Homewood Cluster Planning: **Cluster 3**
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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 Map: Contrasting with past neighborhood-wide planning efforts, the Homewood Cluster Planning process more effectively engages community members by focusing on one part of the neighborhood at a time.
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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Plans for 10 Cluster Areas

Synthesis Meetings

Vision for Homewod Neighborhood Master Plan
Cluster 3 Existing Conditions

Assets & Challenges

Cluster 3 is bounded at its northernmost edge by Frankstown Ave. Lang forms the eastern boundary, and the MLK Jr. East Busway forms the cluster’s southern edge. The boundary runs north along Dallas Ave., turns east along Formosa Way, and then goes north along Murtland.

Cluster 3 is mainly zoned Multi-Family Residential, with a small pocket of Single Family Very High Density west of Lang Avenue along Parklane Drive, and Urban Industrial at the Busway edge. Parts of Cluster 3 have a relatively strong homeownership rate, and a large, Housing Authority-owned parcel is currently vacant on Kelly St.

The Busway’s Homewood Station is an important asset for Cluster 3 residents, providing express bus service to East Liberty, downtown Pittsburgh, etc. The Homewood Avenue business district is one block away, and Cluster 3 residents live adjacent to the Library, recreation fields along Lang Ave. and a pedestrian connection to Westinghouse Park. Homewood Apiary, on Susquehanna St., is a presence in the neighborhood as are Mary Savage’s attractive gardens in vacant lots.

Cluster 3 challenges include working with a large number of vacant properties, 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 3 conditions relating to land and building uses, occupied and vacant properties, homeowners and renters, 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 3 Existing Uses

OBB field surveyed the Cluster 3 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 3 Public Ownership

Cluster 3 has a concentration of City of Pittsburgh properties - mainly vacant land - and a large undeveloped parcel on Kelly Street is owned by the Housing Authority of Pittsburgh. Public land could provide opportunities for developing new community-supported uses: housing, sideyards, open space, etc.
Cluster 3 Existing Vacancy

A significant number of Cluster 3 properties, buildings and land, are vacant. There are both challenges and opportunities associated with large-scale neighborhood vacancy.
**Cluster 3 Existing Zoning**

Cluster 3 is a mix of multi-family residential, single-family very high density, 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**
- Educate people about what makes a successful neighborhood and 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

**HOUSING**
- People who live in Homewood should 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: jobs that are created should be sustainable and not temporary
- Consider a commercial district and what it takes to sustain it: support neighborhood retail by buying local from community-run businesses
- Leverage Urban Industrial Zoning areas to the community’s benefit
- Help local business owners build up their businesses
Cluster 3 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 3.
Cluster 3 Meeting 1

Date: June 19th, 2014
Location: YWCA Frankstown Ave
Attendees: 19

Goal
• Identify future land uses for Cluster 3 and consider ideas for the short-term use of vacant land (0-15 years)

Summary
• SfSP presented a summary of Existing Conditions and ongoing projects in the Cluster, including: the new Animal Rescue League facility, and the City of Pittsburgh parking lot project
• SfSP explained key factors that should be considered when making planning recommendations for Cluster 3:
  1) some blocks are over 30% vacant; and
  2) building new housing takes time, and there is not enough demand to rebuild everything
• Attendees were divided into three groups to review and discuss proposed land use types
• Differing opinions were encouraged

Follow Up
• OBB knocked on approximately 135 residents’ doors after Meeting 1 to review what was discussed at the first meeting and invite them to participate in the process

Above are the three Preliminary Cluster 3 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.
Cluster 3 Meeting 1

A presentation by OBB and SfSP followed by a break out activity and final report out by smaller groups.

GENERAL COMMENTS:
• Main thoroughfares should be a focus for improvements.
• Take into account ongoing maintenance and beautification projects.
• Create short-term plans and feed them into longer-term plans.
• Provide a map of public ownership to help residents better understand the development potential.
• Provide greening strategies as interim uses at the Housing Authority Site

Photograph of interactive break-out session conducted as part of Meeting 1
Cluster 3 Meeting 1

Break Out Group 1

HOUSING
• Renovate housing units along Bennett Street.
• New green residential: propose green residential units at the Housing Authority’s vacant property along Kelly Street.

MIXED USE
• Build small-scale live-make units along Hamilton Avenue between Dallas and Murtland where there are vacancies.
• Develop a small-scale live-make unit at the corner of Murtland and Frankstown.

Break Out Group 2

HOUSING
• Fill in gaps along Kelly Street with new medium-density residential at the Housing Authority site. This area has many walkable amenities, including access to the Busway and the Homewood Avenue business district, so denser housing would be a good idea in the future.
• Provide medium-density residential at the vacant lots and buildings on Susquehanna and Hamilton, between Murtland and Novelty Street.
• Renovate buildings along Bennett Street.

OPEN SPACE
• Create an urban farm or recreational green space for the site adjacent to the proposed Animal Rescue League (ARL) site.

MIXED USE
• Frankstown should be considered as a future mixed-use core if the market would bear it.

HANDWRITTEN ON THE DRAWING:
• Concern for older population in the area, and amenities within walking distance as well as safety should be addressed or provided.
• Question about ARL project and what would be expected from the community: Would they require more land?

Examples of single-family and multi-unit housing, and urban industrial buildings
Cluster 3 Meeting 1

Break Out Group 3

HOUSING
• Extensively renovate existing buildings on Hamilton Avenue and Susquehanna, between Murtland and Novelty
• Every vacant house in the cluster that is a viable rehabilitation candidate should be renovated
• Provide new infill residential along Hamilton between the proposed renovation projects
• Build new housing at the corner of Hamilton and Murtland
• Develop new infill housing along Kelly

OPEN SPACE
• Create a green buffer and/or wall at the parcel adjacent to the proposed Animal Rescue League site, along Murtland, rather than having direct access to the dog walking area
• Provide a small passive green space at the corner of Kelly and Murtland, capping the end of the Housing Authority site
• Develop Urban Agriculture at the corner of Hamilton and Novelty
• Include passive park space for the area next to the proposed parking lot at the corner of Hamilton and Lang
• Outside of the cluster, the park containing Stargell Field should be extended to Hamilton Avenue, with passive recreation space included

MIXED USE
• Small-scale live-make: build a mixed-use unit on the corner of Murtland and Hamilton, at the southeastern corner of the ARL project site, and also across Hamilton Avenue

HANDWRITTEN ON THE DRAWING:
• Concern about the ALR project’s outdoor dog walking area impacting residents on Susquehanna, Hamilton and Novelty. Residents requested that if the dog walking area is intended to be open to the public, access should be biased towards Dallas Avenue, not Murtland.
• There is interest in creating diverse housing: providing a range of types to suit a variety of income levels and family sizes. A need for one-story senior cottages and accessible units was expressed.
• There are a number of poorly-managed and maintained rental properties in the cluster.
Cluster 3 Meeting 2

Date: July 10, 2014
Location: YWCA Frankstown Ave
Attendees 21

Goal
• Evaluate planning options for each sub-area so that a preferred, long-term vision for Cluster 3 can be created

Summary
• Ideas from Meeting 1 were combined to create land use options for the cluster
• Attendees were divided into groups: options for three Cluster 3 sub-areas 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/comments to elaborate on their preferences or to suggest ideas that were not shown in the plan drawings

Follow Up
• OBB knocked on approximately 135 residents’ doors after Meeting 2 to review the latest draft planning materials

Frankstown to Kelly

COMMENTS
• Unanimous support for renovating existing structures in this area
• Concern was expressed about some buildings being beyond repair

Cluster 3 was divided into 3 sub-areas for deeper study: Frankstown to Kelly, Kelly to Hamilton, and Hamilton to the Busway

Frankstown to Kelly
1. Infill with single family units at existing density
2. Assist residents in acquiring sideyard properties
3. Renovate/ rehab existing buildings

The proposed plan for the Frankstown to Kelly area. There was general consensus for this approach and so only one option was provided.
Cluster 3 Meeting 2

Kelly to Hamilton Option 1:
Single Family w/ Corner Open Space

Kelly to Hamilton Option 2:
Mix of Single Family & Small Apartment Buildings

Kelly to Hamilton Option 3:
Corner Duplex w/ Cottages & Shared Green

COMMENTS

- Moderate support for small apartment buildings and shared green space with cottages
- Participants suggested combining small apartments with cottages around engaged green into final version
- Some support for keeping the Housing Authority site as a park with benches and trails
- General support for the parking lot proposed at the corner of Hamilton and Lang, but some community members said that the amount of green space shown in the design (reflective of the city’s design) doesn’t include as much green space as was originally discussed with Councilman Burgess’s office
- A community member suggested that some vacant property on Hamilton would be better as a sideyard
Cluster 3 Meeting 2

Hamilton to Busway

COMMENTS

- Unanimous support for one, small, mixed-use building at the southwest corner of Hamilton and Murtland
- Some support for infill housing along Murtland behind the mixed-use building, but many members were concerned about noise generated by the ARL
- General support for the open space / community gardens as a buffer between ARL and the surrounding neighborhood
- Residents like the community gardens as long as there are no issues with contaminated soils from the adjacent dog park.
Cluster 3 Meeting 3

Date: July 31, 2014
Location: YWCA Frankstown Ave
Attendees: 19

Goal
• Evaluate the Draft Consensus Plan for Cluster 3, working towards a preferred long-term vision

Summary
• SfSP reviewed the content of Meetings 1 and 2 and presented a Draft Consensus Plan. The plan was based on the scheme that had previously received the most community support, and also revisited 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 sticker dots
• Attendees added notes to indicate specific comments or ideas that were not listed
• Community Development Principles, drafted by community members early in the planning process, were also posted for review and comment

Follow Up
• Scenarios were combined into a final vision to reflect resident input/feedback and this Cluster 3 report was distributed to all meeting attendees, residents and property owners
Cluster 3 Meeting 3

Cluster 3 plan illustration, based on resident preferences and input. The yellow-shaded call out illustrates a proposed short term use for the Kelly St. Housing Authority Site.
Cluster 3 Meeting 3

The draft Cluster 3 Consensus Plan was reviewed and discussed in two break-out groups. The Plan brings together the following proposals for three sub-areas:

• Frankstown to Kelly: Rehab existing housing and proposed infill at the existing density on vacant lots.
• Kelly to Hamilton: Small apartment buildings cap the site with accessible cottage units around an engaged green.
• Hamilton to Busway: On the property adjacent to the Animal Rescue League (ARL) site, open space is shown with a small cafe or retail, with rehab / infill along Hamilton Avenue.

Notes from the break-out session discussions are included in the following pages.

Key questions were raised by community members about the Animal Rescue League project and the proposed City of Pittsburgh Parking Lot. Questions regarding these topics are summarized below.

**ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE EXPANSION PROJECT**

**Q)** Why this location? It’s too close to residential space.

**A)** The old location has been outgrown.

**Q)** Where will dogs be walked? Is it safe to be walking dogs with kids in the neighborhood.

**A)** On-site and on roads, but the ARL is willing to avoid certain residential areas. Volunteers are trained to control the animals and will take dogs back inside if they are not behaving appropriately.

**Q)** What happens to dogs that are put down on-site?

**A)** Animal Control picks them up. They are not cremated on-site.

**Q)** Does OBB own any property on the ARL site?

**A)** No, OBB does not.

**PROPOSED CITY OF PITTSBURGH PARKING LOT**

**Q)** Can it be put into writing that the parking lot is used for sports events and activities only? Residents are worried about it becoming a hang-out space or an area that anyone who wants to can park in.

**A)** In order to do that, there would have to be a locked fence or policing of the lot. As of now, no organization is willing to police and ticket the lot. It can be signed, but it is unlikely that it would be enforced.
Break Out Group 1

Frankstown to Kelly
• Green dots: 1 green dot on this area. This dot was applied to the renovation and infill housing strategy for all areas.
• Red dots: None

Kelly to Hamilton
• Green dots: None
• Red dots: None

Hamilton to Busway
• Green dots: None
• Red dots: 2 red dots on green space at parking lot. Some residents were concerned that the number of parking spaces was not maximized, and that the lot would be used by people who weren’t attending sports events. 1 red dot on the ARL: residents’ concern about noise and dog walkers not cleaning up after animals or losing control of dogs when walking them on adjacent residential streets. Residents suggested that despite the UI zoning, it would be more appropriate to develop housing or another more compatible use on the ARL site.

Handwritten on the drawing:
• Residents want to green the busway edge.
• Is the ARL really the best use for this location? Concern about the nuisance and potential smells related to dog walking.
• Does OBB own any property on the future ARL parcel?
• Residents want to make the parking lot as green as possible while maximizing parking.

Break Out Group 1: Attendees identified aspects of the Draft Consensus Plan for Cluster 3 that they liked and didn’t like, using green and red sticker dots

• Can the parking lot be signed or gated so that only people coming for sports activities could use it? The challenge of having someone to manage this was discussed and acknowledged by the group.
• If the Early Learning Center (former Montessori School building) across Lang is going to be demolished, could parking be located there? The proposed parking lot site could become housing instead.
• Streetscape improvements are needed to beautify the entire community, including flowers and bright lights.
Cluster 3 Meeting 3

Break Out Group 2

Frankstown to Kelly
- Green dots: 2 green dots for infill and rehab in this area.
- Red dots: None

Kelly to Hamilton
- Green dots: 1 green dot on shared green space with accessible / senior housing cottages. Residents appreciated the diversity of housing types shown on the Housing Authority site. 1 green dot on the renovation of the building adjacent to Sankofa House. Residents said that renovating the building would help clean up Lang and Kelly Street.
- Red dots: None

Hamilton to Busway
- Green dots: 2 green dots on the infill proposed along Hamilton (both sides of the street). 1 green dot on the reconfigured ARL site with community gardens along Murtland and the dog walk to the interior. Residents also liked the small mixed-use buildings - new and renovated - proposed for the corner of Hamilton and Murtland. There was also general support for the parking lot with green space along Hamilton and Lang.
- Red dots: None

General Comments
- Residents were concerned that there is not housing for seniors aged 55-65. These seniors are expected to pay at least $700 in rent elsewhere.
- Residents asked if transit options would be the same in the neighborhood, and also suggested providing green space adjacent to transit stops throughout the neighborhood.

Break Out Group 2: Attendees identified aspects of the Draft Consensus Plan for Cluster 3 that they liked and didn’t like, using green and red sticker dots

- Homewood Station is too far for many people living in the neighborhood.
- Q: The old senior center that was on the Housing Authority lot was torn down many years ago. At that time, residents were told that it would be rebuilt, but that hasn’t happened. How can we make sure that senior housing goes back into that lot? A: The Housing Authority owns that lot, so we cannot tell them what they must do with it, but we can influence their decision.
**Cluster 3 Consensus Vision Plan**

**Consensus Plan Key Components**

1. Infill housing at the current density / scale on vacant lots and renovate existing vacant properties along Frankstown Ave and Bennett St. Assist homeowners interested in acquiring sideyard properties.

2. Work with the Housing Authority site to explore the possibility of providing new diverse housing types, including small apartment buildings and accessible single-story cottages, fronting onto a shared green along Kelly Street.

3. Infill housing at current density on vacant lots and renovation of existing vacant properties along Hamilton Ave. Assist homeowners interested in acquiring sideyard properties.

4. New public parking lot with green space and stormwater catchment at the corner of Lang and Hamilton.

5. Small-scale mixed-use buildings at the corner of Hamilton and Murtland (new and renovated) with community gardens along Murtland, buffering the Animal Rescue League from the neighborhood.
Cluster 3 Consensus Vision Plan

- **Short Term Strategy:** Green Interim Uses at Housing Authority Site
  - Infill with single family housing, renovate existing housing and assist homeowners in acquiring sideyards

- **Long Term Strategy:** Accessible cottage units with shared green space
  - Infill with single family housing, renovate existing buildings and create sideyards

- **Small-scale apartment buildings**

- **Gateway garden plantings**

- **Infill with single family housing, renovate existing housing and create sideyards**

- **Small-scale mixed use facing Hamilton**

- **Community gardens at edge of block**

- **Future parking lot with rain garden and passive open space**

- **New Animal Rescue League**

- **Infill with single family housing, renovate existing buildings and create sideyards**

- **Small-scale mixed use facing Hamilton**

- **New Animal Rescue League**

- **Gateway garden plantings**

- **Infill with single family housing, renovate existing housing and create sideyards**

- **Small-scale apartment buildings**
Cluster 3 Initiative Plan

- Green parking lot and community gardens
- Infill housing at the existing density (+ some sideyards)
- Renovations of existing structures where possible
- Diversity of housing types around shared green space
- Small scale mixed-use (new and renovated)
Cluster 3 Phasing Recommendations

Current Initiatives
• Animal Rescue League Expansion with proposed mixed-use building and community gardens adjacent to the site to help buffer neighborhood
• City of Pittsburgh Parking Lot at Lang and Hamilton
• Green Interim Uses by OBB at Housing Authority Site
• Mary Savage’s Vacant Property Garden Plantings

Short Term Initiatives
• Promote the City of Pittsburgh Sideyard Sale Program. 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.
• Identify priority infill housing sites, along Hamilton and in the neighborhood core, and work with a developer or developers to build new homes.

Longer Term Initiatives
• Incorporate stormwater capture and passive green space as part of the proposed City of Pittsburgh parking lot design.
• Encourage a new neighborhood-serving retail use adjacent to the Animal Rescue League site at the corner of Hamilton and Murtland.
Homewood Cluster Planning is a project of Operation Better Block, in collaboration with Studio for Spatial Practice.

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