

NEIGHBORHOOD MARKET STUDY  
VISION STATEMENT  
HOT SPOTS  
PRIORITY INVESTMENT LOCATIONS  
VISION STATEMENT  
NEXT STEPS  
ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION  
HOUSING  
HISTORIC REPORT  
GOALS  
COMMUNITY INPUT  
VISION PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

# Greater Parsons Avenue



area vision plan | april 2006



# Acknowledgements

**Council of South Side Organizations (CSSO)**

**Hungarian Village Society**

**Marion Franklin Area Civic Association**

**Merion Village Civic Association**

**Olde South Side Community Partnership**

**Parsons Avenue Merchants Association**

**Reeb Hosack Planning Committee/ Steelfon Village**

**Save Our Southside Civic Association**

**Schumacher Place Civic Association**

**Southside C.A.N.**

**Southside Neighbors Against Crime**

**Southern Orchards/ Southside United Neighbors**

**Stambaugh Elwood Association**

**Vassor Village Civic Association**

**Coordination and Communication by:**

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**South Side Settlement House**

**Reeb Hosack Community Baptist Church**

**St. Paul United Church of Christ**

**Children's Hospital Center for Child  
and Family Advocacy**

**Planks Restaurant**



# Consultant Team

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Planning, Graphic Communications

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Market Research



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# Executive Summary







## Introduction

A consortium of Southside community groups challenged the City of Columbus to make a concerted effort and investment to stimulate economic revitalization of the Parsons Avenue corridor and deal with persistent problems of crime and property neglect.

Through the Columbus Urban Growth Redevelopment Corporation, the Columbus City Council's new Jobs Growth Fund provided resources to the community to begin this study of market conditions and market potential for the Parsons Avenue corridor and its relationship to the surrounding Southside neighborhoods.

This effort incorporated an extensive series of meetings and workshops held with Southside organizations, the community and a Steering Committee formed from representatives of Southside organizations. Focus groups were held with members of the regions' real estate, development and lending communities. Many other stakeholders were contacted regarding their plans and their own assessment of Southside market forces. Members of the Columbus City Council, in particular Councilperson Mary Jo Hudson and Councilperson Patsy Thomas, provided valuable support to the process and met frequently with community members as the process went forward. The Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce, the Central Ohio United Way, and the City of Columbus Development

Department provided insights about available resources that may be applied to the revitalization effort within the framework of the plan that has been developed. The Southside Neighborhood Pride Center and Director Jo Anne St. Clair, a trusted community liaison, was invaluable for maintaining communications with all involved, and the Southside Settlement House and local churches were generous in providing the use of their facilities for the numerous meetings.

## Findings:

From the outset it was clear that the community struggles with crime, traffic, property abandonment, and image problems that spill over from Parsons Avenue, the front door to their neighborhoods. In spite of Pride Center programs and community crime watches employed to deal with the worst of the problems, persistent neglect of properties, vacancies and a proliferation of bars, carry outs and used car lots have provided inroads for criminal activity, alcohol sales to minors, prostitution and violence. The blight harms the community's image, a real threat to its residents and young people. These problems and their effects further reduce the Avenue's ability to attract new enterprises.

Therefore, the revitalization plan of necessity must address these issues in its recommendations as a necessary activity for economic development. Community members and businesses must have the reassurance that the Parsons Avenue Corridor

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is and will be a safe place as well as a good market in which to invest and grow. A comprehensive economic development program is crucial to filling in the vacant buildings, providing jobs and income, providing local sources of goods and services to the surrounding neighborhoods and in turn will provide productive alternatives for youth and reduce the opportunities for conduct of detrimental activities.

The Historic Review reinforced what the community already sensed: Parsons Avenue retains a collection of architecture reflective of the periods over which the Southside neighborhoods grew, and which help to tell the stories of this community. However, Parsons Avenue is also something of a victim of its popularity in the mid-twentieth century when prevailing fashion was to eliminate old expensive buildings and “modernize”. The loss of the historic fabric from these forces as well as from sometimes inevitable events, like fire, and from more recent problems of abandonment and neglect, has created “holes” in the streetscape that diminish the historic significance of the corridor’s architecture as a potential National Register eligible Historic District. Still, enough of this fabric exists to form the foundation for a marketing image that draws inspiration from history and architecture.

The Market Analysis, looking at a primary market area comprised of the neighborhoods themselves, demonstrated that actual crime statistics and certain demographics were not substantially different than some other neighborhoods that are undergoing renaissance or compared to the City as a whole. The corridor has good access to Columbus’s downtown, Interstates 70 and 71 to the north and the intersection with State Route 104 on the south. However, low disposable incomes and educational attainment of the surrounding neighborhoods are factors that appear to inhibit the selection of the corridor for nationally known retailers and restaurants. The analysis shows an immediate market potential for an additional 20,000 square feet of retail space, particularly in the northern portion of the corridor, and for perhaps 40 new (or reclaimed) housing units each year, especially in the form of senior accessible housing and dwellings for young professionals. These numbers are small, but success feeds on itself and an observed potential for growth is basis for strategic investments.

The lower income attainment of many of the residents of the Southside neighborhoods, problems of crime, and the loss of the large manufacturing base in the area indicate that bringing more jobs to the Avenue is of high importance. The Avenue does have location advantages, and the neighborhoods are close to emerging employment expected at Rickenbacker Airport as it creates its multimodal facilities. Better transportation links will be needed to take advantage of this opportunity.

It is important to note that the neighborhoods have not been very successful in keeping their young people, and the average age of householders has increased. Those in retirement or with disabilities are likely to remain on fixed incomes and not re-enter the work force. It will be important for young householders to find opportunities to stay on the Southside, as well as attracting new households to repopulate the neighborhoods.

Some community members are concerned that although the plan to bring in more offices and retail businesses will provide jobs, these jobs may not be equivalent in pay or benefits to the thousands that were lost over the last four decades. However, the constant “help wanted” advertising by Buckeye Steel Castings during the study, and comments from other manufacturers on the Southside that they are having difficulty recruiting qualified workers indicates that there are other factors in the employment equation. There may indeed be niche markets in manufacturing that could support research and development, incubators, and apprenticeship programs. Development of a qualified pool of workers is a complex problem that deserves more study.

Casestudiesoftheexperienceofothercommunities that have attempted redevelopment of older commercial districts or corridors connected with historic neighborhoods revealed some commonalities with Parsons Avenue. The lessons of these communities inform the recommendations of the Vision Plan.

**Those lessons are:**

- a. Housing improvements in adjacent neighborhoods support commercial investment activity
- b. Commercial investments stimulate housing and community improvements in the neighborhoods
- c. Larger scale projects garner the most spin-off of additional investment activity
- d. Immediate visible improvements raise confidence that things are really going to happen
- e. Design - every successful project had strong components of aesthetic improvements and historic preservation
- f. Strong partnerships-every successful project proceeded with strong partnerships with the private sector, local institutions, community groups and local government
- g. It is equally valid to apply the same tools and economic incentives to projects and small enterprises in commercial corridors as are commonly used for larger projects
- h. New housing styles and opportunities will draw in new households that understand the benefits of urbanized living and allow senior citizens to remain in their familiar neighborhood.

Likewise, local development projects provide examples of successful integration of new construction and popular franchises into historic traditional neighborhoods.

Therefore with regard to the Parsons Avenue Vision Plan the recommendations have been built on both the Community Goals and the following general principals. Many of the recommendations meet more than one of these general principals.

**Both economic development and community development tools must be employed to address the comprehensive needs of the Avenue.**

- Grow local capacity; grow a local community development corporation; grow small businesses;
- Encourage community groups to become more entrepreneurial - taking on improvement projects of their own
- Partnerships with non-profits, churches, schools and employers to create more youth activities, apprenticeships and jobs for youth

**Stabilize Neighborhoods**

- Step up code enforcement and nuisance abatements
- Community crime patrols
- Continue nuisance and crime reporting through Neighborhood Crime Watch and Pride Program
- Bring in more households through provision of a variety of housing types - Rehabilitate vacant and properties, new build, in-fill, loft-style conversions
- Traffic calming

**Invest in the National Trust Mainstreet Approach® to commercial revitalization**

- Economic Restructuring- Aggressive business attraction & grow.
  - Recruit an eclectic mix of retail, entertainment venues and sit-down restaurants - ethnic, global feel
  - Recruit a broad mix of neighborhood and business service businesses; a bank
  - Small department store
- Organization - Neighborhood Commercial Manager (NCM)
- Design - Enforce the Urban Commercial Overlay, Community conservation, public open space
- Promotions - Function of the NCM coordinating with businesses and community groups

**Invest in three major revitalization projects (Priority Investments) to “seed” the Corridor and kickstart activity.**

- a. Southern Gateway- Business/Office/Trade District/
  - i. Mixed uses of flex office spaces, business incubators, emerging technology in trades, trade schools, and supporting retail, delis, farm market, small department stores and services
- b. Central Neighborhood- the Mid-Town of the Southside
  - i. Mixed uses with lofts/ live-work space/ neighborhood scale retail, restaurants, cafes and services
- c. North Gateway- Commercial District
  - i. Mixed uses with/ banking services, offices, sit down restaurants, entertainment facilities



Site analysis showed several "Key Areas", properties or areas of particular opportunity, or of major concern to community members. These areas represent places where such strategic investments may "seed" the corridor, and with the application of an economic development program, stimulate additional improvements to spread out and reconnect the entire corridor. From this list of Key Areas, the consulting team selected the above three sites, dispersed across the length of the corridor, to illustrate how differing approaches to redevelopment might be applied to accomplish the goals of the Parsons Area Vision Plan. These sites are referred to as Priority Investment Locations. The reader is cautioned that the proposals represent only potentials, the consulting team's application of the Vision to particularly important sites. The proposals do not represent in any way specific pending proposals, nor do they serve to dictate the exact form that any future redevelopment must take. However, they are intended to inspire new thinking and excitement about the exciting future that can be created along Parsons Avenue.

Lastly, it should be noted that during the time of this study, a number of changes were occurring that will have long term impact on Parsons Avenue and the Southside, as well as the rest of the City. The announcement of additional school closings may affect popular schools in the area including Barrett Middle School and Reeb Elementary. If these schools eventually do close, the buildings and sites will represent challenges to adapt and reuse. The Franklin County Commissioners have embarked upon their own economic study of the retail industry in the County. They

are concerned about finding ways to stop the loss of retail establishments, and thus sales tax revenue, in the County in general, especially as many move ever outwards from established shopping districts to newer malls outside the County. The recommendations of this study could have a positive effect on Parsons Avenue. Mayor Coleman of Columbus, has announced a major initiative to explore youth violence and crime. If the root causes of these problems are better understood, better interventions may be designed to redirect violent activity to productive uses in the community. It is also encouraging that the 2006 City budget is providing for two additional code enforcement officers, reversing a trend of reduction of code workforce. This along with new legislation being drafted to deal with nuisance abatement will definitely have a positive effect in the Parsons corridor neighborhoods. The City's and County's efforts are welcomed for their contribution to improving neighborhood safety and welfare.

This report document presents the Vision Statement and the Goals developed by the steering committee, a discussion of the Vision Plan Recommendations, a listing of Next Steps to advance the implementation of the Vision Plan, and a presentation of inspirations for the Priority Investment Locations. In the Appendix, the reader desiring more background can find the Hot Spot Discussion, Case Studies Report, the Historic Report, a summary of the Market Analysis and a recounting of the Community Input process. The full Market Study report is presented by Vogt, Williams & Bowen under a separate cover.

# Vision Statement

The following vision statement was created and refined over several meetings of the Steering Committee and the community. It reflects history, tradition, diversity and confidence.

“The Greater Parsons Avenue Corridor  
will be  
“The Avenue,”

the bustling center of life and commerce for  
Columbus’s most diverse community, built  
on time honored traditions, with the beauty  
of glass, the endurance of steel and the  
opportunities of the world village at its door.

A place...

- Where residents and visitors feel safe and respected
- With a diverse & economically viable mix of residential, commercial, industrial and community uses
- Which is the social and economic spine for the Southside.



# Community Goals



Throughout the process of discovery and community input, a number of issues were identified that relate to the lack of economic vitality along Parsons Avenue. Community members understand the Avenue as representing the “front door” to their neighborhoods, and that the blight of the Avenue directly harms their quality of life and image in the Greater Columbus area. They also remember more prosperous times for the Avenue and Southside and firmly believe in the potential to revitalize and become vibrant once more. The Vision Statement that evolved reflects that history and future vision.

Four major goals of the Vision Plan were produced by the Steering Committee. They address the neighborhood's major issues, but also reflect the needs of Parsons Avenue as a revitalizing commercial corridor.

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## Goals 1. Enhancement of Image / Sense of Safety



- Achieve higher level of well maintained homes
- Increase code enforcement
- Community Conservation approach
- Increase homeownership
- Reduce building vacancies
- Identify and motivate derelict landlords & homeowners
- Improved pedestrian environment
- Traffic calming
- Landscaping & lighting
- Reduce criminal activity
- Stepped up law enforcement
- Community based law enforcement

## Goals 2. Economic Revitalization



- Repopulate the Corridor with eclectic mix of ethnic restaurants, retail, offices, entertainment and public uses
- Reprogram underutilized industrial space for new economy industries
- Capitalize on proximity to Rickenbacker
- Develop new market niches
- Grow new businesses:
- Incubators & Apprenticeships
- Stabilize neighborhoods to increase investor confidence (see #1 and #4)

### Goals 3. Enhance Public Facilities and Service



- Expand library facility
- Create more parks & open space
- Accessible recreational facilities
- Meeting & gathering spaces
- Extensive use of landscape & lighting to buffer uses, soften the environment and create image
- Public art
- Architectural features
- Customize City and Non-profit programs to specific needs of area

### Goals 4. Transportation Improvements



- Increase available parking
- Implement traffic calming
- Widen sidewalks
- Support improved mass transit connections
- Create transit center with service to employment centers (Rickenbacker)



# Vision Plan Recommendations



The Vision Plan Recommendations are organized around the expressed community goals, and the Four Point Approach® of the Mainstreet Program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

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## I. Economic Restructuring:

### a. Zoning

- i. **Enforce the Urban Commercial Overlay District requirements.** This tool was created to protect the integrity of Commercial Corridors, but repeated variances and lack of enforcement have negated the intent, caused the loss of physical assets, and contributed to the further decline of the Avenue. Without a strong commitment to design, any other efforts and investment may truly be wasted.
- ii. **Conduct a zoning study of Parsons Avenue and make recommendations to the Columbus Department of Development.** There are some difficulties with the current City of Columbus Zoning Code's permitted uses when trying to accomplish the goals of the Vision Plan. Although the predominance of C-4, allows a number of less desirable uses that have begun to dominate the corridor, wholesale down-zoning would eliminate such desired uses as department stores, grocery supermarkets, performing arts centers, dinner theaters and nightclubs. The C-2, Office Commercial District, is entirely non-retail oriented and probably not a good choice. The use of Planned Commercial Districts should be encouraged, especially when working with a vacant lot or eminent demolition. The spirit of the Downtown District is more closely aligned with the spectrum of uses desired, including expressly encouraging the interweaving of housing. This is in contrast to all the other commercial districts in the code which allow dwellings only above permitted uses. Parsons Avenue is dotted with historic single family and multi-family housing that front Parsons Avenue. Any zoning changes should expressly allow this housing to be renovated and continued in use without undue restrictions.
- iii. **Promote a range of mixed uses throughout the corridor.**
- iv. **Establish a proportional limit of various uses to recruit.** When that limit is met or exceeded, target attention to establishing equilibrium with other uses. For example, franchise restaurants might be limited to 25% of all active businesses, or of any one category of use.

### b. Use of incentives to stimulate quality redevelopments along corridor

- i. **Tax incentive business attraction programs.** Use of tax abatements, tax credits or tax rebates should be offered to attract businesses with strong brand identity and performance records to the designated Priority Investment Locations.
- ii. **Tax incentive programs for creative workers.** Expand use of business tax abatements, tax credits or tax rebates and supports to independent workers (arts, professionals, micro-businesses) who locate their homes and studio/offices to a Parsons Avenue address.
- iii. **Tax incentive programs for façade improvements.** Similarly, tax abatements or rebates should be targeted to defraying costs of renovation of buildings on Parsons Avenue. Eligible renovations must be consistent with the Urban Commercial Overlay. The tax rebates and would be applied in much the same way that they have been to stimulate the conversion of space to housing in the Downtown.
- iv. **Utilize the results of the Franklin County Commissioners study of retail retention which is underway at present.**

### c. Southern Gateway Priority Investment Location. Significant capital investment is most needed at the "Southern" Gateway. There are opportunities to assemble large amounts of land in this area, perform selective demolition and redevelop. This approach is most desirable to correct existing site problems; widen sidewalks, calm high speed traffic, provide secure parking and building access, incorporate plantings and a plaza into the streetscape, provide buildings that incorporate state of the art technologies, creating a highly aesthetic and functional district.

- i. **Create an anchor to the south end of Parsons Avenue.** Market niches exist to create a Business Office/ Trade / Retail District :
  1. Use the tax incentives available through "Regional Finance Authorities/ Port Authorities"- Examples of use include the Ohio State University Campus Gateway and the new Clippers Stadium.
  2. Development of Flex Office Space that can accommodate multiple and diverse users, such as; call centers, business services, government services, health facilities and training centers.

3. Partner with the local Small Business Development Center (SBDC), United Way, Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce, industry, higher education institutions, and Rickenbacker Port Authority to create a business incubator for small businesses in the industrial areas east of Parsons Avenue. (Sectors might include: transportation, energy efficiency and green building products, building construction and trades, electronic components, optical components, medical devices.)
  4. Partner with the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) and other transit providers to establish a transit HUB in this area providing a direct transportation link to Rickenbacker and surrounding warehousing and industrial employers and a transportation link to other regional employers.
- ii. **Create an open space plaza at the Southern Gateway.** Provide green space, passive recreation, room for community events, and the farm market.
1. Construct simple festival styled covered structures to serve market vendors and picnic gatherings.
  2. Landscape off-street parking behind the site.
  3. Architecture/ art/ or water features with seating in the plaza contributes to the Gateway effect.
  4. Acquire and use the Citgo property on Marion Road, adjacent to the property the City already owns.
  5. Utilize Tax Increment Financing (TIF's) to pay for public improvements.
- d. **Central Neighborhood Priority Investment Location.** The area around the Whittier/ Parsons intersection contains an excellent collection of buildings with intact historic character, and excellent potential for development of live/work space, first story specialty retail, coffee shops, cafes and galleries. As such, moderate investments may help to realize its potential. This area should develop a connection along Whittier creating a synergy with the proposed Whittier Peninsula redevelopment.
- i. **Provide tax abatements for conversion of vacant office buildings to loft condominiums with street level small retail.**
  - ii. **Employ shared parking arrangements to reduce suburban scale parking requirements.**
  - iii. **Acquire and land bank available properties to award redevelopment rights to quality proposals.**
  - iv. **Create a recruitment program for creative/independent workers to locate here.** This includes not only visual, musical, graphic artists and writers, but also independent architects, engineers and other professionals. Modeled on the Paducah Kentucky Artists program, it would include such activities as:
    1. Lender partners providing favorable financing for purchasing homes and condominiums.
    2. Create an association of independent workers to provide access to affordable health insurance.
    3. Create shared marketing and promotions programs for the products and services of the independent worker community.
- e. **North District and Gateway Priority Investment Location.** This area has the strongest immediate market strength, and will probably require only a few targeted investments to stimulate revitalization. It will be important to adhere to the Urban Commercial Overlay standards and spirit of the Vision Plan.
- i. **Market strength will be augmented during Children's redevelopment and expansion.**
  - ii. **Focus efforts on recruitment of restaurant and entertainment venues.**
    1. This area has potential to be the epicenter for a wide variety of ethnic dining, entertainment and shopping experiences.
    2. Utilize abatements of City property/ and or income taxes to recruit needed businesses.
  - iii. **Create a Gateway feature as a community partnership project.** Community groups would join with Children's Hospital, Bobb Chevrolet-Geo and others to design and create a Gateway feature to draw consumers into the North Gateway and down Parsons Avenue's revitalizing commercial districts.
    1. Business Improvement Districts or Tax Increment Financing to pay for public improvements.
  - iv. **Secure Trolley shuttle services to the North District.** Columbus's proposed trolley system should stop at Parsons Avenue, circulating around the Children's Hospital Campus and back to Downtown during lunch and early evening hours. This may be very important in future years when construction on the Interstate 70/71 "split" begins.

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**f. Housing Development**

- i. **Build or restore to occupancy 200 new housing units (over 5 years) in the Corridor Study Area.**
- ii. **Target markets of seniors (accessible housing) and young creative, professionals**
- iii. **Increase homeownership.**
  1. Tax abatements to home buyers who renovate or purchase homes to standards.
- iv. **Partner with major local employers to create incentive programs for employees and professionals to purchase housing in the corridor study area.**
- v. **Expand Land Bank Program to acquire vacant buildings and parcels for market rate development opportunities.**

**g. Safety**

- i. **Add 2 Columbus Police Department Bicycle patrols in daytime**
- ii. **Increase Vehicle Patrols at night**
- iii. **Institute a Community Crime Patrol system, similar to Campus Area**
- iv. **Educate community about defensible space principals.**
  1. Cared for properties discourage criminal activity.
  2. More foot traffic generated by more activity will discourage crime.
  3. Restoration of windows to storefronts will put "eyes on the street".
  4. Bulk purchase programs to decrease costs of security cameras, alarm systems etc.
- v. **Traffic calming**
  1. Eliminate most left turn restrictions on Parsons Avenue.
  2. Construct sidewalk corner extensions around parking lanes at intersections where not in interference with bus stop needs.
  3. More bus shelters with decorative appeal.
  4. Lower the speed limit to 25 miles per hour.

**II. Organization: Create a Neighborhood Commercial Manager (NCM) Office**

This Manager and Board would function in much the same way as a mall manager would, responsible for unified management of the length of Parsons Avenue. This position requires experience in economic development, business retention and expansion strategies, as well as business recruitment, consensus building and organization skills. The duties would include:

- a. **Marketing and facilitating deal structuring to attract the desired users for the available space.**
  - i. **This position would become the facilitator of or a link to recommendations programs in Section I. above**
  - ii. **Create and maintain a data base of available property and posting on the Internet.**
- b. **Oversight / creating programs to ensure maintenance of the cleanliness and general environment**
- c. **Monitoring and facilitating housing development activity**
- d. **Retention and Expansion program for existing (well run) businesses in the neighborhood**
- e. **Create a marketing plan- graphics, themes, events and promotions -Carry the colors and theme through on signage, plant materials, street furnishings etc.**
- f. **Organize Avenue beautification projects**
  - i. **Borrowed ideas that work well in the urban streetscape include floral themes (e.g. Frankenmuth, MI) window boxes and planters**
  - ii. **Work with community groups to organize/ hire youth groups to plant and maintain.** Potential partners include Columbus Recreation and Parks, horticulture programs at tech schools and service organizations to grow and provide plant materials.
  - iii. **Possible image themes: "World Village" "Steel & Glass"**



**g. Organization of the NCM Office.**

- i. **In Indianapolis, one Manager is usually responsible for two to three neighborhood commercial corridors.** Parsons Avenue is so large, that a dedicated manager would be best.
- ii. **Seek foundation and institution support for seed money for this office.**
- iii. **Allow the NCM organization to also carry out small redevelopment projects, to develop a revenue stream.** The effort could begin with land bank properties Existing Community Urban Redevelopment Corporations in Columbus provide financing model. The first project should be an important building that would be the NCM office on Parsons Avenue. Excess space would be leased out to help with operations costs.
- iv. **Like a mall manger, the NCM could retain ownership/ control of a few properties across the corridor, and could exercise the option of providing free build outs, reduced rents, or rent guarantees to highly desirable new businesses- generally those that have anchor potential.**
- v. The NCM would coordinate activities with community groups and the Parsons Avenue Merchant's Association (PAMA).
- vi. The NCM would assist PAMA in increasing its membership. It would develop incentives, such as paying for memberships for first year members.
- vii. When the business mix on the Avenue has strengthened, the NCM can approach the business community about creating a Business Special Improvement District to fund special improvement projects, or provide long term funding.

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### III. Design

**a. Enforce the Urban Commercial Overlay (see Section I and II above)**

Studies have shown that design is a common factor in all successful projects.

- i. **Protect and promote adaptive reuse of structures with architectural character.** This is important to image and theme for identity and marketing of the Avenue.
- ii. **Utilize rehab linked tax rebates for compliant building improvements, both commercial and residential.**
- iii. **Code enforcement**

**b. Improve Housing Stock**

- i. **Institute Systematic Code Enforcement long term**
- ii. **Civic Associations continue to educating and linking owners to available City Housing Rehab programs.**
- iii. **Partner with lenders through Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) obligations and service organizations to create additional resources for housing rehab and repairs.**
  1. Assist elderly and disabled homeowners with maintenance chores. Link with City Tool Library program.
- iv. **Expand residential development tax abatement as used in the Downtown to the Corridor.**
- v. **Encourage more structures to be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places**
  1. Provides access to additional tax credits for qualified renovation work

### IV. Promotions

- a. **Promotions are mostly a function of the Neighborhood Commercial Manager Office. See II, Organization - marketing**
- b. **Community Groups events should be cross marketed with the business community.**
- c. **Neighborhoods, businesses, City and partners all join together in publicizing and celebrating redevelopment successes.**

# Priority Investment Location Site Plans



**Southern Gateway** Business - Office - Trade District



**Location**



**View of New Retail Construction & Urban Plaza**



**View of Farmer's Market & Pocket Park**



**Existing Site**



**Plan Key:**

- |   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> New Construction (Office/Institutional/Retail) | <b>5</b> Urban Plaza          |
| <b>2</b> New Construction / Adaptive Re-Use             | <b>6</b> Farmer's Market      |
| <b>3</b> New Parking Lots (4 Spaces / 1,000 SF Minimum) | <b>7</b> Outdoor Display Area |
| <b>4</b> Potential Residential Use                      | <b>8</b> "Pocket Park"        |

**Central Neighborhood** the Mid-Town of the Southside



**Location**



**View of Restored Streetscape**



**Detail of New Infill Building and Restored CMACAO Building**



**Existing Site**



Plan Key:

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1 Remove 1 Story Portion of CMACAO Building        | 4 Restoration of Existing Retail   |
| 2 Restoration & Adaptive Re-Use of CMACAO Building | 5 New Parking Lot Behind Buildings |
| 3 Infill Parking Lot with New Building             | 6 Streetscape Restoration          |

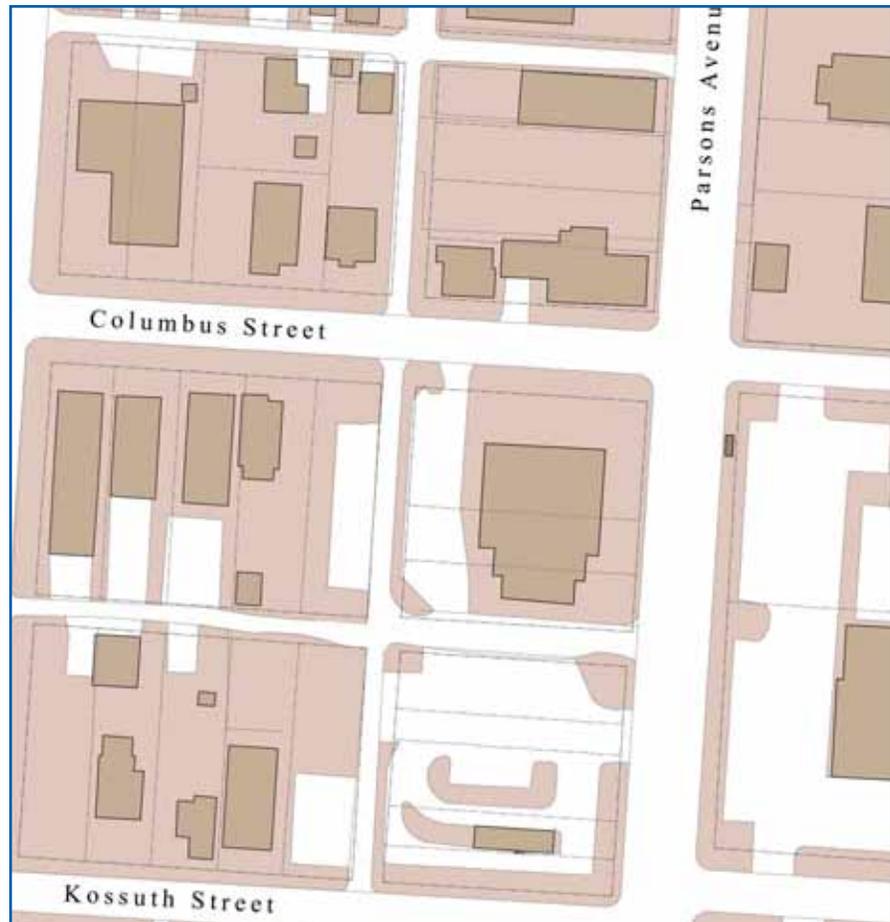
North District & Gateway Commercial District



Location



View of Restored Streetscape



Existing Site



**Plan Key:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>1</b> Library Converts To Retail / Restaurant Uses</p> | <p><b>5</b> Parking Reconfigurations</p>              |
| <p><b>2</b> New Construction (Retail / Residential)</p>      | <p><b>6</b> Remove Alley, Create Pedestrian Plaza</p> |
| <p><b>3</b> Adaptive Re-Use (Church to Bank)</p>             | <p><b>7</b> Streetscape Improvements</p>              |
| <p><b>4</b> Renovation Of Existing Retail</p>                |   |



# Next Steps



To assure that the multi-faceted activities recommended by this plan go forward, a Vision Plan Implementation Committee should be formed. Initially this Committee should be constituted from representatives from Columbus Urban Growth Corporation, the Southside community, the Neighborhood services Division/Neighborhood Liaison, Columbus Department of Development, especially the Economic Development Division and Land Redevelopment Office, City Council and the Neighborhood Commercial Project Manager when hired.

This group should meet at least quarterly for about two to five years to report on progress on the plan, and to access the expertise of the others. The group would determine for itself when other members should be recruited, and when the timing of meetings should be altered, as needed to accomplish tasks as they arise.

A recommended set of eight task areas to be undertaken immediately include:

## 1. Priority Investment Location - Southern Gateway



- a. Who- Columbus Urban Growth Corporation
- b. What- Aggregate property, redevelop and market site
  - i. Acquire properties
  - ii. Develop plans- with community input- and financial package- line up tenants
  - iii. Begin clearance and construction

## 2. Priority Investment Location - Central Neighborhood



- a. Who- Neighborhood Commercial Manager Office
- b. What- the old Columbus Metropolitan Area Community Action Organization (CMACAO) building, or book bindery building, or other available suitable building in area
  - i. Acquire property for offices and income
  - ii. Develop plans- with community input- and financial package- line up tenants and partners
  - iii. Begin construction

## 3. Priority Investment Location - North District



- a. Who- Neighborhood Commercial Manager Office, City Economic Development Office
- b. What- Economic development action
  - i. Marketing available buildings or lots to needed new businesses- banks and sit-down restaurants
  - ii. Provide tax incentives to attract

4. Set up an Land Bank program that is not funded by Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and not limited by CDBG rules



- a. Who- Columbus Department of Development, Land Development Office
- b. What- Acquire properties, make “shovel” or “hammer” ready for developers

5. Tax incentive program



- a. Who- City Council with help from the Economic Development Division
- b. What- Expand financial incentives to small businesses
  - i. Create tax incentives to entice desired businesses to locate on the Avenue- 25% of City property taxes, plus 50% rebate of city income taxes generated
  - ii. Create tax rebates (of city taxes) for rehab costs for certified façade improvements, residential and commercial- at least 75% of costs, pro-rated over 10 years
  - iii. Utilize Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for public improvement work that supports new developments of at least 1000 LF of frontage on Parsons Avenue

6. Create the Neighborhood Commercial Manager Office



- a. Who-Founding Board–Representatives from City Council, Department of Development, Columbus Urban Growth Corporation, Parsons Avenue Merchants Association (PAMA)
- b. What- Establish start up procedures
  - i. Define roles and 1st year work objectives
    - 1. Central Neighborhood (program office) project
    - 2. Corridor image, theme and marketing plan
  - ii. Set budget
  - iii. Apply for seed funds- Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and others
  - iv. Hire staff

## 7. Work with City Engineering / Traffic Division to institute traffic improvements



- a. Who- Vision Plan Implementation Committee
- b. What- Traffic calming
  - i. Reduce or eliminate "no left turn" signs at traffic signals
  - ii. Allow 24 hour parking in most areas of Parsons Avenue (exceptions might include, of course, bus stops)
  - iii. Reduce the speed limit to 25 miles per hour
  - iv. Permit the building of "bump out islands" to restrict lanes around parking at intersections when redevelopment, or sidewalk replacements occur

## 8. Explore Northern Gateway Partnerships



- a. Who- Form a small committee of property owners in the Gateway area, Southside community member, the Design Center and the Neighborhood Commercial Project Manager Office
- b. What- Explore design concepts for creating a gateway effect
  - i. Major property owners implement projects on their properties that relate to the desired gateway effect
  - ii. Propose public plaza or infrastructure project that ties the gateway together
  - iii. Explore funding options for each phase

# Appendix



## KEY AREAS

Part of the purpose of the study portion of the Parsons Avenue Vision Plan was to identify properties that represent "Key Areas" of both opportunity and concern along the corridor. Inputs for this part of the study were gathered from recommendations of the historic property review, the market study, community members and evaluation of land use patterns.

A lot of the general community commentary clustered about properties that present a poor appearance. Clearly, managing the turnover of such properties, to insure improvements in the retail mix and aesthetics needs to be an ongoing effort. Specifically and frequently the opinion voiced was that all vacant lots, abandoned and run-down properties should be considered Key Areas of concern. Such properties are magnets for drugs, prostitution and vagrants, seriously detracting from the community's image and sense of safety. Another generalized concern was the proliferation of used car lots. These types of uses interrupt the massing of retail uses along the corridor and mostly have not been attentive to aesthetics.

The consulting team identified the following properties or blocks that represent particular Key Areas for future attention. These properties or areas are deemed significant due to clusters of factors that affect each, such as market opportunities. These are presented with photos, maps of their area and a description of what opportunities or challenges they represent.

### 1887 Parsons Ave, Schottensteins Site & Surroundings

The Schottensteins store itself is of importance for a number of reasons. The community still stings from the recent loss of this flagship department store which had a long history of growth and service in this community. The community strongly desires to see the building renovated or replaced, but with an emphasis on re-use as a similarly size retailer (Marcs, Kohls, Target).



The site and its surroundings lie at the commercial entry to the Parsons Corridor, just north of Buckeye Steel Castings and the street overpass, close to St. Rt. 104. It therefore has some location advantage. The surroundings include another large parcel as well as other smaller ones that have little structural significance. If aggregated this area represents a redevelopment opportunity that is unique to any other place along the corridor. Although the market analysis does not suggest that the site would be attractive to another department store in the near future, the location would lend itself to coordinated redevelopment of a center encompassing a broad mix of uses, including transit connections, offices, business incubators, enlargement of the Maloney Health Center and a variety of retail and services that would serve the surrounding business and residential community.

The surrounding area includes the 300 block of Reeb Ave., which represents the Steelton Neighborhood Gateway. (366 Reeb Ave. was mentioned by a participant, but this address is not in auditor's data base.) 352 Reeb Ave is the old Foodliner and 377 Reeb Ave. is Power of Prayer Church, which has been identified as being potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. This fact should be taken under consideration in any redevelopment proposals.



Just to the east of Parsons Avenue, on Marion Road, is a farmer's market stand, which is a community institution for fresh fruits and vegetables. The City owns property behind this lot that extends northward through the block. It represents an opportunity to create a more organized open space that could co-exist nicely with the farmer's market.

**Lincoln Park Elementary School, 1666 South 18th Street**

Members of the community nominated this building for a variety of reuses if closed, including a location for the Library relocation or conversion to a business incubator. The building is slated for demolition when its replacement building is completed. The size of the site and its location in the middle of a residential neighborhood presents certain challenges. Important to the Southside as a whole, the structure does not appear to have a close relationship with the Parsons Avenue corridor. Columbus Recreation and Parks Department should be encouraged to develop a user friendly park on the site once cleared, that would be a genuine asset to the neighborhood.



Lincoln Park Elementary School

**555 Woodrow, Federal Glass Site**

Marion Road serves as a major connector east to Lockbourne Road. A number of large properties that once housed major manufacturing employers, such as Federal Glass and Techneglas, can be accessed from Marion Road. These sites, represent important opportunities to retool for clean manufacturing businesses that serve niche markets that could provide excellent jobs for the residents of the community and reinforce the City's tax base.



The former Federal Glass building.

**Techneglas Site, 711 Southwood**

The new owner of this site has plans to partition the building to lease to smaller manufacturing businesses, and call centers.



### 1578 Parsons - Lois Mann's Restaurant



The Lois Mann's Restaurant site, shown on the map above, has the advantage of being previously cleared, and the existing building is a mid-twentieth century infill of no historic significance. This structure and parking lot currently detracts from the community's image and breaks the flow of the streetscape.

**1131 Parsons** – for sale- This building is representative of the Victorian Italianate architecture scattered throughout the corridor. Many of the characteristics of the Italianate style still exist in this structure and make it a suitable candidate for rehabilitation and productive reuse, perhaps as housing. In spite of the poorly done building to the back of the lot, there are two other structures in the same block, shown below, that reinforce the period residential character of this block if they could all be rehabilitated and retained.



**1111 Parsons** - SW corner at Beihl Ave. Residential buildings with historic character, one well kept, the other needed rehabilitation. A map of this block is shown below.



### Moler Street to Jenkins Area:



The area of the intersection of Frebis Avenue and Parsons contains anchor stores, Kroger Foods, CVS Pharmacy and TJ's Country Place restaurant, and thus draws a lot of traffic. Valuable as these anchors are, the prominent placement of large parking lots in front of the buildings intrude on the

historic character of the street. Examples exist of integrating such uses into more traditional site layouts. Thus a few properties in this area are currently available for sale, and represent an opportunity to restore the Commercial Overlay principals during redevelopment. These include the following:

**1414 Parsons** (Used car lot across from Kroger) built 1961



This lot, currently for sale, could be acquired and redeveloped, bringing a new structure into a closer relationship with the street, introducing a more sympathetic architectural style, and introducing a new retail use that would benefit from and build on the synergy created by the existing anchors.

**1451,1457,1463,1467 Parsons**



This cluster of run-down homes, five units total, lies just south of Kroger on the west side of Parsons. They range in age and style from late nineteenth century Victorian to early twentieth century Craftsman bungalow but are Zoned C-4, reducing their marketability for homes. They perhaps could be restored, though one just suffered a devastating fire, and used for professional office space, and would also contribute to and benefit from synergy with the existing anchor stores. If demolition and redevelopment should occur, it should be in keeping with the Urban Commercial Overlay standards. An excellent model for redevelopment is provided by the local Case Study in the Clintonville area. The decorative lamp post shown is evidence of street improvements installed by the City of Columbus as part of a past Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization Program.

**Parsons & Whittier** (From Stanley Ave. south to Siebert) Mid-Corridor District

This three block stretch on the east side of Parsons contains an excellent collection of historic buildings that are in very good shape. They are generally occupied with a variety of retail uses that are complemented by a gasoline station and Post Office on the west side of the Whittier/Parsons intersection. As redevelopment plans for the Whittier Peninsula proceed, a strong node of commercial uses in this area could create a strong synergy along Whittier Street, drawing consumers in from the west.

This area probably needs only minor investments to retain its character, but will benefit from careful conservation of the assets that are there and support to existing businesses.





936 Parsons Urban Outfitters clothing store.

**Kessco Drug Store**, seen just to the right in the above photo, owns the vacant lot just north of 936 that forms the corner with Stanley Avenue. Such vacant lots provide opportunities for the creation of public plazas to introduce functional green space to the mix of uses. Currently, The Church for All People, is acquiring the site and the Kessco Drug Store building for an expansion of its programs. It will need a variance to utilize the open space for additional parking. Although the efforts of the organization are laudable, even the not-for-profit community should be held to the goals of the Vision Plan with regard to changes to the Avenue environment.



**942-48 Parsons** (Kessco Drug Store is for sale. The 1st floor retail space has been bricked in, sacrificing some of the character of the structure and blocking the visual interest that display windows provide. Recently the Church for all People has put forth a plan to use the building for a number of its programs, and is being encouraged to restore the storefronts.

**960 Parsons** Located on the southeast corner of Whittier and Parsons, this building and its businesses appear both adequately maintained and viable, contributing to the character of this area.



**980 Parsons** (Old CMACAO Building)



At the intersection of Reinhard Avenue, is a structure, shown above, abandoned with the demise of the Columbus Metropolitan Area Community Action Organization (CMACAO). The sudden loss of the tenants of the building created both a void in the community, and an opportunity for restoration of a more pleasing exterior of the building. The building also has the advantage of having space for parking in the back. Such a building could be redeveloped with retail spaces such as galleries, on the first floor with loft apartments above. Plans were distributed on the internet showing the building reconfigured as upscale townhouse condominiums. Either would be a desirable configuration and would transform the current blight to a featured asset. The building is currently offered for sale by HER realtors.

**1000 -1014 Parsons** These buildings, found south of Reinhard, are denoted in the Historic Review portion of the study as excellent examples of the Tudor Revival form of early twentieth century architecture. The owner should be recognized for maintaining them in their historic context and this owner and others who do likewise should be provided with support when needed.



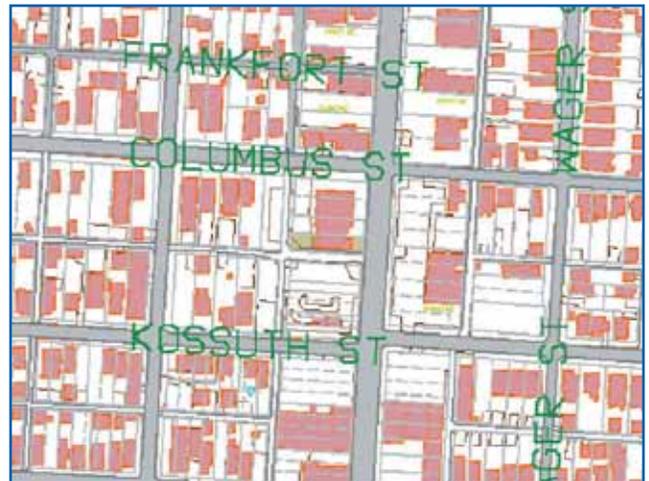
**Northern District.** Extends roughly between 743 Parsons , Plank's Restaurant, and the Parson's/ Livingston Intersection.



**743 Parsons, Plank's Restaurant,** has been a community fixture for a number of years. They have done an excellent job with retaining the historic appeal of the building, and incorporating

the use of plant material to soften the urban hardscape. This is a model demonstrating that a business can comply with the Commercial Overlay and also be successful. With the increased traffic expected from the pending construction at Children's Hospital, this area can evolve into a restaurant and entertainment node. The lot directly across Parsons Avenue is currently being redeveloped for a Subway Sub Shop Franchise. The market potential in this area may be strong enough to require little City investment, but it is important for the City to maintain a high standard for future development plans.

**845 Parsons – Columbus Metropolitan Library, Parsons Ave. Branch**  
Library site & block to south & north



845 Parsons – Columbus Metropolitan Library, Parsons Ave. Branch

It was learned that the Columbus Metropolitan Library is evaluating all its facilities at this time. The Parsons Ave. Branch is much too small for its current usage and may need to be enlarged, and/ or relocated. If moved, the Library system has some evidence that it should locate on the east side of Parsons Ave, and be more centrally located within the Vision Plan study area. These do represent long term plans, five to ten years out.

The Library has committed itself to engaging the public when ready to begin planning this project.

The expansion of the Library, regardless of location, represents a significant future benefit to the surrounding community. This proposal represents a challenge to identifying a large enough location that meets the parameters for rebuilding (which are not yet established), but also an opportunity for re-use of the current building in retail or café spaces. The building, though not historic, is still an asset to the community and is configured in a way that would easily lend itself to being subdivided into a series of retail and café types of users.

Other nearby properties also represent redevelopment opportunities, creating another node where redevelopment, along the lines of modest interventions (compared to the Schottensteins site) rehabilitation and site changes, would have significant impact upon the function of the corridor and benefit the community. For example:



**865-869 Parsons** - This building is located immediately to the south of the current Library, adjacent to Kossuth Street. It is currently offered for sale, but community members believe the asking price may be unreasonably high. Any redevelopment of the site should be consistent with the Neighborhood Commercial Overlay Zoning. Recent indications are that a fast food entity is exploring the site.

Upon considerations of the Library's requirements for a future site, members of the community suggested the following sites as being potentially good alternative locations for the Library should it proceed with relocation of the Parsons Ave. branch. These sites represent a set of potential Key Areas for redevelopment, as their suitability for Library use would make them also suitable for other enterprises needing similar space.

Suggestions made by community members for future Library sites included the following:

- Lois Mann's Restaurant site
- Kroger site
- Parsons & Whittier (discussed in relation to the CMACAO building)
- Lincoln Park Elementary School site \* after demolition
- Reeb Elementary School \* on the school closings list
- Beck Elementary School \* on the school closings list

### Parsons & Livingston Area

This intersection forms the northernmost limit of the study area. It is heavily impacted by the presence of Children's Hospital, Bobb Chevrolet-Geo Co. and a strip center that until recently was anchored by a Kroger Foods. In the immediate area of this intersection, nearly all the historic structures have been replaced, even though the current uses have been in place for a long time. At this time, this intersection forms the northern entry into the Parsons Avenue corridor and it has generated concern among some community members that it should be given a "Gateway" feature.



**Bobb Chevrolet-Geo Co., 567 E. Livingston**, is highlighted on the map above.

Children's Hospital, as part of a massive rebuilding plan intends to construct a parking garage over an area that is now a surface parking lot on the southeast of the intersection. Some community members strongly object to the garage and have campaigned for retail, office, or commercial to be incorporated on ground floor facing Parsons Avenue. Examples of such mixing of uses in a parking structure have provided opportunities to maintain the rhythm of a streetscape.

After consideration of many factors, the consulting team decided that it would not recommend pushing the Hospital to incorporate retail into the structure. It would be a good thing to do, but we do not feel that it would provide enough benefit to make a strong recommendation for it. In this particular site, the limited amount of new retail space that can be absorbed immediately, the large amount of available space on the Avenue, the location of the proposed garage at the northernmost edge of the study area, and Children's stated willingness to incorporate design features into the facades of the structure, all contributed to our decision to not make this a recommendation of the Vision Plan. In addition, Children's points out that they do not want to expend their time and energy in commercial property management. Planning for construction is underway, and it is being designed with possible expansion in mind. The Hospital has indicated a willingness to reconsider the issue if it becomes prudent to expand the garage. If the community can find a way become less adversarial with the Hospital and begin to accept the Hospital as a partner they may be able to work together on important programs and projects in the future.

## CASE STUDIES

The study looked to other communities that have embarked on revitalization projects to explore strategies and lessons that would be applicable to Parsons Avenue. The following examples seemed to have particular similarities to Parsons Avenue.

### Paducah Artist "Relocation" Program

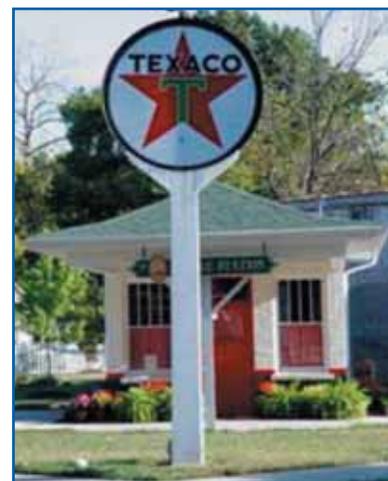
Paducah, Kentucky, set out to revitalize its historic neighborhoods and commercial districts. The region around them offered exceptional natural amenities, both scenic and outdoor recreation. Sensing that these amenities would be attractive to artistic younger people, they identified artists as an industry niche to try to attract to their town. Artists and their galleries also provide another attraction for tourism. Artists however,

work independently, as small businesses, rather than as part of large scale employers (e.g. auto factories). By employing some of the same tools used to attract large scale employers, they were successful in attracting new residents employed in the arts. Artists, as a group, often tend to not be highly compensated, and proved an eager group to purchase and renovate older housing in Paducah's neighborhoods, and so incentives to reinforce these activities were also arranged. Paducah's program included:

- Incentives to attract the Artistic Community
- Local banks incentive lending to artists buying renovating homes
- Group health insurance provided through the Kentucky Arts Council
- Joint marketing & promotions at a national level, including free web pages
- Preservation tax credits (local)
- Enterprise Zone tax incentives
- Business assistance, e.g. business plans, finance and business loans



Musicians play at a renovated house converted to a café.



Historic gasoline station renovated and reused as a candle shop retains its original character.

## Indianapolis

Indianapolis created a set of programs that are available in tandem in all their historic neighborhoods and historic commercial districts. FLIP sponsored by the Indiana Historic Landmarks, provides funding for renovations of historic properties, including housing.

### FOCUS program

- The local neighborhoods have local Community Development Corporations
- 3 Commercial Corridor Consortiums (2-3 Neighborhoods each)
- Hired Commercial Corridor Project Managers
- Partnerships and financial support with the Local Initiatives Support Corp (LISC)
- Façade Improvement Rebate Program- up to 75 % of cost

Note: LISC also provides training for CDC's Grants that were used by CDC consortiums to hire Corridor Project Managers Will also fund rehab projects that involve only housing



Hoosier Flats- Restoration of 5000 SF vacant first floor retail spaces. 50 residential units above. The Davian building next door was a \$7 million mixed use building. Together they create a massing that stimulates more activity.



Genesis Plaza Health Center- 30,000 SF of new build medical offices, which is also home to the local CDC.



The Enrich Building- 64000 of adaptive reuse, leased to a number of users, offices, warehousing, a training center, small businesses and non-profits.



16th Street- This commercial corridor is built on a historic neighborhood, and links the hospital at one extreme to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway at the other. A total mixture of commercial uses now also include parks, grocers and restaurants.

### ArtSPACE USA Projects

ArtSPACE is the leading non profit real estate developer for the arts. They work across the country by forming partnerships with local lenders, development agencies and other resources.

- Also provide consulting services and property management



Everett Station Lofts, Portland, Oregon- This acquisition/rehab project developed 47 lofts for live/work space and with the retail below contains 62,158 SF, costing \$7.6 million (average housing cost of \$161,700).

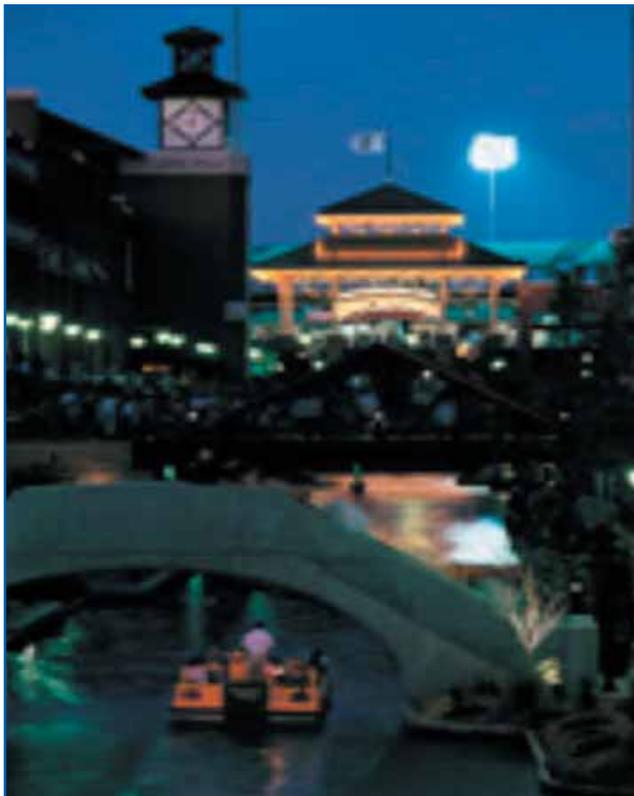


Elder Street (Former Jackson Hospital) in Houston, Texas – This 59,000 SF project yielded 34 live/work units, for a total investment of \$6.3 million (\$185,300 per unit).

**OKC- Oklahoma City**

In the early 1990's the whole city of Oklahoma

- OK International Film Council
- International MADA Auto Show
- Started with LP of tenants who occupied a building in the district
- MAPS projects total \$300 Million since 1990's



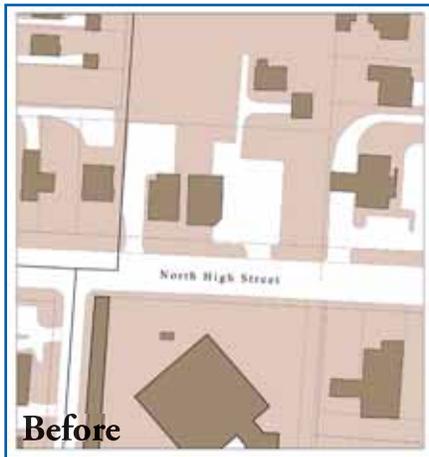
**Eric Grohe Murals  
Bucyrus & Steubenville**



Eric Grohe Murals- examples of murals installed as public art, in conjunction with a small public plaza for gatherings and outdoor entertainment. This project received widespread support and was funded through donations. It now serves as a focal point for the community

## LOCAL EXAMPLES

### Beechwold Place



Two unsightly buildings were demolished, aggregating three parcels. The redevelopment reconfigured a retail plaza with on site parking and opening up vistas to the church on the next block. This example shows a way to sensitively redevelop modest size sites and incorporate modern parking needs.

### Tree Tops – Brewery District



This example shows that mixtures of housing and commercial can exist together on a corridor. Shown is a development consisting of restoration of existing houses and the use of infill. The new construction uses architecture that complements the existing on each side. Unseen in this view is the larger condominium structure that will be constructed behind.

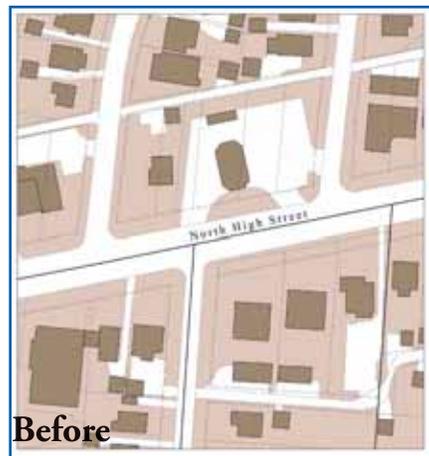
### The Winders Building – Short North

This is a good example of reuse and restoration of a historic commercial structure. Fortunately, most of the historic structural elements were still in place, requiring only the re-opening of the window display areas.



### Clintonville “Sunoco Station”

An abandoned gasoline station was demolished. The redevelopment provided a series of retail buildings, built “to the street” and in a style sympathetic to the period architecture of the neighborhood. This is an excellent illustration of the spirit of the Urban Design Overlay standards.



## MARKET STUDY SUMMARY

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions and recommendations are based upon an in-depth examination of housing, retail/commercial, industrial, and institutional uses within the study area and an analysis of Census-based demographic and economic trends. Our conclusions and recommendations are also based upon extensive interviews and focus groups with stakeholders in the study area, including area residents, civic leaders, business owners, realtors, planners, and economic development spokespersons.

#### Public Perceptions

The message that the South Side has been “forgotten” among other city of Columbus areas has pervaded the dialogue of a variety of respondents during the research process. Conversely, neighborhood residents have a strong sense of pride in the area’s history, past and present inhabitants, and general attitude.

The Vision Plan will amplify the positive aspects of the area from a land-use planning standpoint. These aspects include walkable neighborhoods and easy access to public transportation, jobs, and community services. This area of the central city has a host of advantages in terms of location, accessibility, diversity and neighborhood composition. The area is well-served by public and private community and social service organizations.

Recommendations for increasing positive perceptions of the area include:

- Influence public perceptions via news coverage of redevelopment
- Publish FBI Crime Indices that illustrate the comparability of Parsons Avenue crime indices to the other city areas
- Encourage block watch networks and information sharing
- Indicate Children’s Hospital as the “entry point” to the Parsons Avenue corridor.
- Promote positively that two developments in the northern portion of the corridor are planned, including a new Children’s Hospital parking garage and a Subway restaurant.
- Create a cooperative partnership between neighborhood groups and Parsons Avenue Merchants Association (PAMA), neighborhood schools, and Children’s Hospital
- Invite the community to experience a variety of affordable retail and restaurant choices
- Inform visitors about the area’s rich history

#### Visibility and Access

Vehicular access to the study area is considered excellent from the north, including highly developed neighborhoods of downtown and the near east side, as well as from areas to the south. Traffic on Parsons Avenue is considered heavy for the existing infrastructure. Two of Parsons Avenue’s four lanes are used for parking at all but the busiest times of the day. Improved street designs to calm traffic flow and speed are recommended for safer, lower-speed vehicular access to areas within the study area. Further, improvements to intersections around institutional land uses (schools, the Parsons Avenue Library) are recommended for safety purposes.

Pedestrian access to the study area is considered very good from the neighborhoods to the east and west of the study area. In our opinion, the area has great potential to draw more pedestrians via sidewalk and façade improvements and development of neighborhood-scale retail destinations, particularly in the northern portion of the study area.

Although located just southeast of the Columbus Central Business District, the study area suffers from a distinct lack of visibility. Large-scale land uses “cut off” the corridor from the fabric of downtown and the near east side, removing any continuum of retail, or suggestion that retailers exist south of Livingston Avenue. At the south end of the study area, large-scale industrial uses isolate the corridor visually from residential areas to the south, effectively sealing the area from the north and south.

Although signs announcing entry into the “South Side,” are currently placed at the north and south entrances to the study area, it is our opinion that more aggressive, aesthetically pleasing signage or markers are needed at both the northern and southern ends of the corridor. A defining structure, such a large mural, an arch, new lighting, landscaping or landmark would enhance visibility. Further, signage might include language welcoming visitors to Parsons Avenue, rather than the more general sounding “South Side”.

As the city grows closer to reconfiguration of the interchange of Interstates 70 and 71, it is our recommendation that consideration should be taken for making improvements to the downtown/east side/ and south side neighborhoods that it affects. Additional access points that would connect the site directly with downtown will be impacted by the Interstate 70/71 realignment, which is still under design review and due to begin construction in 2008. Further, this reconfiguration will have the added impact of generating construction noise and light pollution for a brief period.

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Infill properties have replaced many historic structures within the study area. This mixture of old and new buildings, design standards, and non-compatible levels of quality dilutes the attraction of a few aesthetically outstanding historic and architectural structures. Therefore the creation of a highly attractive retail cluster would, in our opinion, increase visibility around the northern entrance to the study area.

Additional comments on visibility and access include:

- The Children's Hospital parking garage is an attractive structure that reflects that institution's need for more parking. By working with Children's Hospital, area merchants can, over time, benefit from proximity to this institution rather than have its location serve as a detriment or infringement of the continuum of neighborhood-level retail.
- PAMA's "Welcome to the Southside" and 20th Century Veterans Memorials call for community support as well as ongoing maintenance. Their purpose is to provide a "pocket park" setting and focal point near the entrance to the study area.
- Bringing buildings back up to the street via enforcement of the urban commercial overlay will, over time, help to restore the historic nature of the corridor and increase pedestrian traffic in the study area.
- Implementation of traffic calming measures will improve the pedestrian experience of the corridor in terms of aesthetics and safety. These measures will also serve to create a "friendlier" more neighborhood scale climate.

## **RETAIL/COMMERCIAL MARKET SUMMARY**

### **Strengths:**

- Tradition as retail corridor; base of successful existing retailers.
- Relatively high traffic counts for neighborhood retail
- Potential to support some niche retail as well as neighborhood retail.
- Potential to capture business from daytime workers in the immediate north and central areas.
- Potential for development of small-space dining establishments with low overhead

### **Challenges:**

- Lack of visibility
- Inconsistent architecturally/streetscapes
- Marketing challenge--poor reputation with uncertain potential support base
- Limited capacity to support consistent markets other than neighborhood retail because of parking and access issues.
- Ingress/egress from existing parking areas is difficult

### **Retail/Commercial**

Many different types of retail and service businesses can be found along Parsons Avenue, but the uneven streetscape includes neglected facades and vacant firstfloor businesses. Many buildings with zero setbacks are mixed with newer buildings with parking lots in front of them. Businesses mix with single-family residences in fair to poor condition.

While this streetscape lacks continuity, its anchors (Kroger, Tee Jaye's, CVS Pharmacy and Planks) perform well and represent potential for growth of new retail in clusters around them.

The corridor contains an imbalanced number of bars, pawnshops, used furniture and appliance stores, storefront churches and used car lots. However, potential exists for development of additional thrift stores, if they are well managed and have eclectic, attractive offerings.

The corridor links many emerging neighborhoods, and these neighborhoods contain individuals and civic groups eager to decrease crime, improve housing and schools and preserve the sense of history and culture that the area holds. The growth of civic involvement of surrounding neighborhoods is a very positive indicator of growing potential for successful redevelopment efforts.

Based upon our demographic and economic analysis of the Near South submarket, field survey of retail space, and interviews with project stakeholders, it is our opinion that retail developed within the Parsons Avenue corridor should begin to solidify retail and commercial nodes at strategic points along the corridor, taking advantage of available existing space as well as currently vacant land. Development, or redevelopment or retail should provide a neighborhood scale continuum of architecture and retail offerings from the downtown and surrounding retail strips, catering to neighborhood residents, commuters and daytime workers.

The following are recommendations for development of specific areas of the corridor, as well as more general recommendations concerning new retail and commercial development.

### **Southern cluster (former Schottensteins site and surrounding vacant parcels)**

The site reflects potential for creation of a small neo-traditional development that would incorporate housing with retail, commercial and institutional uses that would anchor the southern portion of the study area. This space would, in our opinion, require the greatest subsidies, and would be subsidized according to user. This could include tax incentives, affordable lease agreements, and profit guarantees. The following uses are recommended for the site:

- Small to medium scale discount retailer (Marc's 50,000 square feet plus parking)
- Call center or other office user (30,000 square feet)
- Computer training center (10,000 square feet)
- Business incubator in partnership with OSU, Rickenbacker Small Business Development Council (10,000 square feet)
- Flexible space with gallery, sales areas for synergy with Farmer's Market (<3,000 square feet)
- Possible affordable senior housing (parcels west of Parsons) (35,000 square feet)
- COTA Transportation hub for Rickenbacker workers

Given the site's proximity to Rickenbacker, we expect that the site could be marketed to attract a call center user that already has a presence in Central Ohio, or is seeking to establish a presence here, given the increased efficiency that the intermodal transport facility promises. Several national retail chains currently have distribution centers in the Columbus area. These retailers include Target (West Jefferson), The Limited, Big Lots, Pier One, J.C. Penney, Value City, Gap (Groveport), Dollar General (Zanesville) and Spiegel Group.

Other opportunities for customer service or back office work could be found within the growing Children's Hospital or Ohio State University Hospital network.

Central cluster; scattered sites including:  
CMACAO Building (Southeast portion of Parsons and Reinhard)  
1414 Parsons Avenue (For-sale used automobile lot)

The redevelopment of approximately one million square feet of manufacturing and office space at Tech Center/South is expected to bring 200 to 250 jobs to the former Techneglas site in the center of the study area. The following uses are suggested for this portion of the corridor:

- Fast casual restaurant chain
- Barbecue carry out
- Bakery/coffee shop
- Banking kiosk with ATM
- Ethnic food sales/carryout

Growth of new retail on Parsons Avenue within the suggested sites is based upon the following:

- Availability of high-quality retail space
- Synergy with the popular Kroger grocery store
- Opportunity to draw workers without need for additional parking
- Opportunity to draw support from households in central and southern neighborhoods of corridor

Current Parsons Avenue Library Site and adjacent vacant site to the south

The northern portion of the corridor has the greatest potential for unsubsidized retail/commercial redevelopment and infill construction. This is based upon the conclusions that the surrounding neighborhoods have the most expendable income, eclectic spending patterns, and have upward economic mobility. These neighborhoods are comprised of higher-income owner- and renter-occupied households. A portion of drive-by traffic can also be expected. Further, support could be cultivated among the hundreds of daytime workers who will use the parking garage planned for Children's Hospital employees. Retail should be geared toward the relatively diverse needs of these groups, with food offerings focusing somewhat more heavily on "on-the-go". This does not necessarily imply fast food; however it is our opinion that that concept would work well within the northern portion of the corridor.

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Suggested uses include:

- Bakery/coffee shop
- Sandwich shop/Deli/carry out
- Specialty food store
- Flexible second story office space
- Computer repair shop
- Ethnic restaurant
- Hair care/nails
- Dry cleaner
- Banking kiosk with ATM

Utilize available properties for development of new, small- to medium-scale retail spaces

The introduction of a small-to medium sized general retailer, drug store/pharmacy or other "general retail" user would serve to consolidate some of the larger vacant retail spaces within the corridor. Some of these retailers include Dollar General, CVS, Walgreen's and Marc's.

Marketing tools including demographic comparison table, maps of existing store coverage are often even more convincing and indicative of the potential within urban markets than economic incentives alone. Often retailers overlook urban areas in favor of familiar suburban territory. A demographic comparison can provide leverage for the city to show retailers the potential of urban markets, as well as begin to build relationships with a variety of retailers.

Given the synergies that exist within the Study Area for "used" and "thriff" products, we expect that additional high-quality establishments within these niches would have a good likelihood of survival.

We expect that additional well-placed eating and drinking establishments would, with proximity to existing restaurants, create "family dining" and "fast casual" nodes to serve the more budget challenged residents of the area as well as on-the-go workers.

Development of restaurant space along Parsons Avenue would attract affluent customers from neighborhoods to the west. However, it is our opinion that a significant amount of marketing would be required, given the competition that exists within the Near South as well as Downtown submarkets. Price sensitivity and quality is key to building a customer base within the neighborhoods surrounding Parsons Avenue. Based upon local expenditures and sales, there is potential, however, for new restaurants to attract dollars from within the neighborhood as well as from drive by traffic.

It is our opinion that a variety of restaurants, hair care and other personal services retail types emphasizing on convenience, quality, and affordability should find receptive markets at the subject project. We also expect that if provided with a generous incentive package, the larger general merchandiser could develop strong support with residents of surrounding neighborhoods.

Of course, the ratio of specialty stores should not tip the core retail balance away from neighborhood necessities. Keeping in mind that at the core of improvements to Parsons Avenue is maintaining highly walkable neighborhoods, the retail mix should be designed on a neighborhood scale. Retail offerings should be affordable to many different households.

Based upon our field survey of surrounding retail rates, we expect that rents per square foot for retail space at the retail node should be within the \$4.00 to \$7.00 per square foot (triple net) range. Triple net lessees pay rent plus expenses such as property taxes, insurance and maintenance.

Individual retail/office spaces should be on scale with the surrounding landscape, averaging 1,500 to 2,000 square feet each. Assuming that appropriate subsidies are in place, We expect that approximately 20,000 to 25,000 square feet of retail space could be supported at the northern and central retail areas (suggested above) over the next five to 10 years. The predominance of smaller retail spaces in Near South submarket as well as zero-line setback and multi-story space is in keeping with the "rough" plan for retail within the Parsons Avenue corridor.

## HOUSING MARKET SUMMARY

### Strengths:

- Housing stock is generally restorable
- Single-family homes predominate
- Neighborhoods have historical significance, character, continuity of single-family and duplex homes
- Wide variety of price points maximize marketability of for-sale housing
- Affordability of existing stock draws investors
- Housing values within the Near South neighborhoods are appreciating (32.0% for Merion Village and Schumacher Place; 34.0% for Olde Town East).

### Challenges:

- Perception of crime in neighborhoods
- Maintenance issues plague neighborhoods
- Very limited capacity within the Near South submarket to support new market-rate rental housing
- Trash and parking issues impact residents and potential residents negatively
- Surrounding land uses are not complimentary in several neighborhoods (i.e., mix of industrial and residential uses)
- Declining homeownership rates
- Lack of comprehensive code enforcement
- Many absentee landlords

### Housing

We examined for-sale and rental housing within a central city Housing Competitive Market Area (CMA). The Housing CMA includes four submarkets in Columbus' central city, including the study area (Near South), Downtown, Short North, and Near East. The following determinations and recommendations are based upon an extensive field survey of for-sale homes, both existing and new, as well as rental housing.

According to numerous realtors, developers, and community members, the existing for-sale housing market within study area neighborhoods is gaining momentum. The Near South area and surrounding areas have some of the fastest growing housing values in the city (32.0% for Merion Village and Schumacher Place; 34.0% for Olde Town East). Low interest rates and resurgence of historic/downtown neighborhoods have resulted in healthy appreciation rates in the market.

New single-family housing sales have been significantly constrained by the lack of appropriate land in the Housing Competitive Market Area. Although the Downtown sub-market is less

inhibited compared to the other submarkets, land costs encourage (and require) higher density development (e.g., multi-story condominiums). It is our opinion that historical sales of new single-family homes do not reflect the future potential. Recent activity in the market, in fact, indicates "pent up" demand for this housing alternative. For instance, when we surveyed the planned Harrison Park development in the Short North sub-market in September 2005, the project had no completed units but had already taken 25 reservations for single-family homes.

### Establish guidelines for housing preservation within south side civic organizations

- Housing is gaining value in many of the Near South submarket neighborhoods. Development and restoration of these neighborhoods will directly impact economic development on Parsons Avenue by attracting higher income households as well as encouraging neighborhood pride and higher home ownership rates.
- Increases in housing value will draw investors and homeowners, who tend to have a much higher degree of loyalty to area businesses.
- Average sales prices of existing homes in the Near East and Short North sub-market are somewhat higher compared to the new home sales within those two areas. We can attribute these differences in the Short North in part to the preference for historic homes as compared to relatively few "new" single-family home alternatives within the central city.
- The fact that existing, historic homes are valued higher than new build housing speaks to the continued efforts of historic preservation of existing stock within the corridor and surrounding neighborhoods. It is our recommendation that neighborhood civic associations focus on preservation of existing single-family homes in the area, and where applicable, encourage public and private development of infill singlefamily homes with design features in keeping with existing architecture.

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## Encourage public and private development of infill single-family homes

- Invite efforts to replace functionally obsolete and condemned housing with new market-rate and affordable infill homes
- Severely dilapidated units give opportunity for limited infill development. New single-family housing sales have been significantly constrained by the lack of appropriate land in the Housing Competitive Market Area.
- New affordable for-sale and for-rent infill housing developed by Columbus Housing Partnership experienced very high absorption rates, adding or keeping working households in the area, notes a spokesperson for that organization.
- The new-built, infill concept is attractive to both older and younger households—those that do not want to spend time on maintenance tasks.
- The Housing CMA has a net annualized demand for an estimated 20 newly constructed single-family homes based upon market-rate pricing and capture rates. This demand exists within two different price points: less than \$140,000 and \$200,000 to \$299,000. The demand would of course expand if developers targeted lower-income households with affordable for-sale units.
- Within the Near South submarket (2005) homes, new-construction infill, or “single-lot” homes ranged in price from \$109,000 to \$500,000, with an average price of \$222,000. Existing home sales reflected a much wider price range, \$10,000 to \$611,000 and a far lower average sales price (\$81,000).
- Based upon the 2000 Census, the Near South submarket has the lowest estimated (existing) housing value (estimated by homeowners) within the Housing CMA, at \$72,100. Compared with the Near East (\$82,300) and Downtown (\$162,300), this low estimated home value reflects a predominance of older stock that is likely in need of repairs, and may be negatively influenced by surrounding land uses. Explore further the potential for development of affordable and market-rate family and senior rental projects
- Nearly 90.0% of all housing units in the Near South submarket (2000) are single-unit attached or detached, or two- to four-unit structures. This is a considerable share of small number housing units. It is also indicative of the lack of modern conventional multifamily apartment development.
- The only existing conventional product identified within the Near South submarket is public housing operated by the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority. The three projects within the submarket boundaries (Lincoln Park, Reeb-Hosack Family Apartments and Marion Village Senior Apartments) have rents that are income-based, and would not be considered competitive with market-rate developments.
- Infill development of affordable (Low-Income Housing Tax Credit) and/or HOME funded apartments in limited numbers (up to 40 units) along Parsons Avenue or surrounding neighborhoods could be supported. Based upon absorption trends of single-family rental units, we expect that up to 40 units of affordable family apartments would experience lease-up periods of seven to 10 units per month.
- The construction of senior apartments with services or supportive living facility would likely be met with significant support from this area. Note that the majority of support for this type of housing would likely come from “older” seniors, that is, 75+ households within the Near South submarket. Based upon demographic and economic trends in the Near South submarket, we expect that the addition of 50 to 70 new affordable (Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, HOME) senior units to this market could be supported.
- We surveyed 50 for-rent single-family and duplex homes within the Near South submarket. A total of seven (14.0%) of the single-family rentals surveyed are one-story garden-style units, while the remaining 86.0% are townhouse style units. Given the age distribution of the Near South market area, as well as trends indicating increasing numbers of senior householders, we expect that this unit design will prevent some seniors, particularly those with disabilities, from remaining in the neighborhood.

- There is currently one senior-specific apartment project in the Near South area. Marion Square, a public housing development located on Marion Road east of Lockbourne Road, targets low-income senior households age 62 and over. These households have incomes of less than 50% of the area median household income to qualify to live there. We expect that as south side householder's age, they will want to stay in their homes. However, given that disabilities and two-story housing designs may prevent them from doing so, a senior apartment project with supportive living services, designed to accommodate older seniors would likely receive support from the south side. Further exploration of this concept is warranted.

### **Empower neighborhood organizations to encourage city foreclosure on neglected properties**

The city of Columbus has implemented a new tactic for eliminating neglected properties. The tactic involves filing liens on severely neglected properties for unpaid nuisance fines, and using those liens to pursue foreclosures through the Franklin County Environmental Court. City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer Jr. notes in a Columbus Dispatch article dated August 27, 2005, "The goal is to get properties into the hands of responsible owners." While such structures typically would have little to no value, the value of the land would be worth demolition costs.

Typically, market-rate infill developments satisfy a demand for new for-sale housing within an older, established neighborhood. This concept is attractive to households that do not wish to maintain or renovate older homes, and of course to renter households who may wish to purchase a home but do not have experience in home maintenance. The area's proximity to downtown, employment, several large colleges and universities, and a variety of entertainment options, increases its attractiveness to younger residents as well as active empty nesters.

### **Industrial**

Reuse of portions of vacant or underutilized industrial sites should include cleanup and beautification of the southern portal to the corridor. This does not necessarily mean that all of the underutilized industrial buildings be razed. The cluster of industrial uses that extends down the southern third of the corridor, and presence of both the Norfolk and Southern railroad tracks

and C & O railroad yard all contribute to the urban, industrial character of the landscape. This character defined generations of residents of the area, and in our opinion, preserving some of the industrial history of the area will serve to maintain pride and identity for the south side for generations to come.

However, the largest issue with older industrial space, according to area realtors, is that it is not marketable when compared with new, clean, and modern industrial space just a few miles south of the study area in the Rickenbacker area.

Preservation of industrial space does have a more practical benefit. This space can provide low-cost space for small machining, tool and dye, and other companies that hire unskilled laborers. Companies such as these are the primary occupants (in terms of numbers of businesses) of the former Federal Glass factory site. Grow employment in the neighborhood The former Techneglas site, approximately one million square feet of manufacturing, warehouse, and office space will be renovated and marketed to warehousing, small commercial operations and office users. Developer Marvin Katz estimates the site will be available by the late spring of 2006. Katz projects that the site, when completely occupied, will contain between 200 and 250 workers.

This development, renamed Tech Center/South, is expected to have a very positive impact on the neighborhood, although increased traffic from warehousing activity and site tenants and employees is a negative albeit necessary side affect to the development. Kapac, Katz's company, is known for successful acquisition and development of industrial and warehouse space, having completed several projects in Columbus' urban core.

A strong effort by Vassor Village civic leaders, in partnership with community-based vocational training operations and the developer, could help neighborhood residents become employed at a variety of entry-level jobs that the site is expected to offer.

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## **Build synergy among small manufacturers within low-cost spaces**

While the former Federal Glass site is currently over half vacant, we expect that the development of the Techneglas site, which is located adjacent to the north, may spur increased activity. The Federal Glass site has excellent access, readily available, low-cost space that appears to be easily divided in order to accommodate small users.

We do not recommend public/private ventures for developing additional large-scale industrial/manufacturing space within or in close proximity to the Parsons Avenue corridor area. Perceptions of noise and air pollution, increased truck traffic and other negative side effects are associated with heavy industrial users. Although community members welcome additional job growth within the neighborhood, smaller manufacturing companies or other business types are preferred over large-scale heavy industry. Some potential uses for vacant industrial/warehouse spaces include:

- Machining and metalworking vocational training
- Logistics and transportation vocational training
- Small business development training
- Machining/tool and dye operations
- Customer service call center
- Business incubator

Existing industrial/warehousing space along the Parsons Avenue corridor is not competitive with new industrial/warehousing space within the southeastern quadrant of Central Ohio in terms of quality, newness, access, or adjacent transportation services. Existing industrial space generally competes with older space within the central industrial submarket of Columbus. We expect that incentives should be offered to draw potential users. Given the study area's location in close proximity to downtown, area roads and highways, and its high level of accessibility, we expect that some of these marketability barriers could be overcome.

The study area's proximity to the Rickenbacker Intermodal Transit facility can facilitate marketing industrial and commercial property along Parsons Avenue. According to Norbridge Research (2002), intermodal yards often attract affiliated and related economic developments, including:

- Origin and destination drayage companies, which serve as a key link between intermodal rail facilities and shippers/receives
- Equipment Maintenance Companies, which serve equipment needs of truck, terminal and rail operations (this group includes, in particular, those companies specializing in container, chassis, lift equipment, hostler tractors, and rail equipment.
- Public and private warehouse and distribution centers, which benefit from a proximity to an intermodal rail yard, including third party logistic company operated warehouses.
- Manufacturing and processing companies, which reduce shipping and receiving costs and expedite shipping and receiving by proximity to intermodal sites.

The ability to attract related activities of warehousing, distribution, and manufacturing, is closely linked, however, to the availability of appropriately skilled labor, labor costs, economic incentives, and current availability of facilities and cost of those facilities. Based upon the relatively high availability rate within the southeastern industrial market in Columbus, as well as planned development, we expect that bountiful space will be available well into the future.

Insight Research Corporation projections (2003) indicate the following employment increases in the Rickenbacker area:

In 2003, the Discovery Park Intermodal facility employed 174 full time employees (FTE) with average annual wages of \$31,200. Employment at this facility, which is currently expanding, is expected to decrease to 109 by 2018.

However, the Rickenbacker Intermodal facility is expected to provide 435 onsite, full-time jobs with average annual wages of \$31,200 (in 2003 dollars). In addition, jobs will be created within individual logistics, transportation, equipment maintenance, equipment manufacturing, and other operations.

The development of the intermodal transport facility represents job opportunities for Near South residents as well as opportunities for redevelopment of existing industrial/warehousing space within the corridor. However, the potential vacant manufacturing sites to be absorbed to be “cleaned up” and converted to functioning light manufacturing and commercial spaces should be leveraged together with a ready workforce.

Establishing a substantive, ongoing relationship between large, growing employers to the north and south of the study area, and initiating an ongoing information exchange between human resources departments and local high schools, vocational schools, and other workforce development providers is essential. Job training and readiness could focus on the specific needs of local employers, transportation services could facilitate job creation in targeted neighborhood areas, and referral services could pinpoint job growth as well as trends in hiring.

### **Institutional**

An additional recommendation is related to the eventual relocation of the Parsons Avenue branch of the Columbus Metropolitan Library. According to our interviews with library staff and relocation spokespersons, the new site for this branch will likely be more centrally located within the study area. Given that there is a need for additional parking at the current library site, a new building would include a larger interior space, as well as increased space for parking.

Southside Learning and Development Center is considering a combined campaign with a couple of different early childhood learning and development groups within the central city. The current capital campaign is in process. SSLDC has raised approximately \$500,000 to date. These funds have been used to help redevelop the site for the planned building. Need an additional \$3.5 million, approximately, to complete the project.

### **Demographics**

- Projections indicate an 11.8% decrease in population and an 8.5% decline in households in the Near South submarket. This is the highest rate of decline projected for any of the Central City submarkets. The Downtown submarket, Columbus and Franklin County are all projected to increase in population and households.
- Some of this negative growth can be attributed to the replacement of larger households with smaller households, particularly within the more affluent German Village, Merion Village, and Schumacher Place neighborhoods.
- We expect that deteriorating housing stock, job losses and negative perceptions have also contributed to population and household losses in the Near South submarket.
- The Near East and Near South submarkets contain the highest ratio of individuals less than 25 years of age among all of the central city sub-areas. Columbus and Franklin County also have high shares of population within this age group.
- Vassor Village has the youngest estimated median age in 2005 at 26.3 years, while Stambaugh-Elwood has the oldest at 39.2. The Vassor Village median is likely influenced heavily by the presence of the Lincoln Park public housing development within that neighborhood. Lincoln Park contains a large number of families with young children.
- The neighborhood areas containing the highest share of population under 25 are as follows: Vassor Village, Southern Orchards, Southside CAN, Hungarian Village and Reeb-Hosack, respectively.
- Projections indicate increases in median age among all geographic areas. The most significant increases are within the 55 to 64 and 65+ age groups, while all the younger age groups are expected to experience declines in numbers. The Near South submarket is projected to have the largest percentage increase in median age of all the geographic areas in the analysis at 5.6% (from 44 to 46 years old).

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- According to Census estimates, in 2005 owner-occupied households in the Near South submarket comprised 46.9% of all households. Census projections to 2010 indicate slight increases in renter-occupied households within this submarket. We expect this owner-renter ratio to remain relatively unchanged for the next several years. The increase in housing values expected to continue to draw interest from both homeowners and investors.
  - Within both owner- and renter-occupied households in the Near South submarket, one- and two-person households comprised approximately two-thirds of all households within the Near South submarket, compared with over 80.0% in the Short North submarket.
  - Larger-sized households comprised of four or more persons made up 17.1% of owner households and 22.6% of renter households within the Near South submarket.
  - Interestingly, the Near South and Near East submarkets contained much higher shares of larger, renter-occupied households than did Downtown or the Short North. The Near South also contains one of the highest ratios of larger housing units.
  - Of the estimated 12,108 households in the Near South submarket in 2005, 23.0% had Annual Household Income (AHI) of less than \$20,000. • As is typical of many older urban areas, the median income for the Near South submarket is much lower than the national median income of \$41,994. At \$31,680, the median income is nearly 33.0% below the national median.
  - Within the economically diverse Near South submarket, polarization of income is projected to continue to 2010. The area is expected to experience growth among household earning \$60,000 and over. In 2000, these households comprised 19.3% of all households, while 2010 projections indicate they will make up 32.7% of all households. Households earning under \$20,000 will decrease from nearly 30.0% to 23.0% during this time.

## HISTORIC REPORT

### Historic Resources:

#### Overview:

The Parsons Avenue Neighborhood Corridor is truly a unique surviving remnant of an inner city neighborhood commercial district. Parsons Avenue largely maintains itself as a traditional working mixture of commerce and residential uses that serves primarily the residential market that surrounds the Avenue itself. Anchored by Children's Hospital to the north, and Buckeye Steel to the south, the Parsons Avenue Corridor is largely a diverse neighborhood combined with both a white and blue collar workforce, and intermingled with businesses, services, and residents that are equally diverse in race, social, and economic status as well. The diversity of Parsons Avenue is truly one of its best assets in which to develop, maintain, and revive the neighborhood. Most Urban Planners would agree that the diversity the Avenue enjoys today is one of the hallmarks making any great neighborhood's success.

Notwithstanding, that diversity holds challenges, that has also brought shifts to the neighborhood's economic base, but also presents opportunities. Diversity along Parsons Avenue also comes in the form of its structures both residential and commercial. Unfortunately, a lack of planning and consistency in planning and development has led portions of Parsons Avenue to develop a very disorganized, and deteriorated, appearance as portions of its traditional building stock has been demolished in order to accommodate development that was more in keeping with suburban sprawl. This approach to development along the Avenue has in part led to its decline. An attractive physical environment of any neighborhood, or commercial area, is a key component in its stability, attractiveness, image, and marketability. The Parsons Avenue area is now struggling to find its identity in which to promote its potential to investors, consumers, and residents alike.

The management of historic and cultural resources is critical as part of the economic strategy, plan, and vision in which the Avenue is now seeking. That goes to say that not every older structure is worthy of historic preservation, or rehabilitation, but "spot development" that has been undertaken, scattered demolitions, and incompatible development over the years has taken their toll, and has in part contributed to a negative image

of the district that has probably steered some positive development, investors, and potential residents away. In order to successfully implement a new and positive direction for Parsons Avenue everyone MUST get on the same page in terms of development and rehabilitation of structures in the neighborhood, and more importantly develop guidelines and standards by which the physical and historic elements of the neighborhood will be managed, IMPLEMENT THEM, AND BE CONSISTENT to those policies and guides.

But, none of the positive changes that need to come about along the Avenue can be achieved without COMMUNICATION among stakeholders including the City of Columbus, the neighborhood, planners, and designers.

A great deal of physical damage has been done to the Avenue by NOT being consistent in the physical planning and preservation aspects of the area, and it will take years, financial commitment both of public and private sources, and a commitment of leadership to reverse or improve, but hope is not lost. Parsons Avenue still retains outstanding opportunities for historic preservation, historic rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, and compatible in-fill opportunities to make the Avenue a vibrant, diverse, traditional urban commercial and residential core.

### Touring Parsons Avenue:

In September 2005, residents and business owners of Parsons Avenue strolled the entire length of the district. The group observed current conditions in the neighborhood, and denoted notable structures and blocks which held historic significance, or that posed significant rehabilitation opportunities as part of a neighborhood revitalization effort. Additional members of the touring team included urban planners, historians, neighborhood organization representatives, as well as BBH project leaders. During this day-long tour an overall assessment that identified the following of Parsons Avenue were completed:

1. Architectural styles present long Parsons Avenue
2. Key historic structures that are endangered of being lost
3. Structures, or portions of Parsons Avenue, that may be eligible for inclusion to the National Register of Historic Places
4. Maintenance issues, and proper design techniques that should be considered along Parsons Avenue that would be relevant to especially the commercial structures of the District.

5. Observations of physical changes that have taken place to structures over time along Parsons Avenue
6. Discussion or revitalization techniques and approaches that could be implemented along Parsons Avenue in regards to particular structures, and areas along Parsons Avenue.

**Current Conditions:**

The Historic Architecture and Physical Orientations of Parsons Avenue:

Parsons Avenue is a eclectic mix of architectural styles of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Parsons Avenue is actually devised of three sub-neighborhoods. A number of later Mid Century roadside architectural styles also dot Avenue as well that could be of significant note as well in terms of the "recent past". These Mid Century structures are also some of the earliest developments that signaled the transition of Parsons Avenue to be more oriented to suburban style development and vehicular traffic rather than a pedestrian or neighborhood orientation. It is interesting to note many of the historic architectural styles found along the Avenue are from what is commonly referred to as the "Storybook" era of 20th century architecture. Meaning these building types represent storybook/fairy tale type of architecture that was beginning to be romanticized in literature and early films. These styles also tend to represent older types of architecture from the "Old World" in Europe and were reintroduced and popularized in American architecture in the early 1900s through the early 1930s. These styles of architecture include:

- Spanish/Spanish Mission Revival**
- Tudor Revival**

Additional styles that appear along Parsons Avenue from the 19th and 20th centuries include:

- Italianate**
- Queen Anne**
- Vernacular/Germanic Influenced**
- Craftsman**
- American Four Square**
- Art Deco**
- Colonial Revival**

The Avenue, and the surrounding residential area, also exhibits these architectural styles as well as working class, or Vernacular architecture, with some Germanic influences similar to those found in nearby German Village. These structures have been constructed in both frame and masonry variations, and are relatively simple in their design

and architectural features.

There appear to be several individual structures, and condensed portions of Parsons Avenue, that may be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Bear in mind the listing for the National Register of Historic Places. Including a structure to the National Register of Historic Places DOES NOT mean that a property cannot be altered, or cannot be even demolished. Only LOCAL legislation passed would mandate changes to historic structures such as that which is practiced in German Village. As a result German Village enjoys being one of Columbus' most desired neighborhoods in which to reside because the historic integrity of German Village is maintained through local review and design ordinances. Projects that also involve Federal dollars for demolition or rehabilitation also involve a review process known as Section 106 to determine if there would be any adverse effects upon structures or places either listed, or eligible, for the National Register of Historic Place.

However, the National Register designation DOES in fact provide an opportunity for Parsons Avenue that could be of benefit in terms of tax incentives, heritage tourism opportunities, and grant sources for specific projects. There is also a widespread myth that in order to be considered for the National Register of Historic Places that a structure, or a place, must hold extremely high historic associations or architectural value. This is not necessarily so, or to be considered for local landmark designation potential. For further information concerning the full criteria of listing property to the National Register of Historic Places see the box inset below, or contact the Ohio Historic Preservation Office at 614-298-2000, or visit [www.ohiohistory.org](http://www.ohiohistory.org)

It should also be noted that historic or architectural relevance of structures varies, and takes into account several factors such as historic integrity of architectural style, setting, cultural affiliations, function, and age. Age is not the only determining factor in a building's historic merit. A building, or entire neighborhood, does not need to be associated with a person of high status, or highly ornate examples, of a building type or style in order to be considered for official historic status. Neighboring German Village is a good example of this concept. Many of its structures are not terribly ornate or elaborate, and many of their historic occupants were German workers and laborers. However, the area is significant as a whole because it an excellent collection of vernacular Germanic architecture and represents a culture that played a contributing role in the social, cultural, and commercial history of Columbus.

The following properties have already been identified in the Southside Plan of 2000 as being eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Buckeye Steel Casting Company Office Building**

2211 Parsons Ave  
 Y Register eligible  
 1893 OHPO has info

**Engine House No. 14**

1716 Parsons Ave  
 Y Register eligible  
 1906, with 1973 addition  
 OHPO., Central Ohio Fire Museum

**Joe Cartin Used Furniture & Appliances (former St. Stephens Community House)**

379 Barthman Ave  
 Y Register eligible  
 1920, Columbus Planning Division

**Pappy's Pawn Shop (still occupied?)**

1873 Parsons Ave (at Reeb)  
 Y Register eligible  
 1929 OHPO

**Power of Prayer**

377 Reeb Ave  
 Y Register eligible  
 1940 Columbus Planning Division

**National Register of Historic Places**

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of properties recognized by the federal government as worthy of recognition for their local, state, or national significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture. Although the National Register of Historic Places is a program of the National Park Service, it is administered at the state level by each respective state.

**Criteria for Evaluation** The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, association and;

- A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. that have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria considerations** Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that

have achieved significance within the past 50 years shall not be considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:

- A. a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or
- B. a building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or
- C. a birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is not another appropriate site or building directly associated with their productive life; or
- D. a cemetery that derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or
- E. a reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or
- F. a property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own historical significance; or
- G. a property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.

For more information on National Register of Historic Places criteria contact the Ohio Historic Preservation Office

**Physical Orientation:**

Parsons Avenue, and its three "sub-neighborhoods", largely developed as a pedestrian oriented mixed-use environment. With the widening of Parsons Avenue over time to accommodate larger volumes of vehicular traffic, and the booming manufacturing base that developed around the district's periphery, resulted in more and more workers coming into the district. The need to transform the Avenue into a more automotive oriented appearance ensued and has resulted in inappropriate setbacks, large gaping vacant lots, and "chain" style architecture and signage that has given Parsons Avenue a "seedy" and disheveled appearance.

The three sub neighborhoods that comprise Parsons Avenue contain similar architectural styles with some in better states of preservation than others. Good examples of compatible in-fill development, and sympathetic façade renovations are also present, but they are far outnumbered by the examples of bad signage, bad land planning, and bad design in action. However, good elements still exist along the Avenue that could bring back a more cohesive and attractive element to the Southside that will in turn assist in a strategy of economic development as well.

A centralized "downtown" for Parsons Avenue appears to be located in the center of the street and focused around the former Schottenstein's Department Store, which is also one of the most substantial and significant structures in the area, and one that affords some very interesting adaptive reuse possibilities as well. However, the district displays several small sub "downtown" areas that hold revitalization potential as well.

**Key Structures:**

Key structures, and portions of the Avenue, that pose viable and interesting opportunities for revitalization, and could be considered anchor buildings or "test blocks" that would serve as catalysts when coordinated with a larger revitalization effort that is comprehensive and incremental in nature. Such a model of revitalization may be best be found in the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program, or the Elm Street Program, created by the State of Pennsylvania with similar focus as the National Main Street Program, but is significant to its use of State funding. Regardless, the inconsistent design practices that have had no regard to placement, location, materials, signage, landscaping,

historic aesthetics, or an urban renewal mindset that is more consistent with suburban sprawl will continue to only put Parsons Avenue on a path of a neighborhood without an identity, positive image, and with mediocre results in the area of economic development that brings new market opportunities that have broad appeal as well as those that serve the local market segments.

**The walking tour inventory of key structures of historic value included the following examples:**

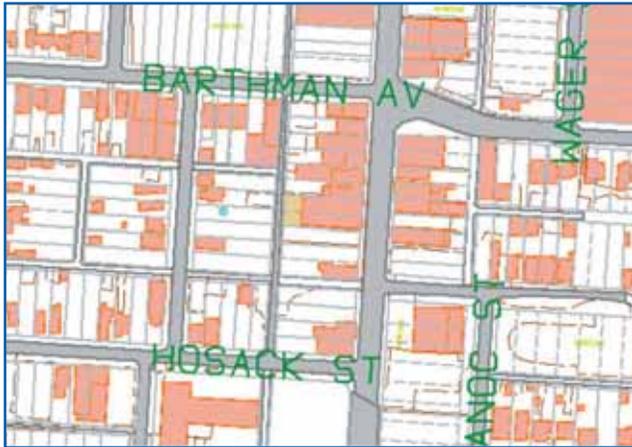


960 Parsons



1000 -1014 Parsons (SE Corner of Reinhard)

and all neighborhood churches and schools (built as churches & schools)



010-030676-00 03/13/2004  
1941 Parsons (built 1920)



010-015293-00 03/13/2004  
1931 Parsons (built 1920)



010-051632-00 03/13/2004  
1949 Parsons circa 1920



010-035967-00 03/13/2004  
1935 Parsons (south of Barthman) Built 1920



010-016572-00 03/13/2004  
1957 Parsons circa 1920



1991 Parsons Built 1909

North Of Reeb



1958 Parsons built 1925



1854 Parsons built 1917



1854 Parsons built 1917



1846 Parsons built 1912 (SE Corner of Innis)



827 Parsons (NW corner of Columbus St)



1111 Parsons

**Incompatible Façades/Inappropriate In-Fill:**

One of the main obstacles the Parsons Avenue district faces are inappropriate façade renovations that uses lesser materials, and inconsistent design principles that dramatically alter the appearance of historic structures along the Avenue. Inappropriate in-fill construction, largely of a commercial nature, also have had an impact on the neighborhood too. There apparently is a fear among residents, and even civic leaders, that if variances are not given to commercial enterprise that wants to develop property in the District that they will not invest there at all. This is a common myth among such individuals. There are plenty of examples, even in Columbus, where commercial chain stores and commercial development successfully adapts urban properties, or constructs new structures that are more consistent with the neighborhoods historic and urban fabric ranging from setbacks, materials, scale, and signage through local design ordinances. The result has been a better structure that contributes to the overall character of the district, inspires additional development, and maintains a quality of life, and higher property values benefits. Many resources are available to assist the District and the City with more neo-traditional and new urban design efforts such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Urban Land Institute, and the Design Center in Columbus. Chains and franchises that locate in the neighborhood already have done their market research, and know they want to locate in the area by the time they approach the City for approval of their planning permits. Negotiating with these businesses or chain stores should be pursued to construct compatible buildings to Parsons Avenues historic character, or be encouraged to adapt existing structures.



1973 Parsons Built 1930

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### **Neglect and Demolition:**

Property neglect and demolition is yet another issue that faces the Avenue. Of course the first thought of many residents, and others, is to demolish a blighted structure, but in the current economic situation of Parsons Avenue that does not necessarily result in a positive replacement that is compatible. But, rather results in a vacant litter strewn lot that depletes property values further. Albeit, some selected demolition of neglected properties may be warranted and welcome whereas in other instances the rehab of structures could serve as a positive catalyst for the neighborhood, and surrounding properties.

A historic property revolving fund could be established on Parsons Avenue that particularly targets these blighted properties renovation. One of the most successful examples in the country in which Columbus and Parsons Avenue could pattern itself is that of the Fund for Landmarks Indianapolis Properties in Indianapolis. Over the last quarter of a century, the FLIP fund of Indianapolis operated by Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indianapolis has enjoyed tremendous success renovating some of that city's most dilapidated structures, and triggering the transformation of some of that city's most blighted areas into some of the city's most desired places and real estate, and generating new revitalization opportunities.

### **Opportunities for Revival: Obstacles and Opportunities**

Despite the some of the current obstacles, and some of the less than favorable conditions that currently exist along the Avenue, regarding inappropriate planning decisions, demolitions, and neglected properties, there is still ample opportunities for revitalization. Parsons Avenue revitalization must be a public-private partnership. Some of the obstacles that currently exist include:

**Image:** Parsons Avenue struggles with finding and establishing its own identity, and is struggling to with a perceived image the neighborhood is unsafe and un-maintained

**Organizational Development:** The neighborhood is working to maintain a sustainable, broad based, and knowledgeable organization to carry out the mission and vision of the District.

**Leadership:** Additional neighborhood volunteer/professional leadership is needed inside the

district itself to be educated about planning, historic preservation, adaptive reuse and the overall facets of revitalization in general including promotion, marketing, and design issues.

**Clear Vision:** A clear vision in which there is consensus, and not led by the City alone, but has the support of a broad base of stakeholders

**Funding:** There are funding sources and incentive tools available to assist in the long term revitalization and development of Parsons Avenue, but it will be limited in some cases, and projects will have to be targeted and leveraged with private sources with public ones to bring about incremental, positive, and comprehensive change. That in mind, there is nothing that would preclude an organization for Parsons Avenue to develop local financial incentives and "volunteer labor" that would be targeted to the specific needs of neighborhood.

**Codes:** An understanding of codes and allowances under Building Codes that make adaptive reuse possible. Chapter 34 of the Standard Building Code works with historic, or existing structures, and yet does not compromise safety, but building code officials seldom utilizes this section of the Code. Entire States such as New Jersey and Maryland have initiated specific Rehab Codes that have triggered a surge in urban revival projects that under their former code systems made unlikely or prohibitive to complete.

**Inconsistent land use / design / planning:** Inconsistent planning, land use, and design that gives the Avenue a disorganized, deteriorated, and blighted appearance; especially with regards to commercial properties. If the City is going to implement Design Standards for commercial development on a uniform scale in Columbus than it should uphold its own policies, and not allow variances that send the wrong message, and set the wrong tone for commercial development and adaptive reuse on Parsons Avenue. The same goes for locally targeted legislation as well that may be pursued by a Parsons Avenue organization as well. The policies of design, planning, and historic preservation efforts must be agreed upon, insist upon good design, uniform setbacks, involve quality materials and signage, and be in keeping with the historic character of District that survives, or the neighborhood will struggle to develop the environment, economic character, and quality of life it is seeking.

### Market Segment:

Parsons Avenue is in position itself to further refine its market segment, and yet continue to be a location to serve the needs of its local market area. However, with the exit of many of the neighborhood's larger employers, suburban sprawl, and changing neighborhood demographics the Parsons Avenue is in an economic shift that is having an impact on the physical nature and structures causing decline, abandonment, and a need for adaptive reuse strategies.

These market segment opportunities abound in the Parsons Avenue area for historic rehabilitation and compatible in-fill construction. Particular market segment opportunities appear to be achievable in the Parsons Avenue area that would be appealing for development and re-development, and are as follows:

**Artists:** This market segment could be developed with two approaches. Low to moderate income artists, with or without families, could be attracted to Parsons Avenue for its affordable space, and type of space available that would be attractive to a variety of artistic mediums. Artists that are more established, and do not necessarily fit the low to moderate income criteria, could also be attracted to the area to privately invest in the properties that may be available as well. A compilation of incentives, and technical expertise could be developed that would match artists with potential properties for their homes and workspace. An example of an "Artist Relocation Program" is currently being implemented in Paducah, Kentucky. Of course recruiting such a specialized pool of people to the neighborhood could trigger additional investment and related businesses to the Avenue such as galleries, restaurants, and artist supplies.

**Seniors:** With the aging baby boomer population Parsons Avenue could develop some interesting new urbanism opportunities for housing options with the amenities of the big city close at hand combined with affordability, and reduced maintenance concerns, that could be with larger homes and lots found in the suburbs. Low to moderate-income senior housing could also be further expanded in the neighborhood as well.

**Working Families:** Working families continue to be a strong market segment base already present in the neighborhood. The best neighborhoods are diverse neighborhoods that boast a variety of ethnic personalities, income, and social levels. Efforts

should continue to retain and enhance working families as part of the Parsons Avenue dynamic.

**Professionals:** With the proximity to downtown, night life, cultural amenities, OSU, and Childrens Hospital along with the affordable housing market in the Parsons Avenue area, young or single professionals could be yet another market that could be enticed to reside in the Parsons area.

**Diversity:** The diversity of the Parsons Area should be encouraged, and such diversity could be attractive to a "creative class". This group of people tend to be young to middle aged, educated, and represent a diverse population mix. They tend to desire to be around an eclectic mix of people, seek out uniqueness of a community or neighborhood and built environment, and want to be near or surrounded by creative outlets such as bookstores, art galleries, and museums.

**Entrepreneurs:** Again, the affordability of the Avenue could be very attractive to prospective entrepreneurs that fit within the vision and strategy for the neighborhood. However, the neighborhood should try and partner and develop incentives that could entice this group, but those incentives may have to go further than the traditional offerings currently available such as SBA Loans, and perhaps more localized to the unique needs and goals of Parsons Avenue.

**Test Blocks:** In order to develop some of the historic resources located within Parsons Avenue, and to develop some of the potential market opportunities outlined here, the Avenue should seek to develop "test blocks" where some of the concepts outlined in the planning document could be implemented, and serve as a catalyst for neighboring endeavors as well. Examples of test blocks would be targeting façade improvements, or developing an "artist row" in a particular location, or in a group of buildings somewhere within the Avenue target area.

**Moratorium:** A demolition moratorium should be considered along Parsons Avenue until a complete property inventory can be accomplished that evaluates each structure along the Avenue and weighs its potential for eligibility for local historic designation, or listing to the National Register of Historic Places as an individual building, or part of a district. A moratorium should also be considered too as a means to develop design guidelines for new construction that encourages good and compatible design to the Avenue.

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## Resources and Examples:

**ARTSpace:** ARTSpace is a not for profit organization that has developed, or assisted, numerous communities across the country in developing large scale artist housing projects either as an advisor, or as a developer. Leading Non Profit Real Estate Developer for the Arts

- Partners with local lenders, development agencies and other resources
- Also consulting services and property management

More about ARTSpace's work may be seen through their website at [www.artspaceprojects.org](http://www.artspaceprojects.org).

**Historic Landmarks (FLIP):** Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana is one of the most prestigious historic preservation groups in the United States, and over the past 20 years have developed an effective revolving fund that has triggered the revitalization of some of Indianapolis' most blighted residential structures, and neighborhoods, into some of the most desirable areas in that City. One of the most innovative projects in which HLF is involved is Fall Creek Place; a HUD Homeownership Zone that combines historic preservation with new construction in-fill. More information can be found on the web at [www.historiclandmarks.org](http://www.historiclandmarks.org)

- FOCUS - "Fostering Commercial Urban Strategies"
- Partnerships based on Neighborhood Based Community Development Corps.
- 3 Commercial Corridor Consortiums (2-3 Neighborhoods each)
- Hired Commercial Corridor Project Managers
- Façade Improvement Rebate Program

**Paducah Artist Relocation:** This effort has been transforming one of Paducah, Kentucky's most blighted neighborhoods into a vibrant area in which artists are being recruited to take up residence, and open galleries in the community. The effort was actually modeled after the small river town of Rising Sun, Indiana. The Paducah Artist Relocation Program has been a joint effort of one local bank, the City of Paducah, and a local arts organization. Initiatives to attract the Artistic Community include:

- Local banks incentive lending to artists buying homes
- Group Health Insurance
- Joint Marketing & Promotions
- Preservation & Enterprise Zone tax incentives
- Business assistance

More information may be found on the web by searching "Paducah Artist Relocation Program".

**The National Trust for Historic Preservation:** The National Trust for Historic Preservation is the only nationwide not for profit organization dedicated to the preservation of America's cultural and historic resources. The Trust has some grant funding programs mostly related to planning, but also maintains a wealth of information and contacts that would be very helpful related to design, in-fill, and the economics of making historic rehabilitation projects effective. More information at [www.nthp.org](http://www.nthp.org) The Midwest Regional Field Office that serves Ohio is located in Chicago.

**The National Park Service:** The National Park Service is housed under the Secretary of Interior, which is also the keeper of the National Register of Historic Places. One of the many helpful resources the National Park Service can provide are technical briefs related to proper techniques related to the preservation and historic rehabilitation of historic buildings. These briefs are wealth of information ranging from energy conservation in historic buildings to the repair of wooden windows. These leaflets and other helpful services of the National Park Service may be downloaded from their website.

**The Ohio Historic Preservation Office:** The Ohio Historic Preservation Office should be able to provide more technical information that could be helpful in terms of determining properties that are eligible for inclusion to the National Register of Historic Places, and assisting in completing a full inventory of properties along Parsons Avenue utilizing the Ohio Historic Inventory Forms (OHI). The OHPO should be able to provide technical information pertaining to the proper maintenance and repair of historic structures, and Federal and State tax incentives available for those resources to be rehabilitated.

**The National Main Street Center:** The National Main Street Center is an allied arm to the National Trust for Historic Preservation headquartered in Washington D.C. The National Main Street Center along with the National Trust can provide a wealth of information related to downtown and neighborhood commercial revitalization ranging from parking, housing, retail recruitment, historic building rehabilitation, in-fill design, traffic calming, streetscapes, and zoning and planning to name few. The National Trust also contains several financial incentive programs as well for

revitalization, planning, and historic preservation. The Regional Office that serves Ohio is located in Chicago. The National Trust and National Main Street Center may be contacted via their website at [www.nthp.org](http://www.nthp.org)

**Downtown Ohio/Heritage Ohio:** Downtown Ohio/Heritage Ohio is the statewide not for profit group that assists in training and implementing the Main Street Program throughout the State. Much like the National Main Street Center, this organization provides similar guidance and support for implementing downtown/commercial district revitalization based upon the Four Point Main Street Approach of Design, Organization, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring. The organization will also be versed on eligible funding prospects available for commercial district revitalization and historic preservation type projects in Ohio such as the CDBG Block Grant Program through Ohio Department of Development and the Transportation Enhancement Program through the Ohio Department of Transportation to name a few.

**Urban Land Institute:** This think tank type organization produces a wide array of publications and materials related to smart development and zoning practices, and redevelopment that focuses upon the revitalization of urban areas, and best practices related to them.

**Automobile Alley, Oklahoma City, OK:** This urban commercial center just off the downtown area of Oklahoma City has been redeveloping itself following a Main Street type of organizational approach to downtown revitalization. The area gets its name from the long history associated with early gas stations and automobile related businesses that once lined it, and has similar characteristics to Parsons Avenue, and may be worth exploring their methods for success.

- International MADA Auto Show
- Started with LP of tenants who occupied a building in the district
- MAPS projects total \$300 Million since 1990's
- OK International Film Council

**Bethlehem, Pennsylvania:** Located in the Lehigh Valley of Eastern, Pennsylvania Bethlehem, Pennsylvania is redefining itself after the closure of the Bethlehem Steel Mills. Downtown Bethlehem, and the adjoining steel mill and industrial properties are experiencing an amazing renaissance that should be emulated by other heavily industrialized areas that have gone by way of the past. Bethlehem's downtown and former steel mill areas are finding new life as restaurants, retail, housing, galleries, hotels, and even a proposed casino. More information may be gained from contacting the PA Downtown Center at [www.padowntown.org](http://www.padowntown.org)

**New Jersey Rehabilitation Code:** New Jersey was the first state, and one of the few today, that has enacted a Rehab Code. The Code cuts through the red tape and many barriers more common building codes place on existing structures, and often can make them very difficult for rehabilitation. The New Jersey Rehab Code DOES NOT sacrifice safety, and has been the cause of a massive increase in existing and blighted structures being renovated across the State, and bringing new investment with it.

**Elm Street:** The State of Pennsylvania: Elm Street is a new concept that is solely unique to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania launched in 2004. The Elm Street concept is being developed by the PA Department of Community and Economic Development, and the PA Downtown Center, and focuses on a five-point strategy (Design, Image and Identity, Neighbors and Economy, Sustainable Organization, and Safe, Clean and Green) for neighborhood revitalization. Many of the neighborhoods engaged in the Elm Street Programs are areas adjacent to, or nearby, to downtown districts. Some Elm Street neighborhoods even contain smaller neighborhood commercial districts within them as well. Targeted development, and a massive commitment of State funding for innovative grant programs targeted to even private homeowners is just one of the items that is setting the pace for the Elm Street Program. Elm Street is now being implemented in 18 neighborhoods across the Commonwealth of PA, and another 27 communities are currently engaged in Planning for Elm Street Programs.



# Community Input



# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



## Vision Session July 28<sup>th</sup>

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### 1. What characteristics / features within the community do you feel are sacred?

- **Lincoln School ... save, adaptive use, incubator space**
- **Diverse social-economic and ethnic community**
- **Safe place to live and work**
- **Unique ... older historic housing**
- **Keep the kids here ... good schools**
- **Don't displace the people that are here**
- **Stop blight ... retain families, improve connection to community**
- **Parsons remains the HUB of activity build upon HUB**
- **Close proximity to everything, good access to freeway system**

### 2. What do you want changed?

- **The way City employees think about the South-side**
- **Perception of South-side in general**
- **Safety, prostitution, drugs, shootings/violent crime, illegal dumping (contractors)**
- **Lots of small businesses off of Parsons Ave. that need to be organized**
- **There is buying power ... need places to spend dollars**
- **Get rid of vacant lots and houses, abandoned ...boarded up housing**
- **How safe Parsons Ave. depends upon how safe the neighborhood is**
- **Need more lighting (esp. allies)**
- **Too many small stores selling cigarettes, alcohol and drug paraphernalia**
- **Clean it up, sweep the streets, get rid of big trash cans**
- **Don't get the same level of services as other Columbus neighborhoods**
- **Improve code enforcement**
- **Better understanding (recognition) of community assets and strengths**
- **Need jobs ... recognize the changing economy**
- **Bigger library**
- **Need check cashing facilities**
- **Non-functional businesses**
- **Additional facilities (resources) for community groups (learning center, settlement house, etc.)**
- **More owner occupants of commercial structures (too many absentee landlords)**
- **Permits issued without community notification ... need to enforce law**
- **Lack of an established area planning commission**
- **Poor traffic patterns, bob-and-weave, enforce speed limits**

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#### **Vogt Williams & Bowen**

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



- **Need more parking (more lots, add turning lanes, turn signals, allow parallel parking 24 hours per day)**

### 3. Vision in 10 Years

- **Strong E. D. near an improved 104/Parsons Ave interchange**
- **Utilize architectural resources**
- **Proper commercial zoning ... hold people accountable**
- **Improved building code**
- **Improved code enforcement, better trained staff, staff assigned to overlay district**
- **Someplace to shop-outlet businesses, basic essential services, transition from large buildings to small shops, middle and small box national chains**
- **Survey where people on South-side shop, determine where money is being spent, examine purchasing power within the community**
- **Quality shopping-safe well lit**
- **Utilize lot at Frebis/Lockbourne**
- **More mixed uses**
- **People bringing \$ into the community**
- **Remodeled SS settlement house**
- **Improved parking around Post Office**
- **Facilities for Sr. citizens**
- **Enhanced parks, facilities for older children, bike paths, walking paths, neighborhood type facilities**
- **Businesses with outside seating**
- **Dry cleaning, drug stores, video stores, extended hours stores**
- **Community center (possible reuse of building on Ohio/Newton)**
- **Activities for youth**
- **Enhance Driving Park**
- **New housing construction, housing has been fixed up**
- **New jobs**
- **New retailers, office buildings, hotel**
- **Good workforce**
- **Capitalize upon new intermodal facility at Rickenbacker**
- **Increased homeownership and business ownership**
- **Improved transportation to jobs**
- **Utilize businesses that are in the SS**
- **Improved Safety**
- **Changed (modified) perception of the SS by outsiders and City employees**

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



### Results of the August 3, 2005 Visioning Session Conducted with PAMA Trustees

#### 1. What are the attributes of the community that you want to see preserved?

- Library
- Diversity of neighborhoods
- Historic buildings – don't tear down the entire Southside
- Cohesive unity within neighborhoods and among merchants. Merchants have established a good relationship with the community
- Unity among civic associations and interest groups
- Sense of community

#### 2. What has the community done to inhibit sound business investments and expansion?

- Urban commercial zoning overlay
  - Has inhibited growth
  - Overlay hurts start-up businesses
  - Parsons Avenue is not another Short North
  - City not flexible when administering overlay
  - Curb cuts not easy to obtain
- Politics within the community
- City staff and administrators not customer-friendly
  - Selective code enforcement
- Lack of a developer taking an interest in the area
- No plan to get behind and support
- No money to implement ideas/vision
- Banks have turned their backs on Parsons Avenue
- An insurance company dropped a business' policy when it moved to Parsons Avenue
- Lack of community investment
- Perceptions about Parsons Avenue area
  - Crime
- Closing of factories and retail stores/lack of retail
- Parsons Avenue is like a freeway. Need to get people to stop and shop.

#### 3. What can be done to improve investment opportunities for commercial and industrial development?

- Improve image of Parsons Avenue
  - Elected officials
  - Media
- Work with Columbus Urban Growth on property redevelopment
  - Schottenstein property and surrounding area. CUG has options on old IGA/A&P site
- More police presence

# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



- Liked bicycle patrols
- Substation in community
- Better/targeted code enforcement
  - A lot of absentee landowners
  - Code enforcement officers go after people that are easy to track down
- Create job opportunities
- Existing businesses need to get a positive attitude
- Need more businesses that cater to residents and that attract people to Parsons Avenue
  - Need more nighttime businesses
  - Need something like North Market or old central market
- Capitalize on assets – Schiller Park, proximity to German Village
- Improved marketing of the area
- Need a master developer

# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



### Results of the August 4, 2005 PAMA Visioning Session

#### 1. What are the attributes of the community that you want to see preserved?

- Historic buildings
- Small businesses
- Neighborhood that supports families of all sizes and ages (young/old)
- Maintenance of healthy, small buildings
- Small business opportunities
- Keep a diverse community. Don't push out people that have supported the neighborhood.

#### 2. What has the community done to inhibit sound business investments and expansion?

- Parking ban imposed along Parsons Avenue from 4-6 pm hurts small businesses.
- Parsons Avenue is like a freeway.
- Boarded up houses draw people away.
- Not sure who to contact to purchase boarded-up homes.
- Negative press about Parsons Avenue.
- Banks don't support neighborhoods.
- Parsons Avenue businesses too scattered.

#### 3. What can be done to improve investment opportunities for commercial and industrial development?

- Maintain what exists. Currently people leave the neighborhood for shopping.
- Need to know what the community will support. Neighborhood won't support high priced businesses. Businesses should be geared toward the working man.
- Make the community attractive.
- Keep it safe – lighting, better police coverage, visible police presence – go back to street cops.
- Don't turn Parsons Avenue into a fast food freeway.
- Sensitive design standards for new buildings
- Better marketing of Parsons Avenue corridor.
- Tap into activity into German Village. Determine what Parsons Avenue can offer.
- Parsons Avenue needs to be brought back to a neighborhood. Now it is just a thoroughfare.
- Work with the banks, etc. to provide help in renovating homes – low interest loans.
- Better code enforcement on properties owned by absentee landlords.
- More flexibility from City/code enforcement. More customer-friendly.
- Maintain a database of vacant/available sites for development.
- Get media involved - positive promotion of Parsons Avenue area.
- Construct mixed-use and mixed income projects.
- Create a draw that would attract people from the outside to Parsons Avenue – something unique. Make Parsons Avenue a destination location.

# Greater Parsons Avenue

area vision plan



- Break Parsons Avenue down into smaller pieces and look at how they all fit together.
- More retail – department store like Target or Kohl’s needed.
- A lot of undeveloped land left on the Southside. Look at the natural/environmental aspects of land development.

# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



Ms. Boumis of Burns, Bertsch & Harris, Inc. facilitated a meeting with the members of the Reeb Hosack Planning Committee on September 13, 2005. The results of the session follow:

**1. Think ahead 10 years into the future. What do you want Parsons Avenue and your neighborhood to be like in 10 years – positive and constructive statements? Don't worry about the realism, how it is going to get done, or who's responsible.**

- Increased homeownership
- Increased sense of safety and well-being. People in the neighborhoods need to feel safe or Parsons Avenue will not feel safe.
- More housing for seniors. Look at Innis/Parsons lots as a possible location (1805 Parsons)
- Better street lighting.
- Better street signs.
- Create in other communities the feeling of safety along Parsons Avenue. Positive perception of the area.
- Jobs in the community. A variety of employment opportunities.
- Reuse of vacant industrial buildings on Marion Road.
- More retail/commercial opportunities. Examples given include banks, grocery store, restaurants/diners (not fast food), theater, ice cream parlor, store like Schottensteins where you can buy clothes and household items, Tim Horton's, Starbucks (coffee shop/businesses where people can congregate), well-lit gas station with a mini-mart. These areas should be accessible to the neighborhood. Many seniors do not have cars. Commercial areas should be pedestrian friendly
- Bus stop shelters
- Improved street maintenance
- Better parking/signage for on-street parking
- Alleys better maintained/cleaned.
- Sidewalks extended/repaired
- Historic buildings maintained and reused
- Old A&P site re-used
- More services for seniors
- Updated look to Parsons Avenue – booming like it used to be
- Unique businesses – things that draw people here
- More police in the area – in cars and on foot
- No more second hand appliance stores and no more liquor stores
- No more slumlords. Properties cleaned up.
- No more boarded up houses. Banks refuse to take responsibility for maintenance. They do not put houses in their name when they foreclose.

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



### 2. What can the City do to ensure that your vision becomes reality? (All of the ideas presented were discussed by the participants. However, participants were asked to prioritize these items. The number in parentheses represents the number of votes each item received.)

- More police support
  - Community policing station (at least 2) in the neighborhood(s); near the fire station is an ideal location. Similar to community policing stations in Linden area. (25)
- Get rid of drug activity through concentrated, continuous police involvement (19)
- Cut through the red tape/process involved with getting things done (17)
  - Receivership program
  - Weed abatement
  - Code enforcement
- Code enforcement needs more authority to shut down houses that are in violation (12)
- Help property owners clean up property – money/resources (11)
- Create better incentives to attract businesses to the area (10)
- Work with developers to redevelop City owned properties currently vacant and boarded up (7)
- Traffic calming through neighborhoods (6)
- Don't permit any more liquor stores (6)
  - Stricter guidelines – clean them up
  - Shut down stores in violation
- Tow junk/inoperable vehicles off streets (4)
- More parks/natural areas for neighborhoods (3)
- Get rid of gangs in parks/better lighting (2)
  - SE Lions Park
- Work with neighborhoods to secure funding for projects – staff support (2)
- Property cleaned up – homeowners taxed (1)
- Better enforce traffic laws – truck traffic on Barthman Street
- Provide trash containers for households. Get rid of dumpsters (0)
- Better street lighting (0)
- Sell boarded up properties. Maintain weeds and get rid of trash on these properties. (0)
- Condemn abandoned houses (0)
- Clean streets (0)
- Enforce curfew (0)

### 3. What can the community do?

- Continue looking for grants for park improvements/housing renovations and other neighborhood programs
- Continue to assist in the maintenance of community spaces such as parks
- Continue to advertise the positives of the neighborhoods/Parsons Avenue
- Begin or continue promotional events and festivals such as the Lawn and Garden Tour
- Maintain relationships with Columbus officials, Pride Center. Attend meetings at City Hall.

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



- Sponsor/participate in neighborhood clean-ups
- Support Parsons Avenue revitalization efforts
- Work to change City policies that negatively affect the neighborhoods/Parsons Avenue. Civic associations/groups should band together.
- Get City Council members/Mayor to tour area

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



Dianne Harris of Burns, Bertsch & Harris, Inc. facilitated a meeting with the members of the Schumacher Place Civic Association on September 21, 2005. The results of the session follow:

- 1. Think ahead 10 years into the future. What do you want Parsons Avenue and your neighborhood to be like in 10 years-positive and constructive statements? Don't worry about the realism, how it is going to get done, or who's responsible.**
  - Parsons Avenue becomes a positive edge (component) of the neighborhood (Similar to the revitalizing of Clintonville)
  - More grass and green space; less pavement
  - More continuity in design on Parsons Ave. (businesses)
  - Underground power lines
  - Retain historic architecture (small "h"; not just Register nominated structures)
  - Owners maintain properties & grounds well
  - A comfortable, pleasant area for walking (free of threatening elements)
  - Continuous flow of buildings on Parsons Ave., with few parking lots interrupting
  - More shopping attractions with an eclectic business mix (desirable businesses)
  - East side of Parsons Ave. also a comfortable pleasant place to walk
  - Not subsumed by large, mega-businesses (including Children's Hospital and car dealerships to North)
  - Wider sidewalks on Parsons Ave. in shopping districts (separation from traffic, and room for strolling & looking)
  - More community involvement on the "follow through" of plan
  - Adhere to the Urban Commercial Overlay standards
  - Create a "nucleus" a focal point- town center- in the corridor
  - Create a signature civic event (annual, regional draw, using this town center)
  - Create a fresh identity
  - Parsons Ave. business and service mix serves the demographics of both sides of the corridor; creating natural interactions, instead of being a dividing line.
- 2. What can the City do? To ensure that your vision becomes reality? (All of the ideas presented were discussed by the participants. However, participants were asked to prioritize these items. The number in parentheses represents the number of priority points each item received.)**
  - Provide financial incentives to stimulate locations of businesses, and assist current businesses on Parsons Ave. (18)
  - Acquire and package adjacent parcels to stimulate developer interest (16)
  - Demand higher architectural standards for new build and remodeling projects. (9)
  - Stronger code enforcement- ultimately City taking control of derelict properties if necessary (8)
  - Improve traffic flow – reduce the number of traffic lanes (7)
  - Explore the Neighborhood Conservation District idea- especially focusing on the commercial corridor (3)
  - Use Urban Recovery Infrastructure Funds in area (2 )

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



- Dedicated code officer for the Parsons Ave. area (2)
- Help to locate a major new attraction in the area (like the Arena or Baseball stadium)
- Give more weight to community concerns about demolition – change process of reviewing permits
- Dedication of more City services to the area; police protection, code enforcement, trash pick-up etc.
- Graffiti removal program
- Split the 13<sup>th</sup> precinct- too large to be effective
- Keep a high profile with Mayor and Council
- Ward representation

### 3. What can the Community do?

- Get involved with the neighborhood associations
- Keep everyone's "feet to the fire" (accountable) for implementation; especially with changes in administration
- More business owners participate in the neighborhood associations
- Support Parsons Ave. businesses, now and in future
- Use self taxing (like Special Improvement Districts; Downtown Ambassadors)
- Beautification (overhead flower baskets, etc.)
- Better communications across the entire area (some don't receive the *This Week South Side*, and other publications that are supposed to be regional)
- Community take over and use the web site after the Vision Plan process is complete
- Need a "champion" ; a group or person with influence to get the power brokers' attention
- Express appreciation for positive efforts
- Neighborhood Associations and Organizations coordinate and produce more unified efforts
- Reach deeper into the community for communications and involvement
- Engage the landlords as part of the community

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUPS 8/25/05 and 9/01/05  
PARSONS AVENUE VISION PLAN  
September 23, 2005

### Introduction

Residents, business owners, and other interested participants gathered for community focus groups on August 25 and September 1, 2005. These groups were held to integrate the community with the visioning process. Respondents were shown maps of the general study area, with the explanation that they could comment on relevant areas outside those that appeared on the map. Throughout the fall and winter of 2005, community focus group questions will become more specific as the Parsons Vision Plan solidifies.

Approximately 20 individuals were in attendance at each meeting. A few individuals came to both meetings. A total of five groups provided input on these dates, and attendees were generally enthusiastic about the process, taking the entire two hours to contribute to the discussions.

The following is a discussion of the three specific questions that were posed to each of the community focus groups. Note that the term “Greater Parsons Area” was left to individual interpretation.

- 1. What are the attributes of the Greater Parsons Area that are sacred, and you wish to see preserved or do not want to see changed in the future?*

### Retail and Old School Retail Culture

Many respondents commented about the importance of maintaining the current retail climate, both in terms of keeping businesses alive in the area, but also that retailers who had stayed in the area for decades were truly sacred. Having these “mom and pop” businesses, where shopkeepers know customers by name, and personal service keeps people coming back is vital to respondents. Most agreed that larger chains and high-end shops would not work on Parsons Avenue, and some noted that they did not want these types of businesses. However, a few people did mention that they would like to see Target or Kohl’s in the old Schottensteins store.

The idea of preserving existing small businesses and inviting new small business owners with compatible offerings (see suggestions for retail at the end of this report) is of relatively high priority to the group. “We need homegrown businesses who have a stake in the community, mom and pop stores...not chains or businesses that will leave when they have a poor fiscal year.”

The loss of many businesses over the past several decades, particularly the spring 2005 closing of Schottensteins Department Store, has been difficult for the South Side. One respondent noted that she thought the store gave the corridor an identity. Certainly, the store, which had done business for nearly a century, anchored the corridor and provided a destination for shoppers. Shopping at Schottensteins

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



was a multi-generational activity for South Side residents, many who look at the vacant building with sadness and nostalgia.

Suggestions for new retail vary widely, but most respondents agree that it should be kept on a neighborhood scale. “Going to a neighborhood business is a more personal experience.”

Examples of “sacred” businesses, some of which are now closed, include:

- Kroger (1441 Parsons)
- Lois Mann’s Restaurant
- Tee Jaye’s Restaurant
- Automotive Stores
- Schwartz Tax Service (one of the respondents owns this shop)
- Dairy Queen
- Bakery (closed)
- Isaly’s Ice Cream (closed)
- Schottensteins (closed)

### Public Transportation and Traffic Patterns

The general perception among respondents is that bus service is very important to residents of the corridor. Most who brought up this topic as “sacred” noted that they do not use the bus daily or even weekly, but add that they believe it’s important that the neighborhood be well-served by the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA). Respondents were divided on the issue of whether COTA provides good service to the area.

Several respondents warned, “Don’t mess with traffic and transportation patterns through the area” and leave ingress and egress intact. There is some concern about what will happen when the Interstate 70/71 split is reconfigured. Other traffic-related concerns include high volumes of traffic, speeding and truck traffic along Parsons Avenue. In addition to making the area less pedestrian-friendly, these trends make navigating the corridor difficult for drivers.

Some of the older residents commented that they rarely walk along Parsons Avenue. Approximately ten respondents noted that they drive more than walk on Parsons Avenue. The remainder had no comment on this issue. However several comments were made about how easy it is to get everything you need in the neighborhood within walking distance. “You don’t *need* a car to go about your life.”

Preservation of brick streets is encouraged; brick streets calm traffic and are historic; aesthetically pleasing.

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



### Location and Accessibility

A large number of respondents love the central city location of the corridor, commenting that the Greater Parsons Avenue Area location is great—highly accessible, close to downtown, southern Ohio and major highways. However, several noted that the area is “cut off” from the rest of the city. This isolation is psychological rather than physical, and those who are not familiar with the area dare not venture down the Parsons Avenue corridor, because of perceptions of crime primarily.

### Neighborhood and Community Pride

The sense of neighborhood and community is sacred. For example, family owned businesses thrived along Parsons Avenue for decades. Neighbors are loyal to those businesses, and the sense of pride and tradition is still alive. Keeping families in the neighborhoods is a priority, and improvements should consider multiple age groups—youth- and senior-friendly uses—to keep families in the South Side.

### Tradition and History

Almost all of the respondents, even the younger ones who had not lived in the area for a long time, spoke of preserving and cherishing the physical, cultural and/or sociological elements of tradition and history in the neighborhoods surrounding the Parsons Avenue corridor. The fact that the area grew out of a “melting pot” around the turn of the century, with Italian, Greek, Hungarian, German and African American families all putting down roots is fascinating and sacred to respondents. The diversity of these groups as well as the wide diversity in land uses in the area creates a “city within a city” effect around the corridor.

Some fear many of these cultural vestiges have been lost, and should be remembered or preserved. A very large number of “sacred” comments focused upon maintaining and preserving the tight-knit yet rapidly shifting cultural fabric of the community, as well as its architectural integrity. Many comments indicate a perception that these qualities are “slipping away,” and therefore represent something even *more* sacred to these community members.

Preservation should be conducted on several levels:

#### *Physical:*

- Keep fronts/facades of older buildings intact; keep sidewalks intact.
- Rehab and preserve buildings on Parsons Avenue
- Develop incentives for reuse and rehabilitation
- Preserve the “working class” character of the neighborhoods, avoid gentrification
- Historic “purity” in building not highest priority; rather, new adaptations
- Preserve and grow home ownership—use incentives!
- Identify and minimize derelict buildings and absentee owners
- Keep the integrity of old, pretty homes but blend new structures into the neighborhood.
- Historic preservation—we need guidelines!
- Brick streets (calms traffic...need a plan for maintaining them)

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



- Preserve green spaces—they are important
- Preserve scale and style—new structures should match existing structures
- Gateways make neighborhoods inviting
- Conserve the neighborhoods near Children’s Hospital

### *Emotional:*

- Let me keep my memories!
- Preserve loyalty to neighborhoods
- It is the “South Side”, NOT the “south end”
- Nostalgia for “glory days” of thriving industry and retail activity is alive and well
- Southside does not get its “fair share” of housing (and other) resources
- The neighborhood is like a family group—residents feel very connected.
- People really help each other here

### *Cultural:*

- Churches are big asset and strength for building to the future
- Library...expand it!
- South Side Settlement House
- Southside Learning & Development Center
- Ethnicity, history and culture
- Quality of life programs, including food pantry, nurse, social workers. Some sacred things have been lost—Community Hospital, St. Leo’s
- Preserve diversity of income and ethnic groups—“people from all walks of life”. The vision plan should reflect that—be inclusive, not exclusive.
- People, rich history. Don’t force people out of the South Side.

### *Civic/Public Safety:*

- Bike police patrols
- Utilize the city-owned building (PAL Bldg.)
- Strong zoning and code enforcement
- Powerful Area Commission and Neighborhood Associations (without the loss of community power)

### *Economic:*

- Help existing businesses
- Help attract and grow new businesses—there are no banks here anymore.
- Preserve socio-economic mix; gentrification usually does away with that
- Protect strip from pawnshops and other predatory businesses
- Maintain the mix of residential and commercial uses

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



- Need hotels, motels
- Stop/keep illegal yard sales

2. *What do you feel makes your neighborhood and the Greater Parsons Area unique (could be positive or negative) when compared to other Columbus neighborhoods?*

Many of the elements that are considered sacred to respondents are linked with things that they consider to be unique as well.

### Cultural and Community-Based Assets

Many respondents expressed pride in the cultural melting pot that comprised Parsons Avenue in the early portion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is important to remember, say a few, that the South Side still serves as a portal for many families moving to Columbus from Appalachia—Kentucky, West Virginia, Tennessee, and other areas. The area inspires loyalty, and some families have many generations represented here. However, schools have a bad reputation, and families have begun to move out.

Several respondents say they like the fact that there are so many schools in the area. The fact that many schools are historic structures is also a bonus, although it appears to be causing some controversy among neighbors, some of whom want to see buildings demolished and rebuilt; some who want to see historic buildings preserved.

The mix of low-income and moderate-income residents is viewed as unique. Overall, the area's ethnic and economic diversity is considered a very good thing. People from "all walks of life" live in the South Side. This is a place where the "county auditor talks to the guy who collects aluminum cans". The wealth of the community lies in the family owned businesses, and the blue-collar working family neighborhoods.

The people are unique—there is a sense of generosity, neighborliness. It's a close-knit, "face to face" type of community. There are small yards but lots of community spaces.

Community services and programs are unique—respondents describe the South Side as a little "downtown" with a post office, a library, stores, and industry—like a small community within the city. Assets include the Maloney Health Clinic, South Side Settlement House, South Side Learning and Development Center, the area's churches, and the library, which needs to be bigger.

The strength of outreach and social service organizations is viewed as unique, and very positive. "The South Side Settlement House gives people a forum to get help, voice problems, learn, etc. It's convenient, and really promotes community." Also, "We have the South Side Child Development Center, also an excellent community resource." There are strong connections and communication

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



between neighbors here. There are historic school buildings and a real sense of community with the schools. The area has a large number and variety of community organizations. There are a lot of resources available through social organizations and churches, to help people meet their basic needs. Networking and resourcefulness are strong within these groups.

The South Side has a very unique culture, hosting tent revivals and one of the city's two drive-in movie theaters. It represents true Rustbelt Americana—places like Dan's Drive-in, the South Side Flea Market, and Original Tee Jaye's, Plank's Restaurant, Lois Mann's restaurant, and the old style Dairy Queen. The neighborhood is accessible to other arts communities in the central city. However, several respondents comment, "within all that, the South Side always gets forgotten. We never get the recognition that that Short North or German Village do."

### Underserved Area of the Central City

Although the South Side is generally viewed as having strong and visible political representation, comments about uniqueness invariably turn towards the fact that the area is underserved politically, financially, and given a "bad rap" by the press. Further, some respondents believe that the South Side has been promised plans that do not materialize. "Although we have a new firehouse and medical center (the city *did* give us that), I still don't feel safe after dark." And, "Buckeye Steel Castings is the area's second largest polluter, and yet the Ohio EPA does not seem to care."

Respondents note a general lack of support from city officials in terms of combating blight. Maintenance issues are a large source of frustration, and South Side residents feel neglected or even ignored in terms of trash pickup, and city code enforcement. Trash in alleys is a large maintenance issue, and overgrown trees in alleys are also a big issue. One respondent notes, "The Parsons Avenue area is the last bastion in the city of Columbus without an infusion of money". Further, the media "implies" that Parsons Avenue is either bad or nonexistent. Comments related to the South Side being "uniquely underserved" include the following:

"People have used the South Side as a testing or dumping ground, then abandon it for other areas."

"The area needs a total facelift."

"People are fighting to maintain their neighborhoods"

"People are afraid—there is high crime here."

"People here have low expectations. They get used to being apathetic"

"The neighborhood doesn't feel empowered. Middle- to low-income families need some support to feel empowered."

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



### Commercial

The mix and tenure of some of the local businesses is considered very unique. Some have been in business for over 50 years, and people are loyal to them. The businesses have been loyal to the neighborhood as well—could have moved away but didn't. New operations such as the farmers' market on Marion Avenue are viewed very positively.

The Parsons Avenue strip also stands out in a more negative way—respondents perceive that the commercial strip has many redundant (and negative) uses—used car lots, used furniture and appliance shops, bars, pawn shops, cell phone shops. Several agreed that these uses are unique in that they are signs of hard economic times. But these businesses don't contribute positively to the neighborhood. Some even say that certain businesses are just fronts for drug dealing activity.

Some new forms of entrepreneurship have respondents divided. Some perceive street vendors (with movable concessions carts) as a harbinger of trash, health risks, and unsavory customers. Others see street vending as an opportunity for business growth. "These are real mom and pop businesses."

### Physical

The historical nature of housing is considered unique, as is the diversity of land use in the area. There is a mix of retail, housing, and manufacturing. This is unique in Columbus and played right, could be a real strength. Older properties have a lot of potential and a lot of character. This area was built when the "anything goes" style of housing was going on. That resulted in very diverse styles of housing. Further, some housing units, particularly those used for rentals, are poorly designed and neglected and should be knocked down.

Although diversity of land use in the housing/retail/commercial mix is generally considered good, many comments indicate that both Parsons Avenue and Lockbourne Road have a very high concentration of bars, and that too many bars cause unwanted crime.

Further, most respondents agree that industrial uses are not compatible with housing in terms of quality of life: "we have a wide mix of institutional (Jail on 104), industrial (Buckeye Steel), Trash burning power plant, Rumpke, and others. It's a mixed bag of somewhat unpleasant uses. Ohio Mulch stinks!"

Others argue that their neighborhoods are calm, quiet and pleasant. "It's a block to block thing". It's a little country and a little bit city.

Parks, accessibility to the Scioto River and wildlife, the large number of dogs in the neighborhood, and the dog activity in Schiller Park are all viewed as positive. The area has lots of neighborhood gardens, landscaping, and old/unique trees.

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



Vacancies create opportunities for improvement, clean industries and warehousing would be welcomed. The vacant or underutilized properties could bring new life to the community. Future uses could be community centers, green space, more parks as well as commercial uses.

- 3. What improvements (social, economic, infrastructure, services, environmental, etc.) need to be made in order to create a better future for the area and its residents?*

### Land Uses-Housing

The largest share of respondents noted housing rehabilitation as their most needed improvement. Cleaning up abandoned homes and addressing residential vacancies, both of which invite crime and decay, were noted often. Establishing target areas or zones for housing improvement would be helpful. Many noted that absentee landlords contribute to housing decay, and spoke hopefully about increased home ownership.

Several people pointed out that the German Village and Merion Village areas both have a lot of momentum in terms of increasing housing values and improving perceptions. The entire area could benefit from this. However, inviting opportunities for housing investors is not a welcome idea. Owner-occupancy is key, say most. The community needs a lender to step up—improve access to financing, and (community organizations) need to educate people on home ownership and living within their means.

The consensus among all age groups is that seniors, children (family households) and underprivileged people should NOT be forgotten during housing improvements. The construction of affordable, accessible senior housing might be a good idea, some say. Others say seniors on the South Side want to stay in their homes as long as possible, and they are good for the neighborhoods.

Opinions on development of low-income apartments were divided. Some respondents were adamant that they do not want any additional “Section 8” projects developed on the South Side. Others said that affordable housing is needed, but it needs to be professionally operated, and well kept.

All agreed that new housing (and retail structures) should be on scale with the rest of the neighborhood, and should match the “historic look” of housing in the area.

All agreed that code enforcement should be backed up with stiff fines, and that community groups should pinpoint offenders, judges, and lawmakers. Residents also need to “squeak more” about the problem until it is addressed, many say.

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



Respondents disagreed on whether the addition of new apartments or rental units would be positive or negative. One commented, “I’d rather see a neat, well-kept apartment or condominium over a beaten down single-family home.” Merion and Hungarian Villages recently received zoning approval limiting the number of multifamily structures built in those neighborhoods, which are comprised of single-family homes and duplexes almost exclusively.

The 15-year lease-purchase program isn’t viewed positively by several respondents, who think that organizations like Columbus Housing Partnership isn’t acting as a good neighbor by implementing these plans.

Some respondents want increase local neighborhood control, in the form of a Neighborhood Conservation District status that would help to maintain the integrity of the area’s homes and other structures.

### Land Uses—Other Uses

Several respondents noted that the mentality that “Not In My Back Yard” uses are OK for the South Side needs to be squashed, and that the South Side should begin to demand respect in the form of a more intelligent mix of land uses. Most agreed that the design restrictions/urban-commercial overlay should be enforced.

Several residents of the Lockbourne Road area were concerned that negative land uses and “undesirable” businesses would be pushed to that corridor as a result of the Vision Plan.

### Environmental

Suggestions for environmental improvements include cleaning up the air/enforcing air quality standards. Many respondents agree with the idea that South Siders likely have health issues because they live in air pollution. Cleanup of Brownfield sites with help from the Columbus Urban Growth Corporation and regulating those operations that are polluting would help.

### Perceptions

Changing perceptions is needed, but is viewed as a big challenge to those present at the focus groups. Most agree that the perception west side of Parsons is more positive than that of the east side (in terms of crime, housing values, hope for future, etc.)

Many respondents agree that implementation of a positive media campaign promoting the Vision Plan and the coverage of the South Side would be a good start in improving perceptions of the South Side. This campaign could include giving the Parsons Avenue area a catchy name, slogan or phrase to create a positive identity.

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



Instilling pride in the community could also begin with a logo, advertisements about the history of the corridor, and mention of the famous people who grew up in the area. “We need help improving the way we feel about ourselves, our community”. Several liked and agreed with marketing the South Side’s great location with a billboard slogan advising suburban commuters. For example, a message like “If you lived on the South Side you would already be home” might attract positive attention and put a new slant on old perceptions.

Increasing perceptions of safety, and reducing perceptions that the area is crime-ridden will greatly improve overall perceptions of the area, say many respondents. “People are afraid to come here after dark!”

- Enforce curfews
- Get more bike and walking cops
- Beginning block watches should model after existing, successful ones
- General perception is that the southern portion of the area is worse than northern. Several say to divide the 13<sup>th</sup> precinct, because it is too large an area.

### Traffic and Infrastructure

Suggestions on improving traffic and roadway infrastructure are primarily fragmented, although many respondents agree that people drive too fast along the corridor. Other suggestions include:

“Install brighter lighting, but less traffic signals on Parsons Avenue.”

“Install traffic calming devices (speed bumps) on Hosack, Barthman, Whittier.”

“Add on-street parking along Parsons Avenue. This helps businesses and slows drivers down.”

“Encourage pedestrian-friendly traffic measures.”

### Economic

An improved Parsons Avenue should mean increased jobs on Parsons Avenue. This means creating a more inviting place that will attract businesses. Several different approaches were touched upon during the focus group conversations. The following is a synopsis of the steps that need to be taken, according to respondents:

- Establish a consortium of businesses and property owners to do comprehensive facelift of the Avenue. Use funding from government and banking partners.
- Organize neighborhood litter cleanups. “Beauty dies where litter lies.” Designate the South Side as a community recycling area. Make it a hub or a model area for recycling efforts.
- Establish committees to fill large buildings and industrial vacancies. Have the city make it their focus.

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



- Recruit active, thriving businesses that are participants in the community.
- Start a business incubator for small businesses. For example, the area has lots of trades people, and good hardware stores. Think tank of contractors, or a builders' consortium of some sort. Try and attract companies like Durable Slate to the area. Contractors should be in incubators.
- Market the area as a true city neighborhood; a blue-collar neighborhood. Near West Side of Cleveland or . . . the Brooklyn Bridge area in New York. A somewhat gritty, authentic neighborhood.
- Build on opportunities such as the empty (city owned) lot next to the Farmer's Market on Marion Road. Also, the for-sale property adjacent to the Southside Branch of the Columbus Metropolitan Library.

### Organizational/Programmatic

Improvements targeting local social service organizations include linking churches with rent-paying users such as job services, counseling, etc. Recognize (with grants and funding) the efforts of area churches.

The Vision Plan should result in the following:

- Focus on a (few) single, targeted issue
- Include mechanisms to maintain the Vision Plan actions...tracking system, accountability.
- The resulting Vision should be a "Win-Win" for all--don't push some out.
- Need continuation of the WEB site, accurate information, and press releases through the Mayors office.
- Need to expedite the Lockbourne Road Plan (it needs to work together with the Parsons Corridor effort)

Improvements to early childhood education, parenting training, available and affordable day care are all ongoing efforts, say respondents. Several comments related to youth and child development include:

"Children are the key for the future so school improvement is a must."

"...(Children) are the engine for training, jobs and keeping people within the neighborhood."

"Parental involvement is key."

### Community Facilities

Add a YMCA, recreational facility, or fitness center, with appropriate programming for all, say many respondents. "Our children need a YMCA, since our old one was closed." According to consensus, the following programs should be implemented out of such a facility:

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



- After school programs for kids
- Health and fitness activities for seniors
- Arts and crafts for seniors and kids
- Recreational programming and events for the whole community
- Put in a Cultural Arts Center or Theatre.

### Retail

Improved retail would collectively make the South Side a destination point for visitors to eat out, have an authentic meal (German, Italian, Soul Food, etc.), shop, feel safe, and enjoy an option to the Short North and German Village.

Suggestions for improved retail corridor:

- Bank
- Theatre
- Farmers Market (expand existing)
- Ethnic Restaurant
- Ethnic Market
- Tea or coffee shop
- Sit down restaurant
- Sit down fast food
- No chains, but Tim Horton's wouldn't be bad!
- Cluster of antique stores
- Clothing
- Appliances (new!)
- Double size of library

Suggestions for uses for Schottensteins building

- Food court
- Small appliance store
- Flea Market (tasteful)
- Dance studio, theater
- Artist lofts
- Business incubator
- Target, Kohl's
- Karate Studio
- Specialty grocery

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



Several types of retail that comments indicate are *not* needed along the corridor include:

- Bars—cheap liquor holes
- Used appliance shops
- Pawn Shops
- Used furniture shops.
- Laundromats
- Drug Stores

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



Ms. Boumis of Burns, Bertsch & Harris, Inc. and Forrest Gibson of POD Design facilitated a meeting with the members of the Merion Village Civic Association on September 29, 2005. The results of the session follow:

**1. Think ahead 10 years into the future. What do you want Parsons Avenue and your neighborhood to be like in 10 years – positive and constructive statements? Don't worry about the realism, how it is going to get done, or who's responsible.**

- Schottenstein's site redeveloped into a retail center
  - o Business types mentioned include coffee shop, Panera, farmer's market, full-service bank, bakery
  - o Want a wide variety of shops
  - o Some favor a large scale retailer
  - o Like the shops in the Short North; small, unique shops
  - o Shops that cater to needs of residents
  - o Don't turn Parsons Avenue into a strip mall with big boxes and chains
- Safe walking areas
- Bars cleaned-up
- Thriving merchants
- Neighborhoods cleaned up; improved maintenance of existing properties
- Neighbors forced to take care of their property; improved code enforcement
- Trees on street; flower boxes; greenery
- Older buildings renovated and brought back – windows unbricked, etc.
- Back to what Parsons Avenue used to be – a thriving urban center
- Trash along Parsons Avenue cleaned up
- Residents proud of neighborhoods
- Healthy economy
- Positive reputation to those outside the neighborhood
- Commercial overlay enforced
- Conservation district enacted
- Existing institutions strengthened
  - o Library; South Side Settlement House; Maloney Health Center; churches
  - o Classes/educational seminars provided at local institutions for residents (homeownership, etc)
- Children's Hospital developed properly – design sensitive to neighborhoods
- Stronger bank/foreclosure laws enacted
- Parsons Avenue will serve as a link to the neighborhoods on both sides
- More active Parsons Avenue Merchants Association (PAMA)
- Residential maintained along Parsons Avenue
- Neighborhoods not gentrified – remain mixed income
- Homes converted to condominiums in select areas

# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



- Parsons Avenue is an economic engine
- Entrepreneurial opportunities
- New development compliments existing development
- Improved sense of safety; more police on streets
- Number of liquor stores reduced
- Brownfields redeveloped
- Improved services for residents
  - Job training facility
  - Tutoring/school center
  - More community space

**2. What can the City do to ensure that your vision becomes reality? (All of the ideas presented were discussed by the participants. However, participants were asked to prioritize these items. The number in parentheses represents the number of votes each item received.)**

- Proactively enforce property maintenance codes (42)
  - Work with police
- Focus efforts on economic development in order to create jobs and enhance small business growth (40)
  - Create incubator space
  - Create tax incentives for building rehabilitation
  - Create a SID (Special Improvement District)
  - Utilize Chamber resources
  - Bring in businesses and offer them a tax incentive if they hire locally
  - Work closely with local businesses – training, etc.
  -
- Enforcement of urban overlay – no exceptions (including none for Children’s Hospital); appoint **one** individual to work with cases involving overlay in order to have some consistency (28)
- Increase police presence on streets (19)
- Create a landlord law (12)
- Expand library (10)
- Get rid of large trash containers (8)
  - Make recycling a part of the service provided
- Create senior citizen housing (3)
- Show greater interest in south side issues (1)
- Repair alleys (1)
- Protection for elderly – create programs to keep the taxes low
- Improve parks and recreation
  - Expand hours and programming at existing facilities
- Develop programs for grants/loans that can be given to individuals who want to improve their property; look at what other communities around the country are doing

# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



- Acquire properties for redevelopment

### 3. What can the community do?

- Help neighbors
- Help keep the neighborhood clean; pick up trash
- Support civic associations
  - Get neighbors more involved
  - Promote community spirit
- Keep property maintained
- Draw organizations together; support each other
- Be active with churches, etc. and support social service efforts
- Support businesses and organizations in the area
- Attend City Council meetings – get the agenda of the south side in front of Council; insist the City must focus on Parsons Avenue – keep the momentum going
- Understand the resources that are available for people and help connect them to those resources
- Talk positively about the neighborhoods to outsiders
- Involve businesses; create partnerships; businesses will benefit when neighborhoods improve
- Reach out to schools

# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



Parsons Avenue Vision Plan  
Targeted Focus Groups  
Real Estate and Development Professionals  
October 13 - 14, 2005

The consultants from VWB Research and Burns, Bertsch and Harris held two focus groups with local development professionals, including representatives from local realty offices, development organizations, land holding companies, and planning agencies. All of the respondents have first-hand experience with development, infill, rehabilitation, renovation, land use analysis, planning, and other key issues that affect the Vision Plan. The following is a summary of these focus groups.

Most respondents agreed that housing rehabilitation in the neighborhoods surrounding the corridor is a logical step toward revitalizing the corridor. Many noted that the momentum experienced by German and Merion Villages has already increased interest in the South Side.

Several comments on pathways to home ownership pointed to different programs that could involve local lenders as well as public incentive programs. One neighborhood resident that has renovated numerous homes notes that financing is often the primary barrier to housing improvement projects. Various assistance programs (for housing as well as neighborhood improvements) include the following:

### Private Lenders:

- Huntington National Bank **City Community Access Mortgage Program**
- Third Federal Bank 3.0% down payment program
- 5<sup>th</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Bank 0.0% down payment program

### **Publicly Administered Programs**

- Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) for infrastructure improvement
- Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) designation
- Special Improvement District (SID) designation
- Tax Abatement for housing (typically, respondents say, you have to have a significant redevelopment project)
- City investment in foreclosed properties

Respondents discussed the fact that housing stock within the study area is high quality with larger units that in German Village and other central city areas, in generally good condition, and relatively uniform in terms of age (1900 to 1940). Not a lot of newer, lower-quality infill has been done in the area, which is a huge advantage in terms of garnering interest from outside. Further, the stock is overwhelmingly single-family and duplex units, with very little multifamily housing. These “housing assets” will serve to encourage investment in the South Side.

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



Trends in housing value increases and home ownership in the Merion Village area over the past several years were described very positively by many respondents. Many of the real estate professionals noted that housing values are on the rise on the east side of Parsons Avenue as well. However, absentee landlords and decaying, vacant stock continues to threaten many South Side neighborhoods.

The majority of respondents noted that given the study area is so large, and there are many potential sites that could be targeted for redevelopment, that attention to quality is important.

The neighborhood's potential for retail development was discussed in more general terms. Many respondents commented that the Schottensteins Department Store building is a natural focal point for redevelopment. Several noted, however, that the new use should be able to draw visitors from outside the South Side area. All recognized that the site, given its size and proximity to the downtown, the corridor, Route 104, and neighborhoods, has real potential for a variety of different types of developments. But, some commented that the use should be "retail" rather than "institutional" or "commercial".

Other comments for retail related to making retail establishments more attractive (landscaping, lighting, and sidewalks) but still keeping them secure. Some respondents noted that residential uses are not appropriate for the retail strip, but others disagreed, saying that the study area is long, and will never be truly consistent in terms of uses. Many respondents commented that they liked what was happening at Marion Road east of Parsons with the Farmer's Market. This type of use, something with the potential to attract visitors from the outside, is what they would like to see increase. Other spots that do this now include Tee Jaye's Restaurant, the Parsons Avenue branch of the Columbus Metropolitan Library (to some degree), and Schottensteins before it closed. The Farmer's Market is creating a buzz, improving the area's image, which is a very good thing.

The area's capacity for an industrial redevelopment was not discussed in detail, but several respondents noted that the area's existing industrial facilities are older and lack elemental features that would make them competitive with other, newer facilities, particularly those within the Southeastern quadrant/Rickenbacker area, which has a very high concentration of new transportation/warehousing/industrial facilities. In summary, although the area has excellent access to downtown and other areas via I-70, I-71 and State Route 104, retooling of industrial property was not addressed as a priority. However it was noted that the Marion Road area has traditionally been occupied by industrial/warehousing tenants, and those uses are expected to continue.

One issue that was discussed in depth was community involvement, particularly in terms of neighborhood clean up and crime issues. It was agreed that the corridor neighborhoods have a negative reputation for public safety.

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



Suggestions to decrease negative perceptions include:

- Installation of street and alley lighting
- Installation of landscaping
- Neighborhood/community involvement in block watch groups
- Involvement of Community Crime Patrol forces to assist officers
- Active communication with local liaison officers and patrol officers
- Publication and distribution of crime statistics on a monthly or quarterly basis
- Involvement of local retailers with neighborhood block watch groups

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



Forrest E. Gibson consultant of POD Design, Inc. facilitated a meeting with members of the Hungarian Village Association on October , 2005. The results of the session follow:

**1. Think ahead 10 years into the future. What do you want Parsons Avenue and your neighborhood to be like in 10 years – positive and constructive statements? Don't worry about the realism, how it is going to get done, or who's responsible.**

More and diverse business establishments  
Parsons Ave. needs a branch office of a bank  
Fewer used furniture and Pawn Shops  
Safe, walkable streets  
Clean environment in which to shop  
More "sit down restaurants"  
Kid's have pride in the neighborhood  
Destination shopping with entertainment  
Expanded Library  
Play space to address the needs of today's and future kid's  
Open lots reused as new development sites (residential and commercial)  
Current architectural character preserved  
The history of the area is preserved and promoted  
Increased police presence

**2. What can the City do to ensure that your vision becomes reality? (The participants discussed all of the ideas presented).**

Increase police dedicated to the greater Parsons Avenue area - no split of 13<sup>th</sup> precinct personnel  
Create a multi-jurisdictional police force for the area  
Push to reuse vacant property  
Create a marketing plan for the area  
Work with the Columbus City School District to improve the quality of education  
Dedicate at least one individual for ACTIVE code enforcement in the area  
Broader and more effective trash clean-up service  
Improve the recreational facilities  
Enforce the Urban Commercial Overlay  
Create incentives to encourage/ entice business development in the area  
Create incentives for the construction of better homes including rehabilitation opportunities  
Hold landlords accountable for properties in disrepair

**Due to time constraints this group was unable to review question 3. What can the community do? However the group was able to provide priorities for the question of what the City can do ensure that the Vision becomes reality.**

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



Stacey Boumis of Burns, Bertsch & Harris, Inc. facilitated a meeting with members of the Southern Orchards Civic Association at Children's Hospital on October 4, 2005. The results of the session follow:

**1. Think ahead 10 years into the future. What do you want Parsons Avenue and your neighborhood to be like in 10 years – positive and constructive statements? Don't worry about the realism, how it is going to get done, or who's responsible.**

- Small shops (Short North Concept) including:
  - ... Retail including specialty shops
  - ...Galleries
  - ...Bookstores
  - ...Minority owned businesses
  - ...Something w/Southern Orchards theme
  - ...Beauty shops, barbershops
  - ...Bakeries
  - ...Restaurants (ethnic)
  - ...Specialty shops (no fast food)
  - ...Day cares
  - ...Banks
  - ...Grocery store (for the Southern portion of Parsons Ave.)
  - ...Fabric/craft shop

*Note: No phone stores, pawnshops*

- Green space / parks, more lid space / playgrounds
- Put parking back on Parsons Ave. / no speedway
- Clean alleys, streets, new curbs and sidewalks
- More home ownership
- Maintain diversity
- Better lighting
- Police substation, police on foot, minimize crime
- More church activity
- Filled vacant buildings
- Things appealing to youth...arts/culture, social space, areas for physical activity (like the King Arts Complex)
- Bigger library...youth outreach programs

**2. What can the City do to ensure that your vision becomes reality? (The participants discussed all of the ideas presented). Participants established priorities by assigning color dots to the elements they determined most urgent. The accumulated value of points for each item is shown in (\*).**

- Clean up City, police enforcement to get ride of drugs and crime (16)

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



- Positive attitude about community; get people involved to feel positive about the neighborhood ...ripple effect (8)
- Continued community involvement ... meetings, survey, keep people engaged (4)
- Bring businesses to the area (6)
- Transportation ... work w/COTA to get people to jobs
- Keep the area clean (see #1) ...lights and other public improvements, deal w/vacant lots (4)
- Landlord registry ...vacant homes, absentee landlords (10)
- Better laws to support code enforcement
- More activities in parks for children (9)
- Job training (5)
- Equalize where felons and sex offenders are placed (6)
- Better disbursement of subsidized housing and sex offender housing (4)
- Help bring in home owners / increase home ownership
- Incentives to fix up homes (5)
- Attract developers that are committed to the area (6)
- Lobby / support improved state laws addressing code enforcement and real estate brokers (4)

### 3. What can the community do?

- Patronize local businesses
- Maintain homes
- Help elderly
- Assist in programs targeted at kids
- Volunteer in the community / schools
- Take back the streets

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



Dianne Harris of Burns, Bertsch & Harris, Inc. facilitated a meeting with the members of the Vassor Village Civic Association on October 5, 2005. The results of the session follow:

**1. Think ahead 10 years into the future. What do you want Parsons Avenue and your neighborhood to be like in 10 years – positive and constructive statements? Don't worry about the realism, how it is going to get done, or who's responsible.**

- South Side recognized as the great place it is; new improved image
- Parsons is a cool, fun , entertainment destination
- Better shopping options; businesses with wide appeal
- Specialty shops, higher quality goods also available
- More health facilities, esp. medical specialties
- Coffee shops and gathering places to share culture
- Wi-Fi Hot Spots, and more use of technology for the “cool” factor & for enhancing interaction
- Parsons Ave. is a walkable shopping district that feels safe, and is family friendly
- Area retains its eclectic and diverse character, human and architecturally (but not museum like)
- Continuous pleasant landscaping plan tying the commercial corridor together
- Business owners take responsibility for their role in the community – should make it a place they can be proud to be part of
- “Branding” use of signage to tie Parsons corridor together with unified appearance
- Parsons Ave CLEAN
- There is good traffic flow and adequate parking
- Reduce number of one-way streets and easier turning
- Completed ADA improvements, streets and sidewalks in good safe condition
- Traffic calming; especially on Jenkins.
- Better street lighting
- Strict controls on peddlers
- Properties well maintained; clean and painted
- Continuity in education- kids can go through school in the neighborhood
- Better schools
- More parks and safe places for kids
- A good place to raise families
- Cohesive marketing- Vassor Village as a celebrated destination around a glass-district theme (galleries, shops, museums about stained glass & lead glass)
- Tear down derelict and hopeless buildings to make room for museums, public uses, fire stations etc.
- Limit through truck traffic (especially at night)
- City incentives to attract businesses available

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



Dale F. Bertsch of Burns, Bertsch & Harris, Inc. facilitated a meeting with members of the Marion Franklin Village Civic Association on October 11, 2005. The results of the session follow:

**1. Think ahead 10 years into the future. What do you want Parsons Avenue and your neighborhood to be like in 10 years – positive and constructive statements? Don't worry about the realism, how it is going to get done, or who's responsible.**

- Safe community, no heavy truck traffic
- Major streets have been improved and have attractive sidewalks
- The neighborhood has been revitalized and codes are being enforced
- Marion Franklin has its own Pride Center
- We have our own library
- There is a community focal point for neighborhood activities and gatherings
- The 14 acre site at 2440 Lockbourne Road has been developed to the benefit of the community
- There is a Learning Center for preparatory and continuing education
- There is an attractive strip mall suitable for small business incubation
- We are finally realizing “our fair share” of Columbus tax dollars
- We have a department store, grocery store, bakery, drycleaner, restaurant, theater, etc.
- We have a police sub-station and an adequate number of police officers
- The community is well kept and well landscaped
- We have an urgent care facility and doctors
- There are jobs for everyone who wants one
- We no longer have any bars or liquor establishments
- The junk yards and used car lots are no longer in the neighborhood
- There are more parks including walking/bike paths

**2. What can the City do to ensure that your vision becomes reality? (The participants discussed all of the ideas presented). However, participants determined that all of the identified items were appropriate, necessary and of the highest priority.**

- The City should keep the promises that have been made
- Zoning patterns should reflect our vision and plans...and be enforced
- The City should offer tax incentives for targeted businesses consistent with our vision
- Enforce our area plan “The Tri-South Plan”

**3. What can the community do?**

- Residents must get involved
- Maintain our homes
- Come together and support our vision and plans
- Publicize and participate in community events
- Aggressively market the community internally and externally

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



### 2. What can the City do to ensure that your vision becomes reality? (All of the ideas presented were discussed by the participants. However, participants were asked to prioritize these items. The number in parentheses represents the number of votes each item received.)

- Reduce bureaucracy that inhibits business start ups; e.g. building code variances to accommodate retrofitting old buildings. (3 pts)
- Maintain streets & sidewalks; e.g. kill weeds, replace trees in ROW (3 pts)
- Increase Police presence in neighborhood (32 pts)
- Provide open support for South Side activities
- Better code enforcement procedures ; e.g. allowing officers to respond to complaints sooner (3 pts)
- Code officers must be available on 24/7 basis to deal with weekend problems
- City council must interact with School board to work together to improve schools. (Many of us will leave if schools don't improve) (8 pts.)
- Provide better resources to tenants to obtain action from landlords. (6 pts)
- Hold landlords responsible for the exterior appearance of their properties. (3 pts.)
- City immediately plan response to loss of major business tenants (like Schottenstein's building compared to action taken re: Morse Rd)
- Facilitate conversion of Buckeye Steele property to cleaner uses (maybe lofts and malls)
- Plan clean up of major contaminated sites and environmental issues (6 pts)
  - i. Partner with State & Feds to refocus priorities on environmental clean up where residential areas are affected (like South Side & Technoplate)
- Offer incentives for local (Central Ohio vs. out of state) businesses to clean up sites in preparation to locate/ expand here.
- Eliminate sewer gas smell (1 pt)
- Install 90 gallon (personal) trash containers & eliminate 300 gallon size in alleys (9 pts)
- Landlords need to be responsible for immediate hauling off of bulk items, and not be allowed to fill all alley cans with construction debris. (Use Personal cans instead)
- Better lighting in alleys. (1 pt)
- City stop passing the buck and take action
- Mayor should step up and set the agenda for focused efforts on the South Side (5 pts.)

### 3. What can the community do?

- Residents must get involved- get to know one another- turn on porch lights- be aware- peer pressure- all the little things that make a neighborhood
- Create a volunteer/ donation based paint- up program to help the elderly and others unable to do work themselves
- Write letters to the editor and "make noise"
- But beware of how we speak of ourselves to others- don't perpetuate negative images
- Organize community clean up programs

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



- Neighbors help their neighbors without being asked
- Support local businesses – work on shopping promotions
- Contact city leaders and the environmental judges with problems
- Take maximum advantage of the web site for communication and promotion
- Organize community foot patrols with police
- Send the message that negative behaviors will no longer be tolerated

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## area vision plan



### November 3, 2005 Public Meeting Visioning and Image Rating Exercise

In this exercise participants were asked to view a series of images and respond as to whether they viewed the images to portray a desirable (positive) scenario or feature for the study area or an undesirable (negative) one. A neutral reaction was indicated with an “N”. Not all participants placed a mark under every picture, and a few made brief comments, which have been recorded in quotation marks (“”).

It is possible in this exercise that an individual will respond to different aspects of the scene, whether it be the aesthetic appeal of the scene, or to the building use depicted (or sometimes implied). Some images probably inspired both a positive reaction to one feature, but a negative one to another.

There were forty-five (45) images, in an effort to put forth a variety of examples of the same use, but articulated differently. This helps to distinguish the exact characteristics that are considered desirable or objectionable in the context of the Parsons Avenue Corridor. The exact responses are recorded according to the order in which the image was presented, along with a description of the image at the end of this report. The analysis is categorized with respect to land uses, but aesthetics are noted if discerned to have noticeable impact.

#### **Residential:**

(35, 34, 32, 31, 22, 11, 10)

None of the residential images received strong support. Number 34 with its portrayal of new single family homes built in traditional densities received modest support of 25 of 37 respondents and number 22, which had the character of urban townhouses received support from 23 of 35 participants. Number 10, showing vintage renovated properties received support from about half of the participants. So while maintenance of historic properties is important to the community, the single family units implied “homeownership” and multifamily buildings implied “tenants”, and the preference is for more homeownership. Condominium ownership in multifamily units is certainly not the norm in this community at this time, and thus is probably not viewed as an ownership scenario.

#### **Retail:**

Buildings: (45, 28, 25, 12, 6, 2)

These represent new construction in the chain format, many in the “big box” genre. Only the Walgreen’s received any support (about 1/3), most likely because they already have a presence in the community, and have served community needs. But the structure design is not well received.

Traditional: (27, 30, 23, 37, 42, 18, 1, 36)

Urban streetscapes, CBD type development received very strong support, except for Number 1. It was perhaps the only one that did not convey a sense of historic buildings.

Centers: (9, 41, 36)

# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



Numbers 9 and 41 reflect “typical suburban” shopping centers and received strongly negative reactions, even where attractive landscaping was incorporated at the boundaries. Number 36, was a sketch that could reflect a well done retail center, in a traditional town plaza motif and was strongly supported .

Open Air Markets or Events: (32, 26, 17, 3)

Outdoor events and farm markets received strongly positive reactions. Number 32, a neighborhood portraying \perhaps a yard sale or street vendor, received support from only about 2/3 of the respondents. Excessive street vending has been identified in some citizen groups as an issue in the corridor.

Parking: (39)

Parking structure articulated like a 19<sup>th</sup> Century commercial structure, “hiding” the vehicles, possible commercial use on the street side of the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. Strongly supported by 32 of 38 respondents.

### **Institutional/ Office: (22, 16, 8)**

These examples were distinctly late 20<sup>th</sup> century in design and received strong negative reactions. The utilitarian angularity does not blend with historic structures and does not convey openness to the world outside their walls. It is felt that the design of these buildings carried the reaction, and not the activities they would have housed. Only #22, with an implication of residential uses in a traditional townhouse style received a little more than half of total participants’ approvals’, but many did not respond to it- the uses being perhaps too ambiguous. The sketch also failed to convey any sense of plantings or softening at the street edge.

### **Industrial: (19, 15, 20)**

These uses received strong negative reactions, although qualified by statement that these may be OK in portions of study area near the interstate- but generally not along Parsons Ave.

### **Open Space**

(40, 44, 29, 24, 14)

### **Transit:**

( 43, 37, 33, 21, 13, 7)

In general, all depictions of personal transit received mostly positive ratings, whether bus, train, electric street car, or even transit related fixtures like the weather shelters, or hubs.

### **Safety:**

(38)

The image of bicycle cops was enthusiastically received, and reinforces the attitudes heard in community meetings about the need for greater security, law enforcement, and a desire for creative policing efforts like bicycle cops.

# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



### Images Exercise

1. Modern Design Retail Streetscape; 7+ 29 - 2 N  
outdoor dining, bold colors and design, landscape islands separating sidewalk from a parking area, tall trees behind the structure
2. Renovated Theater (Barnes & Noble) 28+ 8-  
Implied adaptive reuse of large structure; maintained theater marquis for signage, appears part of a larger retail center
3. Outdoor vendors 23 + 4 - 4 N  
Colorful tents, attractively displayed goods, open space setting, historic appearing downtown in background
4. Urban Street Scene 21 + 4 - 4 N  
Historic 5 story building, awnings, iron balconies, attractive commercial signage
5. Creative cut out Business Signs 16 + 13 – 7 N  
Low street scene of several sandwich board style signs, with cut out figure in foreground.
6. New (BOX) Grocery Store (Fred Meyers) 2 + 28- 2N  
“Close to Street is good; boxy architecture is bad”
7. High Speed Train at Station 18 + 12- 2N  
“Rapid Transit, Yeah!”  
“Train Station on South High Street”
8. Single Story New Government or School type Structure 5+ 29 – 1N  
Elements include brick with stucco accents, Gabled Entrys with Greek style Columns; No apparent landscaping at front or in large parking lot  
“Parking should be in rear/side, NOT front”
9. Shopping Center- Recent Suburban Construction 4+ 31- 1N  
Tall single story (false front), trees and water tower in background, large parking lot, with minimal landscape islands, tall lighting  
“Ugly”
10. Three Story Residential Multifamily 18 + 15- 2 N  
Vintage, brick, appear altered with balconies and curving front steps to second floor. Urban character with grassy small set backs from sidewalks ( looks like reconfigured rear elevations)
11. Four Story Brick Residential with Mansaard Roof Line 3+ 30- 2N

# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



Recent, large structure with large windows but otherwise plain façade. Small covering marking entrance with curved driveway access, flowers and small shrubs. Appear to be window AC units. One comment “Medical Facility?” indicates some ambiguity in understanding of use.

12. Large Retail - Walgreens – Recent Construction 10 + 27 - 1 N

Brick with green hard shell awnings over windows- lots of neon signage, corner entry- parking lot with a few entry shrubs

“Yuck”

13. Transit Bus with Bikerack on front. 26 + 2- 4 N

Rendering of a park-like stop; large trees, decorative paving, benches, waste containers and gazebo all of complimentary construction

14. Wide Decorative Sidewalks, 38 + 1- 1 N

Tree lined, shrubs and flowers- almost park-like, could be a different view of the same site in #13

15. Warehouse/ Industrial – Recent Construction 30 -3+ 2 N

Poured wall construction- 1 tiny tree at entry, parking lot butts up against building, attempts to break up mass of wall with horizontal stripes & “neutral” colors- scale definitely reads as a warehouse facility- loading docks not in view of the entry

16. Brick Two Story Office or Institutional- circa 1970’s 1 + 32 - 6N

A style that has been used for offices, schools and professional buildings- “energy saving” long narrow windows, few in number; strong vertical accents to break up mass of structure, sort of a front “lawn” with utilitarian evergreen shrubbery (dated suburban feel) No cars or signs of life.

17. Outdoor Event. 31 + 4 - 1 N

Vendor tents lined up in a treed open space area in front of collection of medium scale buildings. Lots of people milling about

18. Historic commercial area street scene. 37 + 1 -

The “Main Street USA” Look. Low, two story, trees and decorative street lights with banners. Fronts appear “restored” and though similar in scale and style, have variation in colors and architectural elements. Drawing conveys slow pacing- only a few cars, a bicycle rider, couple strolling with baby carriage.

19. Arial view of large Industrial complex. 2 + 34 - 2N

Lots of large gray flat roofs and parking lots- some green areas and trees are in the fields, but view does not soften because of them

2 comments “Industry near interstate OK, just not ON Parsons”

# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



20. Large Truck Yard. Loading dock view. 3 + 30- 3N  
Lines of trailers, edge of parking shows lines of immature evergreen plantings in a grassy area.  
“Depends on where it is”
21. Electric Streetcars in City Scape (Denver). 31 + 3 – 0 N  
“Access to transit is important”
22. Sketch of Six Story building Modern construction style- 23 + 6 - 5 N 1 ?  
Flat roof, angular, parking in first story- could be residential or professional offices
23. Sketch of Six Story Buildings Streetscape 28+ 7 - 2 N 1 ?  
Could be adapted historic buildings, or new construction. Built up to sidewalks and parking area. Tree lined. Conveys pedestrian activity and mix of commercial and other uses.
24. Open Space. 37 + 3 - 1 N  
Paved with seating around fountains. Tree shaded with potted plants. Commercial building in background.
25. Shopping Center. Recent construction. (Staples) 4 + 32 - 0 N  
Brick, false front design. Large parking lot with immature landscape islands
26. Open air produce shop. 30 + 4 - 2 N  
Produce on quaint brightly colored displays at edge of frame building.. Buckets of flowers. Casually dressed people browsing. Farm stand feel.
27. Commercial streetscape in dense urban area. 36 + 2- 1 N  
Attractive, brightly lit window displays, canopies, planters with small trees, decorative light poles.
28. Large Retail, recent construction. (WalMart) 4 + 36 - 1 N  
Benches, brick & stucco, decorative lights and planters.  
“WalMart = death of small companies”  
“We have one”
29. Open Space with Strong Entry Feature Pergola 34 + 1 – 1 N  
Almost appears to be an inset between clusters of low structures- probably commercial in nature. Some paving, lots of trees and flowers.
30. Commercial Corridor. Mixed ages of structures and businesses. 25+ 10 -1 N  
Clean mostly light neutral color with bright accents on each business. All low, one and two story. Small street trees. Appears busy.

# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



31. High Rise Residential, Modern Design. 2 + 34 –  
Brick, glass and steel, with balconies.
32. Vintage Neighborhood. Street Vending/ Yard Sale type Activity. 26 + 10 –
33. Bus Shelter. Metal Supports, Translucent Sides. 32 + 5 – 1 N  
“Is this a bus shelter?”
34. Row of Two Story Houses. Recent Construction. 25 + 11 - 1 N  
Small front and side yards. Traditional feel.
35. Three Story Block Long Building- Modernistic 13 + 19 – 3 N  
End appears to be office/institutional in character, followed by townhouses.
36. Street Scene Commercial, Central Plaza 31 + 2 – 4 N  
Lots of trees, people walking about, two story structures, mixed styles.
37. Busy Urban Scene. Public Market Sign. Bus Stop. 32 +5 – 0 N
38. Street Scene, Modern Storefronts, Bicycle Cops 41 + 1 - 0 N  
“Absoltely!”  
“Bike cops, yeah”
39. Street Scene Feature Three Story Building- 32 + 5 - 1 N  
Appears Open Air- like a parking garage- rigid awnings, 3<sup>rd</sup> story with screening and decorative features
40. Playground 37 + 4 - 0 N  
Standard equipment, appears to be sand base, with grassy areas in the background.
41. Shopping Center. Located along Street. Newer Construction, 4 + 24 – 1 N 1 ?  
Low construction, mix of brick, stucco, awnings decorative and tall lighting and landscaped buffer between parking lot and street. Some landscaping in the development.  
“This is ugly”
42. Dense Mixed Use Area. Four Story 31 + 3 - 1 N  
20<sup>th</sup> Century structure in scale and style to complement the historic building in the foreground- recessed covered walkways for retail , some balconies and architectural features.
43. Series of Weather shelters; 14+ 18 - 4 N  
Maybe for transit; all paving, large building and vehicles in background

# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



44. Park Scene 38 + 1 -  
Benches, neutral paving, trees lawn

45. Large Retail Store (Giant Eagle) 4+ 32 -  
“single story, false gable, Modern”; parking with landscape islands  
(reactions to use or visual?)

# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



December 12, 2005 the Southside Community Acton Network (CAN) organization invited the consultants to present an overview of the project to the membership. Progress to date, the Vision Draft and the Goals & Objectives Draft were reviewed. Members of the audience expressed a desire to have more sit-down restaurants and retail establishments located on the Avenue. Some members expressed a wish for the City to consider the schools, especially South High, as integral parts of the community, and that any plans should consider impacts upon the schools and the students. Several participants spoke of the need to improve the image of the Avenue's neighborhoods, both to others in the City, as well as raising their own sense of pride.

Later in the evening, six seniors from South High participated in a focus group led by the Consultant and moderated by their Principal, Mrs. Lawson.

### **“What’s the Best Thing Going On for Teens in Your Neighborhood?”**

When asked to describe the best thing about their neighborhood, for teenagers, most said their schools. It was pointed out the South is very much a neighborhood based school, and that these students, as seniors, had attended the same school together for all of high school, some even from middle school. They believe this enabled them to develop close friendships, almost a feeling of being family. One student believed that South was safer than a school previously attended; that the police had a greater presence. Their favorite places were the Salesian Boys and Girls Club, Easton Center, City Center Mall and the Recreation Center at Driving Park. Notably, none of these places are within their own neighborhood. Exploring that issue revealed that they do not have any place within the neighborhood, except school, where they feel they can gather and interact with their friends. There used to be a recreation center in the area but the City closed it.

### **“What Are the Things That Hold You Back: That Keep Things From Being Better?”**

The students pointedly responded that their greatest obstacle was from “negative people”, those who look down on the residents of the South Side, stereotypes about the South Side, gangs, sexual offenders in the neighborhood that follow them as they walk to school or the bus, and guns. They perceive the class discrimination that is exhibited through the demarcation of property values, comparing east vs. west of the avenue, almost feeling physically constrained against going into neighborhoods like German Village. They commented that there were not enough jobs for teens and that the Avenue is “dead”, i.e. no activity for teens, and no place to shop. The group was split on whether they would like to continue to live in the neighborhood once their education was completed and they started their future careers. Those who believed they would leave, felt the best opportunities in their chosen fields existed in other cities.

They wished for people to pay attention to what they (students) do right, instead of blaming all students for problems like litter. They felt that academic requirements, including college entrance tests, focused too much on things that did not seem important to their future. This led to a discussion of their concerns about transitioning to college. They wished for programs that would help them to be able to enter colleges along-side their current friends for the social support, as well as the opportunity to earn college credits in high school. They would like to see more facilities and programs like those offered by Salesian Boys and Girls Clubs, which also offered employment to the teens.

### **“What’s the Best Thing For Teens That Could Happen Here in the Next Five Years?”**

They responded, more, and better jobs, more programs like Salesian Boys & Girls Clubs, new recreation centers, because they do not feel comfortable going to Schiller Park. Driving Park is about the same distance away, but they feel like it is closer. At any rate, neither is really within comfortable walking distance. They would like to see community groups for young people - and places where they can “drop in”, without having membership cards, just use a universal ID if necessary.

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# Greater Parsons Avenue

## area vision plan



December 15, 2005, the consulting team made a presentation to a Community Meeting assembled at the Southside Settlement House. The information presented was the results of the previous community meeting, with particular attention to the mapping exercise, in which participants were to indicate parcels or locations that they felt would be key to stimulating redevelopment of the Avenue. The agenda included exercises to have the participants react to a set of goals and objectives developed by the Corridor Development Action Group. A number of participants were attending for the first time and had a number of questions. They also wished to further discuss a number of additional sites of importance and generally how redevelopment succeeds. Due to time restraints, the group did not get to examine goals and objectives for the plan. These will be further crafted and presented at the next meeting. Instead, they were asked to write down their suggestions as to what should be the highest priority areas/properties for redevelopment addressed by this plan. The compiled results, with the number of persons who recommended this property, are as follows:

1887 Parsons Ave, Schottenstein Renovate or replace and reuse	1+1+1+1+1	(5)
366 Reeb Ave., Steelton Gateway	1	
Library (Expand) (Relocate to East side of Parsons) (benefit of Kobacker Park) “ to Lois Mann site “ or Kroger site “ or Reeb School if it closes “Parsons & Whittier “ Lincoln Park	1+1+1+1+1+1+1+1	(8)
Lot next to Library	1	
Parsons & Whittier (and synergy with Whittier Peninsula)	1	
Parsons & Livingston (Childrens & Bobs Chev)	1+1	(2)
Children’s Parking Garage & Area around it Prefer retail, office, or commercial on ground floor facing Parsons	1+1+1+1+1	(5)
Old CMACAO Building	1	
Develop Outlots in Kroger Parking lot	1	
All vacant lots & abandoned property	1+1	(2)
Lincoln Park School change to incubator	1 1	
Federal Glass Site	1	

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### North Area:

Parsons & Kossuth or	1	
Parsons & Stanley	1	
Site across from Planks	1	

### Middle Area

Parsons & Southwoode	1	
Parsons & Markison	1	
Parsons & Welch	1	
Lois Mann site	1+1	(2)

### South Portion

Parsons & Reeb	1	
Parsons & Barthman or Marion	1	
Market Area	1+1	(2)
Southside Market at Maes Market; Marion & Parsons		

Great INB (?) for the area with Laundry, Library, groceries, coffee ( related to Library at Kroger?)

Redevelop used car lots to off street parking

Get blighted drug houses out of slum landlords' possession

More street links (?)

Develop a building like the Central Station in the Short North

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