

BLUE ASH CITY COUNCIL

February 22, 2024

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1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

A Council Work Session of the City of Blue Ash, Ohio, was held on February 22, 2024. Mayor Jill Cole called the meeting to order in the Blue Ash Conference Room at 7:00 PM.

2. OPENING CEREMONIES

Mayor Cole led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councilman Jeff Capell, Councilman Lee Czerwonka, Councilman Brian Gath, Councilman Pramod Jhaveri, Councilman Marc Sirkin, Vice Mayor Katie Schneider, and Mayor Jill Cole

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager David Waltz, Assistant City Manager Kelly Harrington, Economic Development Director Dan Johnson, Deputy Clerk of Council Julie Kipper, Emil Liszniansky and Tom Moeller, Envision Group and interested citizens.

4. ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA

Councilman Czerwonka moved, Councilman Gath seconded to accept the agenda. A voice vote was taken. All members present voted yes. Motion carried.

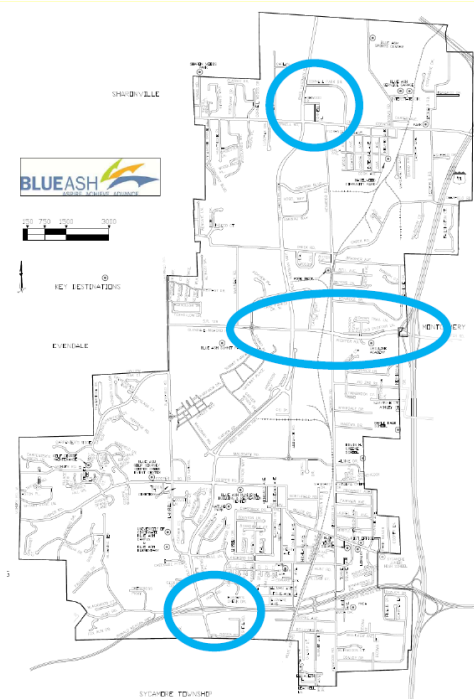
- 1. *MEETING CALLED TO ORDER*
- 2. *OPENING CEREMONIES*
- 3. *ROLL CALL*
- 4. *ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA*
- 5. *WORK SESSION*
 - a. *Economic Development Strategy Plan discussion*
 - *Emil Liszniansky and Tom Moeller of Envision Group*
- 6. *ADJOURNMENT*

5. WORK SESSION

Mr. Waltz gave a brief summary of community and economic development trends in the region and in Blue Ash over the last few years. He commented that tonight’s work session is a follow-up to the economic development strategies analysis and discussion from the Council work session in October 2023, focusing on three key areas identified as a result of Council feedback during that discussion. He noted that some of these areas have physical limitations and market challenges associated with their redevelopment, but the main goal for tonight is to determine the direction and next phase of the City’s economic development strategy plan, with the assumption that the BLUE downtown development and the Neighborhoods at Summit Park are a top priority. He introduced Mr. Emil Liszniansky of Envision Group, who provided the following presentation.

BLUE ASH
Strategic Area Planning
Concepts Discussion
City Council Work Session

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Background

- Follow-up to Economic Development Study (August 2023) & October 2023 Council Work Session discussion
- Concept ideation for redevelopment in areas identified by City staff as vacant and/or underperforming
- TONIGHT’S GOAL: (1) determine if we like any concepts/areas presented and (2) what to prioritize for future examination*

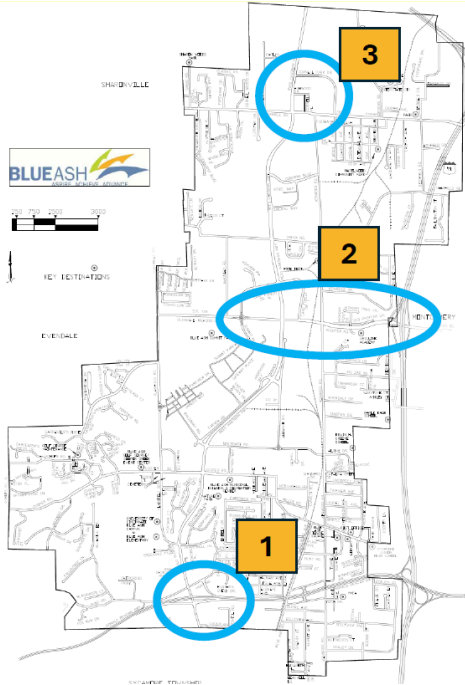
*ASSUMES COMPLETING DOWNTON DEVELOPMENT & SUMMIT PARK ARE TOP PRIORITIES

Mr. Lisniansky reviewed the purpose for tonight’s discussion to determine if Council is open to any of the concepts presented and how to prioritize these target areas and ideas for future redevelopment. He noted that these concepts aren’t necessarily big economic development projects, but they would fit in these areas and site locations. However, each site has its own unique challenges for redevelopment.

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3 Focus Areas

1. South Gateway: Plainfield Rd Interchange
2. Central: Glendale-Milford/Pfeiffer Corridor
3. North Gateway: Reed Hartman Highway/Cornell Intersection

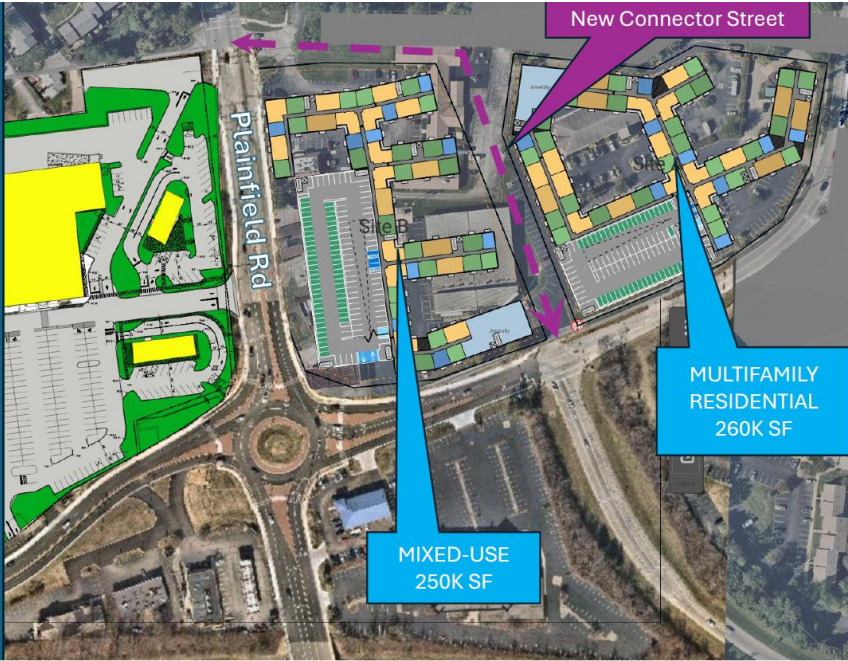


He explained that based on the discussion in October, three areas were identified with properties that are either vacant and/or under performing and have the potential for redevelopment. These areas are the South Gateway – Plainfield Road/Ronald Reagan Highway interchange, the Glendale-Milford/Pfeiffer Corridor, and the North Gateway near the Reed Hartman Highway/Cornell Road intersection. Council discussed the concept ideas in each focus area in detail to try and get consensus on prioritizing each area.

SOUTH GATEWAY

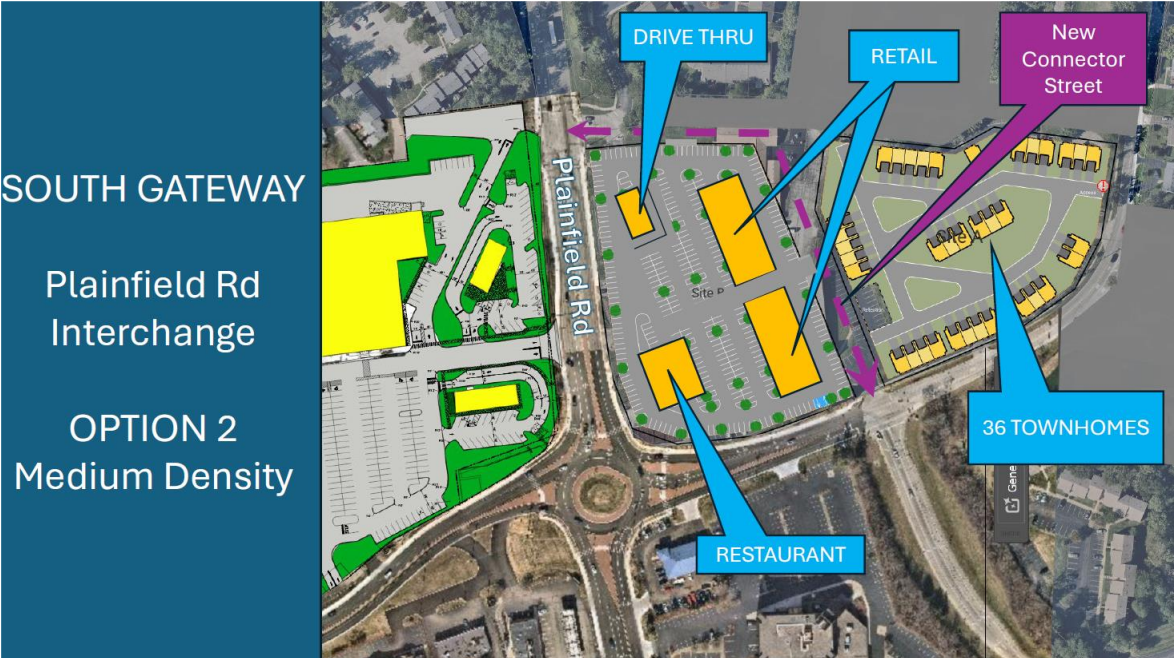
Plainfield Rd Interchange

OPTION 1
High Density



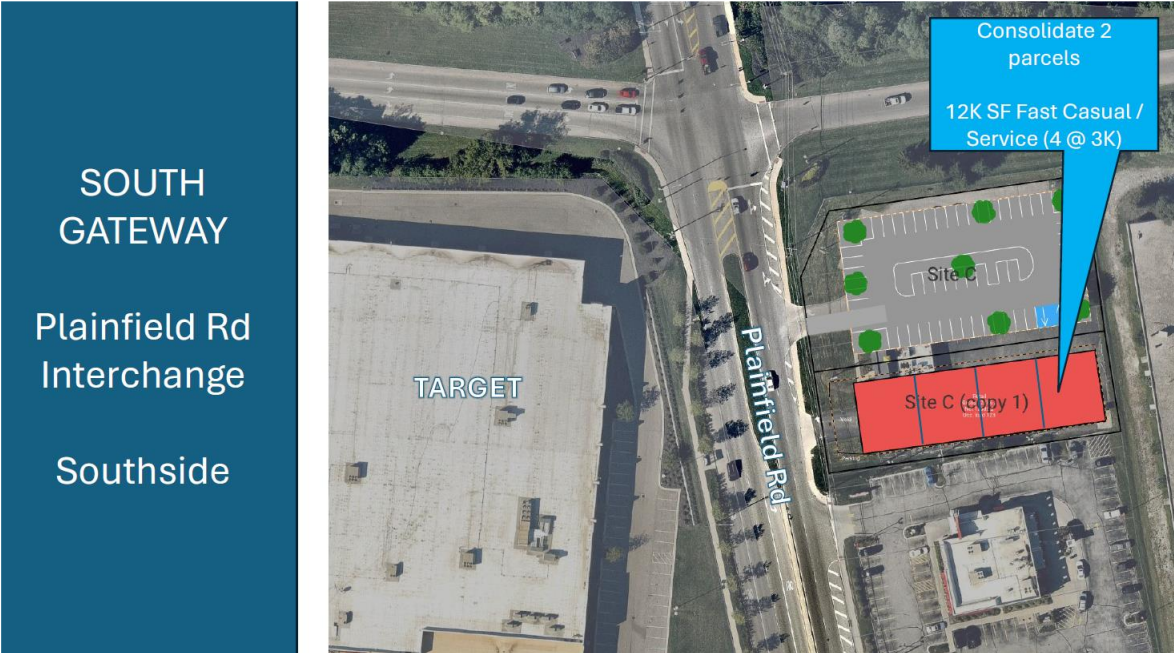
Beginning with the South Gateway, Mr. Lisniansky outlined a high-density urban concept focusing on the northeast side of the new roundabout. This concept includes a 250K sq. ft. mixed-use development with structured parking, ground floor retail and service businesses, with residential above, and transitioning to a 260K sq. ft. of multi-family residential to the east, with some structured parking and a new in-fill connector street off of the interchange ramp to Hunt Road and through the development connecting to Plainfield Road.

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Another scaled down option that is a little more suburban in style includes a sit down casual restaurant, retail, and a drive-thru with a medium-density residential development of townhomes. Council discussed this idea and were in favor of the lower density and housing option, but noted it involves multiple properties and easements which could be challenging to develop.

Council liked the concepts presented, but commented that with multiple property owners and various easement issues, redevelopment could prove to be challenging. Council agreed that opening up the zoning regulations in this area could encourage developers. They commented that Site A would probably be more desirable for redevelopment, mainly because Site B appears to be more difficult to develop. They liked the idea of adding residential, but noted that this area is not very walkable. Mr. Waltz added that for this particular area, simply changing the zoning regulations may not be enough to entice developers, and Council might need to consider perhaps offering some type of tax abatements or incentives.

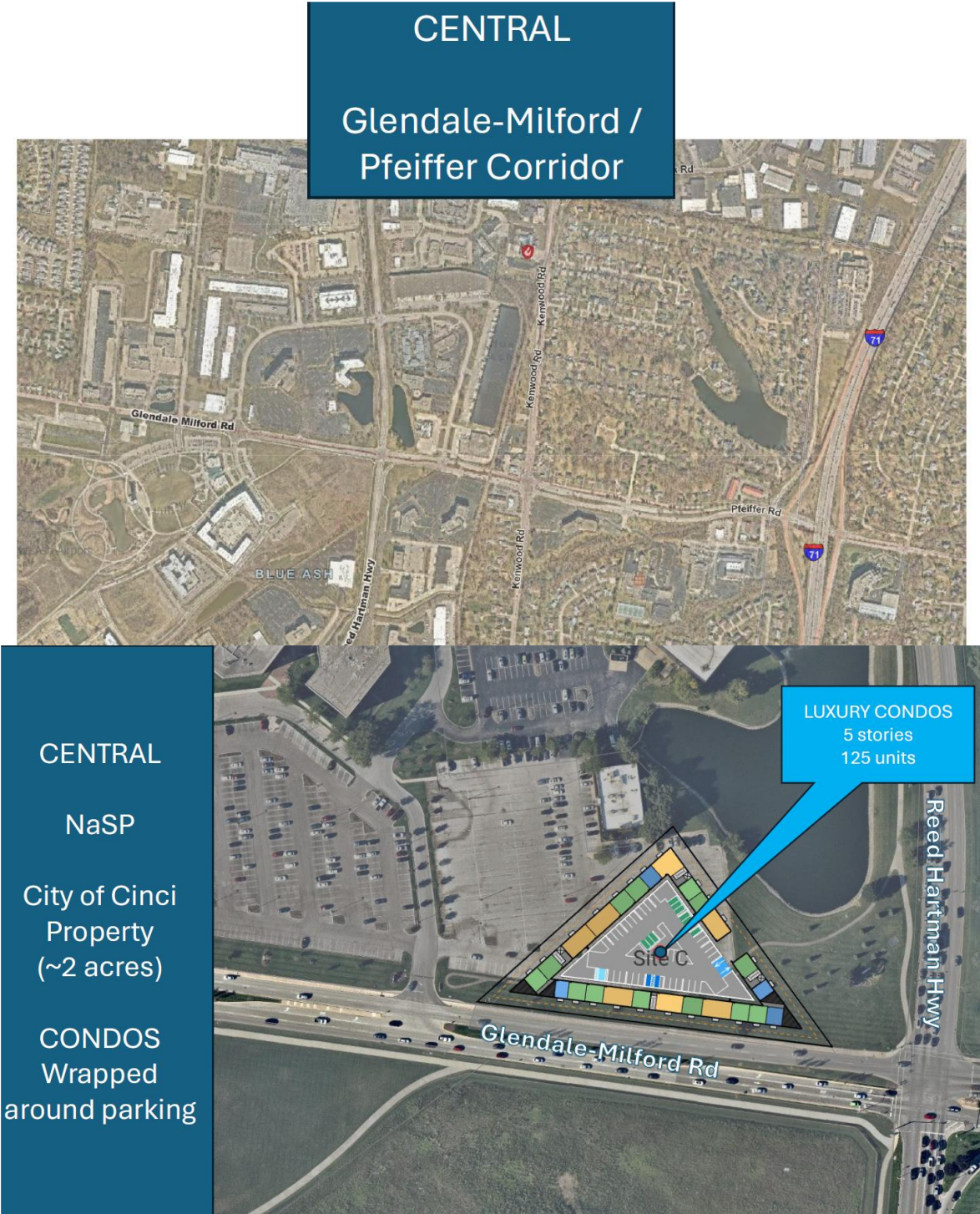


On the south end of the Plainfield interchange near the Target store, there are two parcels that could potentially be consolidated for a 12K sq. ft. fast casual eatery, or a small service business plaza or commercial type use. One of the challenges with this site is the access points at the front and back of the site. Council briefly discussed Site C, and the challenges with traffic access to the site. If additional access to the back side of the parcels could be

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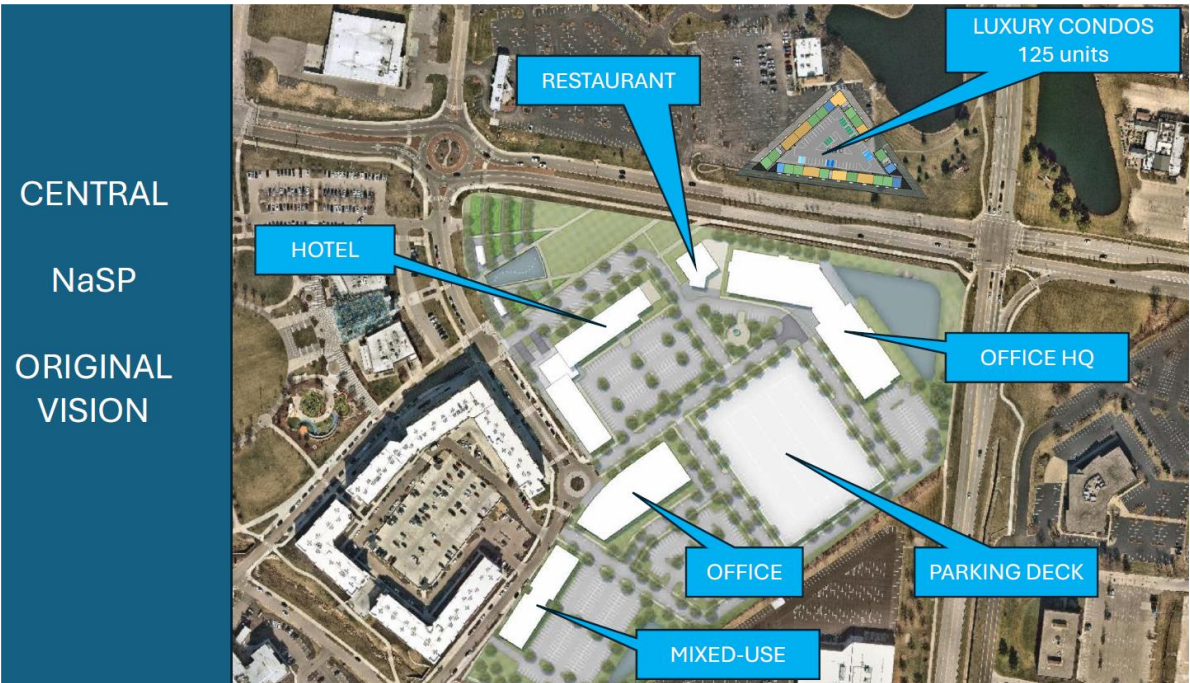
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constructed, it might make this site more desirable for redevelopment. In addition, the point was made that the motivation for property owners to sell varies greatly with all of these sites, and Council should carefully consider whether or not it makes sense to spend money to offer incentives or purchase some of these properties. After some additional discussion, Council agreed that mixed-use and some residential in this area makes sense, but of the focus areas, the South Gateway would be a lower priority.

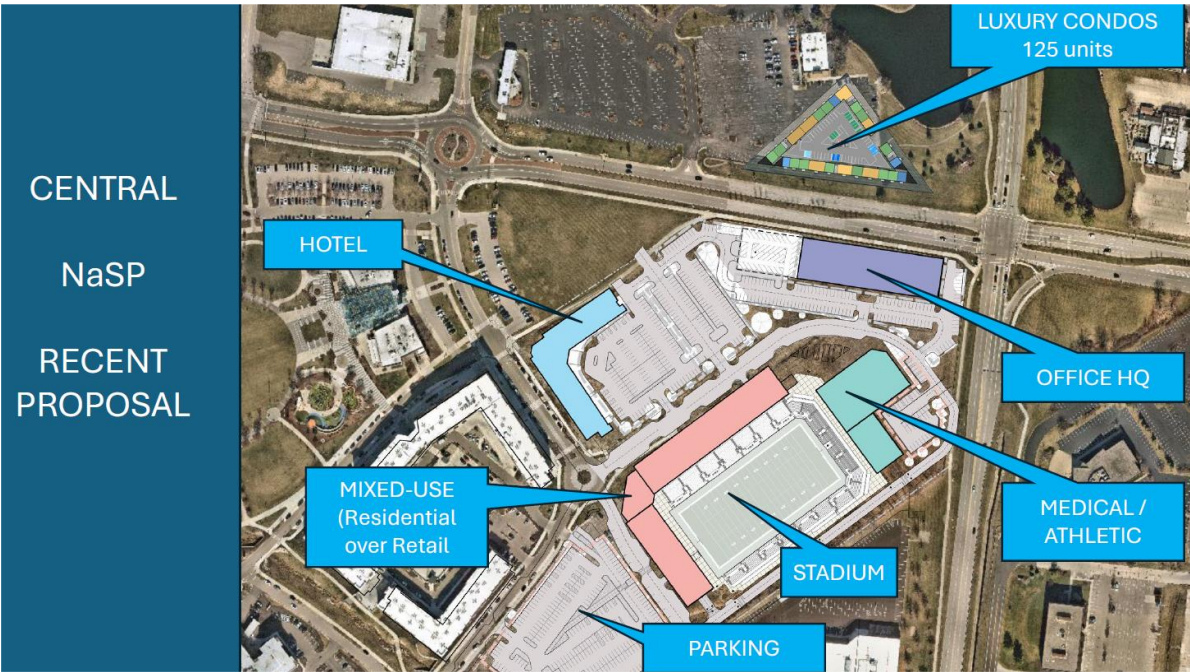


In the northwest quadrant of the Glendale-Milford/Reed Hartman Highway intersection, there is a City of Cincinnati owned property of approximately 2 acres currently for sale. One idea for this property is a 5-story luxury condo building. Council discussed this concept, noting that they are in favor of residential on this site due to the close proximity to Summit Park and the walkability, but some members expressed concerns about the building height in relation to the neighboring businesses. Mr. Waltz confirmed the surrounding office buildings are six and seven stories, so it could fit in with the surrounding properties.

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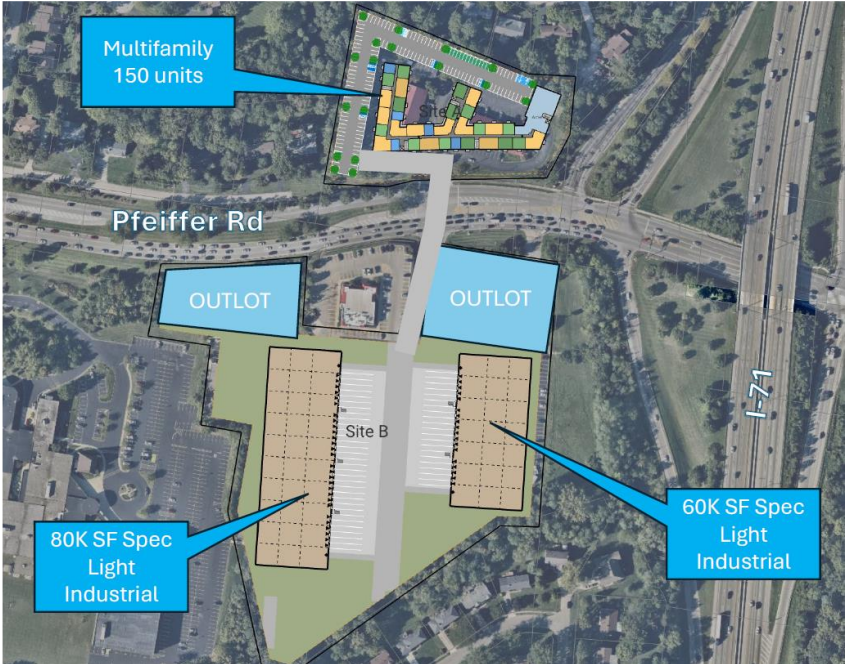
This aerial view shows the original master plan vision for the southwest corner property at the Glendale-Milford/Reed Hartman Highway intersection within the Neighborhoods at Summit Park development. The plan shows heavy office use, a hotel, restaurant, and mixed-use with a large parking deck, however, this plan has been slow to move forward with the changes in the market demand for office space.



Recently, the property owner presented to Council a concept proposal for a mixed-use development, which included a multi-use sports stadium/entertainment venue, hotel, retail, and residential units, however, the developer never actually applied for formal approval. Mr. Waltz informed Council that he recently had a conversation with the developer, and they are still looking at doing a similar plan with some modifications. Additionally, the site located near the rehabilitation hospital that was approved for two office buildings has not come to fruition, however M/I Homes presented an idea for another housing product on that site that would be similar to Arabella. Mr. Waltz suggested to the developer that they may want to consider revising the original master plan, and bringing it forward to Council for consideration and feedback, or they can submit the applications separately through the regular process. Council discussed what the process would be for revising the master plan, and concluded that this would be valuable, and considered it one of the top priorities.

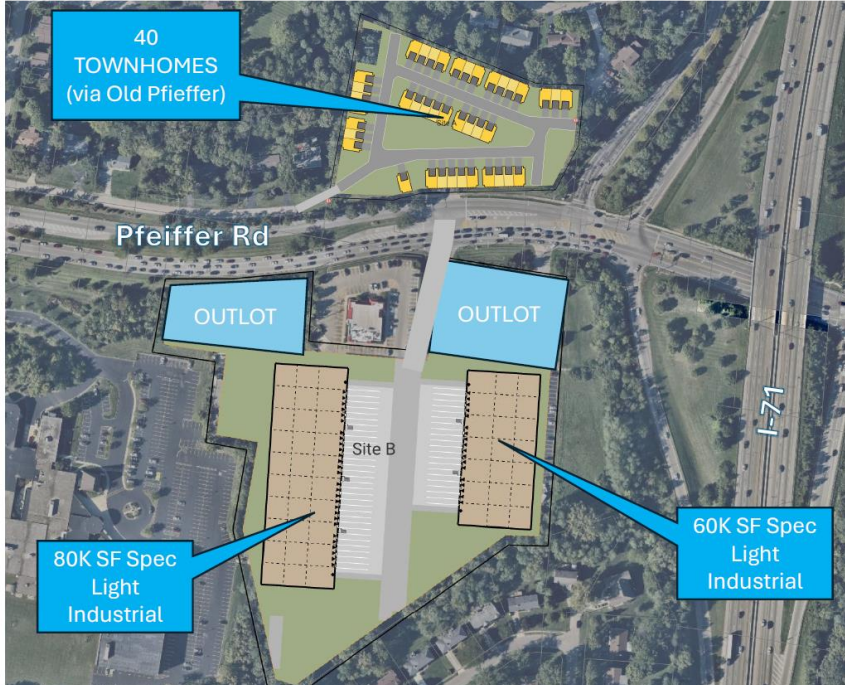
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CENTRAL
Pfeiffer
Interchange
OPTION 1 (North)
MULTIFAMILY



This concept shows multi-family residential on the north end of the site currently occupied by the Red Roof Inn, with two outlots for restaurant or retail, and two 60K – 80K sq. ft. spec light industrial buildings on the south end where the Quality Inn is currently located. Council discussion was favorable to the spec industrial at Site B, but expressed some concerns about traffic congestion, and the density of the multi-family to the north on Site A. Staff noted that for years, there have been inquiries from developers for a variety of uses on these sites, including car washes, gas stations, car sales lots, senior living, and apartments, but no applications have been submitted due to the time and expense of a risky PUD process.

CENTRAL
Pfeiffer
Interchange
OPTION 2 (North)
TOWNHOMES

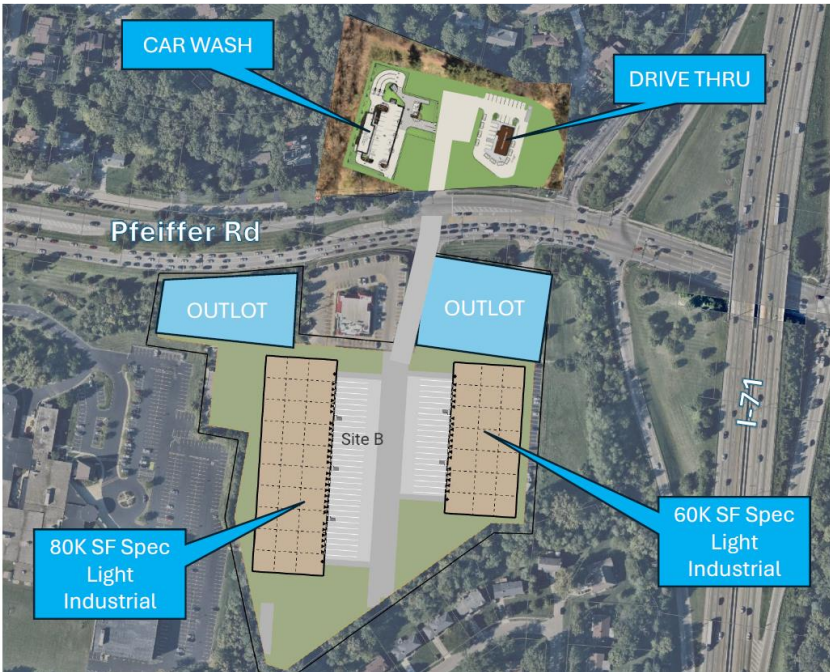


This option shows the same concept with the light industrial spec buildings to the south with a less dense residential development of 40 townhomes to the north with access via Old Pfeiffer Lane. Council was preferable to the less dense residential proposed in this option, as it would likely have less impact on the adjacent residential neighborhoods. Staff noted that the residents to the south near Ursuline struggled with the school building tennis courts, so it is possible there will be residents opposed to redevelopment on both sites. After some additional discussion, Council determined that the Pfeiffer interchange area was a medium priority for redevelopment.

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CENTRAL
Pfeiffer
Interchange
OPTION 3 (North)
CAR WASH &
DRIVE THRU



This concept idea for the north site includes more of the highway services featuring a drive-thru and car wash, which is a suitable option given the site’s close proximity to the interstate. Council discussed the challenges with the topography of the site, traffic concerns, and the impact on adjacent residential properties.

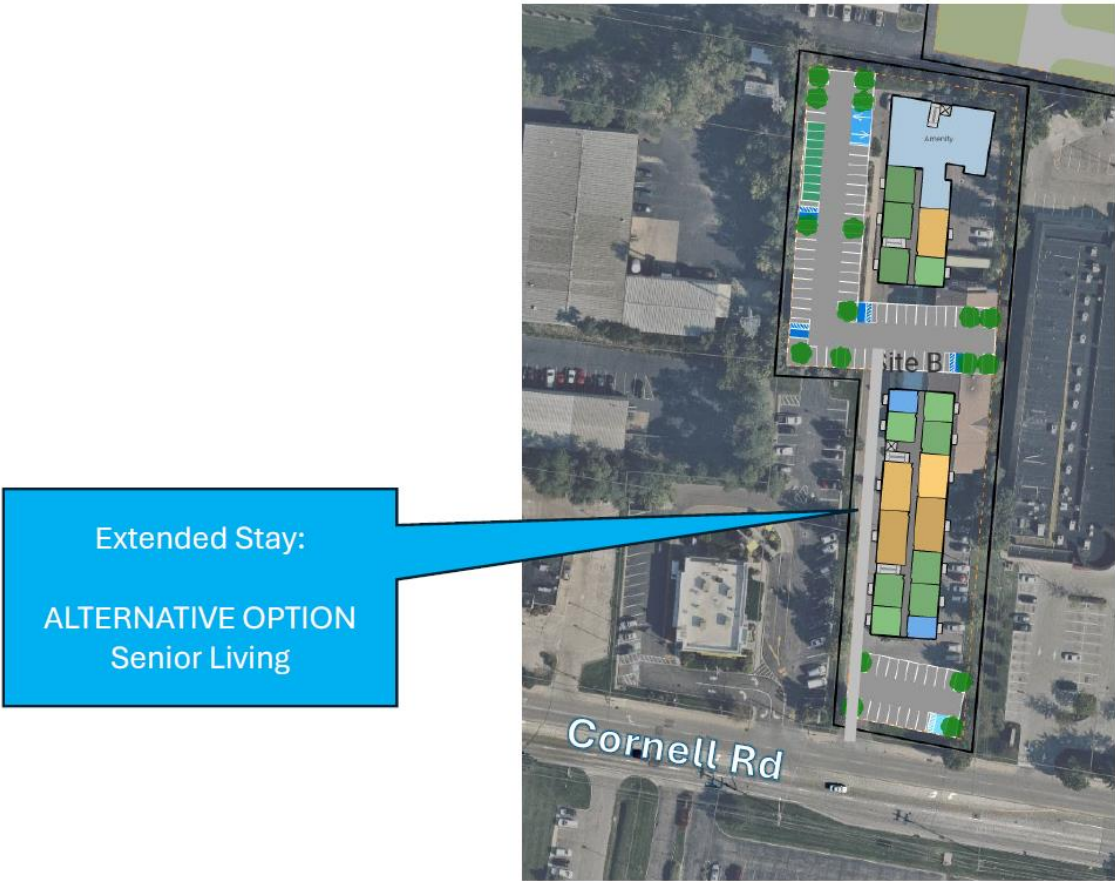
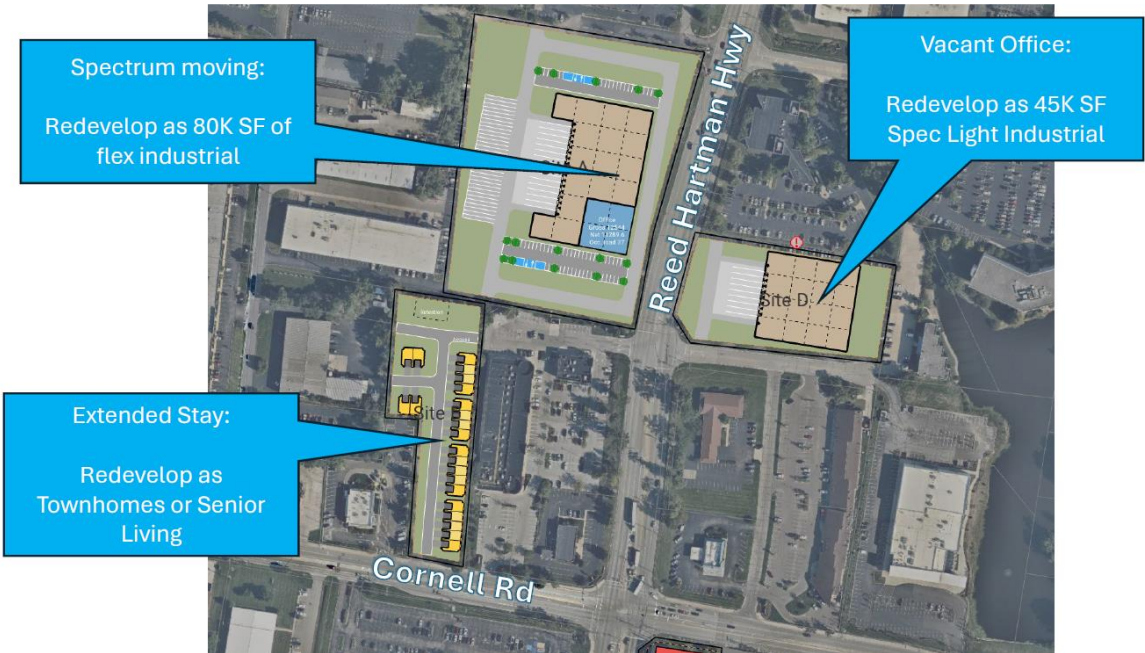
NORTH
GATEWAY
Reed Hartman
Highway &
Cornell Rd



In the North Gateway area, four sites were identified for potential redevelopment. Site A is the Hills office building currently occupied by Spectrum, but they are relocating to another site which opens the possibility for redevelopment as an 80K sq. ft. flex industrial space. Site B is an undesirable extended-stay hotel, which could potentially become a senior living or small townhome development, and Site D is a vacant office building which could become a smaller spec light industrial manufacturing/warehouse space. The property owner of Site D has previously inquired about other permitted uses for this building, however the property owner has indicated a business has expressed interest in leasing the space. Council discussed Site A & C and determined that those sites are a lower priority, but perhaps changing zoning regulations to allow for other permitted uses might be helpful. Mr. Lisniansky mentioned that office to residential conversion was one of the trends brought up during the economic study, and inquired if that would be something that Council would consider on a site specific or area basis. Council agreed that office to residential conversion would be something they would be willing to consider in the right locations.

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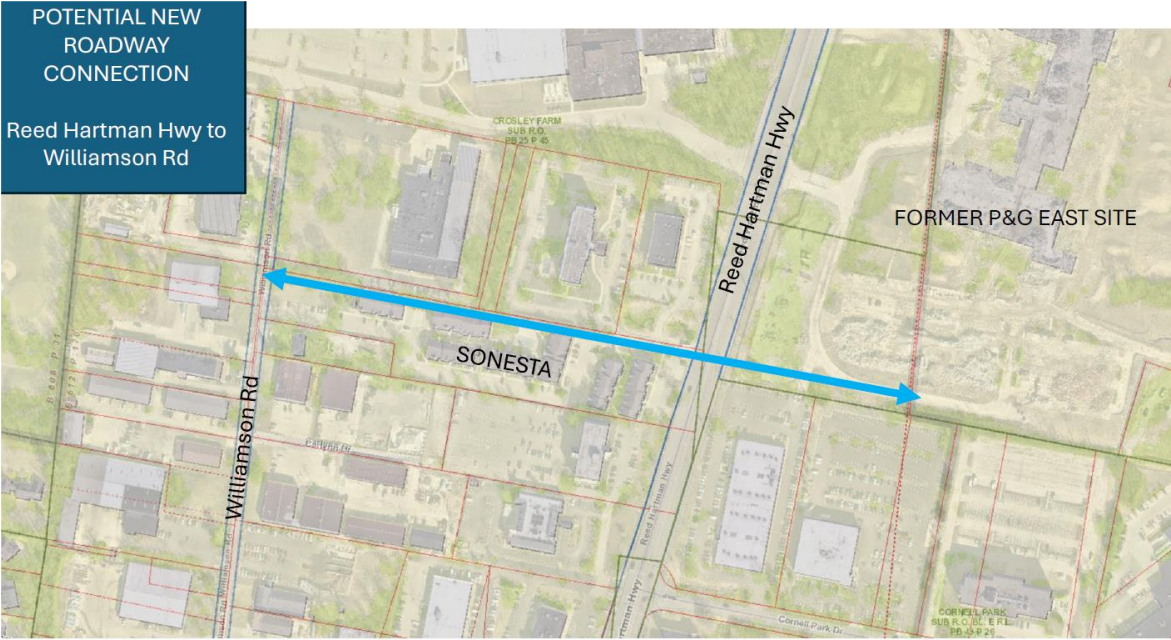


Given the narrow parcel and its limited visibility from Cornell Road, an alternative option for site B could be a car wash and drive-thru business. Council discussed Site B options and the possibility of either purchasing or offering incentives to redevelop this property. Staff indicated that this property is not currently for sale like the other hotels at the Pfeiffer interchange. Another drawback to this site is that it does not have the street visibility like some of the other properties making it less desirable. In response to a question from Council, staff stated that out of the 19 hotels in Blue Ash, this hotel gets the lowest amount of money per room by far. Council commented that although the hotel at Site B is definitely one they would like to see redeveloped, it is not for sale, but they would be very interested if an opportunity were presented. The hotel properties at the Pfeiffer interchange are currently on the market, so it would make sense for those properties to be a higher priority.

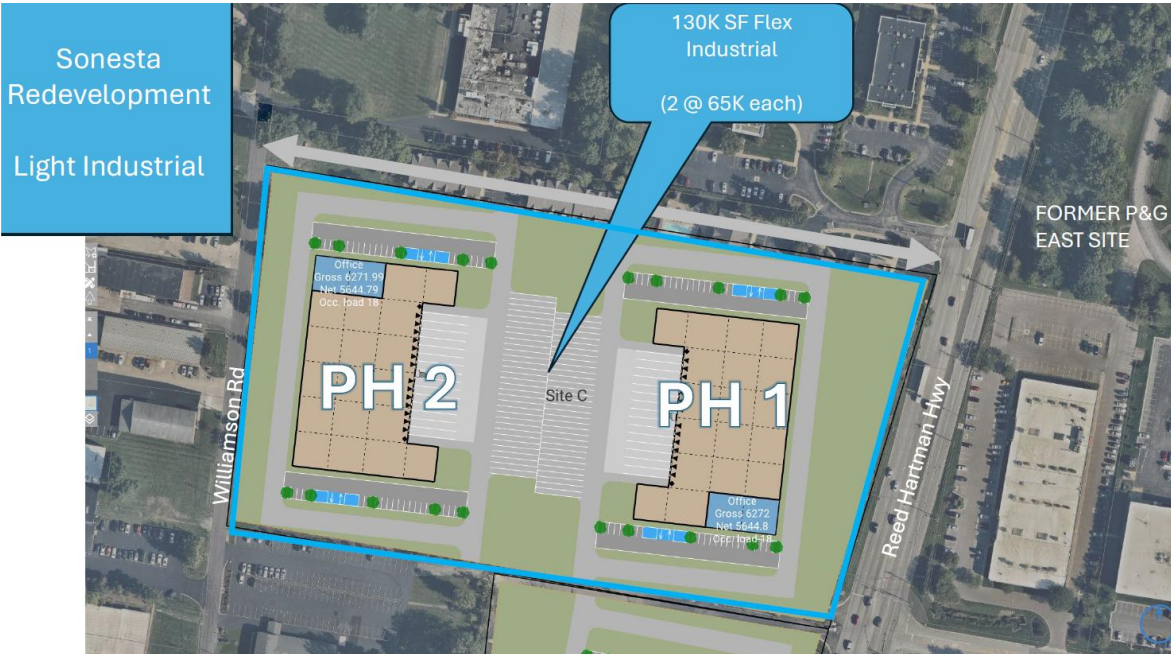
Council and staff discussed the possibility for residential redevelopment at the Red Roof Inn property, and staff explained that it would have to make financial sense for the developer. Considering the cost of the parcel, a residential development on that site would be prohibitive, and would likely have to be incentivized or subsidized. Some Council members commented that it seems more realistic to have some sort of commercial, restaurant or retail development due to the site's proximity to the interstate.

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Constructing a new roadway to connect Reed Hartman Highway and Williamson Road to align with the former P & G East site could provide improved access to the businesses and properties on Williamson Road, increase property values, and the potential for redevelopment of the Sonesta Suites and surrounding properties as shown in the following image.



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Discussion Topics

1. Are there concept(s) & area(s) presented tonight that we are interested in examining further?
2. If YES
 1. What actions do we want to consider? (e.g. approvals, changes in development regs, site assembly/incentives)
 2. What are a short list of areas to prioritize / compare (e.g. return on investment) for future plans?

ASSUMES COMPLETING DOWNTON DEVELOPMENT & SUMMIT PARK ARE TOP PRIORITIES

Mr. Lisniansky concluded his presentation and stated that the concepts presented are ideas that a developer might have interest in and that market forces generally support. Mr. Waltz added that even if Council doesn't like any of these ideas, another strategic option to consider is making it easier from a regulatory standpoint to remove some of the barriers to encourage developers and redevelopment of these vacant or underperforming properties.

To recap tonight's discussion, Mr. Lisniansky confirmed with Council that the South Gateway was the lowest priority due to the complications associated with redeveloping multiple parcels, but if opportunities arose, Council agreed they would be interested in considering those prospects.

Council briefly discussed updating the Comprehensive Plan, and whether it makes sense to revisit the whole plan, or just certain sections. Since it is a lengthy process, there were some concerns of missing out on current or potential opportunities for redevelopment.

Council reconfirmed that the top priorities are the Neighborhoods at Summit Park Master plan update and the City of Cincinnati owned triangle property. They also expressed the need to be proactive and flexible with zoning and consider incentives for the two hotel properties at the Pfeiffer Road interchange, and the Cornell Road hotel if the opportunity presented itself.

6. ADJOURNMENT

All items on the agenda having been acted upon, Councilman Sirkin moved, Vice Mayor Schneider seconded to adjourn the meeting. A voice vote was taken. All members voted yes. The Council meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:10 PM.

Jill Cole, Mayor

Julie Kipper, Deputy Clerk of Council

MINUTES RECORDED AND WRITTEN BY:

Julie Kipper, Deputy Clerk of Council