Homewood Cluster Planning: Cluster 2
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Cluster Planning Overview

Why Create Another Plan for Homewood?

Change is coming to Homewood. The goal of Homewood Cluster Planning is to guide that change in the interest of Homewood’s residents. The Cluster Planning process will create a detailed land use vision for Homewood’s future based on the needs and desires of existing, present-day community stakeholders.

This process will consider both long – and short-term land use, working with residents in one part of the neighborhood at a time. Building on the neighborhood assets, the process will craft a vision for what should happen to vacant property; what types of development are right for different parts of Homewood; where houses should be renovated, mothballed or demolished and where new ones should be built; as well as where new businesses, industrial uses or parks should be located. After plans for all of the clusters have been developed, they will be brought together into a complete, community-driven plan for the entire Homewood neighborhood.

This process will not resolve all questions regarding how the vision will be implemented. However, it will set goals for ensuring that future development is equitable and addresses the needs of the existing community.

The Cluster Planning Team

Operation Better Block (OBB) was incorporated in 1971 and has worked for successful Neighborhood and Community Development over the last forty years, focusing on the Homewood-Brushton neighborhood. OBB’s mission is to strategize, organize and mobilize residents block-by-block to benefit the Homewood community. The Cluster Planning process is a natural extension of that mission.

Studio for Spatial Practice (SfSP) is an innovative, award-winning design firm with a multi-disciplinary approach to architecture, urban design, landscape architecture and art. SfSP specializes in public realm projects that engage clients and community members in creatively envisioning changes to their environment. SfSP brings experience and local insight to the Cluster Planning process, having recently completed the Bridging the Busway study.
Cluster Planning Overview

How the Homewood Cluster Planning Process Works

After an initial pilot study area was completed for residential blocks adjacent to Faison Elementary, the planning process began in earnest, in January of 2014, with an Introductory Meeting where an overview of the Homewood Cluster Planning process was presented.

As a first step in each cluster, OBB conducts field surveys to collect personal testimonies from residents and parcel-specific data within the target area. OBB shares their up-to-date information with the rest of the planning team and mails postcards summarizing basic statistics about the cluster to every resident. The postcards are a way to share the data that has been collected and encourage participation in upcoming planning meetings.

Three cluster-specific meetings follow, where findings are presented and residents’ input is solicited. OBB staff also go door to door between meetings, following up with residents to share draft planning materials and ask for feedback. Their comments are then incorporated into the planning work. At the third meeting, a Draft Consensus Plan is presented for review and comment.

The resulting Final Consensus Plan is included in a summary report and distributed to area residents. All completed Cluster Plans are eventually brought together into a neighborhood-wide Master Plan. The anticipated time line for completing planning for all cluster areas is the summer / fall of 2015.

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<th>Meeting 1: Identify possible land uses</th>
<th>Meeting 2: Discuss possible scenarios</th>
<th>Meeting 3: Refine a preferred strategy</th>
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Plans for 10 Cluster Areas

Synthesis Meetings

Vision for Homewood Neighborhood Master Plan
Cluster 2 Existing Conditions

**Assets & Challenges**

Cluster 2 is bounded by Homewood Avenue to the east, Frankstown Avenue to the south, Curranhill Avenue and Washington Boulevard to the west, and Lincoln Avenue and Apple Street to the north.

Cluster 2 is zoned Multi-Unit Residential, Two-Family Residential, and Urban Industrial. A small area within the western industrial edge is zoned for Single-Family Residential, and parts of Lincoln and Frankstown Avenues are zoned for Local Neighborhood Commercial use.

Cluster 2 is home to Westinghouse High School, a strong asset with a rich history and tradition within the neighborhood. Parts of Cluster 2 have high rates of home-ownership and good quality housing stock. The YWCA is located within this cluster, and the Homewood Avenue Business and Institutional Core is nearby.

Cluster 2 challenges include working with a large number of vacant properties - particularly in the area around Westinghouse High School, delinquent landlords, and several deteriorating properties. Many vacant, dilapidated homes have been demolished in recent years, a practice that continues into the present day.

The following pages show existing Cluster 2 conditions relating to land and building uses, public ownership, occupied and vacant properties, and zoning. This key information was presented and made available at community meetings to help educate stakeholders about local conditions and inform discussions about land use planning.
Cluster 2 Existing Uses

OBB field surveyed the Cluster 2 area to determine the existing uses of buildings and unbuilt land, which are reflected in this diagram. Understanding which lots are being used as sideyards, for parking or as community gardens, for example, will help inform the planning process and action plan.
Cluster 2 Public Ownership

Cluster 2 has a concentration of City of Pittsburgh properties - mainly vacant land - that could provide opportunities for developing new community-supported uses: housing, sideyards, open space, etc.
Occupied and Vacant

A significant number of Cluster 2 properties, buildings and land, are vacant. There are both challenges and opportunities associated with large-scale neighborhood vacancy.
Cluster 2 Existing Zoning

Cluster 2 is a mix of multi-family residential, single-family low density, local neighborhood commercial, and urban industrial zoned land.
Community Development Principles

During the Cluster Planning Introductory Meeting, a set of resident-supported community development/planning priorities was drafted to guide the planning process.

The Principles, provided to the right, summarize the community’s expressed development priorities - at the time of this writing.

These Community Development Principles are a work in progress. As new priorities, policies, and practices are recommended during the Cluster Planning sessions, the Principles are modified to accommodate the most current and up-to-date community feedback.

### Community Development Principles

**COMMUNITY**

- Collaboration is key: take into account existing community plans and other neighborhood organizations that are doing good work
- Create relationships and partnerships within the community of Homewood
- Use the process to educate people about what makes a successful neighborhood and community

**HOUSING**

- People who live in Homewood get to stay here
- If there is relocation, renovate or build new first, and keep people in their community or neighborhood
- Provide a diversity of housing types for families and individuals with different needs, lifestyles and income levels

**ECONOMY**

- Residents should benefit from jobs resulting from neighborhood revitalization: jobs that are created should be sustainable and not temporary
- Help local business owners sustain and expand their businesses
- Support neighborhood retail by buying local from community-run businesses
- Leverage Urban Industrial zoning areas to the community’s benefit
Cluster 2 Meeting 1

**Potential Land Use Types**

Illustrated examples of potential land use categories were presented to Meeting 1 participants. These precedent images were used by residents to help them identify appropriate future land uses throughout Cluster 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Open Space</th>
<th>Mixed Use</th>
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<td>Green Residential</td>
<td>Neighborhood Serving Retail</td>
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<td>Renovate Existing Houses</td>
<td>Urban Agriculture</td>
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<td>New Single Family Houses</td>
<td>Recreation Park Space</td>
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<td>Pocket Neighborhoods</td>
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<td>Urban Agriculture</td>
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<td>Community Garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>One Story Cottages</td>
<td>Passive Park Space</td>
<td>Stormwater Management</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- **Open Space**: Recreation, Urban Meadow, Playground, Reforestation, Passive Park Space.
- **Mixed Use**: Neighborhood Serving Retail, Artisan Manufacturing /Retail, Small Neighborhood Retail, Grocery Store.
Cluster 2 Meeting 1

Date: December 3, 2014
Location: Westinghouse High School
Attendees: 18

Goal
• Identify future land uses for Cluster 2 and consider ideas for the short-term use of vacant land (0-15 years)

Summary
• OBB introduced its staff members: each individual presented information about the program that they lead
• SfSP presented a summary of Existing Conditions and Land Use
• SfSP explained key factors that should be considered when making planning recommendations for Cluster 2:
  1) some blocks are over 50% vacant; and
  2) building new housing takes time and there is not enough demand to rebuild everything
• Attendees were divided into two groups to review and discuss proposed land use types
• Differing opinions were encouraged

Follow Up
• OBB knocked on approximately 532 residents’ doors after Meeting 1 to review what was discussed at the first meeting and to personally invite them to participate in the process

Above are the two Preliminary Cluster 2 land use diagrams that were developed by neighborhood residents. Pre-cut pieces of colored foam, matching the legend above, were used to indicate which uses they would like to see in different parts of the cluster. More-detailed handwritten notes were added to provide commentary or suggest ideas or uses that were not listed.
Homewood Cluster Planning | Cluster 1 Vision Plan

Cluster 2 Meeting 1

A presentation by OBB and SfSP was followed by a break out activity and final report out by smaller groups. The following questions, summarized below, were asked after the presentation:

**Q)** How will the land bank legislation affect Homewood?

**A)** The land bank is a tool that will help the City deal with vacant land more efficiently. It will be used to help aid and promote community-approved development in the neighborhood.

**Q)** How will the cluster associations work in the future?

**A)** Once planning is complete for a cluster, area residents and other stakeholders will form an association that will identify priority initiatives within the vision plan. The association will review all development proposals for the cluster.

**Q)** What types of houses will be built? Will they look like the ones already in the neighborhood?

**A)** Developers will be encouraged to reflect the neighborhood context in their designs and cluster associations will have the chance to review proposals, as stated above. A variety of housing types will be built including single family, duplex or multi-unit apartment buildings, to name a few.

**Break Out Activity Group 1:**

**HOUSING**
- Renovate the school on Kedron Street and turn it into a community center with green space associated with it.
- Build infill with senior housing along Apple Street.
- Build infill housing at the existing density at the corners of Frankstown and North Lang Avenue, and Upland and North Lang Avenue.

**MIXED USE**
- Provide a corner store somewhere in the neighborhood, and at the end of Belmar Street.

**OPEN SPACE**
- Open space associated with Westinghouse Academy is a good idea. Create a park north of the Academy along Mount Vernon Street.
- Establish community gardens along Murtland Avenue at Kedron Street, at Homewood Avenue at the intersection with Apple Street, and along Lincoln Avenue.
- Add open space adjacent to Silver Lake for use by residents.

**DISCUSSION AND OTHER NOTES**
- Bring a grocery store to the neighborhood even if it is not within Cluster 2.
Break Out Activity Group 2:

**HOUSING**

- Renovate the vacant school on Kedron Street: create compact apartment units for younger tenants and smaller households.
- Build new housing at the existing density along Upland Street at the intersection of Belmar. New housing is proposed on the west side of N. Lang Avenue at the Monticello Street intersection.
- Beyond the areas marked on the map, the group advocated for infill housing as the primary use for vacant land.
- In general, the group advocated for infill similar to the existing density as an appropriate development strategy for blocks that are mostly intact.
- Lower density infill was proposed on Monticello and Race Streets between Lang and Murtland Avenues. In general, the group felt that areas with high levels of vacancy would be appropriate for Green Residential development.

**MIXED USE**

- Renovate existing, small-storefront buildings on N. Lang to accommodate neighborhood-serving retail or office uses.

**OPEN SPACE**

The group discussed two distinct scenarios for integrating open space into the cluster:

1. Create small pocket parks throughout the cluster that are integrated with infill housing areas. The suggestion for smaller parks was discussed but potential locations were not indicated.
2. Take advantage of the high level of vacancy in the cluster to create a larger neighborhood park with amenities such as small recreation, picnic spaces and, in particular, an outdoor event space suitable for music performances. The green areas shown on the Group 2 map, at the corner of Frankstown and N. Lang Avenue and at Idlewild Street between Murtland and Gerritt, are intended to indicate two possible locations that might accommodate such a park.

**DISCUSSION AND OTHER NOTES**

- Participants requested that the broad strategy proposed for other clusters, especially adjacent clusters, be communicated in Meeting 1 to allow for better decision making. Studio for Spatial Practice verbally described the plans for adjacent clusters and suggested that complete plans for adjacent clusters could be shown in relation to land use scenarios during Meeting 2.
Cluster 2 Meeting 2

Date: December 17, 2014
Location: Westinghouse High School
Attendees: 13

Goal
- Evaluate planning options so that a preferred, long-term vision for Cluster 2 can be created

Summary
- Ideas from Meeting 1 were combined to create land use options for the cluster
- Attendees were divided into groups in which two options for Cluster 2 were presented and discussed
- Residents identified aspects of the planning scenarios that they liked and didn’t like, using green and red dots
- Participants were encouraged to add notes and comments to elaborate on their preferences, or to suggest ideas that were not shown in the plan drawings

Follow Up
- OBB knocked on approximately 532 residents’ doors after Meeting 2 to review the latest draft planning materials

A presentation by OBB and SfSP was followed by a break out activity and discussion of next steps for the Cluster.

Two scenarios for the Cluster were presented:
- **Option 1 Neighborhood Park:** A 3 acre neighborhood park was proposed at the intersection of Frankstown and Lang. To create this park, 2 vacant units would be demolished, 1 homeowner would be relocated and 1 rental property would be demolished.
- **Option 2 Address Park:** A small park was proposed at the intersection of Frankstown and Lang. To create this park, 1 vacant unit would be demolished.

In both options, a network of small parks was shown throughout the cluster with new residential units facing onto the proposed open spaces.
Cluster 2 Meeting 2

Cluster 2 Overall

COMMENTS

• Some support for infill housing fronting onto Lang and Murtland
• Some support for a portion of Lang to be zoned Local Neighborhood Commercial to allow the storefront buildings to be renovated and occupied by neighborhood-serving retail
• No support for proposed housing on Idlewild across from the church. Community members thought that a playground would be more appropriate
• Strong support for creating small parks throughout the cluster with infill housing fronting onto the open spaces
• Concern about creating housing at the vacant school on Kedron Street: participants suggested turning it into a community center.
• Concern about the existing bar at the intersection of Frankstown and Lang: participants thought that the noise level was too loud for the surrounding area.

The Cluster 2 Overall Scenario featured a network of small parks throughout the neighborhood with infill residential units fronting onto the open space where possible. Ecological open spaces and woodlands were proposed for vacant lots with steep slopes and in the area adjacent to Westinghouse High School.
Cluster 2 Meeting 2

Neighborhood Park Option 1

- Strong support for a large neighborhood park
- Support for the Event Space adjacent to Frankstown Avenue as a place for vendors

Address Park Option 2

- General support for infill housing fronting onto the open space

Discussion & Other Notes

- Community members feel that more active parks are needed throughout the neighborhood
- The renovated school would be an ideal location for a children’s daycare as well as a cooling station in the summer for seniors
- Q: Are people waiting to move into the proposed houses shown on the plans? A: (OBB) No, not yet, but we’re hoping to generate a market in the near future.
- Q: What type of housing is proposed? Is it like the housing proposed in Larrimer? Will it lower the value of our houses because it will not be taken care of? A: (OBB) The hope is that the proposed housing will be contextual. You will not be able to distinguish between market rate and affordable housing units.
Cluster 2 Meeting 3

Date: January 14, 2015
Location: Westinghouse High School
Attendees: 16

Goal
• Evaluate the Draft Consensus Plan for Cluster 2, working towards a preferred long-term vision

Summary
• SfSP reviewed the content of Meetings 1 and 2 and presented a Draft Consensus Plan based on the scheme that had previously received the most support, while also revisiting the community’s interest in providing housing for a range of age groups and income levels.
• Residents identified aspects of the plan that they liked and didn’t like, using green and red dots
• Attendees added notes to indicate specific comments or ideas that were not already listed

Follow Up
• Scenarios were combined into a final vision to reflect resident input/feedback and this Cluster 2 report was distributed to all meeting attendees, residents and property owners

A presentation by OBB and SfSP was followed by a break out activity and discussion of next steps for the Cluster. A Draft Consensus Plan for Cluster 2 was presented and featured:
• A 2-acre neighborhood park at the intersection of Frankstown and Lang. To create this park, 2 vacant units would be demolished, 1 homeowner would be relocated and 1 rental property would be demolished.
• Vacant properties on steep slopes, or at flood-prone areas, converted into ecological open spaces.
• A network of small parks shown throughout the cluster with new residential units facing onto them.
• Small-scale mixed uses along Lang Avenue in storefront buildings.
• The vacant school on Kedron Street renovated into housing on the upper floors and a community center on the ground floor.

DISCUSSION, QUESTIONS AND OTHER NOTES:
• Both groups supported the neighborhood park shown at Frankstown Avenue
• Group 2 said that infill housing should be contextual, in style and size, with the existing Homewood housing stock
• Group 2 would like previously-removed neighborhood amenities (tennis courts, recycling center and Baxter Playground Arts Program) to be reinstated before new housing is developed
• Group 2 suggested that the renovated school could also be a senior center and that some of the green spaces should have playgrounds. Group 2 also asked who would maintain future green spaces.
• Group 1 wanted the infill housing to be diverse: some of the housing may want to be single story for the senior population
• Participants suggested creating partnerships with local companies when implementing these vision plans
• Participants suggested that new construction should be energy efficient and that rehabs and new construction should both be considered

• Q: What does lower density mean? A: More space between houses or houses clustered around a shared green space.
• Q: How are clusters divided and where can we find a map? A: The cluster map
Cluster 2 Meeting 3

is included in the report that will be distributed to all participants, and it is also on OBB’s website.

• **Q: Are property taxes going to increase with new development? How can we look out for existing and elderly residents?** A: Property taxes may increase but OBB is looking for ways to aid existing residents.

• **Q: How much does it cost to build a new house?**
  **Anyone from $120,000-$250,000. Who can afford to purchase it?** Programs through URA such as soft second mortgages would allow current Homewood residents to purchase homes as well as attract others from other neighborhoods. **Where are the people going to come from to occupy all this new construction?** Renters who are currently living in Homewood others from adjacent and surrounding neighborhoods.

• **Q: Where does funding come from to implement these plans?** Can come from a variety of sources such as URA, state funding through PHFA, foundations, as well as private investors. OBB is taking the lead on finding funds to implement the plan.

**Break Out Group 2**

**GREEN DOTS**
  • Convert Kedron Street school building into a community center on the ground floor with housing on upper floors (1 dot).
  • Network of scattered parks (1 dot).

**RED DOTS**
  • Housing proposed on Idlewild across from the church. Eliminate 1-2 proposed houses and add a playground on the remaining vacant lots (1 dot).
  • Vacant lot on Race Street should be shown as a sideyard (1 dot).
Cluster 2 Consensus Vision Plan

Consensus Plan Key Components

1. Create a new neighborhood park with a playground, community gardens and an event space along Frankstown Avenue

2. Use vacant land that is flood-prone or has steep wooded slopes to create ecological open space for stormwater control and slope stabilization

3. Build infill housing at a lower density on vacant lots (preferably facing open space) and renovate existing vacant properties throughout the cluster - assist homeowners interested in acquiring sideyard properties

4. Create a network of small parks throughout the cluster

5. Convert the former elementary school on Kedron Street into housing on the upper floors and community services on the ground floor

6. Extend Local Neighborhood Commercial along Lang Avenue to allow vacant storefront buildings to be renovated as neighborhood-serving retail
Cluster 2 Consensus Vision Plan

- Infill single-family units at existing density
- Small parks throughout the neighborhood
- Renovate existing school: upper floors as housing with ground floor community center
- Infill single-family units at lower density
- Community gardens: Race Street 20/20 Vision Plan
- New 2-acre Neighborhood Park with Amenities
- Neighborhood Event Space along Frankstown
- Renovate existing units where feasible
- Network of small parks throughout the cluster
- Ecological open space/woodlands at slopes
- Ecological open space/woodlands at vacant lots
- Green residential facing open space/gardens
- Ecological open space/woodlands at vacant lots
- Ecological open space/woodlands at vacant lots
- Renovate units along Lang Ave as mixed use. Retain LNC zoning along Lang

- Housing infill at existing density
- Renovate existing housing
- New green residential
- Trails/Open Space
- Ecological
- Small scale live-make
Cluster 2 Initiative Plan

- Network of parks and ecological open space through the cluster
- Infill housing at the existing density (+ some sideyards)
- Renovations of existing structures where possible
- Lower density or green residential
- Local Neighborhood Commercial Zoning

Cluster 2 Initiative Plan Image
Cluster 2 Phasing Recommendations

**Short Term Initiatives**

- Promote the City of Pittsburgh Sideyard Sale Program in which homeowners living next to vacant, City-owned land, who are up-to-date on their taxes, can purchase adjacent parcels for a low fee
- Create a Vacant Property Strategy detailing precisely which existing vacant buildings in the cluster area should be: a) renovated in the near future, b) mothballed and preserved as a future rehab project, or c) demolished

**Longer Term Initiatives**

- Create a neighborhood park adjacent to Frankstown Avenue with amenities (play areas, active play space, community gardens, etc) and an event space that will accommodate community performances and festivals
- Encourage a zoning change along North Lang Avenue to Local Neighborhood Commercial to allow existing storefront buildings to be renovated into neighborhood-serving retail uses
- Create a network of small parks on vacant land throughout the cluster with lower-density residential infill units fronting onto the open space
- Renovate the elementary school on Kedron Street with community space on the ground floor and housing in the upper floors
- Introduce ecological open spaces on vacant land that is steeply sloped, wooded or flood-prone
Homewood Cluster Planning is a project of Operation Better Block, in collaboration with Studio for Spatial Practice.

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Photos from the Cluster 2 Planning process