible with the natural environment and respect the quality of the urban environment in those locations where the hillsides are of significant public value. These regulations are intended to prevent damage to the City’s hillsides.

**Determination of Maximum Building Envelope.**

Each applicant must establish a maximum building volume area to determine the size of a structure that can be built on the site by calculating the following in accordance with the rules of measurement set forth in Chapter 1400:

(a) **HS Rear Yard Setback.** Average rear yard setback of abutting structures on both sides; or the required rear yard setback of the underlying district if no adjacent structure(s) exists.

(b) **HS Side Yard Setback.** Average side yard setback of abutting structures on both sides; or the required least width side yard setback of the underlying district if no adjacent structure(s) exists.

(c) **HS Front Yard Setback.** Average front yard setback of abutting structures on both sides; or the required front yard setback of the underlying district if no adjacent structure(s) exists.

(d) **HS Height of Front.** Maximum height of the front of the structure; either the maximum height of the underlying zoning district or the average height of the front of adjacent structures as measured from the finished grade of the front of each adjacent structure, whichever is greater.

(e) **HS Height of Rear.** Maximum height of the rear of the structure; either the maximum height of the underlying zoning district or the average height of the rear of adjacent structures as measured from the average grade, whichever is greater.

The maximum building envelope is the solid defined by vertical planes constructed at the HS rear, side and front yard setbacks and the plane between the HS height of front and the HS height of rear.
Base Development Requirements.
An application subject to review must comply with the following requirements:

(a) **Maximum Building Envelope.** A new building or a building alteration, addition or repair must be contained within the maximum building envelope.

(b) **Height Versus Width.** Buildings proposed on top of the hillside must be taller than wider to accentuate the vertical dimension.

(c) **Stepping.** Buildings proposed below or above the brow of the hill must be staggered or stepped in depth and width to match topography and slope.

(d) **Maximum Retaining Wall Height.** Retaining walls may not exceed eight feet in height.

(e) **Rooftop Utilities.** Rooftop utilities and mechanical equipment should be avoided. If rooftop utilities and mechanical equipment are necessary, screening and sound control must be provided to integrate them into the rooftop.

(f) **Landscaping of Pervious Surfaces.** All pervious surfaces remaining after completion of construction must be landscaped in trees, shrubs, grass or other ground covers to promote hillside stability and reduce excessive water runoff.

(g) **Excavation and fills.** Excavation and fills should not exceed eight feet in cumulative height.

(h) The preliminary geotechnical evaluation should address relative hillside stability.
Conformance | Community Plans

1992 Mount Auburn Community Plan

The development proposed here complies with the 1992 Mt. Auburn Community Plan in that it designates the ‘Hollow’ area as a residential area. The corridor along Vine Street is zoned differently than the remainder of the project site in that it is to be a more urban, denser area. Along with our plan, we have chosen to preserve this zoning and land use proposal. We are proposing to enhance the existing housing stock in the project site by infilling and rehabilitating the neighborhood. In doing this, we aim to comply with the land use concept of the 1992 Mt. Auburn Community Plan.

Where our proposal falls short to meet with the Community Plan lies on the existing school site which we are proposing as both Mixed Use and Multi-Family housing. The plan states that this site is designated as institutional, but with the planned closing of Vine Street Elementary on that site, we have proposed a plan with results in a higher and better use.

Uptown Parks Plan of 10.25.2006

When we look at the current Uptown Parks Plan, we notice that because it is a parks plan, the emphasis is not on this specific site, but rather enhancing the amenities (parks) surrounding it. In this way, we are proposing to improve and add to the housing stock within the project site to support those amenities. Our proposal conforms to the Parks Plan with the intent of our project site to be used for housing. Specifically, we can say that the Parks Plan proposes single family where we propose single family and multi family/mixed use along the Vine St. corridor, where we are proposing that same use. There is also a unique pocket park found in the center of our proposal that also appears in the Parks Plan proposal.