

East End Market-Based Development Strategy

Executive Summary

Prepared by:

URBAN PARTNERS

Prepared for:

East End Partnership

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Introduction

The East End of Pittsburgh consists of a diverse group of communities that share a common spine – Penn Avenue. Over the years, each community has made strides in improving neighborhood conditions and quality of life through various planning and economic development initiatives. Understanding the need to coordinate activities and functions, six neighborhood organizations along the corridor – Lawrenceville Corporation (LC), and Lawrenceville United (LU), Bloomfield Development Corporation (BC), Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC), Friendship Development Associates (FDA), and East Liberty Development Inc. (ELDI) – have recently joined forces to form the East End Partnership (EEP). The East End Partnership Market Based Development Strategy is an attempt to understand existing challenges and identify economic development opportunities - 'catalytic' projects that could significantly transform the East End - in a strategic fashion. The strategy is a comprehensive market-driven plan that will empower EEP partners with the sufficient knowledge to begin implementation, whether it be undertaking additional planning, organizing and programming, soliciting funding, or preparing construction documents for development.

Since the onset of this planning effort, the potential funding mechanism for recommended strategies has changed. Furthermore, leadership has changed and staffing has been reduced in two of the participating organizations. This may cause delays in the ability to accomplish the implementation of certain strategies recommended herein. However, it is anticipated that the organizations with the capacity to obtain funding and pursue implementation will be able to do so with guidance from this document.

Catalytic Strategies

Major EEP-Wide Impact Projects

1. Support attractive in-neighborhood feeder elementary school options

Issue Statement: Faced with the loss of 34% of its children under the age of 18 in the 2000 to 2010 period, the EEP organizations are strongly interested in creating conditions to encourage younger residents to purchase homes and begin their families in the EEP neighborhoods. Although many families choose magnet, charter, religious, or private elementary schools, the assurance of an attractive in-neighborhood elementary school option is often critical to the decision to purchase a home. However, the recent loss of school age children has meant that the East End has been losing its in-neighborhood elementary schools

due to closures. Pittsburgh Public Schools' on-going agenda to achieve *Excellence for All* has resulted in signs of improvement at these East End neighborhood schools. However, efforts to date have not yet stemmed the decisions of many families in the East End to move out of the neighborhood once their children reach school-age. ***The East End needs further support for its remaining feeder elementary schools to continue their improving performance and to create the confidence that they will be permanently high-performing options for all school-age children in the East End.***

Action Program: This project involves developing an EEP community education resource network designed to (1) assist EEP parents in identifying educational options; (2) encourage parents to explore the potential of neighborhood feeder schools; and (3) support those neighborhood feeder schools by connecting them to community-based resource enhancements from EEP residents, businesses, and institutions.

2. Consolidate developed area/open space in Garfield

Issue Statement: The Garfield neighborhood has suffered for many years from declining population and deterioration of the housing stock. As residents left, their homes often remained vacant due to the neighborhood's lack of desirability and the overall shrinkage of population and households in Pittsburgh. Many homes were demolished over time due to disrepair and public nuisance concerns. The result has been a hollowing out effect across the neighborhood where remaining homes are becoming increasingly isolated among swaths of vacant land. While BGC's efforts to develop new housing and rehabilitate the existing housing stock have created dozens of new homes over the past three decades, in many cases in compact nodes, the overall pattern of revitalization has not yet resulted in fully revitalized groups of blocks or sub-neighborhoods. BGC recognizes that, at least for the next several years, additional housing development will largely replace heavily deteriorated stock rather than grow the overall neighborhood population. ***This suggests that the location for this on-going housing development must follow a strategy of consolidated housing development and associated open space creation.*** This will create new desirable housing opportunities, raise property values, reduce drug activity and crime, and increase the quality of life for Garfield residents.

Action Program: The project will involve strategically targeting concentrated blocks in Garfield for new housing development and rehabilitation, while simultaneously identifying areas that will be targeted as long-term open space. The open space area will be de-densified, eliminating vacant and nuisance homes. The open space will be passive or actively used for recreation, gardens, and urban farming, some of which already exists in Garfield.

3. Initiate waterfront development in Lawrenceville—40th to 48th Streets

Issue Statement: The Allegheny River waterfront in Lawrenceville has traditionally been an area of heavy industry. While some industry still exists there, and even new facilities such as the National Robotics Engineering Center, much of it left as Pittsburgh's manufacturing declined. Many buildings and facilities have been demolished leaving a large quantity of vacant and underutilized sites along the Allegheny Riverfront, many of which are used for parking or vehicle storage. In the Central Lawrenceville section between 40th and 48th Streets, the largest parcels include the Heppenstall site, which is vacant; the Buncher site, which is occupied by a flex/warehouse facility; and the 43rd Street Concrete Company plant, which is still operating. Because the sites are large and deep, the street grid stops well short of the river. Rail lines traverse the riverfront properties, including the still-functioning Allegheny Valley Railroad. These factors contribute to a physical disconnect between the river and the adjacent Central Lawrenceville community, where residential and mixed use redevelopment projects have found buyers for new and renovated homes. However, this development has occurred several blocks from the river while the riverfront character has remained industrial. ***The Lawrenceville riverfront needs a major high-quality project involving a variety of committed entities that will be the first step toward transforming the area and its perception.***

Action Program: The project will involve initiating new development on the Central Lawrenceville riverfront between 43rd and 48th Streets, as recommended in the Allegheny Riverfront Vision Plan. The intent is to initiate new development large enough to begin transforming the waterfront and create a precedent for future investment along the Allegheny River. More detailed plans are currently being prepared, but the outlines of the initial focus area—largely along the 43rd Street corridor—and key project elements have been identified.

4. Encourage denser development along Centre/Baum corridor—Aiken to Penn Avenues

Issue Statement: Centre Avenue forms the southern border of Bloomfield, Friendship, and East Liberty; parallel to Centre is Baum Boulevard. Together, these streets form a commercial corridor that stretches between Bigelow and Penn Avenues. While the portion between Aiken Avenue and the East Busway crossing is predominantly Shadyside Hospital and related uses, the portion between Aiken Avenue and Beatty Street is a hodgepodge of various land uses, densities, and building heights. In some instances, parcels are substantially underutilized, such as for surface parking. In other cases, very intensive uses occupy the corridor, such as Essex House. In between are various smaller commercial and residential structures. Also in the vicinity are the developments between Centre Avenue and the busway right-of-way such as the Eastside development. East of Beatty, new developments are currently proposed for the corridor, including Eastside 3 and 4 at the busway station and the Odeon project. ***The Centre/Baum corridor needs more of this larger scale and variety of new development with coordinated parking to reprogram underutilized parcels and increase their desirability for redevelopment.*** This will create sufficient economic scale to support structured parking on certain blocks, allow the corridor to reach its commercial potential and help revitalize this portion of the East End.

Action Program: The project will involve three inter-related activities: (1) amending the zoning along the Centre/Baum corridor from Aiken to Beatty to allow for greater heights (and thereby higher densities); (2) planning for and creating an integrated parking management and circulation program (including a two-way Penn Circle West and North) for the core of the East Liberty commercial district to facilitate multi-site development; and (3) creating a financing structure for infrastructure investment in the node bounded by the busway, Penn Avenue, and Highland Avenue to facilitate the next round of development in this area.

5. Reinforce regional retail character of East Liberty

Issue Statement: The commercial core of East Liberty is a once-traditional retail district that was greatly modified through urban renewal in the 1960s. For the past 30 years, ELDI has been working toward reversing the mistakes of urban renewal and is creating a revitalized commercial core for East Liberty with many successes. Major retailers such as Trader Joe's and most recently Target have opened stores in East Liberty signaling that the area has truly reemerged as a regional shopping destination. The commercial core also has a significant number of merchants selling almost every possible variety of community-serving and specialty goods. Despite these successes, the commercial core has still not reached its potential as a lively, walkable, and attractive retail district. ***The district needs additional major anchor retailers and "mini-anchors" to bookend the retail district and attract additional independent businesses.***

Action Program: The project will involve identifying locations for and recruiting additional retailers to the East Liberty commercial core. A major retail anchor of approximately 100,000 SF, such as Kohl's, on the western edge of the district on or near Penn Circle West could create a second soft goods anchor to connect with the commercial activity generated by Target and revitalize Penn Avenue in between. A portion of a redeveloped Penn Plaza Apartments site between Negley Avenue and Penn Circle West could provide such a potential anchor retail location. Additional sites for smaller mini-anchors (30,000 SF +/-), such as

Marshall's, Home Goods, Dick's, Best Buy, TJ Maxx, etc., could be found along Penn Circle West to further support this retail growth.

Localized Key Projects

1. Bloomfield Senior Housing

As Bloomfield's demand for senior housing continues to rise, its existing housing stock generally does not function well for seniors; the houses are older and increasingly difficult to maintain, and are usually at least two stories making it difficult for seniors to get around in their own homes. Currently, Bloomfield does not have any housing facilities that provide for the specific needs of seniors. ***Bloomfield needs appropriate, affordable housing in the neighborhood for the neighborhood's seniors who can no longer manage their existing homes.***

2. Repositioning of Penn Avenue—Mathilda to Negley

Since the late 1990s, BGC and FDA have pursued arts-oriented revitalization in this portion of the Penn Ave. corridor through the Penn Avenue Arts Initiative (PAAI). Some arts-related activity is now scattered throughout the corridor, but PAAI is most active on two blocks while many other blocks remain vacant or underutilized. ***The corridor needs a new multi-faceted strategy for revitalization*** to identify specific roles for each block; that is, which blocks will continue to be targeted to an arts focus; which should be solely residential; and which will house other kinds of commercial or retail.

3. Affordable Housing Strategy for Upper Lawrenceville

Portions of Upper Lawrenceville are experiencing deteriorating housing stock and depressed housing values. In these locations, the homeownership market is not sufficiently strong to warrant private contractor/investor efforts to renovate and resell at a profit. Therefore, problem landlords continue to purchase homes that remain deteriorated as rentals, bringing down values around them. ***The Lawrenceville community needs a comprehensive strategy for dealing with these issues of deteriorated housing and depressed values*** that will create solutions for affordable housing and strategies for improvement.

4. Liberty & Main gateway development strategy

The intersection of Main Street and Liberty Avenue is a prime gateway into Bloomfield and the East End via the Bloomfield Bridge. However, key parcels at the intersection, particularly the ShurSave supermarket site, are not only underutilized, but they also provide an unflattering first impression of Bloomfield. The potential remains for higher-density mixed-use development at the ShurSave site and other smaller parcels at the intersection. ***A new strategy for development of this key gateway is necessary to create the framework for redevelopment of the many potential sites focused on this key intersection.***

5. East Liberty Gardens/Enright Court

Enright Court and East Liberty Gardens are adjacent residential complexes in East Liberty constructed during the neighborhood's urban renewal phase. Enright Court has individually-owned homes on a network of small streets, many in poor condition. Recently a home sold for just \$5,000. East Liberty Gardens is a rental complex with 125 affordable units, located just behind the new Target. ***A plan is needed for the Superblock encompassing East Liberty Gardens and Enright Court to examine such potential solutions as redevelopment and housing improvement intervention programs for homeowners, while assuring that all current residents are provided with appropriate housing options.***

Systemic/Collaborative Initiatives

1. East End Business Improvement District— Butler St. and Penn Ave.

Commercial districts throughout the East End lack the necessary infrastructure to implement comprehensive care and maintenance services. In addition, funding streams are changing or disappearing altogether. Yet in order to compete with other neighborhood-serving business districts and destination shopping centers, East End business districts must become cleaner, safer, and better marketed. In response to these phenomena, several East End organizations banded together in 2010 to assess the feasibility of creating a Business Improvement District (BID) for key commercial spines through the neighborhoods. **Two EEP organizations are jointly pursuing a business improvement district (BID) for their commercial districts: LC for Butler Street and BGC FDA for Penn Avenue.** The organizations conducted a feasibility study in 2011 and have agreed that **LC will be the lead organization.**

2. Appearance of heavily-traveled routes and gateways through EEP area

Thousands of people enter the East End everyday on its several heavily-traveled routes, such as Penn Avenue, Negley Avenue, Liberty Avenue, Centre Avenue, and Butler Street. In many locations, however, these corridors provide a negative impression of the area with eyesores and vacancies at prominent locations and intersections; poorly maintained streetscapes; and dilapidated housing occupying several key gateways. **Each East End Partnership organization needs a strategy for addressing these issues on a localized level to improve the appearance of their neighborhood thoroughfares and the overall impression of this part of the City.**

3. East End Restaurant Fund

All East End neighborhoods have benefited from expansion of restaurant activity, which attracts customers and evening activity to East End commercial corridors. Financing for restaurant improvements—especially equipment and décor—is expensive and failures by individual restaurant operators are high. As a result, growth in restaurant activity can be slow as potential operators struggle to find financing. ELDI has had success with restaurant finance and has developed procedures to recapture value when individual restaurateurs cease operation. **An East End Restaurant Fund could stimulate activity throughout the East End and draw on previous experience to assure permanent benefit from these financings.**

Summary of Projects, Budgets, and Responsible East End Organizations

Project	Budget	Responsible East End Organization
Major East End-Wide Impact Projects		
1. Support attractive in-neighborhood feeder elementary school options	\$375,000	Lawrenceville United, Lawrenceville Corporation
2. Consolidate developed area/open space in Garfield	\$11,750,000	Bloomfield Garfield Corporation
3. Initiate waterfront development in Lawrenceville - 40th to 48th Streets	\$98,650,000	Lawrenceville Corporation, Lawrenceville United
4. Encourage more dense development along Centre/Baum corridor - Aiken to Penn Avenues	\$127,550,000	ELDI, Bloomfield Development Corporation, Friendship Development Associates
5. Reinforce regional retail character of East Liberty	\$105,000,000	ELDI
Localized Key Projects		
1. Bloomfield Senior Housing	\$14,350,000	Bloomfield Development Corporation
2. Repositioning of Penn Avenue - Mathilda to Negley	\$75,000	Bloomfield Garfield Corporation, Friendship Development Associates
3. Affordable housing strategy for Upper Lawrenceville	\$75,000	Lawrenceville United, Lawrenceville Corporation
4. Liberty and Main gateway development strategy	\$200,000	Bloomfield Development Corporation
5. East Liberty Gardens/Enright Court Superblock	\$18,850,000	ELDI
Systemic/Collaborative Initiatives		
1. East End Business Improvement District - Butler St. and Penn Ave.	\$1,750,000	Lawrenceville Corporation, Lawrenceville United, Bloomfield Garfield Corporation, and Friendship Development Associates
2. Appearance of heavily-traveled routes and gateways through East End	\$50,000	Lawrenceville United, Lawrenceville Corporation, Bloomfield Development Corporation, Friendship Development Associates, ELDI
3. East End restaurant fund	\$2,000,000	Lawrenceville United, Lawrenceville Corporation, Bloomfield Development Corporation, Bloomfield Garfield Corporation, Friendship Development Associates, ELDI
Total	\$379,475,000	