

## **Linden Gateway Small Area Study**

Task Force Meeting Minutes

Location: Center for Great Neighborhoods

Thursday, March 27, 2008

6:00-7:40 P.M.

### **ATTENDANCE:**

Charles Eilerman – Kenton County Planning Commission

Pete Nerone – Peasenburg neighborhood resident

Helena Roden – Owner of Crosstown Pub

Maureen Rabe – Blau Mechanical

Doug Chambers – St. Elizabeth Medical Center

Betty Schumacher – Friends of Peasenburg Neighborhood Association

Beth Johnson – Historic Preservation Officer, City of Covington

Alex Weldon – Covington Resident

Sharmili Sampath – Northern Kentucky Area Planning Commission

Edward Dietrich – Northern Kentucky Area Planning Commission

Jenna Haverkos – Northern Kentucky Area Planning Commission

Emalee Listerman – Northern Kentucky Area Planning Commission

### **ABSENT:**

Pastor David Foley – Southside Baptist Church

Vada Smith – Westside Action Coalition

Rick Ludlum – Linden Grove Board of Overseers

Regina Haley – Westside Neighborhood Resident

Jack Toemer – American Sound and Electronics

Rachel Hastings – Center for Great Neighborhoods

### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by Chairwoman Roden.

Ms Roden asked if anyone had received a read receipt from State Senator

Westwood when they sent emails to him regarding the money for underground utilities along 12<sup>th</sup> Street. Nobody had received one. Ms. Roden said she had sent

four emails requesting a read receipt but had not heard back. Mr. Eilerman asked if anyone had called him. Mr. Fossett asked what the bill number was and Ms

Roden said it was House Bill 406.

### **2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MARCH 13, 2008 MEETING**

Mr. Eilerman moved to approve the minutes, and Ms Schumacher seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0.



### 3. DISCUSSION OF SCHEDULE

Ms Sampath said that because of the discussions and concerns about 12<sup>th</sup> Street it has been decided to extend the time line by two months. The public meeting will be held on April 17, and the comments will be shared with the Task Force on April 24. She added that there may or may not be a meeting on May 29<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Sampath said that the meetings on June 26<sup>th</sup> and July 31<sup>st</sup> will focus on 12<sup>th</sup> Street and there may be a public meeting after these meetings to show and explain any changes that may occur. The first draft should be ready by the August 28<sup>th</sup> meeting, and hopefully the final report will be finished by September 25<sup>th</sup>.

Ms Sampath said that staff is following up on items brought up by the task force at the previous meeting. She said St Elizabeth has been provided the contact information for Holophane Lighting to look into lighting fixtures for the access road. There is a meeting set up with the state historic preservation office (SHPO) on April 10<sup>th</sup> about the interpretive park. She said no progress has been made on the sign yet along 12<sup>th</sup> Street to let people know that the disruption is because of a street widening project. Sponsors may be needed to help pay for the sign. Mr. Eilerman asked that the desire for images on the sign not delay a sign being installed. He thinks just a sign saying this is a state road project is better than no sign. Ms Roden said she would talk to 12<sup>th</sup> Street business owners about money for the sign. Ms Sampath said she will find out how much the city is able to spend and then talk to Ms Roden about additional funds.

Ms Sampath handed out written reports on the recommendations for land use, transportation and parks, and said that if they have any comments or questions to contact staff. Mr. Eilerman asked who would be present at the meeting with the state historic preservation office. Ms Sampath said the meeting would include the people from the city, NKAPC, Sanitation District #1, Human Nature, and the Transportation Cabinet. She said the meeting basically is to find out what SHPO will and will not allow on that site.

### 4. STUDY AREA RECOMMENDATIONS – HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Ms Roden introduced Ms Beth Johnson, Covington’s Historic Preservation Officer, to present the historic preservation recommendations for the study area.

Ms Johnson started by explaining the difference between the National Register district and a local historic district. Ms. Johnson said that the national register currently includes over 80,000 listings both individual and districts. She said that it does not have any legal teeth regarding the up keep or restoration of a property and the property owner is under no obligation to preserve the property. It is just a list of important historic buildings and districts worthy of preservation. The thinking behind it is that the designation may help keep them preserved.



Ms. Johnson explained that there are five categories: buildings, sites, structures, districts, and objects, the majority of the listings area within districts. The register does have some significance on projects using federal money, in which case the impact on the historic property must be evaluated. She said this is called the Section 106 Review process. She said that impact on historic properties will not necessarily stop a project. Ms Johnson used 12<sup>th</sup> Street as an example. She said that on the south side of the street there were several buildings eligible for the national register but was not listed. However, consideration for these buildings still had to be made. Some of the buildings were saved and moved others were refurbished. Ms. Johnson said that there are federal tax credits for income producing properties and in Kentucky, state tax credits on any type of property. The federal tax credit is 20% and to qualify the secretary of the interior's guidelines for preserving, rehabilitating, restoring and reconstruction of historic buildings must be followed. In Kentucky the tax credit is 30% for homeowners and the same guidelines must be followed. There are also qualifications for federal assistance for historic preservation when funds are available, but there are no funds available at this time.

Ms. Johnson then moved on to explain local historic preservation zones (HP-O) and said that in Covington there are seven HP-O zones. Seminary square is the closest to the study area. She said that these are places that the city has determined are important and vital to save, and their historic character and fabric is to be maintained. Land use differs in the zones, some are residential while some are a mix, and others are almost entirely commercial. She said that the legal teeth for historic preservation are in these local zones. To make changes approval must go through the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process. Any changes must follow Covington's historic guidelines; some examples of things covered are windows, colors, fencing, roofs, doors, gutters, awnings, new construction and infill. In many cases, Ms. Johnson said staff can approve most of the changes. She said the guidelines are straight forward and the process is fairly simple. However, major changes or changes that do not meet the guidelines must go through the Urban Design Review Board (UDRB) a panel of nine citizens all with some knowledge of and interest in historic preservation. They meet every month so delays to construction are usually short. Ms. Johnson said that if they are denied by the board they are not allowed to do the work or if work is done and the proper process was not followed or the work was denied and it was done anyway the board can fine it. It is considered a zoning code violation.

Ms Johnson said she went on a field trip of the study area with Ms Sampath, Ms Haverkos, and Ms Weldon to identify development patterns. She said the northern portion of the study area was developed in the late nineteenth century. She said just south of the cemetery is a mix of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century development. She said further south the development is entirely 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ms Johnson showed a slide of subdivision plats in the study area. She said the Cambridge Tile Company was located in the middle of the study area and residences grouped



around it first and spread out. Eventually the buildings were torn down and houses built on the site.

Ms Johnson thinks the whole area is eligible for a national historic district. There are a few buildings already on the national register; Saint Augustine church, the 5<sup>th</sup> district school, now Academy Flats, two monuments in Linden Grove Cemetery, the cemetery itself, and the Bavarian Brewery. She said anyone can prepare a nomination for the national historic register, but fortunately Ms. Johnson and Ms. Weldon both have experience with the process. She said the process is lengthy and requires a lot of research and documentation.

Ms. Johnson said that the entire area does not have to be nominated at one time. It can be broken up into smaller areas based on neighborhood boundaries or development areas.

Ms Johnson stated that the national historic register is the first step and later if there is interest in more protection then a local historic overlay zone may be considered. The local overlay zone has a lot more restrictions and is not always the best thing for every neighborhood, but it will protect the historic character of an area. Ms Johnson said that her office can help residents with historical refurbishment of residences and commercial buildings. She has lots of resources on historically accurate types of treatments based on when built and in what style; along with information on technical issues when rehabbing a house. She also can assist with meeting contractors that specialize in historic reconstruction. Her office will also help with tax credit projects and filling out of nomination forms.

Ms Weldon said the plaque program is very good where the plaque is customized for the house and made of cast bronze. Ms Schumacher asked what the difference is of historic objects, structures, and buildings on the national register. Ms Johnson replied saying structures are like the Roebling Bridge, an object is like one of the monuments in the cemetery.

Ms Roden asked how an overlay district would hinder development. Ms Johnson said if infill is needed, such as along 12<sup>th</sup> Street, there are guidelines for the historic overlay zones for new construction that will have to be followed. Also, the *12<sup>th</sup> Street Redevelopment Plan* includes guidelines that must be followed. The infill buildings do not have to look historic but they need to be sensitive to the surrounding neighborhood. Ms Roden asked if the guidelines give percentages for the mix of commercial to residents. Ms Johnson said no, they are only aesthetic they do not deal with land use that is only done through zoning. Ms Weldon added that with the new zoning ordinances there are infill residential guidelines throughout the city. Ms Roden said that if the Task Force recommended an overlay it would not put road blocks up for new development. Ms Weldon and Ms Johnson said it would not. Ms Weldon added that the first recommended step would be for a national historic register district that does not include guidelines but it does provide the possibility of tax credits



Mr. Nerone asked if the overlay zone would hinder demolishing buildings. Ms Johnson said it does put restrictions on demolitions. There are five different standards on what constitutes an allowable demolition. She said if the structures were determined to be a threat to the public's health and safety then it could be demolished. If someone wanted to demolish a structure just to build a new one they would have trouble getting that passed. The process would include submitting an application to the Urban Design Review Board and they would probably deny the request. The applicant could then go to city council.

Mr. Nerone asked if in an overlay zone this protection applies to all buildings. Ms Johnson said yes, but there is a process in the UDRB where they determine if a building is contributing or non-contributing. If it is non-contributing they look at it differently. Ms Sampath asked when this determination is made. Ms Johnson said when they go through the certificate of appropriateness application, and they do look at the building's standing on the national and state registration. This is another reason why being on the national register is important.

Mr. Eilerman said that being on the national register can help create a sense of place and pride and revitalization. And, The Licking and Riverside areas were the first to get on the national register back in the 60's and 70's and they were pretty dumpy at that time, but this brought a lot of interest and investment, and the same thing happened at Seminary Square and Mainstrasse.

Ms Johnson clarified that there were seven local and 16 national historic districts. She showed a map of the two different groups and pointed out that all the local zones are within national districts. Many of the national districts are very large. Ms Weldon pointed out that there is no local overlay zones on the east of the city south of 8<sup>th</sup> Street and on the west side south of 12<sup>th</sup> and Pike Streets. Ms Sampath asked if the entire local zones were set up after the area was on the national register. Ms Weldon said yes and added that most of the zones are older with the exception of Pike Street. Ms Johnson said it was started in 2003 and all the others were done in the late 1980's or early 90's.

Mr. Nerone asked if the north side of 12<sup>th</sup> Street were included in any zones or districts. Ms Johnson said one block, close to the bridge is in an overlay zone and three blocks are in a national district. Mr. Eilerman said that it appears there are many areas in the city that are on the national district but not in a local overlay zone. Ms Weldon agreed and added most of the city is that way. Mr. Eilerman said that reinforces the option of doing it or not doing it. Mr. Nerone asked if the restriction on the property owner is lifted once it is on the national register or is it a required first step. Ms Johnson said it is not a required first step, the area does not have to be on the national register to become a local historic zone, but it is a good step. It is a good process to let people get use to the idea and what it means. It helps residents get interested in the historical aspect of the area. Ms Sampath added that if the community is interested in being part of an overlay zone then that would be the next step.



Ms Johnson added that may be only a small part of the area on the national register that would want to be within a local historic overlay zone. She went on to say that the national register is like a stamp of approval and says that this is an area that is historic and worthy of preserving but it does not put any restrictions on the property unless federal money is used on a project. Mr. Nerone said that explains why there is little that can be done on the north side of 12<sup>th</sup> Street because of the federal money being used in the project.

Ms Sampath asked the Task Force if they were comfortable with the small area study recommending that the area be considered for a national register district and if in the future the residents are interested in a local HP-O zone that can be pursued. Mr. Nerone said he has a fear that local property owners rights are going to be walked on by outsiders limiting what they can do to their property. He also asked what rights a property owner has when taking an area into an historic overlay zone. Ms Johnson said that first, at least 51% of the residents have to agree to it and there are several public hearings. Ms Weldon said it is a long process and that is why Pike Street is the only one that has been done since. Ms Johnson said that Pike Street went forward with the process earlier and decided against the zone. It was not until much later that they went forward a second time and decided to do it.

Mr. Eilerman asks if the Bavarian Brewery is on the national register. Ms Johnson said yes and that if it is demolished it could be taken off the national register. Mr. Eilerman said it is not in an overlay zone. Ms Johnson and Ms Weldon said that it is in a chapter 99 plan. Ms Sampath asked if putting Pike Street on the national register was done by the city. Ms Weldon said a lot of the area was on the national register already. Ms Johnson said that there has been a lot of activity along Pike Street in the past few years; a lot of façade improvements and renovation.

Ms Sampath said there is also a funding component to getting an area listed on the national register. She said that NKAPC just completed assisting the City of Park Hills to list an area on the national register and the entire process took a year and a half to hire an historic consultant to do the work.

Ms Weldon said that the 30% tax credit from the state is a big savings and is not being used much in Covington especially when the house needs a lot of work. Mr. Nerone said that he would hate to see this become a negative by keeping people from buying homes in the future because they are not able to fix them up to be energy efficient. He did say there are a lot of pluses to being on the national register, but this is a fear of his. Ms Johnson said that it comes down to education. She said that in Chicago they have been able to get these two concepts working together; windows are always a big concern, but a good fitting wood window with a properly fitting storm window is more energy efficient than a vinyl clad replacement window.





Ms Sampath said that the study will recommend a national register district now and then if there is enough resident support for a local historic zone then that could be pursued. The study will make it clear that the initial interest in a local historic zone has to come from the local residents. Mr. Eilerman asked if there are studies of any of the local historic zones on how well they have done and how little problem the zoning has caused. Ms Weldon said nationally the statistics show large increases in property values. She went on to say that there are no local studies but Kentucky has done a study. Many of the areas in the city on the national register have been on for over 20 years and have not chosen to have an overlay zone added.

## 5. STUDY AREA RECOMMENDATIONS – HOUSING

Mr. Dietrich said that most of the recommendations are based on what is currently being provided by the City of Covington, HONK and the Center for Great Neighborhoods. He said that these organizations are already providing programs that currently exist at the national level. He added that recommendations include working with neighborhood associations to further provide programs for housing in the area.

Mr. Dietrich said that the study area is predominately residential area (80%) of where 90% of those structures are in good condition or need only minor repairs. He said that this is a low income area which is reason for the low home ownership rate. The Housing and Urban Development Authority recommends a 66% home ownership rate and while it is only 51% in the study area.

Mr. Dietrich explained that recommendations fall under two broad categories; increase homeownership and improve the existing housing stock. He said in terms of increasing homeownership three strategies are recommended. The first is to increase the awareness of and advocate for relevant homeownership issues. This would include providing information from the three main housing program agencies (city Housing Department, HONK, & CGN), to the neighborhood association, then to the residents. He said it is hoped that by getting information out to the public better policies and programs will be forthcoming. Mr. Eilerman said HONK is Housing Opportunities of Northern Kentucky and went on to ask how they provide housing. Mr. Dietrich explained that they use HOME money given to them by the city housing department and leverage this with other money from donations and grants. They have two main programs, one is a rent to own a home and the other is a home improvement program. He said they build new homes and rehab existing homes.

Mr. Dietrich said that the next strategy is to have the neighborhood associations act as connectors between residents and the home programs. He said the programs are already in place and what is needed is to get more people involved. The neighborhood associations can advertise the programs and a few members can become familiar with the programs and assist residents determine eligibility,



gather up needed documents and help an applicant move through the process. Another strategy is called an Employer Assisted Housing Program. Mr. Dietrich said Ms Hastings mentioned this idea and was thinking about St Elizabeth as a possible employer, however St. Elizabeth already part of a similar program with the City of Covington. He said that these programs basically have an employer help eligible employees obtain housing in a specific area usually close to the employer's location. This assistance is usually in the form of a low or no interest loan up to a certain amount to be used towards the down payment. Special accounts were the employer matches or puts in a specific amount along with the employee who is also contributing to accumulate enough money for a down payment. Mr. Dietrich then outlined the benefits to the employer for this program which includes less turnover and less absenteeism, and community goodwill. He added that benefits to the employee are financial stability, less commuter time, increase feeling of belonging, and possibly more exercise.

For improving existing housing stock Mr. Dietrich said staff would propose a targeted code enforcement strategy. Under this strategy the neighborhood associations work with the code enforcement office and target a block or a group of houses for an intense code violation inspection. This is advertised before hand allowing owners to fix obvious violations before the inspections. Once the inspections are completed the neighborhood associations assist eligible homeowners sign up for the home improvement programs that the city and HONK have in place. Right now this money is a loan. It would be helpful in the future if a program is set up where small amounts of money are given to residents to fix up their home. Along with this program is the idea of a tool lending library. One of the agencies could collect a supply of tools that could be lent out to residents for specific projects. Coupled with this strategy is to create a pool of knowledgeable people that would assist people with their home improvement projects. Mr. Dietrich said that HONK currently has a group of volunteers that do work on houses but it is only on a HONK project.

Another program Mr. Dietrich said is idea of the neighborhood associations becoming an LLC, buying properties, fixing them up and selling them. He said this has been very successful in other areas of the city. This type of program takes a great deal of organization and commitment. Ms Schumacher said it also takes people.

Ms Weldon provided a few more ideas. She mentioned the painting project Center for Great Neighborhoods is putting on this spring. She said this is part of a nation wide program where organizations pick houses based on need and the situation of the owners and fix up the house over the course of a weekend. Besides having an improved house this helps bring people of a neighborhood together and could lead to more and bigger projects. She added that about 7 years ago the Center built a playground in the sixth district; it was like a barn rising. Another idea she had was to work with realtors; to stop them discouraging clients from living in some of these areas and to tell them about the plans for an area and how the city is





working on improving the area. Mr. Eilerman said the national register will also help make the area more appealing to potential homeowners.

Ms Weldon said several years ago that the city housing department and all the neighborhood associations held an annual housing fair. Each neighborhood association, non-profits, employers, the school district had tables. It was advertised and a particular neighborhood could be targeted to bring residents in and show them what was available. This program was stopped when staff changed in the city housing department. Ms. Weldon said another idea is Rehabarama that Newport has held a few times where a neighborhood with a lot of rehabbing opportunities is picked and opened to the public to show what is being done and what is possible. She added that a lot of the effort is public relations. Ms Sampath said that is what we found in our research. The programs and funds for these programs are available and it is just a matter of getting people involved.

Mr. Dietrich then handed out maps of the study area with building conditions and ownership information. He said the study area was divided into four areas and the percentage of rentals and housing in poor condition in each area was provided. He said the northwest area has the largest percentage of rental units and housing in poor condition and this area requires the most attention. The Peaselburg neighborhood to the south has very good housing stock and fairly good rental percentages except for the far eastern side along Russell and Banklick Streets. The area south of the cemetery is rather mixed with somewhat higher rentals and poor housing stock.

Mr. Eilerman said that one of the goals of this study is to diversify the population of the area; to increase the percentage of middle class homeowners and this should be made clear in the report. With St Elizabeth medical center coming in it is hoped that some of its employees will want to move into this area. He went on to add that a lot of the programs described by Mr. Dietrich were for people with low and moderate incomes and that is not the only concern. Mr. Dietrich agreed and said that he did not know of any programs to attract this group of people. Ms Weldon added that the historic tax credit for rehabbing homes can be an inducement. Mr. Eilerman said that this area was a middle class area in its day. He also pointed out that even though this is a rather dense area there are some opportunities within deteriorating and vacant lots where infill and redevelopment could occur. Mr. Dietrich added that the lack of off street parking could be a difficulty in attracting people with higher incomes into this area. Mr. Eilerman said the same thing could be said about the Mount Adams area in Cincinnati but housing prices up there are very high. Ms Weldon pointed out that there are quite a few alleys that are not being used to their full potential.



## 6. STUDY AREA RECOMMENDATIONS – GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms Listerman presented recommendations for green infrastructure. She started by presenting the area within its larger context. She showed a topography map of the area showing the steep hills starting just to the west of the study area. The primary focus of the recommendations is to look at the opportunities for providing a green network and organizing a hierarchy of green spaces within the study area. As a mean to acquire additional funding, she suggested that it may be more effective to develop a concept plan for parks and green spaces within the study area. There are seven possible park locations and two park projects currently underway. These are the interpretive park on 12<sup>th</sup> Street and the landscaped green space in front of Linden Grove Cemetery. Ms Listerman drew and superimposed images on top of photos of three of the possible locations to illustrate how these spaces could be used. For example, the small lots owned by the city along 18<sup>th</sup> Street could become a trail head with a pathway winding up to Linden Grove Cemetery. Another example showed a slide of what a community garden could look like.

There was also discussion on the idea a trail connecting the ravine area beside the new medical center to the cemetery. This trail would run along the greenway at the level of the parking lot. The junction of this trail with the sidewalk leading to the medical center could be enlarged and made to be a seating area and small garden. A similar treatment could occur where this trail turns to the east towards the cemetery and the sidewalk heads north along the access road. This ravine area provides a significant amount of green space for the area but its steepness possess some problems. The bottom of the raven is deep and isolated and not a good place for a pathway. The steep sides also limit the area's uses. Crossing the ravine is also a problem. The ravine at the top is wide and to economically bridge this gap the trail will have to run north to the 14<sup>th</sup> Street area.

Ms. Listerman also suggested that it may be important to develop a marketing strategy for the park system. Marketing strategies could theme the parks around the concepts of water and water usage, local history, or other environmental ideas.

## 7. FUTURE MEETING DATES

Ms Sampath reminded task force members about the public meeting on April 17<sup>th</sup> and the next Task Force meeting on April 24<sup>th</sup>.

## 8. ADJOURNMENT

Ms Rabe motioned for adjournment and Mr. Nerone seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 P.M.

