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# **Economic Development Plan**

*for*

Rocky Fork District

*Prepared by:*

*Planning Division*

*Department of Development*

*City of Columbus*

November 19, 2003

## **Introduction**

Section 5709.40 of the Ohio Revised Code authorizes the legislative authority of a municipal corporation to create, by ordinance, a tax increment financing incentive district and declare residential and other “improvements” within the district to be a public purpose. “Improvements” are defined as increases in assessed values of properties that occur after adoption of the ordinance that created the district.

To be eligible for establishment, an incentive district must be enclosed by a continuous boundary, contain no more than three hundred acres and have either (i) one or more “distress characteristics” (defined by the Code to include lighted property, high unemployment rates and above-average poverty rates) or (ii) a municipal engineer’s certification that the public infrastructure serving the district is inadequate to meet development needs as reflected in an economic development plan for the area. The plan must be adopted by the corresponding legislative authority.

In accordance with the above, this Economic Development Plan was created to document the public infrastructure needs of the Rocky Fork District planning area. The properties within the planning area have been approved for development, and public improvements will be necessary to ensure that the development is adequately served by parks, utilities, roadways and other forms of infrastructure. The establishment of an incentive district will enable the city of Columbus to provide funding for these public improvements and thus meet the planning area’s infrastructure needs.

## **Planning Area**

The planning area (see Attachment A) lies within the city of Columbus corporate limits and its growth area and contains approximately 5,500 acres of land. It consists of approximately 1,400 parcels (see Attachment B) and is generally bounded by the Franklin/Delaware county border on the north, the Franklin/Licking County border and Columbus/New Albany border on the east, Walnut Street and SR 161 on the south and the Plain/Blendon township border on the west. Current Columbus zoning within the planning area is depicted in Attachment C and includes LAR12, LARLD, LARO, PUD-6, NC, NG, NE, LR2, LR2F, SR, RR, CPD, LC3, LC4, LM2, and R.

## **Proposed Development**

In accordance with the Rocky Fork-Blacklick Accord Update approved by the Development Commission on November 20, 2003 and by Columbus City Council on December 1, 2003, the planning

area will be developed as a combination of single-family residential, multi-family residential, retail commercial, office, and Metro Park. The proposed park will be located to the north of Walnut Street within a larger area designated as the Park Zone. The highest concentration of development will occur in the West Village area. The West Village will be a mixed-use neighborhood, using elements of the Traditional Neighborhood Development Article in the Columbus Zoning Code. These land uses are depicted on the Land Use Map, which is included as attachment D.

## **Infrastructure Needs**

Significant improvements and/or additions to public facilities and infrastructure will be necessary to serve the new construction in the Rocky Fork District. By providing additional infrastructure capacity where needed, the improvements and/or additions will also serve to mitigate any adverse impact upon adjoining properties, thereby preserving and enhancing economic values in the area. Infrastructure and facilities improvements and/or additions may include:

Streets/Roadways - To provide safe vehicular access, right-of-way will be dedicated and roadway improvements will be constructed along such roads as Warner, Central College, Walnut, Harlem, and Hamilton. Additionally, the construction of new roadways or extension of existing roadways may take place to provide access to serve new construction. This includes east-west connections in the West Village, the northern extension of Hamilton Road, and provision of a new east-west connection to the New Albany Road West area.

Metro Park – As depicted in the Accord Update, a 1200-acre Metro Park is planned in the area north of Walnut Street. Property will be acquired and improvements will be made to create this facility and provide linkages with surrounding neighborhoods and open space, such as Hoover Reservoir.

Schools – Acquisition of property and development of facilities needed in the provision of public schools for the area. These improvements may occur in conjunction with other public infrastructure and facility improvements such as parks and recreation facilities.

Parks and Recreation Facilities - Acquisition of property and development of facilities needed in the provision of public parks and recreation facilities to serve the development in the area. This may include neighborhood and community parks, multi-use trails, greenway corridors, and recreation facilities.

Other Infrastructure/Facilities - Provisions for internal vehicular access, pedestrian access, fire and police facilities, storm water drainage and/or sanitary sewer service will also be made. Other improvements may include connections to water, telephone, electric and/or natural gas lines.

## **Economic Impact**

According to the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, the central Ohio region has the highest growth rate in the state of Ohio. During the next twenty-three years some 500,000 people will move into the region. During the first half of 2003, permits were approved for over \$276 million worth of residential development in Columbus alone. These new residents will serve as the base of workers needed to help fuel the economic growth that has marked Central Ohio for several decades. Additionally, these residents will themselves create demand for wide variety of goods and services.

The northeast area is a key growth corridor for Columbus and the development planned in the Rocky Fork District is desirable for several reasons. Upon completion, the development will provide new housing options and job opportunities for local residents and thus help to enhance the physical, social and economic health of the surrounding area. Approximately 5,700 new units are expected within the West Village portion of the planning area, resulting in 13,110 new residents using the city's average household size of 2.3 (Census 2000). The investment this growth brings will provide the necessary financial flexibility to contribute to such things as open space preservation and roadway improvements/construction.

## **Supporting Policies**

The Columbus Comprehensive Plan states:

"Infrastructure is necessary whenever development and redevelopment occur. When adequate public infrastructure investments are planned and programmed to accompany development activities of the private sector, 'growing pains' can be minimized. It is one of the principal aims of this Plan to ensure that the city of Columbus coordinate and plan infrastructure investments, as well as investments in other municipal functions and services, to meet the needs of this growing community and enhance the quality of life for all."

Similarly, the Principles of Progress contained in the Columbus Covenant 2000 recognize that provisions for adequate infrastructure are essential for economic growth and job creation. The Covenant also notes that the efficient delivery of services contributes to quality of life and helps to promote “strong, distinct and vibrant neighborhoods”.

As stated in the opening pages of the Accord, “the Rocky Fork-Blacklick Accord is an initiative of the city of Columbus and village of New Albany to establish long range planning guidelines to manage future growth and development within the defined planning area.” The Accord further states that the plan “is intended to be elastic and changeable so that it may grow with the planning area.” Since its initial adoption in 1997, the Accord has undergone several amendments to ensure ongoing relevance as a planning tool.

## **Public Process**

The public infrastructure needs anticipated by this economic development plan are based upon, and coincide with, the Rocky Fork-Blacklick Accord as updated and approved by the Development Commission and Columbus City Council. In the review and approval of the initial Accord and subsequent updates, the nature of the development proposal was made public through notification of interested parties, advertisements in the Columbus City Bulletin, information on the Planning Division website, public meetings and hearings, and newspaper articles.

## **Conclusion**

The development of the Rocky Fork-Blacklick Accord planning area will contribute to the economic and physical growth of the city of Columbus. Though desirable, this growth must be served with adequate public infrastructure -- at significant expense. The creation of an incentive district will help the city of Columbus to provide this infrastructure and accommodate future growth, while providing for the safe and efficient delivery of public goods and services.

## **Attachments**

Attachment A: Planning Area

Attachment B: Parcel Map

Attachment C: Zoning Map

Attachment D: Rocky Fork-Blacklick Accord Update (Land Use Map)