

Franklinton set for revitalization: 20-year plan would split neighborhood three ways, add as many as 4,400 new or rehabilitated homes

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Columbus' oldest neighborhood is about to get its first extreme makeover.

City officials have unveiled an aggressive 20-year plan to revitalize Franklinton, an area just west of Downtown that has been plagued by poverty, boarded-up houses and lack of quality affordable housing.

The draft plan by Boston-based design firm Goody Clancy calls for dividing the area west of COSI into three neighborhoods. The plan is to attract families and a creative class of artists and entrepreneurs.

One neighborhood will be an "arts and innovation" area where city officials hope warehouses will be developed into artist cooperatives and high-tech manufacturing businesses.

The Dodge Park neighborhood would contain the highest concentration of housing. Under-used properties would be merged to make way for large-scale development in the W. Broad Street area.

All three neighborhoods would feature parks surrounded by mixed-use housing for a wide range of incomes, with homes costing as much as \$375,000 and apartments that rent for as little as \$750 a month. The plan anticipates as many as 4,400 new or rehabilitated homes in the next 20 years.

Franklinton residents have clamored for more safe, affordable housing since December, when three people died in a fire inside a house on Wisconsin Avenue that the city had ordered vacated because of safety concerns.

Mayor Michael B. Coleman has made redeveloping Franklinton a priority after years of neglect.

"It is fitting that in our bicentennial year we are witnessing the neighborhood with the most history become a linchpin of our future," Coleman said.

Two weeks ago, Coleman and members of city council opened the Rich Street Bridge, a reconnection from Franklinton to Downtown. City officials hope the bridge will attract medium- to large-sized businesses.

The \$32 million bridge also will allow Franklinton residents to enjoy the Scioto Mile across the river and serves as a place to hold community festivals, Coleman said.

Much of the redevelopment will start in the next two years though some infrastructure improvements, such as converting Town and Rich streets to two-way traffic. There also will be additional connections to Rt. 315.

There is also a call for 115,000 square feet of retail space and 200,000 square feet of space for artists, said Vince Papsidero, the city's planning administrator.

"This (plan) is expected to attract businesses as well as residents," Papsidero said. "This is a sound market and retail study, and in many ways we wanted to be conservative to make sure this will work."

The area has already seen an influx of innovative new businesses and artists.

This year, the Dinin' Hall, a gathering spot for food trucks, opened in the neighborhood. And the 400 W. Rich Street project now has more than 70 artists, said Jim Sweeney, director of the Franklinton Development Association.

The plan calls for a new tax-abatement district for owners of existing homes who improve them, protecting them from tax increases as properties are developed around them.

In January, a consultant projected that demand in the next 10 years could support construction of 1,800 homes and apartments.

Longtime neighborhood leader Bruce Warner said some residents may object to the plan's maximum building heights — five to 12 stories near W. Broad Street and five-story, mixed-income housing on the old Riverside-Bradley public-housing site.

But overall, he said, the plan's goals are workable.

"You've got to do something," he said. "You've got to take baby steps."

The Franklinton Area Commission is scheduled to review the plan on Sept. 11. The city council should vote on it in October.

(www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2012/07/23/franklinton-set-for-revitalization.html)



Proposed East Franklinton neighborhoods

1. W. Broad Street
2. Dodge Park
3. Arts and Innovation



Source: City of Columbus

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