

Cleveland
Heights

visioning summary

of the visioning committee's report to cleveland heights council

November, 2001

Dear Cleveland Heights resident,

In October, 1999, the Cleveland Heights Council began a visioning process to determine priorities that would guide our community into the future.

After an application process, Council selected twenty-five residents (including two students) to form the Visioning Committee. The Committee, with the assistance of PKG Consultants, worked for eighteen months reviewing data, attending town meetings, forming task forces and formulating six key themes for the Vision.

The Visioning document, which was presented to Council on October 8, 2001, is summarized on the following pages and will give you an overview of the Visioning Committee's final recommendations. (Those wanting a copy of the full report may pick one up at City Hall or call Community Relations at 291-2323.)

None of this would have been possible without the interest of so many of you, our residents. Your overwhelming response to the all-household survey (with 6,000 surveys returned), and your attendance at meetings, gave the Visioning Committee and City Council an opportunity for valuable input.

Now we are asking you to participate again by reading through this report and responding with your comments. **A meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, December 13, 7:00-9:00 pm, at City Hall, 40 Severance Circle.** If you are unable to attend, you may send your comments to Council at City Hall.

After the citizen feedback, City Council will begin a complete review of the full document, regarding financial considerations, what suggestions can be incorporated into existing programs and potential private-public partnerships that could best serve our community.

Thank you for your continued support and interest in the future of Cleveland Heights.

Sincerely,

Cleveland Heights Council

Edward J. Kelley, Mayor

Kenneth Montlack, Vice Mayor

Bonita W. Caplan

Nancy J. Dietrich

Phyllis L. Evans

Jimmie Hicks, Jr.

Dennis R. Wilcox

Robert C. Downey, City Manager



a citizen-driven planning process

A. Gus Kious, MD *co-chair*
Cheryl Stephens *co-chair*
David Bauders
Michael Bier
Douglas Braun
Pippa Carter
Jodelle Coleman
Joan Costello
Jeanne Martin Diamond
Benjamin Greenberg
Sharon Grossman
David Hertz
Susie Kaeser
Gillian Lindsay
Steve Presser
Janet Romanic *not pictured*
Gina Saginor
Chavtz Seals
Calvin Singleton
Brian Schneiderman
Sr. Ritamary Welsh, OSU
Marlene Tighe
Steve Wood

meet

Meet your neighbors who served on the Visioning Committee



Dear Citizens:

In a process that lasted two years and involved twenty five Cleveland Heights residents, we were charged with developing a citizen-directed vision and strategic plan for the future. Assisting and guiding the process was Pflum, Klausmeier & Gehrum Consultants and the staff of the City of Cleveland Heights, whose work enabled citizen surveys, town hall meetings, special forums, and task force meetings. As a result, we developed a comprehensive vision and presented it to the City Council and the community. The major themes of this vision document were derived from the community's abiding passion for our people and places. These themes are identified in our vision statement. Our findings from working with you are summarized in this document. For greater detail on our work and recommendations to the City Council of Cleveland Heights, please contact the Department of Community Services at 216.291.2323.

Sincerely,

The Visioning Committee

Visioning Committee Task Forces

Community Participation and City Services

Designed and Natural Environment

Commercial, Residential and Infrastructure Development

Arts and Recreation

Learning Development and Youth Activity

Diverse Community

community

Cleveland Heights: Extraordinary People and Extraordinary Places

OUR VISION

We all come to Cleveland Heights or remain here for a reason. Cleveland Heights draws and keeps us with its vibrant interaction of extraordinary places and extraordinary people. Places that are compelling, vital and memorable, and where you get to know your neighbors and where friendships are fostered. Cleveland Heights is home to many diverse and interesting people who believe passionately in their community. People that think, learn, perform and create together. In Cleveland Heights, extraordinary people and extraordinary places combine uniquely to make a cherished home for all of us.

PLACES

Cleveland Heights encompasses distinctive residential areas and intimate neighborhood commercial districts and schools. Our schools draw on the unique people and institutions, representing the arts, universities and cultural institutions. Commercial areas serve their neighborhoods, the larger community and region.

PEOPLE

Our rich mix of people can be found in our arts, culture, recreation, community events, and even daily encounters. We require open, democratic, public decision-making processes. We expect our city government and school district to respect us as individuals; to set and attain fair, high standards for performance; and to demonstrate accountability and responsiveness.

THE VISIONING PROJECT: DEFINING COMMUNITY VALUES, GOALS, STRATEGIES AND PLANS

The Visioning Project came about through a growing consensus that our community needed to define a strategy to compete with other communities for people and businesses. In October of 1999, the Cleveland Heights City Council appointed a 25-resident committee to work with an outside consulting firm to create a vision for the future. The Visioning Committee designed an eight-step process to engage the community to define goals and to secure the commitment of citizens and partners to strategic initiatives based on the goals.

OUR STRATEGY:

A PASSIONATE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE IN OUR DISTINCTIVE ASSETS AND VALUES

Our community's precious assets and values include a rich diversity of people; arts and culture; public and private schools; neighborhoods with history, distinctive architecture and green spaces; intimate commercial districts; civic passion, commitment and involvement; and location.

CLEVELAND HEIGHTS COMPETES

Our competitive advantages are great neighborhoods, intimate commercial districts and deep social, cultural, and artistic resources, which are scarce and difficult for communities to replicate.

PURSUING EXCELLENCE IN OUR GREAT ASSETS

Our Visioning Project has found that many of our assets are at-risk, under-productive, incomplete, or dormant. Our distinctive neighborhoods, commercial districts and infrastructure are aging and face significant preservation challenges. We will need to invest heavily in our neighborhoods, commercial districts, and artistic and cultural assets. We have chosen a strategy that accelerates our best assets into a competitive advantage in our region.



Promote Beautiful Neighborhoods

PRESERVE CLEVELAND HEIGHTS

Built more than 50 years ago, our neighborhoods are old by government standards. Our neighborhoods require special attention to preservation and maintenance. Many of the homes and neighborhoods are suffering from poor maintenance and neglect that threatens their economic viability. Some neighborhoods are approaching a level of negative impact, thereby weakening neighboring commercial districts.

Our Visioning Project recommends shifting focus to preservation and maintenance by hiring a chief preservation officer and staff, providing planning assistance, providing preservation education, establishing a Preservation Resource Center, establishing restoration incentives, ensuring greater enforcement of maintenance codes, notifying neighborhoods of critical external inspections, assisting elderly or other needy homeowners, establishing local historic districts, installing sidewalk plaques in historic districts and developing Differential Housing Code Standards in historic districts.

BEAUTIFY NEIGHBORHOODS, PARKS AND GREEN SPACES

Our neighborhoods enjoy great natural beauty in their towering trees, mature parks and integrated green spaces. We recommend that the city hire a city landscape architect, develop planting plans for neighborhoods and homeowners to improve existing green spaces, ensure that adequate green space is considered in the planning stages of all new development plans, establish a Heights Conservation Corps, implement tree/shrub planting programs, review public signage and infrastructure for aesthetics, improve gateway signage and plantings, restore backyard garbage collection and develop litter control plans.

IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLIST AMENITIES

Renewed attention is needed for our sidewalks and bike paths to fulfill their aesthetic and functional potential. We recommend a bold program to pursue beauty in our neighborhoods that includes shifting maintenance of sidewalks to the city, developing a cycle route system, expanding the number of bike paths in our parks and restoring the pedestrian bridge across the ravine at North Park and Roxboro to improve the linkage between Cedar-Fairmount and newly revitalized Shaker Square.

DEVELOP NEW HOUSING

Our Visioning Project indicated a strong desire for new housing types, such as cluster housing and live/work studios, that will allow residents with changing needs to remain in our community. We heard a need to preserve green spaces and the need for new housing to respect existing zoning, architecture and construction quality. We recommend a zoning and building codes review that will promote innovative housing types, while protecting the greater investments of existing property owners.

IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

We need to improve the daily quality of life for our citizens to make our neighborhoods more livable and enjoyable. Enhancements can include promoting traffic calming in our neighborhoods, enforcing no-truck routes and increasing noise ordinance enforcement to lessen the effects of booming car stereos and insensitive use of power equipment.

OUR VISION

We seek neighborhood villages that finely integrate parks, green spaces, schools, commercial districts and homes – easily accessible to all of our citizens.

Our community (and our physical environment) celebrates the harmony of nature, people and art.

We inherited a city of exceptional natural and architectural beauty, laid out according to human-scale and pedestrian-oriented principles.

We seek to leave a community that is as ecologically vital, durable and beautiful as the one we inherited.

Build Up Our Main Street Commercial Districts



OUR VISION

Our commercial areas serve their neighborhoods first, then the larger community and region. Our commercial districts function together as a system, complementing each other, and often providing the “Main Street” destination that draws regionally.

We enjoy a rich mix of offices, residences, entertainment, restaurants and shops that foster vital, neighborly, commercial districts. Merchants are often our friends and neighbors, further deepening the connection between our commercial districts and neighborhoods.

Our Main Street districts are based on human-scale and pedestrian orientation to support their neighbors and foster the rich social interaction that makes extraordinary places meaningful.

RESTORE THE MAIN STREET CHARACTER TO OUR COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS

Many of our commercial districts were organized around the trolley lines to serve walking customers. This gave our city a “Main Street” character, indicated by multi-story, mixed-use buildings, continuous storefronts, human scale and pedestrian orientation, and curbside and off-street parking.

As automobiles increased, we shifted to accommodate them. Our older, pedestrian-oriented commercial districts leveled buildings to make way for surface parking and driveways. New construction provided storefront parking lots. Older, classical facades were covered up with modern facings.

The new model created an environment of wide streets, curb cuts, storefront parking lots, storefront gaps, out-of-scale stores and traffic that threatened or burdened pedestrians. Commercial districts lost much of their connectivity to neighborhoods and their customer base. Homeowners lost the aesthetic, convenience and social assets of the districts.

Now our commercial districts need significant rebuilding. In some cases, the damage has been severe with businesses clearly struggling. Other districts are fairly strong, but there are still building or merchant-mix gaps to be filled.

Our central task now is to develop coherent physical and commercial plans for our districts to restore their Main Street character and vitality. We recommend a methodical approach to rebuilding our commercial districts, which includes charrettes, master development plans, new urbanist building and zoning codes, community development corporations, land banking to facilitate redevelopment, public investment and coordinated private investment.

ATTRACT HIGH QUALITY BUSINESSES TO OUR CITY

To compete effectively with other suburbs, we must seek enterprises that will support the physical and social assets our community values. We should also focus on attracting national retailers that are willing to invest in our community.

The arts, health care, science and technology are all industries that could be located in our city. Small and mid-size enterprises could fit nicely into our revitalized commercial districts, while larger enterprises could find homes on Mayfield Road and in Severance Circle.

values

Helping Our Youth Realize Their Full Potential

OUR CHARGE

The Learning and Youth Activities Task Force sought to create a vision for learning that our whole community could aspire toward, get excited about and rally behind. Our residents value education and make a significant investment in our public, private and parochial schools. We have high expectations for our children and for all the schools.

Excellent schools contribute significantly to our city's vitality and they enhance our ability to retain residents and compete for new home buyers. More importantly, they play a significant role in educating our more than 7,000 children.

SET HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT THAT OUR WHOLE COMMUNITY CAN EMBRACE

We envision the creation of a bold new public process, supported by our residents, nonprofit community and the many civic organizations. We see this process bringing our elected officials, school board and city council together to collaborate and listen to the citizens of Cleveland Heights.

CULTIVATE EXISTING AND CREATING BOLD NEW COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

We envision more exposure for our children to a wide variety of workplaces and industries that will give them more opportunities to interact with people who can inspire and motivate them. We want to expose them to interesting careers, cutting-edge technology and innovation and excellence in the workplace. A cornerstone of our strategies is to tap this potential and utilize, as never before, our residents and our local institutions.

Immediately, we could develop a plan to recruit college and graduate students from local universities to mentor and tutor in our schools. We will pursue creating a Leadership Cleveland Heights Development Program, reinvigorating and revamping the role of the block leaders/street captains, while significantly increasing their numbers and exploring the creation of a Cleveland Heights Community Foundation.

INSPIRING CONFIDENCE IN OUR SCHOOLS

We want better information and more ways to hear about how our schools are improving on a regular basis. Recommendations include creating a community magazine; hosting a city-wide Youth Make a Difference Day; conducting a joint city and school district state-of-the-union address; creating a process and a mechanism to generate student ideas, involvement and leadership in important community service projects; building substantial community support for regular, ongoing teaching and curriculum audits to focus improvement efforts on those areas instrumental to student success and developing collaborative marketing and communication strategies with the city and schools.

OUR VISION

Our neighborhoods care about the welfare and success of our residents. Our schools draw upon the resources of the unique people, universities and artistic and cultural institutions of our region.

In our community, children learn to live in a diverse, open society. Neighbors watch out for all children, engage them and support them. Children have places and activities to grow, learn, get together and enjoy themselves. They grow up prepared for life intellectually, socially and culturally enriched.

A notably intellectual community, we expect excellent, nurturing teaching. We set high standards of achievement for our children to foster their lifelong learning and success. We believe that learning is a lifelong endeavor, and support the activities and resources that nurture intellectual growth.

Preserve Diversity and Civic Vitality

OUR VISION

Cleveland Heights is an exciting, enriching place to live because of its people. Our community attracts a rich blend of diverse, interesting and talented people, all living and working in the full ranges of life stages and lifestyles. People who value their differences unite in mutual respect and tolerance. Anyone from any background who upholds these values can find a home and happiness in Cleveland Heights.

Our rich mix of people can be found in our arts, culture, recreation, community events and even daily encounters. Many artists and artisans are among us, and we treasure the enriching role the arts and culture play in our lives. We support and participate in the world-class cultural, learning and arts institutions that are our neighbors. We avidly pursue organized and individual recreational activities in leading balanced, healthy lives.

Cleveland Heights has gained a well-deserved national reputation for its unique qualities and successful efforts to be a truly diverse and inclusive community. Future diversity depends in part on maintaining an attractive community that offers excellent services and housing choices, high community standards and vital commercial districts and neighborhoods. It also depends on public policies that open the housing market in our region and support the needs of older communities such as ours.

Our success as a diverse community also depends on local initiatives and daily practices that help us fully embrace our diversity and that make our residents feel connected as neighbors and friends, while nurturing understanding, self-awareness and appreciation of differences and similarities.

EMBRACE DIVERSITY IN ALL ASPECTS OF CITY GOVERNMENT

First, the city should ensure that inclusive language is used in all city policies, guidelines and ordinances. In addition, the city should ensure that all segments of the community are encouraged to be involved in volunteer roles and city-sponsored activities, and that communication with residents is accessible to people of different needs and languages. Finally, we need to highlight our broadly-defined diversity in all marketing materials and other public documents that feature our city.

BUILD ON OUR TRADITION OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

We would like to build on our tradition of community involvement by focusing on diversity and its role in community engagement. We must:

- Create a history that helps to inform and motivate our new diversity initiatives. The city should convene a Community Council for Interaction and Community Building.
- Cultivate widespread leadership and involvement by all segments of our community to re-create our street contact program as a way to encourage more activity at the street level and to foster neighborhood leadership and outreach; work with other public institutions and the nonprofit network to design a leadership development program that would involve diverse segments of our community.

In addition, we should increase our cultural and ethnic festivals and improve access to theatrical and music programs.

EXPLORE A NEIGHBOR-TO-NEIGHBOR MEDIATION PROJECT

We need to explore mediation options that make it easier for residents to work together to solve problems and resolve conflicts that arise.

choices

Identify Cleveland Heights as a Home to Recreation and the Arts

Cleveland Heights should be the arts and entertainment center for Northeast Ohio. Our arts programming is already among the best in the region. As a home for the arts, we can boost ourselves economically, and use arts as a tool for improving education and as a resource for community building.

EXPAND RESOURCES AND PROGRAMMING FOR THE ARTS

We need to provide more public art that creates an immediate impression on visitors and residents of Cleveland Heights. We recommend initiatives designed to expand the arts resources and programming that includes allocating one percent of all new development and rehabilitation budgets to a city arts budget, hiring a director of Arts Development, creating a marketing and promotional plan that positions Cleveland Heights as a home to the arts, creating a Heights Arts Weekend/Open Studio Day, supporting and encouraging the creation of public art, and attracting and nurturing artists/residents.

IMPROVE THE ORGANIZATION AND DISSEMINATION OF ARTS INFORMATION

As the arts become more integrated into our daily activities in Cleveland Heights, we need to ensure that information about the arts is well coordinated, organized and disseminated. We recommend creating and distributing a quarterly cultural calendar to expand access to arts and cultural opportunities; and creating an arts resource database.

INTEGRATE ART INTO ALL LEARNING EVENTS AND RESOURCES

We need to improve the role of the arts in our education and learning events by introducing art into existing after-school programs and looking for ways to implement a district-wide arts curriculum. We should integrate the arts into lunchtime and after-school programs; create a partnership between nonprofits, the CH-UH Board of Education and the city; increase theater productions for children; develop proactive fundraising for arts and cultural activities in the schools; and integrate intergenerational mentoring in the arts for children.

EXPAND PROGRAMMING AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH AND ADULTS

Our recommendations fall into three general categories: physical resources and programming, recreation and education, and the organization and dissemination of information. We need to program events that incorporate community programming, and large and small events that leverage our community's unique assets. We recommend coordinating several annual events; scheduling large-scale community events; creating more small community social events at parks, schools and religious facilities; designing a program to preserve, protect and maintain our parks and common areas; establishing collaboration between the city, schools and library to assess and implement after-school recreation opportunities for public, parochial and private school children in arts and recreation; combining the calendars for the Cleveland Heights Recreation Department and the Board of Education's Community Services; and providing an accessible indoor swimming pool that is available at a reasonable cost to citizens.

OUR VISION

Cleveland Heights will be a community that promotes an environment rich in the arts and recreation. A community commitment to the arts enriches our lives in ways that are not necessarily quantifiable: living is simply better. Arts and recreation provide people of varied backgrounds – regardless of their race, religion or culture – a comfortable way to come together and learn about each other and to strengthen the community through understanding.

Maximize Social Capital to Drive City Services and Accountability

OUR VISION

We envision a city where:

- a mutually proactive relationship between elected and appointed officials and citizens is continually developed and redeveloped, and encouraged and supported by all involved.
- city employees strive daily to deliver the highest quality services with an attitude of providing exceptional customer service.

We expect our government to be customer-oriented and accountable to us for decisions and practices. We value the citizen/government partnership and we rely on our civic activism to be a roadmap for elected officials. We envision our future city as one that continues to provide effective services in response to citizen needs. To support this vision, we need to maximize social capital and community involvement while measuring the progress of the city against established standards.

Currently, our city communicates with us through one-way communication channels, such as our cable television station and the FOCUS magazine. Increased interactions with City Council and the city administration will maximize social capital and ultimately lead to customer-driven service delivery, strengthened government accountability and reduced social and financial costs associated with city operations and planning.

DIVERSIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

To maximize social capital, our vision holds that the city should diversify its strategy for communicating with its constituents. We would like to increase our opportunities for information exchanges with our elected officials through venues, such as town hall forums and City Council meetings that rotate in various neighborhoods. We believe in strengthening the existing neighborhood network by formalizing a Citizen Information Network. We endorse the use of the Internet as a tool to promote collaboration between our citizens and our government.

CONTINUE OUR PROUD TRADITION OF CIVIC ACTIVISM

We must ensure that civic activism in the community continues and that we encourage a new generation of civic leaders to come forward to participate in addressing our challenges and in assuring that the community vision is achieved. We recommend the creation of Leadership Cleveland Heights, the Cleveland Heights Volunteer Center and Cleveland Heights Community Foundation.

REDEFINE SERVICE EXCELLENCE

We need to redefine our delivery of services so that they reflect the quality and heritage of our community. We need to ensure that the city has a specific financial plan to set priorities and achieve needed capital investments to support economic development and neighborhood quality.

DELIVER CUSTOMER-DRIVEN CITY SERVICES

Our citizens expressed concern over their ability to access the right decision makers when they contact the city. We believe that the adoption of an intensive, city-wide customer service philosophy will enable a more effective response and ensure that residents are treated as respected customers.

STRENGTHEN ACCOUNTABILITY AND MANAGEMENT

We encourage city management to adopt a strategic plan approach to annual goal setting, budget development and reporting.

visions

Strategic Implementation: A Call for Action

The Visioning Committee members learned over the past 20 months that the vision would not be complete without a significant amount of additional work from residents, City Council members and the city staff. The City Council and the senior staff of the city provided high levels of support and a platform for citizens to interact in a positive proactive manner. The city must continue the work started by the Visioning Committee and create a body whose only tasks are to look to the future and ensure the continued improvement of our community.

A COLLABORATIVE REVIEW PROCESS

The consensus of the Visioning Committee is that the process needs a structure for implementation. Our recommended structure is a small, ongoing Vision Review Commission, composed of two people from each of the following groups: City Council, citizens at large, senior staff of the city and the Visioning Committee.

The primary task of the Vision Review Commission will be to review the city's ability to link and implement the goals of the Visioning project. Staff actions in relationship to the vision will be reviewed with a focus on analyzing the city's delivery of services and use of finances. Vision Review Commission members should be appointed by City Council for a term of two years with a minimum of two required semi-annual meetings.

COMMUNICATING UPDATES ON THE VISION

It is recommended that the City Council make the vision a part of the Planning Committee of the City Council with responsibility for ongoing review and regular updates. The Council should have monthly updates on activities and actions recommended by the Visioning Project documents. The community should receive ongoing information on Visioning Project activities via the city's website, FOCUS magazine and the city's annual report.

NOTE: For details on the projects and initiatives recommended for action, review the "Summary Matrix of Recommendations" attached to the PKG Report to City Council.



ACTION

The Vision of the Committee is that change will happen. The changes will be the focused actions of people committed to preserving and maintaining an extraordinary community. The members of the Visioning Committee and the participants in the task forces believe strongly that there must be a long-term investment of time and resources in the Vision for the future of Cleveland Heights. The actions of the city staff and the residents must bring together the following:

- Time
- Budget
- Detailed Projects
- Commitment of the overall community



CLEVELAND HEIGHTS
40 SEVERANCE CIRCLE

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