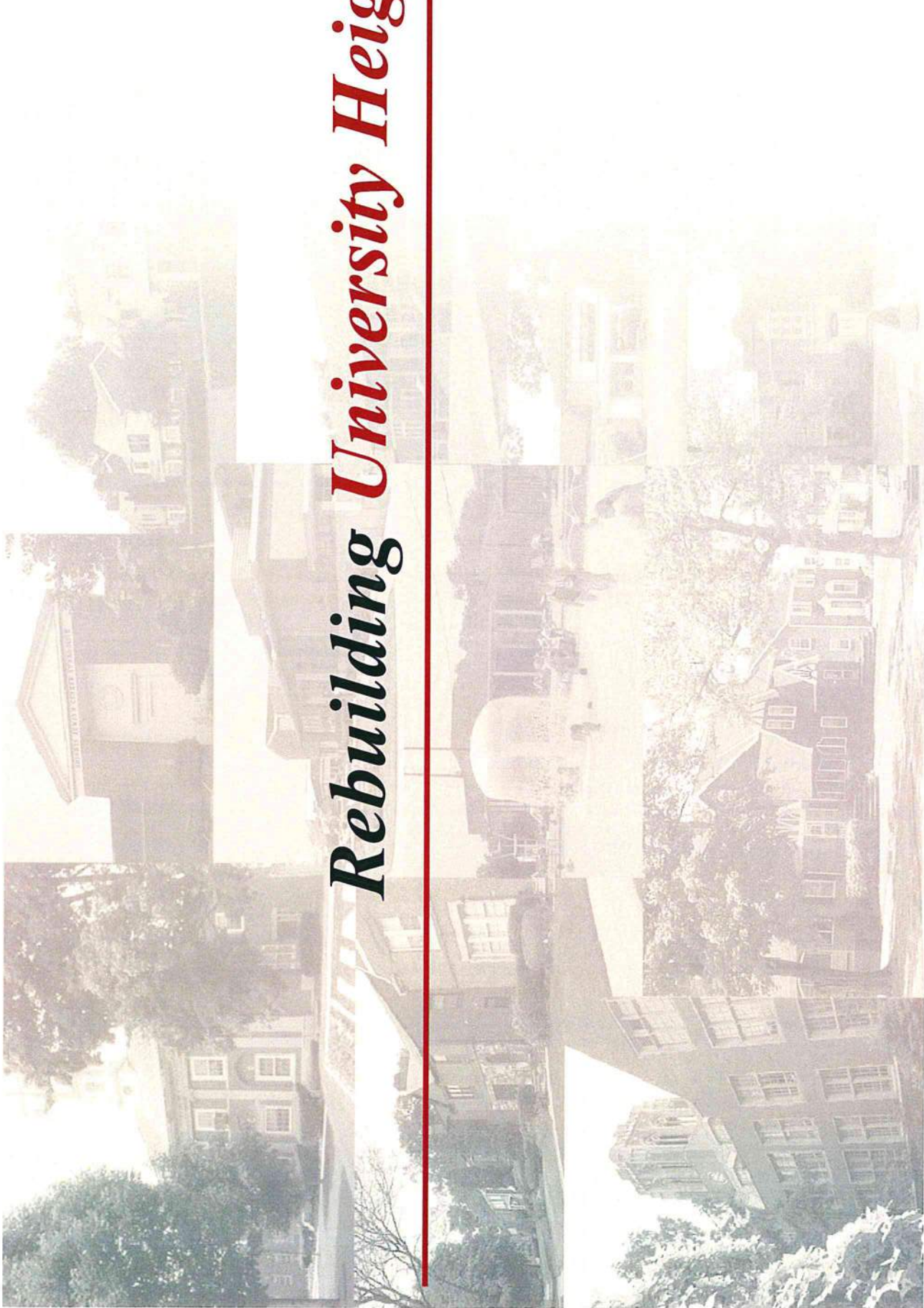


The background of the page is a collage of six photographs. The top-left photo shows a large, multi-story brick building with a prominent entrance. The top-right photo shows a wide, open green space with trees and a building in the distance. The middle-left photo shows a large, multi-story brick building with a prominent entrance. The middle-right photo shows a large, multi-story brick building with a prominent entrance. The bottom-left photo shows a large, multi-story brick building with a prominent entrance. The bottom-right photo shows a large, multi-story brick building with a prominent entrance.

Rebuilding University Heights

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

Throughout the development of this Master Plan, it has been imperative that the decisions made, and development schemes explored, be recognized as important to the future of the City of University Heights by both the city officials, and the residents. Without the continued support of all those involved with the planning process, any development that might occur within the city may not support the needs of the community to its fullest potential. As a result of the process, a series of strategic directives have emerged that should be used as a guide for the completion of not only the development projects that are proposed within this document, but any other endeavors that the City of University Heights might undertake in the development of this community. Quality of life standards are critical to the continued success of any community, and the following recommendations have been conceived on the basis of continually raising the bar to ensure that University Heights remain the successful, thriving community that it has always been.

Municipal Campus Expansion

The University Heights Municipal Campus has become overcrowded and is in need of expansion. As the level of service that the city provides to its residents continues to increase, the Municipal Campus is going to become inefficient. In many cases, such as the police station, this is already the case. The reconstruction and expansion of the Municipal Campus is necessary to ensure the provision of quality municipal services to the community, while providing a visible civic center.

Diverse Housing

University Heights, although abundant in single-family homes, must continue to increase the diversity of its housing stock. There is an increasing demand from many segments of the population, such as empty nesters and young professionals, for alternatives to the traditional home. These include townhomes and lofts. In addition, another alternative may look at opportunities to replace existing housing stock with new housing designs to meet current market demands.

City / University Relationship

The City of University Heights and John Carroll University must continue to work together to create a future vision for both the campus and the city. This vision should incorporate the implementation of new student housing, particularly along Warrensville Center Road, as well as the re-establishment of Fairmount Circle as an important civic space and gateway to the city and University.



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Public Schools

The City of University Heights must analyze the number of students who attend the CH-UH Public School System who are residents of University Heights as well as the number of residents who would support the public schools if University Heights were to separate from the district. The city must also assess the school buildings that currently lie within the city limits, both public and private, to determine their worth to the community both as a school site and for future development.

Shared Resources

Due to the compact nature of University Heights, the city should continue to investigate the possibility of finding resources that can be shared with its neighboring communities. Recreation centers and expanded green space are amenities that University Heights and its neighbors, if working together, could provide for their citizens at a much higher caliber than if they were working individually. However, in the short term a senior center could be created in a vacant storefront, preferably in Cedar Center to continue to establish the district as an effective town center.

Property Evaluations

As the City of University Heights has continued to grow over time, it has become apparent that the majority of its developable land has been consumed. However, if the city is to prosper in the future it must continually analyze the way in which property is being used to determine if the redevelopment of a built-out area could further increase the quality of life for residents.

Pocket Parks

The creation of pocket parks throughout the neighborhoods of University Heights is necessary to continue to increase the quality of life for residents. It is recommended that each park be designed with a specific program of activities to ensure their continued role as an important gathering place for each neighborhood.

Transit-Oriented Development

New development within University Heights should be transit oriented in nature, and should promote a balance of accessibility for pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transportation as well as the automobile.



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Mixed-Use Development

Zoning strategies that will promote mixed-use development in key locations throughout the city are essential to the continued growth of a well-balanced mix of land uses due to the fact that University Heights is a nearly built-out suburb.

Gateways

It is essential that University Heights retain its individuality within the greater Heights community. The implementation of strong gateway elements, incorporating both signage and development, play a key role in accomplishing this as well as demonstrating the philosophy of the city's neighborhoods to anyone that lives in, uses, or passes through them.

Warrensville Center Road

It is recommended that the City of University Heights increase the vitality of Warrensville Center Road and its attractiveness as the heart of the community. Warrensville Center Road is an important link between the neighborhoods of University Heights as well as the surrounding cities, and should adequately represent the front door of the city for all who pass through it. This process should not only include real estate development along the road, but the implementation of new landscaped medians and street trees.

John Carroll University

As the only city in the greater Heights region to have a university, University Heights is unique. There are many business and social opportunities that John Carroll can bring to the city, and every effort should be made to tap into these and build upon the strengths that the University can offer the community.

In order to begin to implement the types of recommendations addressed in this Master Plan, the right tools must be in place for the City's use. Two such tools critical to this use are the City's Zoning Code and Capital Program. The following two sections provide a set of technical recommendations to suggest ways in which University Heights can work towards making its vision a reality.

REBUILDING UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY



University Heights Master Plan ***A Guide To The Future***

UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS ZONING CODE REVIEW

Zoning is a community's recipe book. It defines what a community will look like and translates that vision into reality through the actions of individual property owners over many years. A community's zoning code defines how a community's various land uses and activities will relate to each other and defines procedures for reconciling differences and evaluating proposals to ensure they fit into the larger whole. Like a good recipe book, a good zoning describes clearly how individual ingredients will coalesce to produce the desired end result. Well-crafted and up-to-date zoning is the single most powerful tool for achieving a community's collective civic vision over time.

To be effective, a zoning code should be a clear and concise document which communicates the community's vision to individual property owners and other citizens. On the one hand, the Code must protect the interests of the property owner by ensuring that land use regulations are administered fairly and equitably and that the provisions of the Code are not onerous or confiscatory. On the other hand, the Code must interpret the community's vision on a manner that individual property owners will understand and find to be fair, appropriate and, within the limits of their interests and their resources, achievable.

To the degree that a Code can be easily understood and interpreted by the end user--the property owner and other citizens--it will be an effective device for carrying out a community's vision. To the degree that a code is confusing, overly complicated, and interpretable only by a few experts in City Hall, it will be an ineffective tool for carrying out a community's Master Plan and realizing the collective vision that the plan embodies.

To ensure that a code is understandable, current, internally consistent, and easily administered it should, from time to time, be reviewed comprehensively and, if appropriate, revised and updated. Such is the case with the University Heights Zoning Code.

The University Heights Zoning Code was adopted in 1956 and has been continuously reviewed and amended since its adoption. As a result, the Code adequately addresses most contemporary zoning issues and is not in need of comprehensive reconstruction.



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Despite its general adequacy as a guide to the development and preservation of University Heights, the Code, like any document which has been amended over an extended period of time, merits a thorough review to insure that its terms are up to date and its provisions are internally consistent and understandable to the end user--the property owners and other citizens of University Heights.

While this Master Plan update does not substitute for such a comprehensive review, it can address, in general terms, the issues that such a review should encompass. What follows is a chapter-by-chapter evaluation of the current code.

Chapter 1101: Definitions

Chapter 1101 is the "Definitions" section of the code. A review of this chapter indicates that it was amended as recently as 1999 to include contemporary housing types--attached one-family dwellings, cluster one-family dwellings--and residential/institutional uses--senior housing and health care facilities and residential behavioral health care facilities. These amendments position University Heights well to respond to emerging residential markets and to manage the community's unique institutional uses. At the same time, the Definitions section includes terms such as "boarding house," "lodging house," and "tourist home" that may have been contemporary terms of art in 1956, when elements of this section were adopted, but are no longer in common use today. The Chapter does not address specifically "bed and breakfast" and "live-work" uses and, therefore, does not position the community to deal with these uses appropriately. Furthermore, the Chapter does not define "group homes" and "dormitories." While these uses are addressed in other sections of the Code, they should be identified in the Definitions chapter as unique residential uses.

Section 1101.07, adopted in 1956, arrays the use classifications from least to most restrictive. It clearly reflects the chapters that were adopted at the time but has not been amended to reflect use districts that have been adopted since then: University-College and Mixed Use districts.



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Chapter 1106: Architectural Review Board

Chapter 1106 defines the structure and responsibilities of the city's Architectural Review Board. With regard to the structure of the Board and the applications process, this chapter is clear, concise, and current. Improvements, however, can be made to language regarding the responsibilities of the Board and the design review process it employs. The current language gives the Board broad responsibilities to undertake design review in "all districts" but speaks to specific "powers and duties" only in reference to the U-9 Cedar Center Mixed Use District. The Code only references the use of "design criteria" and "development and design guidelines" with respect to that specific district and not for other areas of the city or other use districts. It is silent with regard to the University-College District, the city's other major development district.

Design review is a powerful tool to maintain the character and quality of a community and to insure that new development is consistent in design with its surroundings. Adopted design guidelines can strengthen the designs review process and ensure that it is administered in a fair, equitable, and consistent manner. The Code should be made clearer and more explicit with regard to design review. The Code should require that the Board adopt general guidelines to address issues of incremental or infill development and should adopt specific design guidelines for individual districts which require the Board's attention over an extended period of time: the Cedar Center Mixed Use District, the John Carroll University-College District, and any planned residential districts.

Chapter 1109: One-Family District

Chapter 1109 defines the permitted uses and characteristics of one-family housing. While it makes reference to "Planned One-Family" and "Planned Multi-Family" districts defined elsewhere in the Code, it makes no reference to "Attached One-Family Dwelling" and "Cluster One-Family Dwelling" uses that appear to have been added to the Code by amendments adopted in 1999. Of specific concern is the apparent inconsistency between the definitions of these two uses, described in Section 1101.08(i) and (j), and the "Yard Regulations" defined in Section 1109.05. The latter section was adopted in 1956 and 1957 and should be reviewed to make it consistent with the more recent sections of the Code which define contemporary housing types.



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This chapter makes no reference to "Planned One-Family Residential Areas." These are addressed under Chapter 1125, Supplemental Regulations. They would better be addressed as part of the One-Family District chapter or in a separate chapter dealing with planned unit development.

Chapter 1113: Automobile Parking District

Chapter 1113 is a curiously-positioned chapter, located between Two-Family and Multi-Family District chapters. The chapter was adopted in 1956 and reflects the auto-oriented thinking of its time. The Code contemplates that this use would be mapped as a buffer between residential and business uses and that its intention would be to protect the former from the latter. The chapter, however, does not speak to specific design elements--setbacks, buffers, fencing, signage, and lighting requirements, etc.--that would provide such protection. The chapter requires that designs be submitted to the City Planning Commission and makes no reference to the Architectural Review Board, a body which, by its composition, is more suited to perform such a review. The chapter also makes reference to "manufacturing," a use not otherwise contemplated in the University Heights Code.

This chapter should be reviewed to determine whether it is any longer needed or appropriate. Should the city determine that retaining such a chapter is justified, the city should revise this chapter to incorporate greater specificity regarding screening, signage, and lighting elements and to incorporate ARB review. The chapter should be relocated within the Code to sit between residential chapters and other, more intensive uses.



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Chapter 1115: Multi-Family Residence District

Chapter 1115 defines the permitted uses and characteristics of multi-family housing. As is the case with the One-Family district, the core of this chapter was adopted in 1956 and 1957. Subsequent amendments to the definition of "dwellings" [Chapter 11101.08] are not referenced in Chapter 1115. Specifically "town house," "senior housing and care facilities," and "residential behavioral health care facility" uses are not referenced. Of particular concern are the dimensional requirements of this chapter (height, lot width and area, and yard regulations) and their applicability to the uses defined since the adoption of these sections of the Multi-Family chapter. The Code should be reviewed and amended to address these issues.

This chapter makes no reference to "Planned Multi-Family Residential Areas." These are addressed under Chapter 1125, Supplemental Regulations. They would better be addressed as part of the Multi-Family District chapter or in a separate chapter dealing with planned unit development

Chapter 1117: Office Building District

Chapter 1117, Office Building District, was adopted in 1956 and reflects the market of its time. The Code contemplates single purpose office structures with "landscaped settings" and surface parking lots which serve as buffers between the office use and adjacent residential areas. While residential uses, consistent with adjacent residential districts, are permitted, the chapter does not contemplate mixed use, urbane structures which may combine office, residential, and retail uses and sit in a lively streetscape setting. No reference is made here or elsewhere in the Code to "live-work" spaces which might be appropriate reuses of older, non-competitive commercial sites. This Chapter should be revised to be consistent with the intent of the new Master Plan and to encourage the development of contemporary mixed use product.

Chapter 1118: Cedar Center District

Chapter 1118 was adopted in 2002 and defines, in great detail, the requirements for the city's principal retail district, Cedar Center. Provisions contained within it are, in many regards, more explicit and contemporary than the provisions of the other, older sections of the Code. In any Code revisions, this chapter should be mined for language that might be more generally applicable to the city as a whole. This chapter contains explicit design requirements for the redevelopment of the Cedar Center District. These provisions should be reviewed periodically to ensure that they continue to reflect the most contemporary design standards and do not, by being overly precise, restrict appropriate redevelopment of this district.

Chapter 1119: Local Retail District

Chapter 1119 defines the uses and character of Local Retail Districts. Adopted in 1969, it reflects the uses and technology of its era. In any Code revision, the permitted uses should be revised to reflect current uses and technologies. To avoid the problem of obsolescence in the future, the City should consider using a "performance-based" use definition--which speaks to the characteristics of permitted uses--rather than a specific list of uses to define what is allowable in University Heights's Local Retail districts.

Chapter 1120: Exterior Signs

Chapter 1120 addresses signage standards. It is curiously located between "Local Retail" and "Shopping Center" districts and should be relocated after all the individual use chapters. Although this chapter is reasonably current--sections having been adopted in 1997 and 1998--it has not been amended to include the U-9 Mixed Use District. This absence appears in many sections of this chapter. The chapter specifies that design review of signs is to be performed by the Sign Advisory Committee of the City Planning Commission. This arrangement raises concern that two separate design review committees--the Architectural Review Board and the Sign Advisory Committee--have separate jurisdiction over key aspects of a building's façade. This language should be reviewed with the intention of establishing an easily understood design review process. We note that this chapter specifies that non-conforming signs be removed by January 1, 2003. [1120.13(b)(6)].



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Chapter 1121: Shopping Center District

Chapter 1121 defines uses permitted in Shopping Centers. As is the case in Local Retail, Permitted Uses (1121.02) contains out-of-date elements and lacks new uses that have emerged since the Chapter's adoption in 1969. To avoid this problem in the future, the city should consider a performance-based use definition rather than attempting to maintain a complete use of permitted uses.

Chapter 1122: University-College District

Chapter 1122 defines the special zoning district intended for the John Carroll University campus. This chapter addresses issues such as permitted uses; area, height, and setback requirements; illumination; off-street parking; and "architectural features." The chapter defines an application and approval process that references a "Community Facilities Plan but makes no reference to the role of development and design guidelines. The chapter makes no reference to the Architectural Review Board and implies that the City Planning Commission alone is responsible for reviewing design and making specific recommendations to City Council for approval, disapproval, or modification of the submitted plans. This chapter gives every indication of being the result of negotiations between the city and the University over 30 years ago and may not reflect the current intentions of either party.

Given the importance of the University campus as a large land use and the importance of the relationship between the campus and its immediate off-campus neighborhoods, this chapter should be more explicit regarding the form of development both on and adjacent to the campus and the process by which design review is to be undertaken. Chapter 1118, the Cedar Center District chapter, by comparison, defines a set of physical relationships that are essential to making a unique place and protecting the interests of surrounding property owners. Chapter 1106, the Architectural Review Board chapter, identifies a specific role for the Board in undertaking design review in the Cedar Center District but is silent with regard to the University-Campus District. This chapter and Chapter 1118 should be rewritten to be consistent in form and content.

The Code should define the nature and content of the Community Facilities Plan reference in this chapter or eliminate the reference altogether.

Chapter 1123: Off-Street Parking and Loading

Chapter 1123 defines the requirements for off-street parking and loading in University Heights. The chapter was adopted in 1956 and reflects the standards of the time. The chapter should be rewritten to reflect current standards with regard to parking requirements, landscaping and screening, shared parking, and the availability of public transportation.

Section 1123.02, for example, references "rooming and boarding houses," hotels, hospitals, and similar uses no longer found or never contemplated in University Heights. This section includes parking standards that are, by contemporary standards, overly generous (5:1000 square feet) for retail and office uses and less than adequate for any hotel use (1:3 sleeping rooms). The section gives no consideration to calculating shared uses, such as theaters, auditoriums, or stadiums which, in University Heights, exist either as part of a campus or of a larger retail center. The section, furthermore, gives no thought or credit for the presence of public transit on most of the city's major thoroughfares. Finally, aspects of this section are difficult or impossible to administer: The section requires that the Planning Commission calculate the number of "roomers or borders" in one-family, two-family, and multi-family dwellings to arrive at a parking requirement for these uses.

Section 1123.03 speaks to hours of operation in all commercial districts except the most recently completed one--the Cedar Center Mixed Use District. The chapter should be amended to incorporate this newest district.

Section 1123.04 addresses the design requirements for off-street lots and garages. Most of this section was adopted in 1966 and reflects the thinking of the time. While reference is made to screening through walls and landscaping, no specific minimum standards are proposed to insure that screening is effective and consistent across the city. No reference is made to signage requirements. Neither the role of the Architectural Review Board nor the use of design guidelines is addressed. As with Section 1123.03, no reference is made to the Cedar Center Mixed Use District.

Chapter 1124: Houses of Assembly and Social Service Uses

Chapter 1124 defines a set uses subject to Special Use Permits within the city's residential districts. As such, its title is misleading and should be changed to reflect the fact that the uses described therein are subject to special review by the city.

Sections of the chapter were adopted in 1982, 1990, and 1999. As is the case with the Cedar Center Mixed Use District (Chapter 1118), this chapter has elements dealing with parking, landscaping, and plan review which would be more appropriately addressed in chapters applicable to the Code as a whole.

This chapter addresses group homes; senior housing and care facilities; office, research and tech production facilities; condominium conversions; residential behavioral health care facilities; and houses of worship. For the sake of consistency and clarity, these unrelated uses might better be grouped as conditional uses within the broad classifications of residential, commercial, and institutional use. Elements such as landscaping and screening and off-street parking would be better addressed in specific Code chapters addressing these issues. Plan submission requirements and the design review process likewise should be consistent with the requirements imposed elsewhere in the Code.



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Chapter 1125: Supplemental Regulations

Chapter 1125 is a catch-all chapter which includes everything from specific site planning requirements for Planned One-Family and Multi-Family Residential Areas to requirements for vending machines and satellite dishes. Elements of this chapter--such as those dealing with residential uses--should be relocated to the residential section of the Code and made consistent with the requirements imposed on similar residential uses. Likewise issues such as "unrelated occupants in residential districts," and "home occupations" are best addressed in the context of the city's residential zones. Other topics addressed by the chapter, such as "grates or bars on dwelling units, are better suited to a city's Building Code.

Chapter 1127: Nonconforming Uses

Chapter 1127 addresses Nonconforming Uses. It was adopted in 1956 and has been unamended since that time. In as much as the issue of nonconformity is a central tenant of zoning codes, it should be relocated to the front of the document and not relegated to a position between "Supplemental Regulations" and "Wireless Telecommunications Facilities." Such relocation will help to make the Code more transparent and user friendly and will assist staff in answering common questions about the rights and responsibilities of a property owner with regard to nonconforming uses.

Chapter 1129: Wireless Telecommunications Facilities and Outdoor Antennas

Chapter 1129 addresses the complex and fast-changing world of telecommunications. This chapter was adopted in 1997 and reflects the state of the law and of the technology at that time. Given the fact that both law and technology in the telecommunications field change rapidly, this chapter should be reviewed and amended on a regular basis, not to exceed every five years.

UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS CAPITAL PROGRAM

A community's capital program, like its zoning code, translates a master plan into reality. To be effective, a capital plan must be fiscally sound, politically sophisticated, and up-to-date: It must be a living document that reflects both a community's financial capacity and its agreed-upon priorities.

University Heights has a long history of sound fiscal management, a legacy of which it is justifiably proud. University Heights also prides itself on maintaining a high level of communication between the citizens and the government and on providing citizens detailed information regarding municipal operations on a regular basis. As a result, city government enjoys a high level of trust. This trust has allowed the city to make bold and difficult decisions regarding its future and to position University Heights as a leader among the region's first suburbs. As the community moves forward, it will be essential that the city maintain its tradition of open communication and consultation with the citizens as it continues to make the difficult but essential choices about the future of University Heights.

The Master Plan provides direction to the community in making these choices. Based both on the analysis of the demographic trends in University Heights and its neighbors, and on extensive communication with public officials, community leaders, and the public, it is clear that the community is poised to make a set of catalytic investments that build on the investments made in the recent past. These catalytic investments, taken together with the city's routine and on-going capital investments, constitute the city's long-term Capital Program, sometimes known also as a Community Facilities Plan.

While crafting the specifics of a capital program is beyond the scope of a Master Plan, the plan describes a set of specific catalytic investments that, taken together, will continue the community's forward momentum and position it well to compete within the region as a place to live and work. These catalytic investments fall into 4 categories: Public Facilities, Parks, Recreation and Open Space, Residential Development, and Commercial Revitalization.



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Public Facilities

The Master Plan identified as a high priority the need for the city to renovate and replace its over crowded and aging municipal center with a facility that meets current standards and enables the city to take full advantage of operational efficiencies. The plan suggests either expanding and rebuilding the existing campus on Warrensville Center Road to meet all of the city's space needs or, in the alternative, positioning the city's Service Department facilities on a separate site near Cedar and Taylor Roads.

The determination of which site or sites to use and the scale of investment is subject to further study and consultation with the operating departments and the public. It is fair to say that the decision regarding municipal facilities is among the most critical for the city to make. Successful resolution of this issue will have a profound impact on the community's quality of life as it will enable the city to maintain its commitments to continuous improvement in the delivery of city services and will create a working environment that will allow the city to attract and retain the very best employees.

Funding for a new Municipal Center typically is achieved through the sale of municipal bonds.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

The Master Plan identifies University Heights as the most densely populated of the Heights communities. An analysis of the city's land use indicates a significant lack of parks and public open spaces throughout the community. It also indicates several opportunities for addressing this issue through the creation of mini-parks or playgrounds on vacant land within individual neighborhoods and the more intensive use of school grounds and public open space. The Master Plan also suggests that the city's principal park, Purvis Park, could be enhanced and made more visible to the public by increasing the frontage on Cedar Road in conjunction with residential redevelopment of the adjacent frontage parcels.

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The Master Plan identifies the need for additional recreational facilities to meet the needs of young families and seniors. Like many first suburbs, University Heights faces stiff competition from newer suburbs that have enhanced their appeal by investing heavily in community recreation facilities. These municipal recreation facilities are particularly attractive to families with children and, in many cases, may be as important as the quality of schools in attracting and retaining younger households.

University Heights faces a similar challenge at the other end of the life cycle as it strives to retain its older residents who have been loyal citizens of the community. Here again, University Heights faces competition from full service retirement communities that can offer a range of facilities to meet the fitness needs of older households.

University Heights is a small community with limited land and financial resource with which to respond to these challenges. To compete, the community should continue in its tradition of collaborating with its neighbors and explore opportunities for cooperating with its neighbors who all face the identical set of issues.

Closer to home, the Master Plan suggests that University Heights invest in a Senior Community Center adjacent to the existing Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library in the Cedar Center retail district. This centrally located site is easily accessible by public transportation, highly visible from Cedar Road, and convenient to many of the city's apartment buildings.

Funding for public open space and municipal recreation facilities is typically achieved through the sale of municipal bonds. The city, however, should be creative and explore opportunities for partnering with other municipalities, taxing districts, and non-profit entities to leverage University Heights' funds to the greatest degree possible.



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Residential Development

The Master Plan identified residential development and redevelopment as a critical catalytic investment and recommended that, to stay competitive, the city must offer a wider range of housing types to a more diverse set of households that can be attracted to or retained in University Heights.

Specifically, the plan suggests developing housing to cater to the "empty nester" market that typically is drawn to smaller, more compact housing to replace the larger, family style house they have outgrown. Cities around University Heights--Cleveland, Cleveland Heights, Shaker Heights, and Beachwood--are all developing this product. To stay competitive, it is essential that University Heights find the resources and the will to develop for this market. The plan identifies several sites--particularly along major thoroughfares--where redevelopment of existing two-family and low-density multi-family housing with townhouse projects would be appropriate.

The plan also identifies several sites where contemporary single-family housing would be appropriate and recommends that the city support the development of products that can compete with offerings in the developing suburbs. During the course of the master planning the theme of housing obsolescence emerged: Many commentators stated that University Heights' housing, though attractive and well-maintained, is unable to compete with newer, larger houses available in other communities. As a result, University Heights continues to lose young, growing families who would like to remain in the community but feel the need to move to get more space for their children. While wholesale redevelopment is inappropriate, development of selected opportunity sites with contemporary product would enable University Heights to compete more effectively for these young households.

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Residential development and redevelopment typically is supported by incentives such as tax abatement, assistance in site assembly and utilities, and targeted lending products. Site assembly and utility investment may be funded by municipal bonds while tax abatement generally requires the support both of the municipality and the other taxing districts--particularly the school system. The use of existing urban lending products and the development of new products tailored to a community's specific needs generally is the result of negotiation between the municipality and the local lending community. Individual financial institutions may seek urban lending opportunities. Those with financial relationships with the city may be open to directed lending opportunities that leverage the city's financial practices to release additional resources to the targeted market(s).

Commercial Revitalization

University Heights is an undisputed leader of the first suburbs when commercial revitalization is discussed. Well before other cities understood the importance of maintaining competitive, attractive retail districts, University Heights undertook the bold and challenging redevelopment of the University Square project in the Cedar Center district and the smaller, but no less challenging redevelopment of the Cedar/Taylor district. As this project nears completion, the community must turn its attention to the remaining commercial districts.

The Master Plan suggests that the community move forward on the redevelopment of the rest of the Cedar Center district. This once vibrant retail center is now tired and distinctly "down market." In order to become competitive once again, the Center must be completely redeveloped. Pedestrian amenities must replace the auto-dominated strip. Mixed uses--including office and housing--must replace the single purpose nature of the existing property. As University Heights' "downtown," Cedar Center needs to be all that it can be.



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Unfortunately, as the city's leaders are all too well aware, the Cedar Center shopping center is split both in ownership and in municipal jurisdiction. The major challenge before the City is achieving consensus with South Euclid regarding the future of a retail district that is important to both communities. While joint planning may seem difficult, it is essential. Successful examples of cooperative planning abound in the region: Shaker Square (Shaker Heights and Cleveland), Alta House (Cleveland Heights and Cleveland), West 117th (Cleveland and Lakewood), and East 185th (Cleveland and Euclid).

The plan identifies similar commercial revitalization opportunities at Cedar/Taylor and Warrensville/Green. In both cases, anonymous retail uses occupy critical gateway sites. Both merit more attractive and more intense uses.

One of the most exciting and promising sites for retail redevelopment identified in the plan is Fairmount Circle. This historic retail district supports a significant concentration of two-family and multi-family housing in University Heights and Shaker Heights. More promising, perhaps, for future development is the fact that this center is the "off campus" for John Carroll University. As a result, unique opportunities for retail offerings oriented to the student and faculty population of the University exist in this center.

The plan recommends the unique opportunity for creating a "college town center" at Fairmount Circle. The plan suggests redevelopment of the gasoline station and intensification of that site and adjacent properties in the form of mixed use residential/commercial buildings that will create a unique sense of place and a pedestrian dynamic that is attractive to retailers.

As with housing, financial support for retail may take many forms. In addition to the financial mechanisms suggested above for housing, commercial redevelopment lends itself to the use of tax increment financing. This tool, which has already been used successfully in University Heights to support the development of the University Square development, earmarks incremental real estate tax revenues to support bonds used to finance public improvements and other eligible project costs in a designated redevelopment district.

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MASTER PLAN PRIORITIES

As a result of the analysis that has been collected for the City of University Heights, the exploration of different development sites, responses from the community meeting, and the discussion of strategic directives that the city can use to guide development and growth, the final portion of this master plan consists of a series of priorities. These priorities have been broken down into a series of categories, and action steps have been suggested for the implementation of each. The categories include; development priorities, civic priorities, marketing / image priorities, and infrastructure priorities.

Development Priorities

Cedar Center

The redevelopment plans for the Cedar Center shopping plaza currently call for a transit oriented, mixed-use development to be constructed along both the University Heights and South Euclid sides of Cedar Road. The plan focuses a greater importance on the pedestrian than the current plaza does and adds a variety of new uses. This would provide an appropriate complement to the University Square development to the east.

- Continue to develop mixed-use district
- Continue talks with South Euclid to address both sides of Cedar Road
- Meet with property owners to encourage joint development opportunities

College Town

The possible Fairmount Circle / College Town development along Warrensville Center Road and North Park Boulevard can provide a great deal of services for both the University and the city. This type of development can take advantage of all that the University has to offer the city, and provide an area in which the student population of the city can feel at home. Many of the new housing opportunities that the city would like to use to diversify its current offerings can also be tested in this area.

- Strengthen the relationship with John Carroll University to determine the common needs of both the city and the university
- Create a "College District Task Force" consisting of individuals from the City Administration, City Council, Planning Commission, safety forces, citizens, and the JCU administration and faculty to work through issues relating to the integration of the campus and the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Continue to acquire with the university, strategic property in the development area with the Master Plan objectives



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Cedar / Taylor Retail District

The Cedar / Taylor Retail District is currently under-utilized. However, there is a great deal of potential to recreate a successful mixed-use district that builds upon the University Corners retail offerings and the older buildings lining the Cleveland Heights side of the intersection. A new development centered on this intersection would also help to create a new gateway for the city from the west.

- Identify ownership patterns in the area to determine an acquisition strategy
- Prioritize development parcels within the area
- Work with a developer to identify redevelopment options
- As this site provides a potential location for relocated municipal services, the development is tied to decisions regarding the redevelopment of the municipal campus
- Communicate with the City of Cleveland Heights to identify associated infrastructure improvements

Civic Priorities

The Municipal Campus

In the development of this master plan it has become obvious that the current municipal buildings within University Heights cannot continue to function well in their current state for much longer. Therefore, it is essential for the city to pursue the reconstruction and renovation of the various facilities that are used to provide municipal services.

- Engage a consultant to conduct a feasibility study to determine the future expansion needs of each of the municipal departments
- Conduct an in depth study of the existing facilities to determine which buildings might be renovated to fit those needs and which buildings must be replaced
- Generate a timeline for Municipal Campus improvements
- Purchase additional homes at the corner of the campus along Silsby Road
- Identify other properties that would be beneficial for inclusion in the expanded campus

The Public School System

While the City of University Heights has some highly regarded private schools, a major concern expressed in both the community meeting and through the city's exit poles is that of the quality of the public school system. It has become clear that very few of the residents send their children to the public schools, a challenge as it relates to the higher levels of taxation in the city. It is essential that an analysis of the school system, facilities, public perceptions, etc. be conducted to develop a strategy for positive change.

- Conduct a public dialogue on the schools to identify key issues and concerns
- Make more intense use of school property to meet the community's recreational needs
- Identify buildings within the community best suited for school facilities, and those that could provide other redevelopment opportunities
- Work with the CH/UH School District to understand future enrollment projections
- Create one educational task force to engage the School District and provide a forum for the community's concerns

Senior / Community Recreation Center

There has been a great deal of interest shown throughout this planning process in the creation of a community / recreation center. This facility could take on a number of different forms, either a smaller center with a series of meeting and activity rooms if intended solely for the residents of University Heights, or a larger recreation facility if built in conjunction with a neighboring community. A senior center should focus on the recreational and social needs of seniors, and provide a shuttle service to and from activities for those who can't get to the center themselves.

- Engage the senior community to determine the types of services and activities desired for a new facility
- Work with a consultant to develop a program for the facility, and appropriate sites for its location
- Communicate with Shaker Heights and/or South Euclid to determine the feasibility of developing a joint community/recreation center



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Marketing / Image Priorities

Image Identification / Signage

The understanding that someone may be entering, leaving, shopping, or dining in University Heights is essential to maintaining a positive public image for the city. As a part of the greater Heights community, it is easy for one to not realize that they are conducting a large portion of their daily lives within the boundaries of the city. A marketing / identification effort can span a number of different topics ranging from street banners to larger gateway elements. The development of a comprehensive signage / identification strategy should be able to be implemented in a phased manner, to tie into projects such as roadway improvements.

- Determine what should symbolize the image of University Heights
- Analyze the city to determine the most effective and visible locations for new signage
- Engage a graphics / design consultant to develop a signage / identification package

Determine Target Markets

This study has shown that the number of housing options within the City of University Heights is quite limited. However, before new types of housing can be constructed it must be determined which segments of the population are going to be targeted with new housing alternatives.

- Decide which markets are the most critical to attract
- Engage a market specialist to determine feasibility of attracting these markets

Other smaller but important marketing/image related efforts can take the form of block clubs, street, yard, and building improvement awards, etc. to encourage the community to continue to improve their property, and as a result, the image of the City.

Infrastructure Priorities

Cedar Road

Following the completion of the reconstruction of Warrensville Center Road, the next project in the City slated to receive Issue II funding will be Cedar Road. Although Cedar Road forms the northern boundary for most of University Heights, it is an important route both within, and



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through the city. During the reconstruction of the road it is essential that a portion of the project funding be utilized to address and leverage pedestrian and visual streetscape enhancements. Many of the development projects either proposed or currently under construction have a strong tie to Cedar Road, and this "front door" to the community should not be overlooked. In following the strong neighborhood beliefs expressed by the residents, any reconstruction of Cedar Road should ensure that the pedestrian be given just as much importance as the automobile.

- Work with stakeholders along Cedar Road to determine the range of infrastructure needs
- Engage a design consultant to develop a streetscape enhancement plan to tie into proposed Issue II improvements
- Work with the City of South Euclid to understand ways that the municipalities can consolidate efforts for physical improvements
- Identify other funding sources/strategies that can be utilized to implement additional improvements

Street Tree Replacement

Many of the neighborhoods within University Heights are characterized by the quality of the homes that have been constructed there. However, it is not just a single building that gives the city its charm, it is the collection of these buildings and their surroundings that all work together to create the neighborhoods that have been so highly praised throughout the development of this master plan. Street trees play an important part of this collective whole. The proper placement of trees in the tree lawns not only provide a shade canopy in the summer, and color to the street in the fall and spring, but they create a visual aesthetically pleasing edge to the street. This creates a perception that the street is narrower, resulting in slower traffic speeds and safer neighborhood streets. A comprehensive street tree assessment and replacement program should be undertaken to ensure the visual and environmental quality of the City's streets. The current program provides one street tree at no cost to each home, but many homeowners have opted to go without a tree. The provision of trees should be mandatory, to ensure the aesthetic quality of the City's streets.

Pocket Parks

The density of the University Heights neighborhoods has shown that there is an extreme shortage of park space within the city limits. Although a series of larger parks can be used in neighboring cities, pocket parks located throughout the neighborhoods would be a welcome addition to the city, and would utilize undeveloped parcels to a greater degree than they currently are. However, there should be a strong



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working relationship between the residents of the neighborhoods and the planners of the parks to ensure that each park fills the role that it must play to be a success within its particular surroundings.

- Determine where vacant and/or underutilized parcels may be acquired
- Set up street clubs to discuss the nature of the design of each park and program its activities
- Determine a strategy for park maintenance - this may take the form of a public/private partnership

Inter-city Bike Routes

The residents of University Heights have praised the city's neighborhoods for their ease of pedestrian access between the residential and retail sections of the city. Therefore, it seems appropriate to supplement this with a series of safe, easily accessible bike routes that can link the different amenities that the city has to offer with all of its neighborhoods. Due to the relatively small size of the city, each destination is within a short bicycle ride of one another, allowing the paths to be used for both recreational as well as daily use.

- Determine a series of areas and sites within the city that should be connected to a bike path
- Meet with Eco-City Cleveland to discuss their bikeway plans for the eastern suburbs
- Identify the nature of the bike route (i.e. separate lanes, signage, etc.)
- Determine which roads within the City make the most sense for the inclusion of bike lanes

Safe, Pedestrian Friendly Streets

It is imperative that the City of University Heights continue to improve upon its street network to ensure safety and accessibility for the pedestrian. The City has done an excellent job of this in the past, particularly in the example set by the community study of Eaton Road. This is a process that should happen throughout the City's neighborhoods for other intersections determined to be problematic.

- Study opportunities to improve the useability of Fairmount Circle from a pedestrian standpoint
- Organize neighborhood / block groups to pinpoint key intersections and streets where problems exist, and work together with the City to determine the solution that will best suit the needs of the residents
- Work with the Police Department to determine problematic streets/intersections and speed zones

As a framework for sustaining the City of University Heights, this Master Plan is intended to serve as a guide as the city meets the evolving and changing needs of the community.



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