

SUBJECT: A report and recommendation on a proposed *Mohawk Area Plan* as the area's guiding comprehensive plan document in Over-the-Rhine.

BACKGROUND:

A small committee of Mohawk area residents approached the City in 2016 to create a plan that implements the *Brewery District Master Plan* (2013). Over two dozen public meetings were held from 2016 through 2019. Staff from the Department of City Planning, Department of Community and Economic Development, Department of Transportation and Engineering, Department of Health, Department of Buildings and Inspections (including the Historic Conservation Office) and numerous property owners and renters were all involved in creating the Mohawk Area Plan.

The *Over-the-Rhine Comprehensive Plan* (2002) is the most recent Plan for the entire community of Over-the-Rhine. The *Brewery District Master Plan* was approved in 2013. This *Mohawk Area Plan* is intended to assist in implementing the *Brewery District Master Plan* for the northern section of Over-the-Rhine. The boundaries of the Plan are roughly described as Central Parkway to the west, Conroy Street to the north, Clifton Avenue to the east and Findlay Street to the south. The draft *Mohawk Area Plan* was presented to the Over-the-Rhine Community Council in February 2020 and they voted to support the plan.

PLANNING PROCESS:

The planning process for the Mohawk Area Plan occurred from 2016-2019.

In July 2016, members of the Mohawk community gathered at Philippus United Church of Christ with a mission: to improve and beautify this historic neighborhood. A Steering Committee was formed and after deliberation the group decided on five key Vision areas: Economic Development, Housing, General Improvements, Connectivity, and Big Ideas and Challenges. The Steering Committee approached the Department of City Planning to draft a Mohawk Area Plan with this Vision to supplement and further direct the implementation of previous plans: Plan Cincinnati (2012), the Over-the-Rhine Comprehensive Plan (2002) and the Brewery District Master Plan (2013). In July and September of 2016, the Mohawk Steering Committee hosted community meetings to conduct mapping exercises, helping highlight several different components of Mohawk's existing conditions: "Areas in Need of Help," "Assets," "Opportunities," and "Where I Live."

In 2017, the Mohawk Steering Committee hosted additional community input meetings, as well as meetings with other stakeholders. In January, the Steering Committee hosted a working session in the Department of City Planning. Later, in May, the Steering Committee hosted a community planning meeting at Philippus United Church of Christ. In September, the planning group met with Xavier University's Community Building Institute, and later with the Department of Transportation and Engineering, to discuss housing and transportation in the neighborhood.

In August 2018, the Steering Committee reconvened to update the Vision goals and action steps, as well as review previously made maps of the Mohawk area. Furthermore, the Steering Committee, in partnership with the Department of City Planning, finalized a timeline to have the plan drafted and approved by Spring 2021.

In early January 2019, mailed notices and several email blasts were sent to the Mohawk community in notice of an upcoming meeting on January 23rd. At this meeting, about 50 members of the Mohawk community participated in a charrette workshop, where the community could review and prioritize the Mohawk Area Plan's ten Vision Strategies. The results of this charette can be found at the end of the Plan, wherein the "Priority Score" for each of the Strategies reflects the amount of "priority dots" given to each item from the January 23rd, 2019 meeting. At this meeting, the community asked for more opportunities to give feedback, and so two more public events were scheduled.

In February 2019, the Steering Committee hosted a Gallery Open House, where blank maps were attached to each of the ten Strategies, and community members were invited to "map out" how and where each Strategy could be implemented. The results from the Gallery Open House mapping exercise can be found in each of the Vision's sections, where "implementation maps" were drafted by the Steering Committee with City Planning staff. About 25 members of the community attended.

In March 2019, over 20 members of the community convened again for a Public Review of the Mohawk Area Plan draft to date. The Public Review was an opportunity for members of the community to gather and learn about the work that had been done not only in 2019, but over the previous three years. Furthermore, this meeting allowed the public to provide more feedback on plan's Vision and Prioritization.

After the meeting in March 2019, City Planning staff reviewed and refined the draft document prior to seeking Over-the-Rhine Community Council, Cincinnati City Planning Commission, and ultimately, the approval of Cincinnati City Council.

PLAN OVERVIEW:

Existing Conditions and Demographics:

According to the 2013-2017 American Community Survey estimates that Census Tract 16, the population of the Mohawk Area of Over-the-Rhine is 997 people. More detailed information can be found on page 12 in the Plan document.

Parks

There are a few small playgrounds and pocket parks within the plan area. More detailed information can be found on page 13 in the Plan document.

Zoning

The existing zoning is a mixture of multi-family residential, Urban Mix, some commercial and manufacturing mixed in the neighborhood. More detailed information can be found on pages 14-15 in the Plan document.

Land Use

Like many older neighborhoods in the City, the existing land use is relatively similar to existing zoning throughout Over-the-Rhine. More detailed information can be found on pages 16-17 in the Plan document.

Historic Districts

There is an existing Mohawk-Bellevue Local Historic District, the Over-the-Rhine Local Historic District, and the newly created Sohn-Mohawk Local Historic District. More detailed information can be found on pages 18-19 in the Plan document.

Hillside District

The northern portions of the Plan area are also in a Hillside District. More detailed information can be found on pages 20-21 in the Plan document.

Transportation

There are both Major Arterial and Minor Arterial Roads, Collector Roads and Local Streets within the Plan area. Also, the streetcar ends within the area of the Plan and there are several Metro Bus Stops in the Mohawk area. More detailed information can be found on pages 22-23 in the Plan document.

Economic Incentives

There are both Opportunity Zones and a Tax Increment Financing (TIF District). More detailed information can be found on pages 24-25 in the Plan document.

Catalytic Buildings

Buildings like the Bellevue Brewery (Mockbee), the Imperial Theatre, the Moerlein Brewery Ice House, the Cliffside Brewery, and the Jackson Brewery are the major catalytic Buildings in the Mohawk Area. More detailed information can be found on page 26 in the Plan document.

City-owned Properties

There are a few small City-owned properties within the Plan area. More detailed information can be found on page 27 in the Plan document.

THE FUTURE OF MOHAWK

The Urban Mixed and the Commercial Neighborhood - Pedestrian Zoning offer a preferred mix of uses. The Land Use included vacant sites and underutilized buildings offering development opportunities. The numerous breweries and Imperial Theater are part of the identity of the Mohawk Area. More detailed information can be found on pages 30-43 in the Plan document.

VISION

The community developed a vision for the future of Mohawk, which guides the goals and strategies throughout the rest of the Plan. That statement is “The vision of the Mohawk Area Plan is to make Mohawk a beautiful, connected, diverse, and welcoming community in which to live, work, and play.”

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Each of these goals and strategies are mapped throughout this document.

Connectivity

Goal: Mohawk is a well-connected business district that is safe and accessible for all modes of travel.

Strategy 1: Develop a walkable neighborhood business district/entertainment district.

- A1. Implement way finding tools such as walking signs to direct pedestrians.
- A2. Maintain good sidewalk conditions.
- A3. Ensure that crosswalks and crosswalk signage are clear and visible.
- A4. Re-establish Baymiller Bridge to improve pedestrian connectivity.
- A5. Connect the different areas of the neighborhood in a cohesive manner.

Strategy 2: Increase the use of available public transit.

- A1. Create a “park and ride” concept by locating a parking structure near access to transit.
- A2. Consider Red Bike, streetcar, and bus stop access-coordinate accessibility of these

with neighborhood destinations and amenities.

Strategy 3: Enhance the biking experience in the neighborhood business district.

A1. Implement designated bike lanes where possible and provide bike racks.

A2. Implement way finding tools such as biking signs to direct bike riders.

Economic Development

Goal: Mohawk is a thriving business district that promotes neighborhood specific development that highlights the history of the area.

Strategy 1: Brand the business district.

A1. Establish the Brewers Boulevard.

A2. Restore the Imperial Theater as a catalyst for future investment.

A3. Ensure that the historic district is contiguous.

A4. Improve gateways that highlight neighborhood assets and incorporate greenspace.

Strategy 2: Promote neighborhood specific infill.

A1. Address topographic issues on hillside development.

A2. Establish a neighborhood or homeowners association to help residents easily communicate with one another as well as assemble funding for certain projects.

A3. Change zoning, if needed, to make NBD more pedestrian and mixed friendly.

General Improvements

Goal: Mohawk is a safe and aesthetically pleasing district that is attractive for both residents and visitors.

Strategy 1: Improve the built environment.

A1. Maintain the alleyways and public spaces.

A2. Improve the lighting in the business district.

A3. Coordinate with vacant property owners to be held responsible for conditions of their buildings.

A4. Work with property owners to repaint their buildings.

Strategy 2: Improve the experience of visitors, residents, and business owners.

A1. Better policing and reporting of drugs, crime, and prostitution.

A2. Make greenspaces destinations.

Housing

Goal: Mohawk is a diverse and inclusive district that contains neighborhood specific housing for all income levels.

Strategy 1: Promote neighborhood specific housing infill.

A1. Establish a neighborhood or homeowners association to help residents easily communicate with one another as well as assemble funding for certain projects.

A2. Residential infill should remain consistent with the content of each residential area of the neighborhood.

Big Ideas and Challenges

Goal: Mohawk is an innovative and creative district that addresses challenges and implements big ideas.

Strategy 1: Define a method to save the Brighton Approach as a possible historic landmark.

Strategy 2: Establish the aerial tram/incline as well as a bar/restaurant to reflect on the history.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND PRIORITIZATION:

A meeting was held in January 2019 and members of the community prioritized the ten vision strategies in descending order based on the “priority score” These strategies also contain action items and are organized

by their Level of Difficulty” as determined by City Staff. More detailed information can be found on pages 44-49 in the Plan document.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND NEIGHBORHOOD REVIEW:

The draft *Mohawk Area Plan* has been posted on the Department of City Planning’s website since 2019 with revisions to the draft being updated regularly. The draft Mohawk Area Plan was presented to the Over-the-Rhine Community Council in February 2020 where they voted to support the Plan. Work on all neighborhoods was temporarily put on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

The draft *Mohawk Area Plan* was sent to all City Departments for review and feedback. An internal City staff meeting was held on March 12, 2019. Attendees included representatives from the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), and the Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTE). There were no major concerns identified at the meeting and all in attendance supported the goals and strategies proposed.

CONSISTENCY WITH PLAN CINCINNATI AND NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS:

The Mohawk Area Plan is consistent with all five Initiative Areas of *Plan Cincinnati* (2012), specifically in the following areas:

Compete Initiative Area: Goal to “foster a climate conducive to growth, investment, stability, and opportunity” (page 103) and the Strategy to “target investment to geographic areas where there is already economic activity” (page 115).

Connect Initiative Area: Strategies to “expand options for non-automotive travel” (page 130) and “support regional and intercity transportation initiatives (page 144).

Live Initiative Area: Goals to “build a robust public life” (page 149) and “create a more livable community” (page 156) and the Strategies to “develop and maintain inviting and engaging public spaces to encourage social interaction between different types of people” (page 150), to “become more walkable” (page 157), and to “support and stabilize our neighborhoods” (page 160).

Sustain Initiative Area: Goals to “become a healthier Cincinnati” (page 181) and to “preserve our natural and built environment” (page 193) and with the Strategies to “protect our natural resources” (page 194) and “preserve our built history” (page 197).

Collaborate Initiative Area: Strategy to “unite our communities” (page 210).

Also, this Plan is consistent with the *Over-the-Rhine Comprehensive Plan* (2002) in numerous areas of the Plan. A few examples include creating a Mohawk Neighborhood Business District (page 32), promoting single-family infill (page 48), and create a Mohawk Local Historic District (page 58).

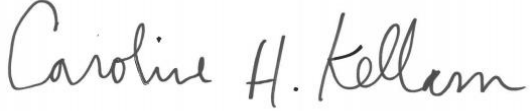
In addition, this Plan furthers the ideas from the *Brewery District Master Plan* (2013) by implementing these goals and strategies to further the revitalization of the Mohawk Area and its brewery heritage.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

APPROVE the *Mohawk Area Plan* as the area's guiding comprehensive plan document.

Respectfully submitted:

Handwritten signature of Caroline H. Kellam in black ink.

Caroline Hardy Kellam, Senior City Planner
Department of City Planning

Approved:

Handwritten signature of Katherine Keough-Jurs in black ink.

Katherine Keough-Jurs, AICP, Director
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