


March 08, 2023

**To:** Mayor and Members of City Council

**From:** Sheryl M. M. Long 

**Subject:** Resolution for the *Mount Airy Plan: Our Future* as the planning guide for the Mt. Airy neighborhood

202300763

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Transmitted is a Resolution captioned:

**APPROVING** the *Mount Airy Plan: Our Future* as the planning guide for the Mt. Airy neighborhood.

The City Planning Commission recommended approval of the plan at its March 03, 2023 meeting.

**Summary:**

For the first time since 1980, Mt. Airy community members and residents have partnered directly with the City of Cincinnati to establish an innovative and progressive comprehensive plan document to continue guiding Mt. Airy for the upcoming decades. *Mount Airy Plan: Our Future (MAP: Our Future)* represents an extensive collaborative effort between the community and the City of Cincinnati. The plan encapsulates all the aspirations for the residents, business owners, property owners, and visitors of Mt. Airy who all collaborated over the past three years.

The planning process of *MAP: Our Future* was led by the Steering Committee which was comprised of residents and stakeholders from the neighborhood and was supported by members of the Department of City Planning and Engagement staff, Mt. Airy Town Council (MATC), Mt. Airy Community Urban Redevelopment Enterprise (CURE), and Community Learning Center Institute. These groups and the entire community created a new vision for the future of Mt. Airy that centers on creating a revitalized environment, particularly within the neighborhood business district (NBD), connecting residents to economic and social centers, highlighting famous landmarks, and welcoming new neighbors who will contribute to the bright future of the neighborhood.

The City Planning Commission recommended the following on March 03, 2023, to City Council:

**APPROVE** the proposed *Mount Airy Plan: Our Future* as the Mount Airy neighborhood's guiding comprehensive plan document.

cc: Katherine Keough-Jurs, FAICP, Director, Department of City Planning and Engagement 

March 08, 2023

To: Chelsey Pettyjohn, Office of the Clerk of Council

From: Katherine Keough-Jurs, FAICP, Director, Department of City Planning and Engagement <sup>KKJ</sup>

Copies to: Jesse Urbancsik, Senior City Planner, Department of City Planning and Engagement

Subject: Scheduling of Resolution – Approving the *Mount Airy Plan: Our Future* as the planning guide for the Mt. Airy neighborhood.

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The above referenced Resolution is requested to be scheduled for the Equitable Growth and Housing Committee.

Included in this submission are the following items:

- 1) The transmittal letter to the Mayor and City Council;
- 2) A copy of the City Planning Commission staff report dated March 03, 2023;
- 3) The Resolution (Transmitted by Law).

March 08, 2023

Cincinnati City Council  
Council Chambers, City Hall  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

Dear Members of Council:

We are transmitting herewith a Resolution captioned as follows:

**APPROVING** the *Mount Airy Plan: Our Future* as the planning guide for the Mt. Airy neighborhood.

The City Planning Commission recommended approval of the neighborhood plan at its March 03, 2023 meeting.

**Summary:**

For the first time since 1980, Mt. Airy community members and residents have partnered directly with the City of Cincinnati to establish an innovative and progressive comprehensive plan document to continue guiding Mt. Airy for the upcoming decades. *Mount Airy Plan: Our Future (MAP: Our Future)* represents an extensive collaborative effort between the community and the City of Cincinnati. The plan encapsulates all the aspirations for the residents, business owners, property owners, and visitors of Mt. Airy who all collaborated over the past three years.

The planning process of *MAP: Our Future* was led by the Steering Committee which was comprised of residents and stakeholders from the neighborhood and was supported by members of the Department of City Planning and Engagement staff, Mt. Airy Town Council (MATC), Mt. Airy Community Urban Redevelopment Enterprise (CURE), and Community Learning Center Institute. These groups and the entire community created a new vision for the future of Mt. Airy that centers on creating a revitalized environment, particularly within the neighborhood business district (NBD), connecting residents to economic and social centers, highlighting famous landmarks, and welcoming new neighbors who will contribute to the bright future of the neighborhood.

The City Planning Commission recommended the following on March 03, 2023 to City Council:

Motion to Approve:	Ms. Kearney	Ayes:	Mr. Stallworth
			Mr. Samad
Seconded:	Mr. Weber		Ms. Kearney
			Ms. Sesler
			Mr. Eby
			Mr. Weber

THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION



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Katherine Keough-Jurs, FAICP, Director  
Department of City Planning and Engagement

**SUBJECT:** A report and recommendation on the proposed *Mount Airy Plan: Our Future* as the Mount Airy neighborhood's guiding comprehensive plan document.

**BACKGROUND:**

Situated adjacent to the neighborhoods of College Hill, Northside, and Westwood, Mt. Airy is one of Cincinnati's northernmost neighborhoods. The neighborhood sits on the northern edge of the City's boundary, also bordering Colerain Township, Springfield Township, and Green Township. Known for its famous, castle-like water tower and Mt. Airy Forest, Mt. Airy is home to approximately 9,210 residents and sits at around 2,314 acres (3.16 square miles) in size. As Cincinnati's largest park at 1,459 acres, Mt. Airy Forest makes up most of that acreage, taking up nearly half of the entire neighborhood. The man-made forest is home to miles of hiking trails, several picnic areas, a world-class disc golf course, and a multi-use mountain biking trail. Mt. Airy Forest additionally contains Ohio's only wheelchair accessible public tree house, an enclosed dog park, and a beautiful arboretum.

For the first time since 1980, Mt. Airy community members and residents have partnered directly with the City of Cincinnati to establish an innovative and progressive comprehensive plan document to continue guiding Mt. Airy for the upcoming decades. *Mount Airy Plan: Our Future (MAP: Our Future)* represents an extensive collaborative effort between the community and the City of Cincinnati. The plan encapsulates all the aspirations for the residents, business owners, property owners, and visitors of Mt. Airy who all collaborated over the past three years.

The planning process of *MAP: Our Future* was led by the Steering Committee which was comprised of residents and stakeholders from the neighborhood and was supported by members of the Department of City Planning and Engagement staff, Mt. Airy Town Council (MATC), Mt. Airy Community Urban Revitalization Enterprise (CURE), and Community Learning Center Institute. These groups and the entire community created a new vision for the future of Mt. Airy that centers on creating a revitalized environment, particularly within the neighborhood business district (NBD), connecting residents to economic and social centers, highlighting famous landmarks, and welcoming new neighbors who will contribute to the bright future of the neighborhood.

**PROCESS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:**

The neighborhood planning process began in the summer of 2020 (during the height of the global pandemic) with the entire planning process being championed by the Steering Committee. To maintain the health and safety of residents and the community, the *MAP: Our Future* Steering Committee held small group gatherings virtually, some of them structured as happy hour events, rather than meeting in large groups. Residents volunteered to host meetings and to distribute invitations to their neighbors. Ten of these meetings occurred with most meetings being focused on different locations throughout Mt. Airy. Besides being insightful opportunities to gather with neighbors safely during the height of the pandemic, the gatherings collected important information in the initial kick-off and brainstorming stage. Community members were asked to provide insight on assets, opportunities, and challenges in the neighborhood. These results were then combined into one map to summarize the initial feedback received.

In addition to the virtual gatherings, there were two online opportunities for input, including a survey and interactive map. This survey was distributed to the Mt. Airy CURE contact list, shared during MATC meetings, and with parents of the Mt. Airy School. This feedback helped craft the goals and strategies of this plan and the results may be found in the Appendix, starting on page 78.

A final in-person open house event was held at Little Brothers-Friends of the Elderly, a social service organization, in the neighborhood's business district. This open house allowed community members to attend at their convenience. During the event, community members reviewed the draft goals and future development opportunity sites, provided feedback, and enjoyed refreshments and charcuterie boards and spreads with their neighbors. Approximately 25 members of the public attended the event, including City staff members and Councilmember Scotty Johnson. From start to finish, approximately 250 community members have engaged with the *MAP: Our Future* process.

### **PLAN OVERVIEW:**

The plan begins with a summary of the neighborhood planning process, before backtracking and exploring Mt. Airy's past and previous planning efforts. Moving forward on the timeline to the present day, Mt. Airy's existing conditions and current land use and zoning are examined. Looking to the future, the plan navigates through Mt. Airy's focus areas and future development opportunities identified by the community.

### ***Plan Cover Page and Logo***

The *Mount Airy Plan: Our Future* logo and cover was designed by previous project manager and former Senior City Planner, James Weaver. The plan's logo and layout are inspired by the Mt. Airy neighborhood flag and the features found throughout the neighborhood. The neighborhood's water tower represents the M. The A is a tree representing Cincinnati's largest park, Mt. Airy Forest. Within the A sits a north arrow, as Mt. Airy is one of the Cincinnati's most northern neighborhoods. Lastly, a flag with 961.5 feet composes the P. The water tower is located 961.5 feet above sea level, one of the highest points in Cincinnati.

### ***History and Past Plans***

The history section of the plan provides an overview of the history of the Mt. Airy neighborhood including the past plans which included one comprehensive plan from 1980, *Mt. Airy Community Plan*, and two area specific plans, the *Kirby Valley Hillside Study* (1980) and the *Colerain Corridor Study* (1983).

Not mentioned in this specific section but attached as Appendix A in the Appendixes at the end of the plan is the *Mt. Airy Colerain Avenue Corridor Study* (2021) curated by KZF Design. Staff from the Department of City Planning and Engagement (DCPE) as well as the *MAP: Our Future* Steering Committee felt it was necessary to attach this document to the Appendix for reference and easy accessibility.

The same goals in the "Transportation" and "Public Safety" theme areas are reiterated in the *Mt. Airy Colerain Avenue Corridor Study* and it is vital to reference this document, including the Implementation Tables at the end of *MAP: Our Future*, during the implementation phases. This study identifies possible design standards, road improvements, recommendations, and goals for Colerain Avenue. It also provides a proposed site plan and renderings the potential redevelopment of the properties located at the corner of W. North Bend Road and Colerain Avenue and the business district in general.

### ***Existing Conditions***

The existing conditions section of the plan is meant to provide a snapshot of the neighborhood's demographic characteristics, zoning, land use, assets, transportation corridors and more. A current land use and zoning map follow this section. The plan incorporates updated 2020 U.S. Census numbers and data which are referenced in this section highlighting population, median household income, race, renters versus owners, vacant units and housing statistics.

## ***Vision***

The vision statement for *MAP: Our Future* states:

*“Mount Airy is a gateway neighborhood, with access points to three townships and other Cincinnati neighborhoods, that strives to create an inviting, appealing, safe, and revitalized environment, highlighting famous landmarks and welcoming new neighborhoods who will work collaboratively with one another to map the future of Mount Airy”* (page 22).

## ***Theme Areas and Goals, Strategies, and Action Steps***

There are six theme areas with a total of 19 goals, 48 strategies, and 36 action steps.

### **Transportation:**

The focus of planning for Mt. Airy’s transportation future is safe and comfortable connections between hubs of activity are the focus of Mt. Airy’s transportation future. Whether a person is traveling by car, foot, bike, or bus, the overarching goal is to foster a transportation environment that allows people to easily get where they want to go while strengthening Mt. Airy’s business district.

This theme area highlights two main goals to “Implement traffic calming on major thoroughfares to reduce accidents and speeding” and to “Enhance multi-modal transportation options and increase pedestrian safety” (page 24). Main strategies throughout this section highlight the need to increase on-street parking, improve pedestrian elements such as lighting, sidewalks, and crosswalks and to look into the feasibility of creating a biking or walking trail from Mt. Airy Forest to the business district.

### **Public Safety:**

Getting more eyes on the street is a core component of Mt. Airy’s public safety goals. The more residents and businesses are invested in creating a community that watches out for each other, the safer the neighborhood will start to become.

Many of the same goals or ideas are reiterated throughout this plan. This theme area identifies for main goals to “Reduce speeding on Colerain Avenue and North Bend Road”, to “Work with Police District 5 to improve community and police relations”, to “Implement a neighborhood wide watch program” and to “Increase safety on Hawaiian Terrace and Bahama Terrace” (page 26). Strategies highlighted in this section include installing pedestrian safety elements, partnering with the Cincinnati Police District on multiple strategies, and encouraging landlords neighborhood-wide to accept a mix of market-rate and affordable units with the aim to deconcentrate poverty.

### **Business District:**

The vision for Mt. Airy’s business district hinges on revitalization of both through the physical built environment and the social atmosphere, transforming the district into the welcoming gateway it was meant to be.

This theme area identifies two main goals for the neighborhood, to “Development the Business District into an attractive environment for both Mt. Airy residents and visitors” and to “Improve the environment of the Business District” (page 28). There are several strategies within this theme area

to make the neighborhood business district more attractive to potential developers and to improve the aesthetics by developing attractive gateway entrances.

Community & Marketing:

Communicating important neighborhood meetings, issues, and opportunities to Mt. Airy residents and encouraging participation in community matters is paramount to the future development of the neighborhood. In addition to internal marketing and communication, Mt. Airy is also looking to its neighbors and the City of Cincinnati to collaborate and share what Mt. Airy has to offer.

This theme area identifies five main goals: To “Develop programs and incentives for more people to attend Mt. Airy Town Council meetings”, to “Strengthen the Quality-of-Life Committee under Mt. Airy Town Council”, to “Develop a community meeting space for Mt. Airy residents to gather”, to “Create a neighborhood roundtable with other neighborhoods to discuss similar problems and solutions” and to “Market Mt. Airy’s assets to existing and future residents, business owners, and visitors” (page 31).

Housing:

Mt. Airy should support existing and future residents of all income levels and lifestyles by providing a variety of quality, well-cared for housing options with incentives and assistance for property owners to maintain housing units.

This theme area identifies three main goals: To “Maintain and enhance the single-family housing stock”, to “Identify blighted and problem properties and work with property owners to improve them” and to “Support existing residents who want to stay in Mt. Airy” (page 33). Strategies and action steps mentioned in this section include starting a ‘Home of the Month’ program, improving the quality of rental units, and encouraging a mix of market-rate and subsidized rental units in large apartment complexes.

Parks & Recreation:

Capitalizing on Mt. Airy’s current recreational resources, from the vast and beautiful Mt. Airy Forest to the Colerain and Shepherd Recreation Area, the future of Mt. Airy Parks and Recreation relies on improving existing facilities and providing greater access for all residents and visitors.

In this last section, there were three goals created: To “Hold more events in Mt. Airy Forest to bring people into the neighborhood”, to “Work with the Park Board to implement the recommendations of the Mt. Airy Forest Plan” and lastly to “Increase awareness and the utilization of existing recreation assets to serve the neighborhood population” (page 35). Strategies within this theme area consist of adding more security and safety measures to Mt. Airy Forest and to partner with other Cincinnati nature groups to bring even more events to the park.

***Future Development Opportunities (FDOs)***

Based on the many goals and strategies identified and outlined in the previous sections, there were six future development opportunities identified which also can be found on page 37 of the *MAP: Our Future* plan document. These areas were identified solely as *potential* development opportunities.

These six areas are: Acadia (the excess land surrounding the Pineroft at Crosley Estate and the Glenwood Gardens Behavioral Center), the Business District, Hawaiian and Bahama Terraces, the St. Therese Little

Flower Parish property, Mt. Airy Forest, and the Shepherd Recreation Area. The strategic goal of these FDOs is to provide guidance and give Mt. Airy a say in the community engagement process for when (and if) a redevelopment opportunity occurs on any of these subject properties.

### ***Implementation Charts and Additional Appendices***

Appendix A includes implementation charts for each of the six theme areas. The charts provide the following information on each action step within the plan's strategies and goals:

- *Time Frame*: The time frames are approximations of how long it would take an action step to be completed, ranging anywhere from 3 months up to 10 years, including multiple ongoing items.
- *Priority Level*: The priority level was determined by the Steering Committee and City staff.
- *Potential Partners*: This identifies additional organizations that could assist in the completion of the action steps such as other City Departments, businesses, Cincinnati Public Schools, Invest in Neighborhoods, Tri-State Trails, and Ohio Kentucky Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI).

### **CONSISTENCY WITH PLAN CINCINNATI (2012):**

*MAP: Our Future* is based upon and consistent with the comprehensive plan for the City of Cincinnati, *Plan Cincinnati*, that was adopted by City Council in 2012. As the goals of *MAP: Our Future* are implemented, they will be assessed with *Plan Cincinnati* to ensure consistency with the City's comprehensive goals. Specifically, *MAP: Our Future* is consistent with all five Initiative Areas of *Plan Cincinnati* - Compete, Connect, Live, Sustain, and Collaborate. These Initiative Areas align with the Guiding Policy Principles by increasing our population, building on our assets, becoming recognized, being aggressive and strategic in future growth and development, and to develop a culture of health embodied by thriving residents.

#### ***Compete Initiative Area***

Goal to "Foster a climate conducive to growth, investment, stability, and opportunity" (page 102) and Goal to "Become nationally and internationally recognized as a vibrant and unique city" (page 121). As it states in *Plan Cincinnati*, "Cincinnati is a special place...our distinctive housing, unique and walkable neighborhoods...Cincinnati can begin to grow into a large city while maintaining the benefits of a smaller community" (page 122).

#### ***Connect Initiative Area***

Goal to "Develop an efficient multi-modal transportation system that supports neighborhood livability" (page 129) and the Strategy to "Support regional and intercity transportation initiatives" (page 144).

#### ***Live Initiative Area***

Goals to "Build a robust public life" (page 149), "Create a more livable community" (page 156), and "Provide a full spectrum of housing options, and improve housing quality and affordability" (page 164) and the Strategies to "Develop and maintain inviting and engaging public spaces to encourage social interaction between different types of people" (page 150), "Become more walkable" (page 157), and to "Support and stabilize our neighborhoods" (page 160).

#### ***Sustain Initiative Area***

Goal to "Become a healthier Cincinnati" (page 181), specifically through the Strategies to "Preserve our natural and built environment" (page 193), "Protect our natural resources" (page 194) and to "Preserve our



built history” (page 197).

***Collaborate Initiative Area***

Goal to “Work in synergy with the Cincinnati community” (page 209) and the Strategy to “Unite our communities” (page 210).

**CONCLUSION:**

The planning process for *MAP: Our Future* has been lengthy, and the community and City staff had to be flexible due to the global pandemic, however this did not stop the Mt. Airy neighborhood from completing this beneficial plan which will be utilized for decades to come. This plan represents the strategic vision to implement all the goals and strategies identified by the community and outlines a 5-to-10-to-20-year structure to improve the neighborhood business district, safety and existing assets while striving to promote collaboration efforts and incentivizing new development and redevelopment opportunities. This plan will put Mt. Airy back on the map as this neighborhood is unique just like the other neighborhoods in Cincinnati. Lastly, this plan would not have been possible without the leadership of former Department of City Planning and Engagement staff: Senior City Planners James Weaver and Samantha McLean, including graphic assistance from Seasongood Intern Emily Burns, who were all instrumental in part of helping map the future of Mt. Airy.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The staff of the Department of City Planning and Engagement recommends that the City Planning Commission take the following action:

**APPROVE** the proposed *Mount Airy Plan: Our Future* as the Mount Airy neighborhood’s guiding comprehensive plan document.

Respectfully submitted:



Jesse Urbancsik, Senior City Planner  
Department of City Planning and Engagement

Approved:



Katherine Keough-Jurs, FAICP, Director  
Department of City Planning and Engagement