

Wilson

A Partnership of City Government,  
Major Oakland Institutions and  
Neighborhood Community Groups

# The Oakland Improvement Strategy

A Comprehensive Strategy for the Development,  
Improvement and Zoning of Oakland's Public Corridors,  
Housing and Commercial Areas

Volume 1  
December 1998



# **The Oakland Improvement Strategy Partners**

## **Community Partners**

Bellefield Area Citizens Association  
Breachmenders, Inc.  
#4 Block Club  
Oakcliffe Housing Club  
Oakland Business and Civic Association  
Oakland Community Council  
Oakland Directions Inc.  
Oakland Neighborhood Alliance  
Oakland Planning and Development Corporation  
People's Oakland  
People on the Move

## **Institutional Partners and Funders**

Carlow College  
The Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh  
Carnegie Mellon University  
Children's Hospital  
Magee Women's Hospital  
Schenley Golf Course  
University of Pittsburgh  
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center-Health System  
Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children

## **City of Pittsburgh**

Mayor Tom Murphy  
Councilman Dan Cohen, District 8  
Councilman Gene Ricciardi, District 3  
Councilman Sala Udin, District 6  
Department of City Planning, Eloise Hirsh, Director  
John Rahaim  
Maureen Hogan  
Leslie Kaplan, AICP, Rush Creek Planning Associates

## **Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh**

Executive Director, Mulugettu Birru  
Director of Housing, Dennis Davin

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This section explains the origin of the Oakland Improvement Strategy (OIS), lists the Oakland Improvement Strategy Partners and funders, and explains the strategy's focus and principles.

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This section is the Action Plan for Oakland. It is divided up into eight different topics, and each topic has a specific list of actions and activities.

### Implementation Strategy and Schedule

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This section outlines specific information for each project of the Development Strategy: a project description, responsible party(ies), the estimated start date, and a cost estimate. In some cases, the estimated start date and cost figures are not known at this time, and will be determined at a later date as more information becomes available. In other cases, the project has begun, and is underway or completed.

### Process and Planning Efforts

33

This section gives the details of the community process and planning efforts that have led up to the Development Strategy. It also highlights the programs, planning and projects of the community and institutional partners in Oakland that contribute to the goals of the Oakland Improvement Strategy.

### Volume 2, Appendices

Volume 2 includes studies that either informed the OIS, including *A Proposal for a Housing Strategy for Oakland* and *Approval of University of Pittsburgh Master Plan, with Stipulations*, or were a product of the OIS, including *Key Findings of the Oakland Housing Study Phase I and II*, *Public Corridors of Oakland: Recommendations of the Urban Design Study* and *Oakland: an Urban Design Plan for Forbes and Fifth Avenue Corridors*.

# Introduction

## Origin of the Oakland Improvement Strategy

In 1995, Oakland's institutions and community groups formed a partnership—the Oakland Improvement Strategy—to invest in the future of Oakland.

This cooperative effort between the City, the community and the institutions has been characterized by communication, participation and coordination. The process has combined ongoing discussions in the Oakland community with new initiatives and forums for public participation, and focused them on a common goal: a workable framework and specific recommendations for actions to improve Oakland and guide future investment. The Oakland Improvement Strategy (OIS) has been focused on a limited agenda of interdependent topics: housing, improvement of the public corridors, and zoning.

The Oakland Improvement Strategy is an action agenda, not a comprehensive plan for Oakland. Early in the discussions, the partners decided to concentrate on a finite action agenda. The chosen topics lent themselves to short/medium time frame solutions, and strategies that could be implemented through available tools. These topics were mutually chosen because they were determined to have the most immediate impact on altering/revitalizing/strengthening the residential market of Oakland, particularly Central Oakland. Study and action on other important topics, including transportation, community health and safety, and issues in other sections of Oakland were deferred until this particular action agenda was addressed.

## Participants and Funders

Participating community groups include the members of the Community Component of the Oakland Agreement Committee, now known as the Oakland Community Council. They are:

- Bellefield Area Citizens Association (BACA)
- Breachmenders, Inc.
- # 4 Block Club
- Oakcliffe Housing Club
- Oakland Business and Civic Association (OBICA)
- Oakland Directions Inc. (ODI)
- Oakland Neighborhood Alliance (ONA)
- Oakland Planning and Development Corporation (OPDC)
- Peoples Oakland
- People on the Move

The Oakland Improvement Strategy was sponsored and funded by the following Oakland Institutions

- Carlow College
- The Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh
- Carnegie Mellon University
- Children's Hospital
- Magee Women's Hospital
- Schenley Park Golf Course
- University of Pittsburgh
- University of Pittsburgh Medical Center—Health System (UPMC-HC)
- Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children

Additional funding and technical assistance was provided by:

- City of Pittsburgh, Department of City Planning
- Housing Department of the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh

## Focus and Agreed upon Principles

The Oakland Improvement Strategy is a short term, coordinated, and practical action agenda based on years of planning studies and community experience. The focus of the Oakland Improvement Strategy is limited to housing, zoning, and the public corridors of Oakland. Many other topics are also of great importance to Oakland, but are beyond the scope of this strategy.

Five basic principles surfaced during the development of the Oakland Improvement Strategy. These principles have been reflected explicitly or implicitly in every discussion about the three topics during the community process and in the documents written independently by the partners. They are:

- Improve the appearance of Oakland's residential areas and the quality and diversity of its housing stock, in order to appeal to a broader segment of the market, starting in Central Oakland.
- Concentrate undergraduate student housing, including fraternities, away from residential areas.
- Improve code enforcement.
- Improve the appearance of the public corridors of Oakland, particularly Fifth and Forbes, but also the Boulevard of the Allies, Centre Avenue, and Craig Street.
- Design and enact zoning that is more sympathetic to Oakland's special needs, for example, new mixed-use zoning for Atwood street.

## Major Recommendations of the Oakland Improvement Strategy

These are the major recommendations of the Oakland Improvement Strategy. They are explained in greater detail in the following sections of this document.

### Housing

- Improve the housing market in Oakland and its visual appeal to potential new residents through code enforcement, façade upgrades and improvements in cleanliness.
- Make Oakland more competitive in the real estate marketplace by providing opportunities in several areas for larger-scale commercial development.

### The Public Corridors

- Transform Oakland's portion of Fifth Avenue into a pedestrian-friendly, beautifully landscaped avenue through landscaping, sidewalk widening, and the potential elimination of a lane of traffic.
- Develop and implement a new sign ordinance and design guidelines for new commercial development along Forbes Avenue to give Oakland a new look.
- Create attractive formal entrances for Oakland and enhance the edges between commercial and residential areas.

### Zoning

- Enact and implement new zoning districts and overlay zones to enhance and protect Oakland's special character.
- Reduce allowable densities in Oakland's residential neighborhoods by re-mapping Oakland's zoning so that it conforms to existing densities.



## Accomplishments of the Oakland Improvement Strategy and Partners

The Oakland Improvement Strategy Partners have already been working to implement the Oakland Improvement Strategy. The accomplishments listed below are discussed in more detail in the following sections of this report.

### Housing

- The City of Pittsburgh has established a special Interdepartmental Task Force on Code Enforcement for Oakland with the active participation of many City departments; to date, the task force has resolved over 383 community complaints.
- A housing market study was commissioned by the Oakland Improvement Strategy Partners to support the development of housing initiatives in Central Oakland. The study concluded that there is a specific middle income market niche for housing in Central Oakland.
- The City has created and filled a new Senior Building Inspector position for Oakland in a funding partnership with the University of Pittsburgh.
- Fifty-two grants totaling \$141,840 have been given out through the Residential Façade Grant Program through October 1998, which represents a total investment of approximately \$477,000 in Oakland residential properties, through University of Pittsburgh Medical Center-Health Systems (UPMC-HC) and the Oakland Community Council (OCC).
- Eleven \$5,000 grants have been given out by the Home Purchase Incentive Grant Program through UPMC-HS and the Oakland Planning and Development Corporation (OPDC).
- A complete inventory and building conditions survey of all housing in Oakland has been completed.
- The University of Pittsburgh will provide 526 new beds of student housing on campus and on the edge of Central Oakland.

### The Public Corridors

- Two urban design studies, for the Fifth-Forbes and the Boulevard of the Allies Corridors, were commissioned by the Oakland Improvement Strategy Partners.
- The Oakland Improvement Strategy Partners convened a group of experts experienced in urban design and college-town challenges to take a fresh look at Oakland's transportation corridors.
- The City has committed \$70,000 to help fund the Business Improvement District for the Fifth and Forbes business district.
- A traffic study to determine the feasibility of the proposed Fifth Avenue Improvements has been commissioned by the Oakland Improvement Strategy Partners.
- The City has removed peak-hour parking restrictions on the north side of Forbes Avenue.

### Zoning

- A set of new special zoning districts for Oakland including a new Civic Center Zoning District have been designed.
- A draft rezoning map for Oakland has been developed and a community review process has been initiated.



The University of Pittsburgh has committed close to \$100,000 to fund the new Senior Building Inspector for five years.





# Development Strategy

## Development Strategy

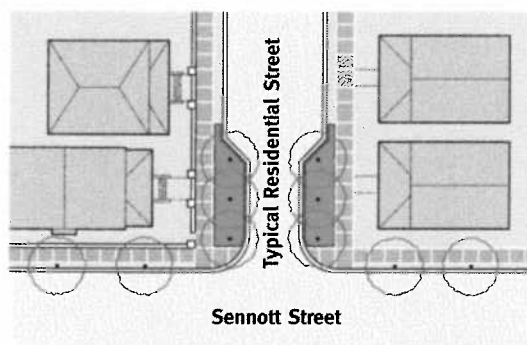
This section is the Action Plan for Oakland. It is divided up into eight different topics, and each topic has a specific list of actions and activities.





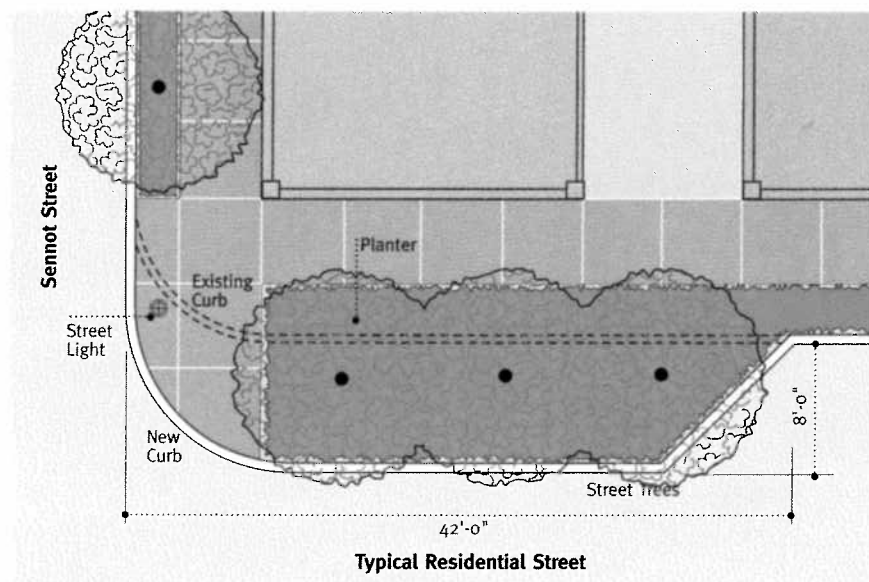
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Typical Illustrative Plan

Streetscape improvements are key to the Oakland Improvement Strategy's recommendations. These diagrams show improvements to typical intersections at the residential/commercial interface, with traffic-calming curb cutouts and additional street trees.



Typical Detail Plan

## Residential Investment in Central Oakland

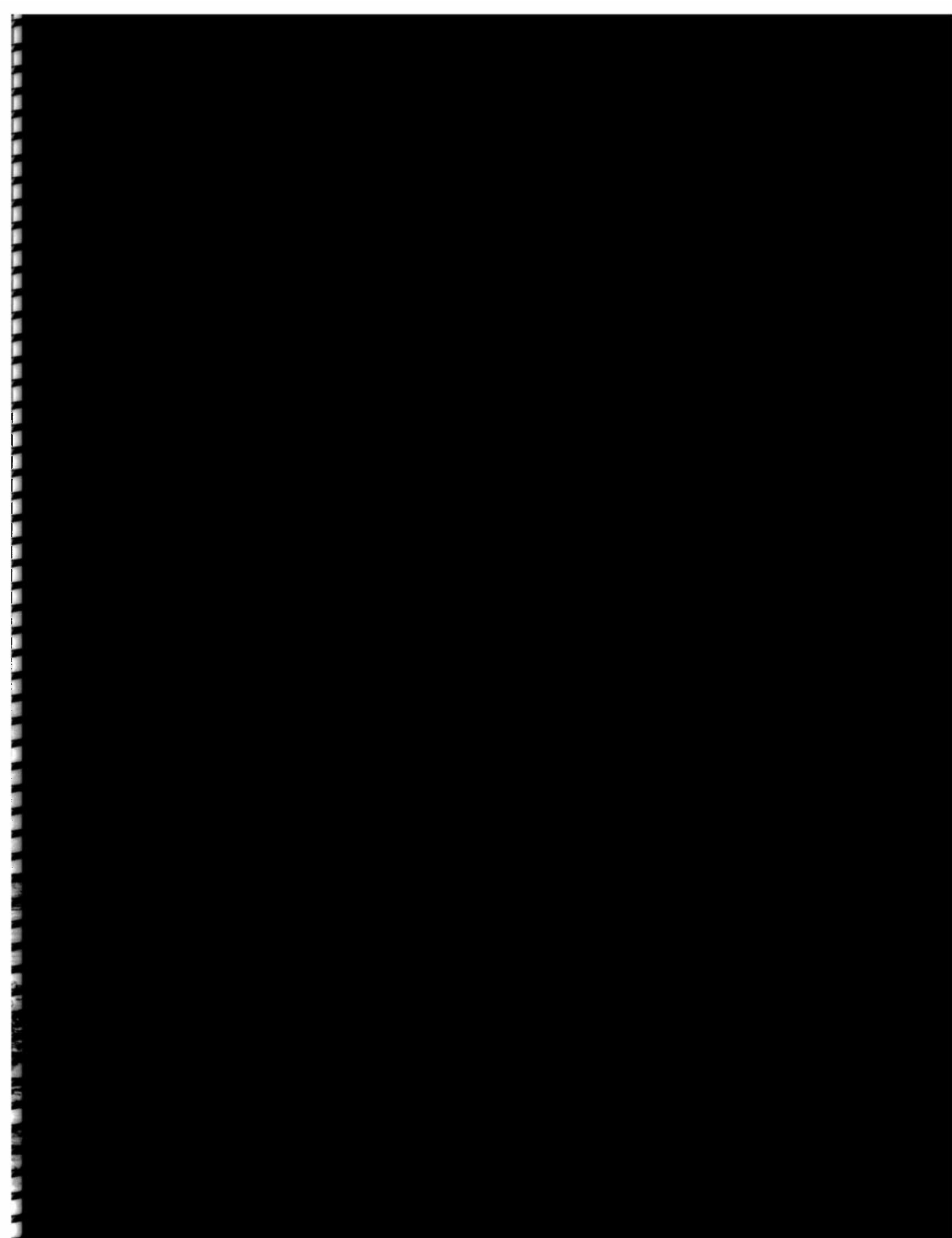
### OPPORTUNITY

The residential streets of Central Oakland have been the site of much disinvestment, real estate speculation, and lack of maintenance. Our market study has shown that Central Oakland is an attractive location. The quality and variety of housing available in Central Oakland must improve in order to encourage property investment and to attract non-undergraduate tenants and better landlords.

The University of Pittsburgh will provide 392 new beds of student housing on campus and on the edge of Central Oakland, with an additional 134 more proposed for later phases.

Fifty-two grants totaling \$141,840 have been given out through the Residential Façade Grant Program through October 1998, which represents a total investment of approximately \$477,000 in Oakland residential properties.





## Code Enforcement

### OPPORTUNITY

Repeatedly, Oakland citizens have placed improved code enforcement at the top of their list of concerns. Building conditions, overcrowding, trash and weeds, junk cars, graffiti, and garbage all jeopardize the quality of life of residents and degrade the image of Oakland. Code enforcement means the enforcement of City zoning regulations, occupancy permits, fire codes, and building codes, including those that deal with illegal parking and curb cuts.

The Interdepartmental Code Enforcement Task Force has handled 477 complaints to date and abated 383 problem properties.





## ACTIONS

**B.1**

Hire a new Senior Building Inspector. In a funding partnership with the University of Pittsburgh, the City Bureau of Building Inspection has been able to establish a new Senior Inspector position for Oakland. The position was filled in March of 1997 and, with the part-time code enforcement officer, has been working his way systematically through Oakland, beginning in Central Oakland.

**B.2**

The Interdepartmental Task Force for Code Enforcement in Oakland resolved 383 community complaints in its first year and a half of operation. Representatives of the Bureau of Building Inspection, City Planning, the Law Department, Environmental Services, Public Works, the Police Department, Fire Bureau, the Allegheny County Health Department, the Oakland Community Council, Oakland Planning and Development Corporation, and the University of Pittsburgh have been meeting monthly to respond to Oakland community code enforcement complaints in a coordinated way. Written status reports on complaints are distributed bi-monthly to task force participants.

The OIS includes a Code Enforcement Initiative to make systematic changes in the way code enforcement is done in Oakland. The task force is also working to develop and operationalize new housing codes and code enforcement techniques. The new initiatives being studied include creative changes to the BBI citation system, environmental services pickup locations, and housing court policies; these changes will increase interdepartmental cooperation.

One of the first initiatives of the code enforcement group was to propose the filing of personal liens on all the property owned by individuals who owed fines and did not fix up their structures. Vacant and dilapidated houses are a blight in any neighborhood, and one of the toughest problems in code enforcement is dealing with the property owners who are unwilling to fix up their properties. Many know how to play the system of citations, housing court and the Court of Common Pleas to their own advantage, and end up making minimal if any repairs. The threat of having personal liens placed on all of their property may persuade owners to fix up their units.

**Due to the work of the task force, personal judgments may now be filed against violators.**



Physical improvements to a neighborhood, including code enforcement, street sweeping and graffiti removal are vital to Central Oakland. The housing survey found that the most important influence on neighborhood choice is people's "own feeling, walking around." (Housing Marketing Study)





# Oakland Gateway Project

## OPPORTUNITY

1.74 acres of prime property on Forbes Avenue, across from Magee Hospital and Carlow College's new development, is vacant and/or underutilized. These parcels have difficult vehicular access due to the Fifth/Forbes one-way pairing, lack of cross streets and a steep hillside. The area's current condition is not an asset to Oakland's premier gateway.



Existing Conditions

1.74 acres of underutilized land brought back into productive use.

Existing Conditions

## ACTIONS

**C.1**

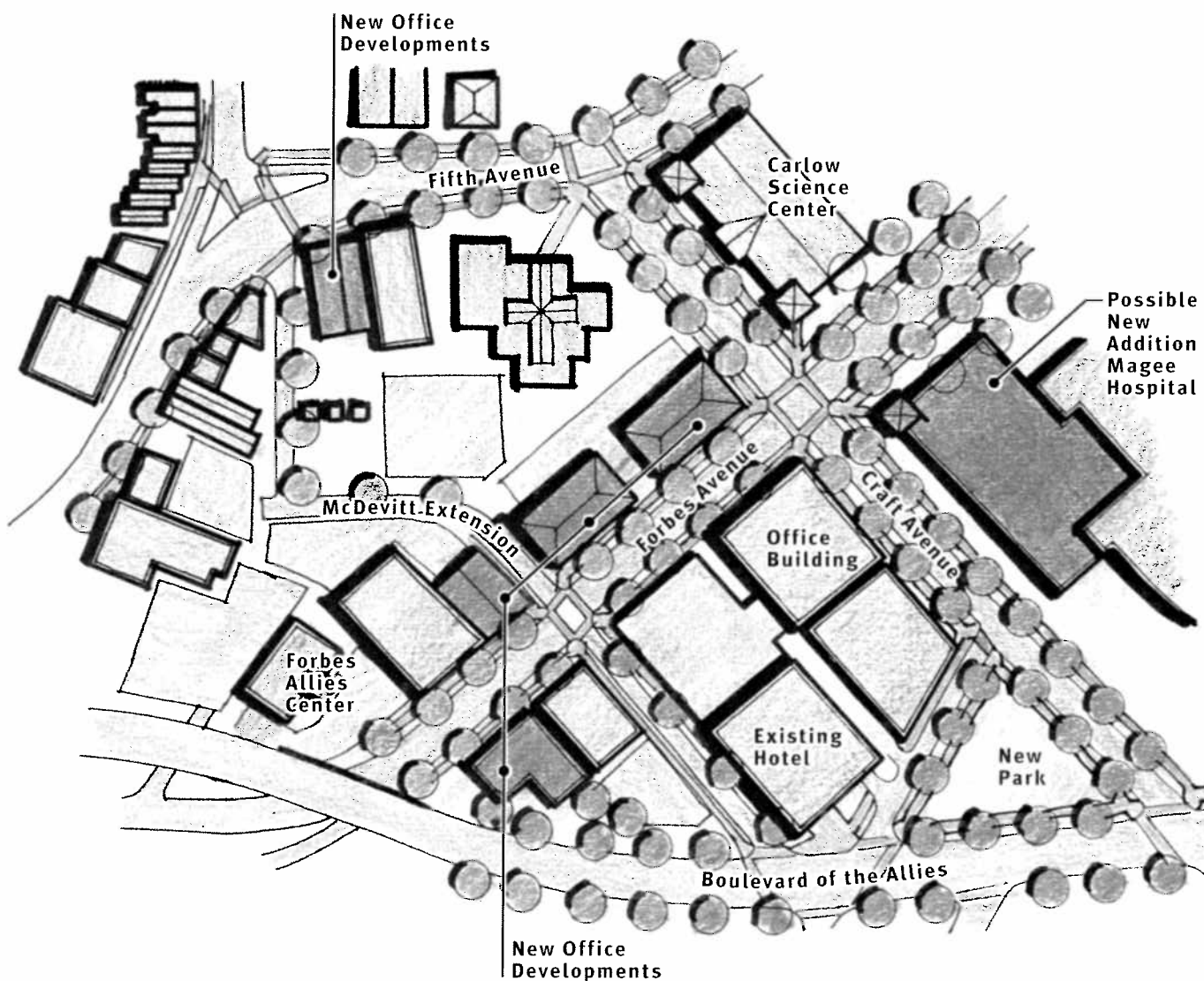
Open up approximately 1.74 acres for development by extending McDevitt Place approximately 120 feet into the site.

The new road from Forbes Avenue allows access to parking areas in the interior of the site. If the road is eventually extended to Fifth Avenue, it would provide reasonable access to businesses on the site from all directions and improve the redevelopment potential for other property in the area.

**C.2**

Acquire 5 vacant and/or underutilized properties. Redevelop this area with several 30-40,000 square foot 'spec' office buildings to house new or existing businesses.

New offices envisioned for Oakland's western gateway.



# Extension & Redevelopment of Commercial Core

## OPPORTUNITY

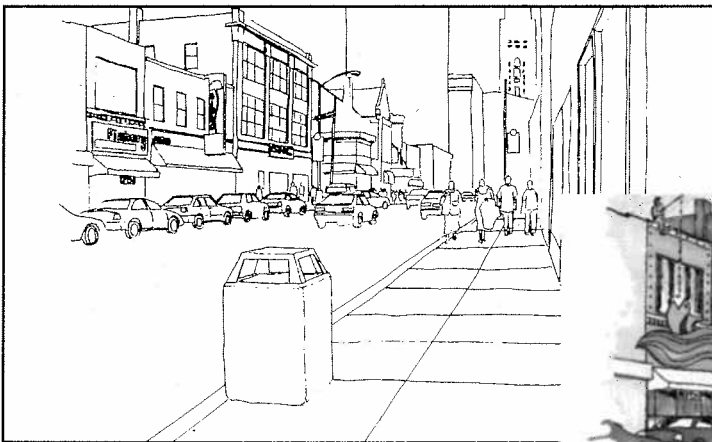
The core of the Oakland Business District is on Forbes Avenue between Bouquet Street and McKee Place. Fast food and bars are the dominant uses. Less than 10% of the businesses own their own buildings. The sidewalks are narrow and the traffic is heavy and fast. On-street parking is only allowed on the north side of Forbes, and only during non-peak hours. There are virtually no street trees or pedestrian amenities in this district. The speed and volume of traffic and the width of Forbes and Fifth are barriers to pedestrians.

There is no distinguishing feature that marks this district as "Oakland". The commercial area to the west, on Forbes Avenue from Halket Street to McKee Place, is thinly developed with an unorganized mixture of small buildings and inappropriate land uses. Due to the volume of traffic and number of employees and visitors, the business district has chronic problems with litter, dirt and trash on the sidewalks, streets and utility poles. Some building facades are in need of upgrading. The commercial core has no consistent identity.

## ACTIONS

### D.1

Create unified and attractive development that provides sizable floorplates for larger, "big-box" retailers. Acquire 10 run-down and underutilized properties on the north side of Forbes Avenue between McKee and Halket Streets, at the intersection with Coltart Street. Redevelop this site for 30-40,000 square foot buildings for modest office-research space (e.g. university spin-off firms) or 15-30,000 square foot spaces for "mid-box" retailers. This area would also be suitable for buildings with retail/service uses on the pedestrian level, and residential uses on upper floors.



Existing Conditions

New sign ordinances and design guidelines for new development give Oakland a new look.



Proposed



**D.2**

Remove the peak hour parking restriction on the northern side of Forbes Avenue. On-street testing of this proposal was successfully completed in the Spring of 1998 and the peak hour parking restrictions have been removed.

**D.3**

Once the parking restriction is lifted, plant small groups of trees near the corners and mid-block (where appropriate) in the parking lane on the north side of Forbes Avenue.

**D.4**

Introduce a uniform streetscape standard for new development.

**D.5**

Erect new streetlights with pendant fixtures along Forbes and Fifth Avenues.

**D.6**

Implement a special Oakland sign ordinance for the commercial district. The sign ordinance would allow larger signs and projecting signs on Forbes and Fifth; it would allow smaller signs on the side streets.

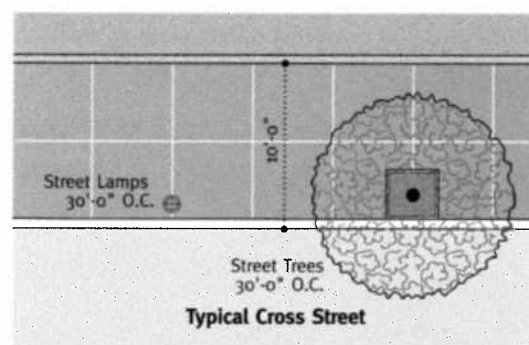
**D.7**

Adopt the new Commercial/Residential zoning district for Atwood Street.

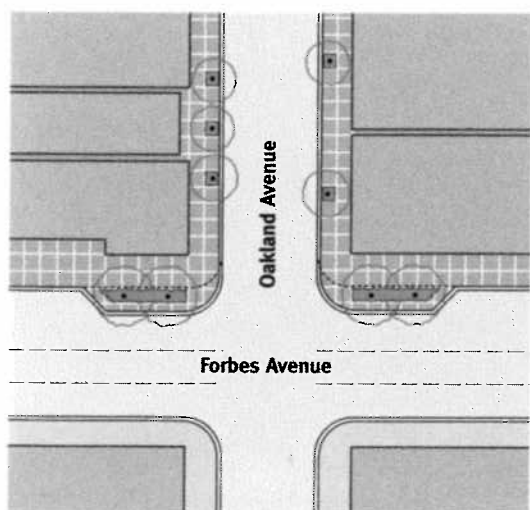
New zoning for Atwood street opens door for small-scale business development.

**D.8**

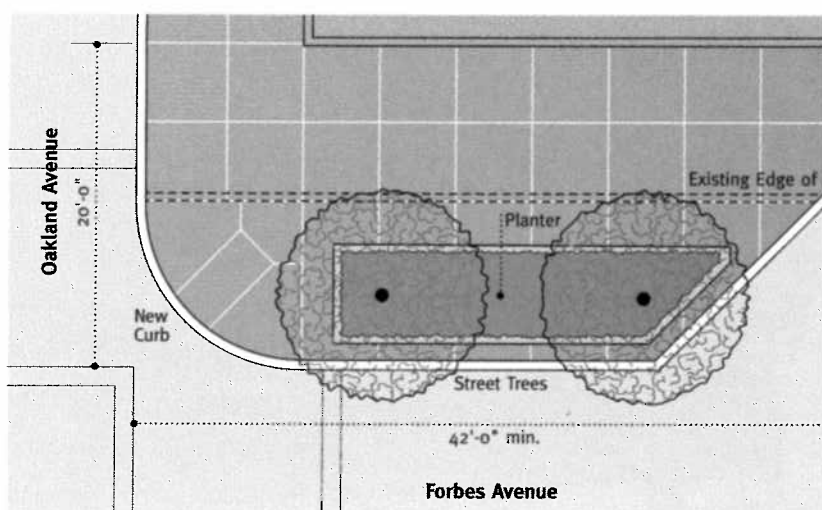
Support the creation of a Business Improvement District for the Fifth and Forbes Business District.



Typical Detail Plan



Typical Illustrative Plan



Typical Detail Plan

# E

## Development Strategy

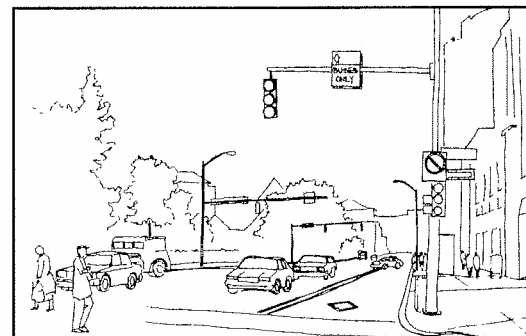
### Fifth Avenue

#### OPPORTUNITY

Fifth Avenue is a major transportation artery between the eastern City and downtown. As it passes through Oakland into Downtown, Fifth Avenue is the westbound half of a one-way pair with Forbes Avenue. Between Darragh Street and Bellefield Avenues, Fifth Avenue is six lanes wide (one of which is a contraflow buslane) and appears to have excess traffic capacity.

Fifth Avenue has the potential to be a beautiful avenue through Oakland, and still fulfill its traffic-moving purpose. Instead, it is an unattractive street, whose width is a barrier for pedestrians who want to cross between the institutional north side and the commercial south side. Sidewalks on the commercial (south) side of Fifth Avenue are also extremely narrow and dangerous. The presence of the contraflow buslane, adjacent to this southern sidewalk, has required fencing along the roadway to protect pedestrians.

The northern side of Fifth Avenue is solidly occupied by institutional uses, but the individual parcels are controlled by many different owners.



Existing Conditions

Fifth Avenue transformed into a pedestrian-friendly, beautifully-landscaped Avenue through Oakland.



Proposed

## ACTIONS

**E.1**

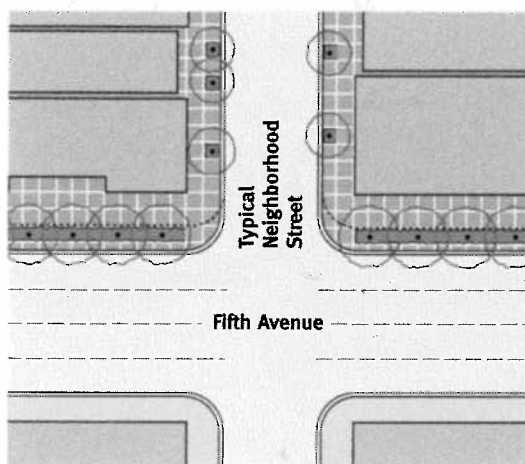
Transform the southernmost lane of traffic on Fifth Avenue between Darragh Street and Bellefield Avenue into a wide, landscaped, tree-filled ribbon between the sidewalk and the street similar to Michigan Avenue in Chicago. Commission a traffic engineering feasibility study to determine the workability of this project.

**E.2**

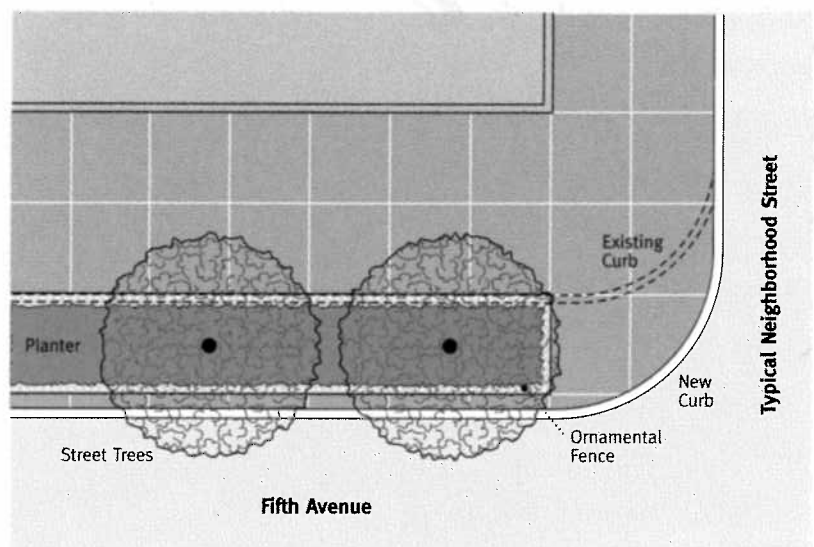
Move the contraflow buslane between Darragh Street and Bellefield Avenue one lane north, and remove one westbound moving lane of traffic. Widen the southern Fifth Avenue sidewalk where necessary.

**E.3**

Work with institutions/property owners of the north side of Fifth Avenue to develop a unified image by adopting and implementing landscape standards.



Typical Illustrative Plan, Fifth Avenue improvements as proposed.



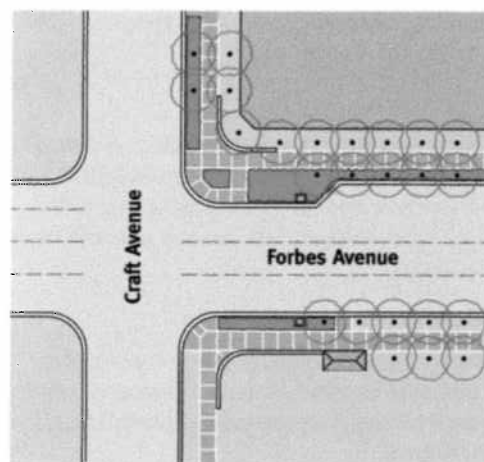
Typical Detail Plan, Fifth Avenue improvements as proposed.

# Gateway Treatments

## OPPORTUNITY

The major regional entrances to Oakland are unsightly, unmarked and uninviting. The main approach from Downtown, at the intersection of Forbes and Craft Avenues, is flanked on two corners by vacant lots and parking areas. Institutional edges are unclear and confusing. Residential and commercial areas bleed into one another. The Central Oakland residential area adjoins the Fifth/Forbes Business District, and the transition area is marked by parking lots, marginal commercial uses, and deteriorating housing. Central Oakland residential areas suffer from heavy non-local through traffic, disinvestment and a poor image.

Schenley Plaza is an important entrance to both Oakland and Schenley Park. It is part of the park, and forms part of a significant urban design axis in the original park design. Currently, the plaza is used as a short term parking lot for visitors to the university, The Carnegie and other central Oakland attractions. The demand for short term spaces in this location is great, and its 290 spaces are often full.



Typical Illustrative Plan, Forbes and Craft entrance to Oakland.

Proposed formal entrance for Forbes and Craft Avenues intersection.



Proposed



## ACTIONS

**F.1**

Create ceremonial entrances to Oakland, particularly at the intersection of Forbes and Craft Avenues. Plant a double row of trees on Forbes Avenue at this intersection so that the Cathedral of Learning, the Oakland landmark which is visible from a great distance, 'floats' on a sea of green. Install an art feature (e.g. two obelisks or columns) or low, decorative walls at this corner to formalize the entryway into Oakland.

**F.2**

Clearly delineate the transition point from commercial to residential areas. At primary neighborhood entry points into Central Oakland, install traffic calming, landscaped curb bump-outs. The first two intersections should be McKee Place and Louisa Street, and Meyran Avenue and Sennot Street in order to support housing redevelopment efforts on those streets.

**F.3**

Encourage the University of Pittsburgh to develop DeSoto Street as a primary, landscaped entrance to the hillside campus, with the stadium arch at its apex.

**F.4**

The Boulevard of the Allies is the gateway from Oakland and Downtown to Schenley Park. Determine the feasibility of adding a landscaped median to the Boulevard from Bates Street to Schenley Park.

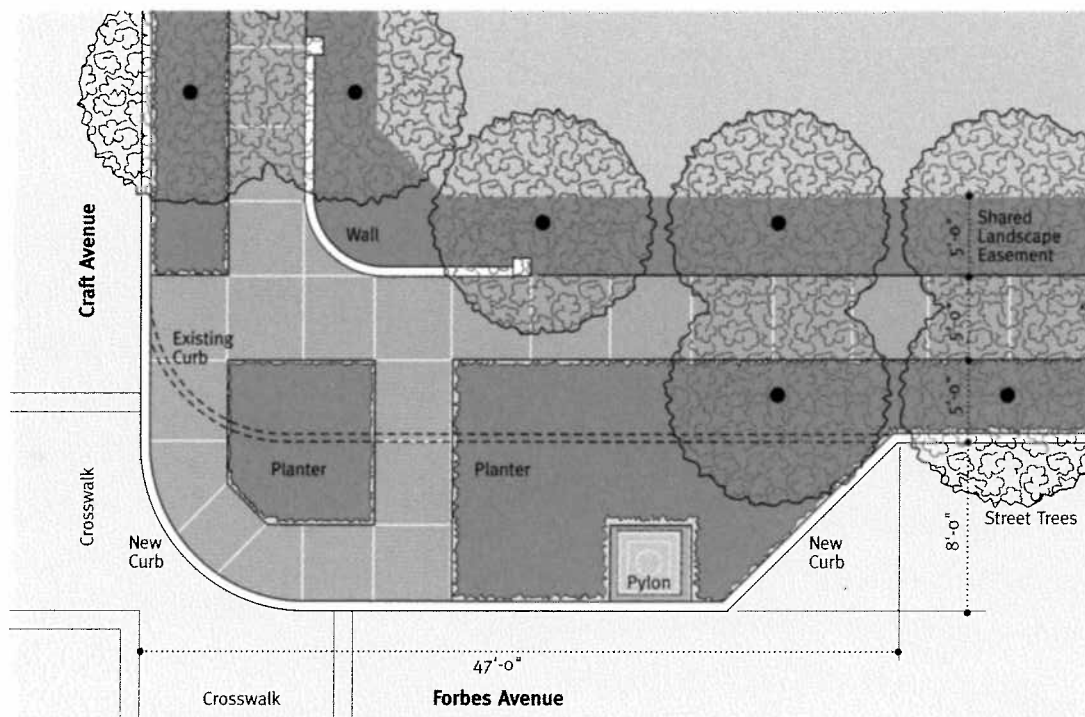
**F.5**

Schenley Plaza is an important part of Schenley Park. Though an underground garage in this location has proven financially infeasible at this time, the OIS recommends the following for future consideration: Remove the surface parking, and install landscaping and pedestrian amenities. Build an underground parking garage with 400–600 spaces. The majority of these parking spaces would be for short term parkers.



Existing Conditions—  
Boulevard of the Allies,  
Schenley Park entrance.

Buffers enhance  
commercial and  
residential areas.



Typical Detail Plan, Forbes and Craft entrance to Oakland.

# North Oakland

## OPPORTUNITY

North Oakland has the strongest housing market in Oakland. Much of it is zoned for very high density. The zoning of some areas does not match the underlying development patterns. The S. Craig Street commercial area is a victim of its own success, and its increasing parking needs have had a negative impact on the adjoining residential area. At Centre Avenue and N. Craig Street, the neighborhood commercial area needs to be strengthened. The two large vacant lots at the corner are opportunity areas for new development. The former industrial area north of Baum Boulevard has become a mixed use district with residential, commercial, light industrial and entertainment uses.



The City partners with North Oakland residents and businesses to solve neighborhood problems.



Artist's rendering of an improved Centre Avenue at the intersection of North Craig Street, with street trees, new lighting fixtures and façade improvements.

## ACTIONS

**G.1**

Develop options for redevelopment of the south-east and southwestern corners of the N. Craig Street and Centre Avenue intersection. Assess with the Pittsburgh Parking Authority the possibility of marketing their lot for development.

**G.2**

Rezone/remap the area north of Baum Boulevard for the mixed use zone, Neighborhood Industrial.

**G.3**

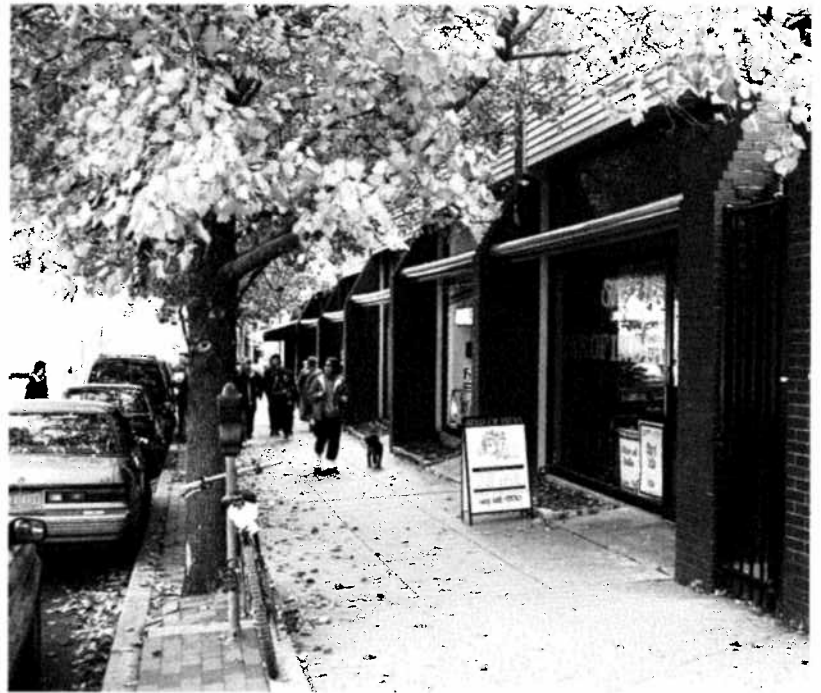
Develop alternatives to increase parking for the S. Craig Street merchants. Possible alternatives may include shared usage/metering of The Carnegie's Forbes Avenue lot, or using it as a mixed use development/decked parking site, or if feasible, decking and metering a surface lot directly to the west of the district.

**G.4**

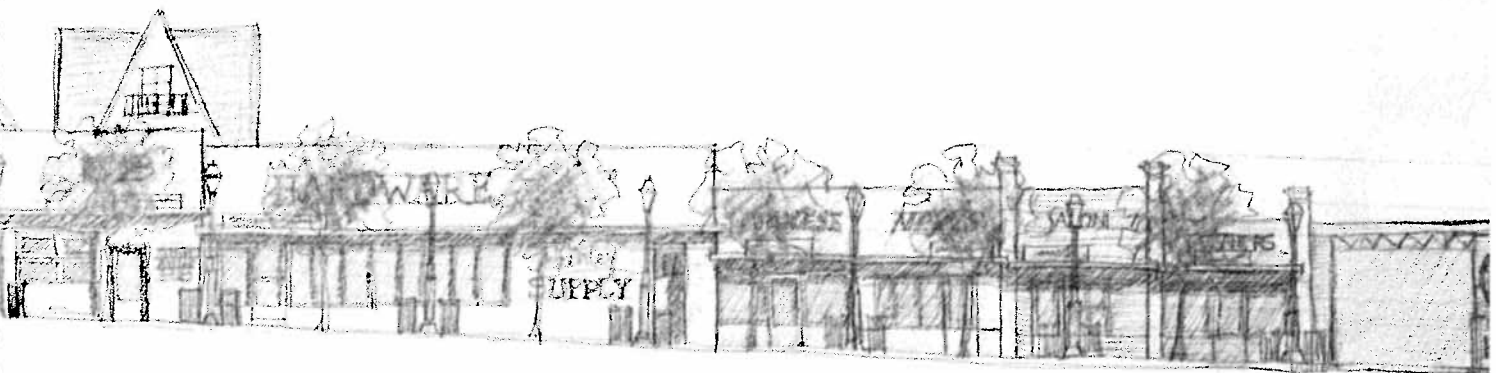
Remap the residential areas of the neighborhood to be consistent with their existing uses and densities.

**G.5**

The City will support the community in opposing new liquor licenses in the N. Craig Street, Centre Avenue area.



New residential development and a vibrant commercial district make North Oakland a desirable location.



### OPPORTUNITY

The City is enacting a new zoning ordinance and the whole city will be re-mapped. The Oakland ordinance and mapping proposal will be submitted to City Planning Commission and City Council after the citywide ordinance has been approved. Initial presentations to the community have been made, but a final draft of the Oakland Zoning mechanism must yet be written, presented to, and accepted by the Oakland community.

#### Key to Proposed Zoning Map

-  **Neighborhood Industrial District (NI)**  
A mixed-use industrial/commercial/residential district.
-  **LNC Local Neighborhood Commercial District (LNC)**  
Small scale neighborhood-serving commercial districts adjacent to residential areas.
-  **Urban Neighborhood Commercial District (UNC)**  
Commercial districts that serve a broader market than the immediate neighborhood.
-  **Educational/Medical Institutional District (EMI)**  
Accommodates Universities and Hospitals within an urban context. Requires approved master plans.
-  **Civic Center District**  
Public and private civic institutions and public spaces.
-  **Fifth and Forbes District**  
Commercial environment with mixed uses, including housing.
-  **Atwood Street District**  
Small scale mixed-use, non-residential uses on the ground floor.
-  **Boulevard of the Allies District**  
Mixed use, primarily office and institutional uses.
-  **Parks and Open Space (PO)**  
Public parks, passive and active recreation areas.
-  **Hillside District (H)**  
Applied in Areas which are not suitable for intensive development due to environmental characteristics.

### ACTIONS

#### H.1

Maintain the Interim Planning Overlay District (IPOD) for Oakland until permanent Oakland zoning is enacted and mapped. The IPOD is a temporary zoning mechanism that requires Planning Commission review for all development over a certain threshold.

#### H.2

After the new citywide zoning ordinance is adopted, re-map Oakland in accordance with its existing density and existing housing types. Reductions in density are recommended in much of Central Oakland.










#### H.3

Design, review with the community, and present special Oakland zoning districts for Fifth and Forbes, the Boulevard of the Allies, the Civic Center, and Atwood Street to the City Planning Commission and City Council for approval.

#### H.4

Under the new zoning code, new surface parking lots as separate uses are prohibited in residentially zoned areas.

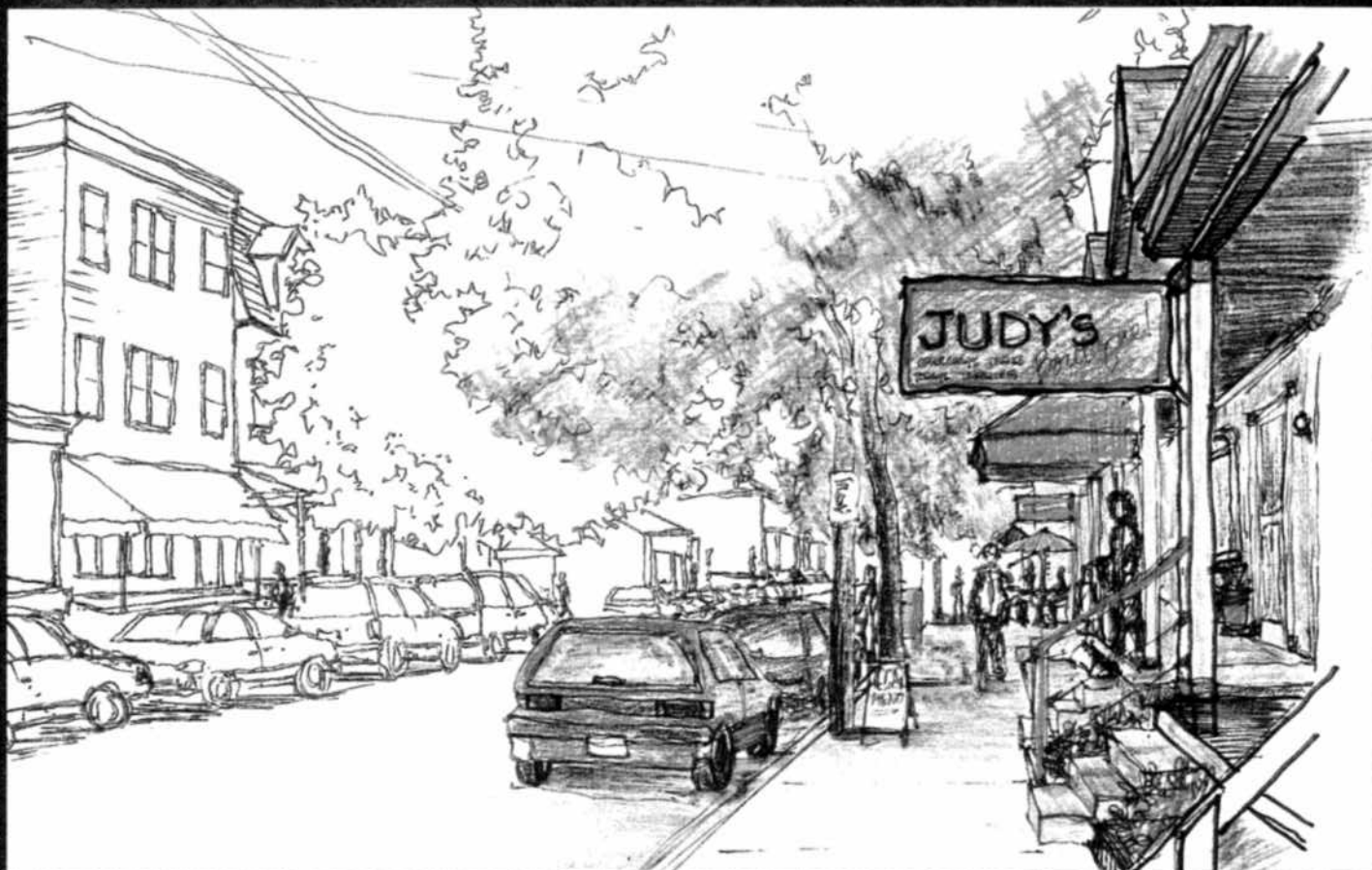
#### Residential Zones

Type		Density
 <b>RSD1</b>	Single unit, detached	Very low
 <b>RSD3</b>	Single unit, detached	Moderate
 <b>RSA3</b>	Single unit, attached	Moderate
 <b>RSA4</b>	Single unit, attached	High
 <b>RT2</b>	Two unit	Low
 <b>RT3</b>	Two unit	Moderate
 <b>RM3</b>	Multi unit	Moderate
 <b>RM4</b>	Multi unit	High
 <b>RM5</b>	Multi unit	Very High

Liberty A







New zoning districts  
enhance and protect  
Oakland's special  
character.



# **Implementation Strategy and Schedule**

Activity	Responsibility	Projected Start Date	Cost Estimate
<b>A. Residential Investment in Central Oakland (see pages 8–9)</b>			
<b>A.1</b> Develop new types of housing to attract a broader range of residents to Central Oakland.			
<b>A.2</b> Improve Oakland maintenance and the appearance of Oakland by: Cooperation between the community and the City through the interdepartmental Task Force for Code Enforcement in Oakland, UPMC façade grant program,	(see B.2)	February 1997	N/A
Volunteer clean-up programs, and	UPMC, OPDC	Begun October 1996	\$200,000 authorized \$141,840 spent by October 1998
Implementation of the Business Improvement District.	Volunteers (City's Clean Sweep program, PITT, Carlow College)	Continuous	N/A
	Institutions, OPDC, City, OBCA	1998	City: study, \$20,000; startup, \$50,000. Property owners: by assessment. Tax-exempt: in negotiation.
<b>A.3</b> Develop and implement a marketing strategy to promote Oakland as a good place to live and work.	OPDC, OCC		
<b>A.4</b> Assist OPDC with the acquisition and renovation of a large block of units in Central Oakland for market-rate rentals.	OPDC, URA	As property becomes available	City 1998 Capital Budget: \$50,000 City 1999: 775,000
<b>A.5</b> Assist OPDC in the purchase and renovation of individual houses on Meyran Avenue for sale to homeowners.	OPDC, URA	As houses become available	
<b>A.6</b> Construction of new student housing on Oakland Avenue by the University of Pittsburgh Facilities plan: housing construction, phase 1 (192 beds), phase 2 (200 beds) and 3 (134 beds).	PITT	Phase 1: 1998 Phase 2: Completed 2000 Phase 3: 2002–2006	Phase 1: \$5.3 million Phase 2: \$5.3 million + Phase 3: not yet determined
<b>A.7</b> Re-map Oakland in accordance with its existing density and housing types. Reductions in allowable density re recommended in much of Central Oakland.	City Planning, OCC, Oakland Institutions, OBCA	City Council Action, 1999	
<b>A.8</b> Commission a housing study to support the development of housing initiatives in Central Oakland.	City Planning, OPDC, PITT, URA, Focus Communications, Consultant	Phase 1 completed February 1997; Phase 2 completed May 1997	
<b>A.9</b> Develop a base-line data base for land use and housing in Oakland.	City Planning, Chuck Carlson, Consultant	Completed, January 1996	

Activity	Responsibility	Projected Start Date	Cost Estimate
<b>B. Code Enforcement (see pages 10–11)</b>			
<b>B.1</b> New senior building inspector for Oakland.	BBL, PITT	Hired, March 1997	Salary and benefits per year: City \$19,620, PITT: \$19,620 (5 year commitment).
<b>B.2</b> Interdepartmental Task Force for Code Enforcement for Oakland	City Planning, OCC, OPDC, BBI, Police, Public Works, Environmental Services, City Law Department, Mayor's Office, PITT	Steering Committee began in early 1996, the Task Force began monthly meetings in February 1997.	
<b>B.3</b> Personal Liens	City Law Department, Housing Court	Instituted in the fall of 1997	
<b>C. Oakland Gateway Project (see pages 12–13)</b>			
<b>C.1</b> Open up approximately 1.74 acres for development by extending McDevitt Place approximately 120 feet into the site.	URA	Not scheduled	
<b>C.2</b> Extend McDevitt Place to Fifth Avenue	DEC, City Planning	Not scheduled	
<b>C.3</b> Acquire 5 vacant and/or underutilized properties. Redevelop this area with several 30–40 thousand square foot 'spec' office buildings to house new and existing businesses.	URA, City Planning	Not scheduled	Approximate cost, for discussion: \$60,000 relocation, \$2,000,000 acquisition



#### Key to Organizations

**BACA:** Bellefield Area Citizen's Association  
**BBI:** City Bureau of Building Inspection  
**City Planning:** Pittsburgh Department of City Planning  
**DEC:** City Department of Engineering and Construction  
**OBCA:** Oakland Business and Community Association  
**OCC:** Oakland Community Council  
**OIS:** Oakland Improvement Strategy  
**OPDC:** Oakland Planning and Development Corporation  
**PaDOT:** Pennsylvania Department of Transportation  
**PITT:** University of Pittsburgh  
**PPA:** Pittsburgh Parking Authority  
**URA:** Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh

Activity	Responsibility	Projected Start Date	Cost Estimate
<b>D. Extension and Redevelopment of Commercial Core (see pages 14–15)</b>			
<b>D.1</b> Create unified and attractive development that provides sizable floor-plates for retailers like Old Navy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acquire 10 deteriorating and underutilized properties on the north side of Forbes Avenue between McKee and Halket Streets, at the intersection with Coltart Street.</li> <li>Redevelop this site for 30–40 thousand square foot buildings for modest office/research space (e.g. University spin-off firms) or 15–30 thousand square foot spaces for “mid-box” retailers.</li> <li>This area would also be suitable for buildings with retail/service uses on the pedestrian level, and residential uses on the upper floors.</li> </ul>	URA, City Planning	Not scheduled	Estimated cost for discussion: Relocation: \$330,000 Acquisition: \$5,749,500
<b>D.2</b> Remove the peak-hour parking restriction on the north side of Forbes Avenue.	OBCA, City Council, DEC, Public Works, PaDOT, City Planning	Testing, Spring 1998 Restriction removed 1998	
<b>D.3</b> Once the parking restriction is lifted, plant small groups of trees near the corners and mid-block (where appropriate) in the parking lane on the north side of Forbes Avenue.	City Planning, DEC, Public Works, Tree Commission	2000–2001	Partial funding, City 1998 Capital Budget: Design (2000) \$100,000 Construction (2001) \$700,000 (shared with project F.1)
<b>D.4</b> Introduce a uniform streetscape standard for new development.	City Planning, DEC, Public Works		
<b>D.5</b> Erect new streetlights with the pendant fixtures along Forbes and Fifth Avenues	City Planning, DEC, Public Works	Not scheduled	\$300,000
<b>D.6</b> Implement a special Oakland sign ordinance for the Forbes and Fifth commercial district. The sign ordinance would allow larger signs and projecting signs on Forbes and Fifth; it would allow smaller signs on the side streets.	City Planning, OPDC, OBCA, OCC	1999	N/A
<b>D.7</b> Adopt the new commercial/residential zoning overlay for Atwood Street	City Planning, City Council, OCC, OBCA	1998	
<b>D.8</b> Support the creation of a Business Improvement District for the Fifth and Forbes Business District	OPDC, City, OBCA, Institutions	1998	City: study \$20,000; startup \$50,000. Property owners: by assessment. Tax-exempt: in negotiation.

Activity	Responsibility	Projected Start Date	Cost Estimate
<b>G. North Oakland (see pages 20–21)</b>			
<b>G.1</b> Develop options for redevelopment of the southeast and southwest corners of the North Craig Street and Centre Avenue intersection. Assess with Pittsburgh Parking Authority (PPA) the possibility of marketing their lot for redevelopment.	BACA, OCC, OPDC, City Planning, PPA		
<b>G.2</b> Rezone/remap the area north of Baum Boulevard for the mixed-use zone, Neighborhood Industrial.	City Planning, OCC, Planning Commission, City Council	1998	
<b>G.3</b> Develop options for providing more parking for the S. Craig Street merchants. Possible alternatives may include shared usage/metering of The Carnegie's Forbes Avenue lot, or its use as a mixed-use development/decked parking site, or if feasible decking and metering a surface lot directly to the west of the district.	City Planning, The Carnegie, S. Craig Merchants Association, OCC, PPA, Board of Public Education		
<b>G.4</b> Remap the residential areas of the neighborhood to be consistent with their existing uses and densities.	City Planning, OCC, Planning Commission, City Council	1998	
<b>G.5</b> The City will support the community in opposing new liquor licenses in the North Craig Street, Centre Avenue area.	BACA, OCC, City Planning	As needed	
<b>H. Zoning (see pages 22–23)</b>			
<b>H.1</b> Maintain the Interim Overlay Planning District for Oakland until permanent Oakland zoning is enacted and mapped.	City Planning, City Council	1997–98	
<b>H.2</b> After the new citywide zoning ordinance is adopted, re-map Oakland in accordance with its existing density and housing types. Reductions in density are recommended in much of Oakland.	City Planning, OCC, Planning Commission, City Council	1998	
<b>H.3</b> Design, review with the community and present special Oakland districts for Fifth and Forbes, the Boulevard of the Allies, the Civic Center, and Atwood Street to the City Planning Commission and City Council for approval.	City Planning, OCC, Planning Commission, City Council	1998	
<b>General</b>			
Adopt streetscape standards for Oakland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Planning Commission</li> <li>• Public Works Department</li> </ul>	City Planning, DEC, Public Works	1999	

# **Process and Planning Efforts**



## Process and Planning Efforts

This section gives the details of the community process and planning efforts that have led up to the Development Strategy. It also highlights the programs, planning and projects of the community and institutional partners in Oakland that contribute to the goals of the Oakland Improvement Strategy.

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## Community Process

### The Idea Paper

With the support of Oakland residents, community groups and institutions, in June of 1995 the Pittsburgh Department of City Planning kicked off the Oakland Improvement Strategy process with the issuance of the Oakland Idea Paper.

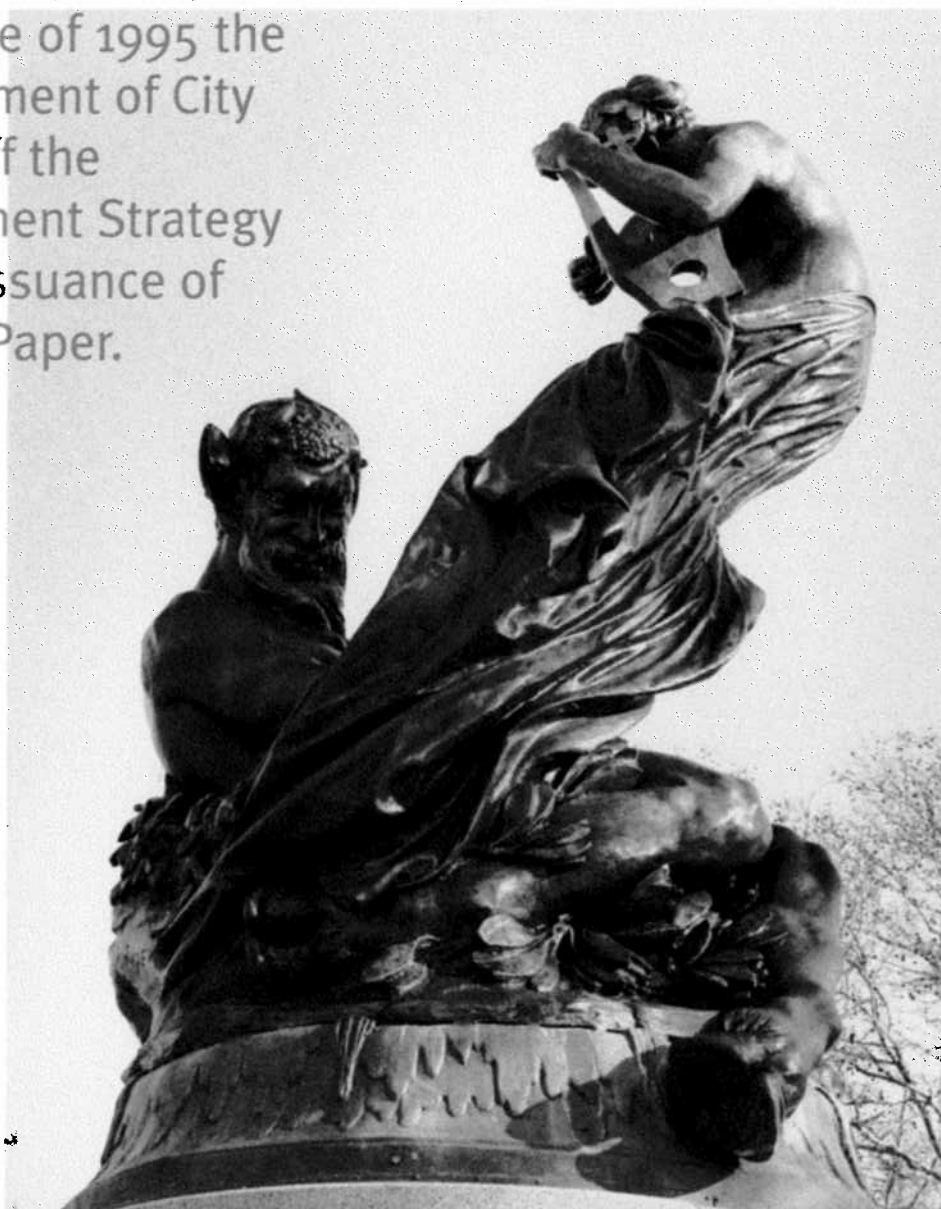
The paper identified problems and proposed specific solutions, based on many years of staff work in Oakland. The paper was very broadly circulated and was designed to stimulate discussion on particular issues in the broader Oakland community. The paper was followed by three community-wide workshops in the fall of 1995.

### Community Workshops

The Oakland Improvement Strategy sponsored four community workshops, including a weekend-long design charrette. The Community Housing Workshop was held in September 1995; the Urban Design Charrette was held at the end of October, 1995. The first of the zoning workshops was in November 1995; the second zoning workshop was held November 1996.

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Mary Schenley Fountain,  
Schenley Plaza



## Housing Initiatives

### The Housing Strategy

The housing strategy envisioned in this document is a direct outgrowth of the Oakland community's 1995 Proposal for a Housing Strategy for Oakland (see Appendix B), the City Planning Department's Idea Paper, the Oakland Housing Study (see Appendix A), and the University of Pittsburgh's most recent housing strategy, Facilities Plan: 1998-2007. If this housing strategy is to be accomplished, the partnership between the local development corporations, the City and the Oakland institutions must continue and be strengthened.

The strategy's initial focus for housing has been in Central Oakland. Central Oakland is the most visible and the most visibly deteriorated of the Oakland neighborhoods. Its proximity to Fifth and Forbes Avenues, the major transportation arteries, means this area is quite visible to many who use these streets. The poor public image of Central Oakland reflects negatively on the public's perception of safety and crime, the reputation of the business district and, ultimately, the desirability of Oakland and the City of Pittsburgh as a place to live, work and conduct business.

The key to improving housing in Central Oakland is to change the market. Because of its proximity to the universities, Oakland will always be attractive to students. The Oakland Improvement Strategy recommends shifting the balance of Central Oakland residents toward more stable, older, and longer-term residents. The OIS proposes to influence this shift by:

- Providing better quality, moderate and higher-end rental housing than what is currently available in the neighborhood. Wider diversity of available housing types would appeal to a broader market;
- Renovating and re-converting multi-family properties back to owner-occupied housing;
- Improving the quality of existing housing by more effective code enforcement;
- Improving the physical appearance of Central Oakland to make it more attractive;
- Providing more attractive on-campus housing options for university undergraduate students;
- Concentrate off-campus university-sponsored student housing on Oakland Avenue and Bouquet Street.

### The Partners

The City, through the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (URA), has been a major funding partner for housing improvement activities in Oakland. The URA's 1997 Annual Report says that since its inception, the URA has made 1,077 loans totaling \$21,909,053 for the renovation and improvement of 1,772 units of housing in Oakland. Though individual property owners have been active in renovations, the biggest coordinated efforts to improve housing have been made by the Oakland Planning and Development Corporation (OPDC) and in West Oakland, by Breachmenders. The University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University are both interested in housing as it affects their students. They are, like all Oakland institutions, concerned about how the quality of the neighborhood housing stock affects Oakland as a place to live, work and do business.

The following sections describe the specific housing initiatives and activities among the Oakland Improvement Oakland Improvement Strategy Partners and documents the progress of the strategy development and implementation to date.



## Qualitative and Quantitative Housing Studies

To support the development of renovated for-sale and market rental housing in Central Oakland, the Oakland Improvement Strategy commissioned a housing market study from Focus Communications. The scope of the research project was designed and guided by representatives from the Department of City Planning, the University of Pittsburgh, OPDC and the Housing Department of the URA.

The research took place in two phases, the first of which examined and quantifiably measured current housing decision-making with a survey of 255 new faculty, staff and graduate students of the University of Pittsburgh and of University of Pittsburgh Medical Center–Health System (UPMC–HC). The second, qualitative phase explored the attitudes behind housing decisions and, more specifically, behind perceptions of Oakland. The second phase utilized focus groups of the target population, owners and renters, all of whom had recently moved, or planned to move in the near future.

### Target Population

At the present time, interest in Oakland is driven by renters, single people, and those earning \$35,000 or less. The key target group for homeownership identified in the survey is the \$35,000–\$75,000 income group. About 40% of this income segment owns their residences. While 21% of this group consider Oakland, only 4% choose it. The challenge is to retain more of these people who are considering Oakland, but are ending up elsewhere.

### Neighborhood Choice

Virtually all of the respondents (97%) say they are influenced “a lot” or “some” in their evaluation of neighborhoods by their own feeling, walking around. This finding reinforces the importance of improving the appearance of Oakland.

The most important attributes in considering a neighborhood to live in were:

- Familiarity;
- Home prices;
- Schools;
- Stability;
- Easy access to work;
- Safety considerations;
- Easy access to shopping or activities;
- A quiet street.

Renters also focused on parking, public transportation.

### Perceptions of Oakland

Though the ‘target population’ as represented in the focus groups was not enthusiastic about Central Oakland, they still had a very positive response to an architect’s rendering of improved Meyran Avenue/McKee Place housing that was presented to them to consider as a possible Oakland housing product. If the neighborhood image is improved, and a desirable housing product is available, the clear inference was that the housing would sell.

### Housing Type Preferences

In choosing a residence, respondents sought, above all else, space—in terms of individual room size as much as overall square footage. More specifically, they were looking for:

- For sale housing: 3 to 4 bedrooms and 2+ bathrooms;
- For rent housing: 2 to 4 bedrooms and 1 to 2 bathrooms;
- lots of closet space;
- eat-in kitchen;
- large living room;
- an “extra” room (included in the above) for a playroom/office/guest room;
- some kind of outdoor space, whether a yard (preferred), porch or deck.

### Overall Findings

The results of the research emphasized the importance of:

- making physical improvements to Oakland to increase its attractiveness as a place to live;
- providing different, attractive housing options;
- effectively marketing Oakland to emphasize “community”.

While the market for upgraded housing in Central Oakland initially may represent a very specific market niche, the market will not grow until some of the housing products are implemented.

For more detail, a summary of the results of the housing market study can be found in Appendix A, Parts 1 and 2.

## Community Housing Strategy

In September of 1995 the participating members of the Oakland Agreement Committee (now the Oakland Community Council) released A Proposal for a Housing Strategy for Oakland (see Appendix B). The document states that "the goal of the strategy is to revitalize Oakland by improving the existing fabric of the community rather than through large scale change, which is often destructive of community fabric." The document goes on to describe the community's housing needs; it makes specific housing and land use recommendations for much of Oakland, particularly Central Oakland. This paper was presented at the September 1995 Community Housing Workshop.



## OPDC Initiatives

In April 1997 the Oakland Planning and Development Corporation prepared a strategic plan for the years 1997-2001. OPDC's Strategic Plan 1997-2001 states its real estate development goal: "to revitalize Oakland through the development of market rate and affordable housing, mixed use developments, and commercial real estate." In addition to its development activities, OPDC operates a housing promotion program to attract and retain long term residents for Oakland neighborhoods. The strategic plan lists real estate development goals for each area of Oakland, with specific actions and time frames to accomplish the goals.

### Housing Renovation and New Construction of Units

OPDC has set the following real estate development goals for housing for each part of Oakland, as found in the Strategic Plan 1997-2001:

- Central Oakland Objectives: to influence the demographic market shift. Projects on McKee Place and Meyran Avenue are anticipated.
- South Oakland Objectives: to revitalize the existing housing stock to promote long term residency, to develop for-sale housing through new construction and to eliminate blight and abandoned buildings. OPDC will concentrate on Ward Street and on properties held back from the Treasurer's Sale.
- North Oakland Objectives: to work with the residents to help eliminate fraternities and sororities, and to continue the efforts begun by residents in the S. Craig Street area to stabilize the area as a viable residential neighborhood.
- West Oakland Objectives: to complement Breachmenders by continuing the development on Chesterfield Road in order to increase the number of owner-occupied units and eliminate blighted and vacant properties and to join with both Breachmenders and the Hill Community Development Corporation regarding development of parcels in West Oakland adjacent to Alequippa Terrace.



## University of Pittsburgh Medical Center-Health System (UPMC-HS)

### The UPMC-HS Home Purchase Incentive Grant Program

This program was started in 1996 to give employees of University of Pittsburgh Medical Center-Health System (UPMC-HS), one of the region's largest employers, an incentive to look at and buy housing in Oakland. The program was sponsored by the Oakland Community Council. The funds for the grant program have been provided by UPMC-HS through a grant to the Oakland Development Fund. The grant program is staffed and administered by Oakland Planning and Development Corporation.

There are no income guidelines for the grant and any permanent employee of UPMC-HS is eligible as long as they buy in Oakland (excluding the Schenley Farms Historic District). This program was established to attract UPMC-HS workers to Oakland, thus enabling them to live where they work. The hope of this program is to get more of the employees who are already working in Oakland to move into the community, making them an integral part of the community rather than people who just work in Oakland during the day.

The initial funding amount from UPMC-HS was \$100,000, and an additional \$100,000 has been added in 1998. Eleven \$5,000 grants have been given out through October 1998, for a total of \$55,000. The grants are very flexible and are often used for closing costs and down-payment assistance.

### The Oakland Residential Façade Grant Program

was started in October of 1996. Its intent is to help people who live in and own their own Oakland properties make repairs to the facades of their residences. It is funded entirely through the Community Relations Committee of the Board of Directors of UPMC-HS. The committee has four members from UPMC-HS and four members from the Oakland Community Council. The grant program is staffed by the Oakland Community Council.

UPMC-HS funded the program as a response to a request it received from the Oakland Community Council. The program's intention is to give people who live in Oakland, especially people on low or fixed incomes, an incentive to improve the appearance of their properties, thus impacting Oakland's appearance as a whole. This can have a ripple effect and it is a very effective way of changing the perception of the community from one of neglect to one of pride.



The maximum matching grant is \$5,000. The initial funding amount from UPMC-HS was \$100,000 and an additional \$100,000 has been added in 1998. Fifty-two grants totaling \$141,840 have been given out through October 1998, representing a total investment of approximately \$477,000 in Oakland residential properties.

## Breachmenders

Breachmenders is a community development corporation that operates in the West Oakland area. Breachmenders' goals are to provide decent, affordable housing, employment training, and community development to the West Oakland community. Breachmenders rehabs 2-3 vacant, tax delinquent houses each year, for sale to low and moderate income people. Breachmenders has also been involved with providing rental housing for low income people, and has their own trained construction crew that repairs houses for a reduced cost.

Breachmenders operates employment training programs, such as the School to Career program, and acts as conduit of information, technical assistance and advocacy for the West Oakland community.

## Allequippa Terrace

The plan for the redevelopment of Allequippa Terrace between West Oakland and the Hill District will feature the following key elements:

- 900+ units;
- a mix of two-, three- and four-bedroom attached townhouses and one- and two-bedroom flats in midrise buildings in a new village setting;
- 100 units in several rehabilitated buildings;
- a new Allequippa Town Center featuring 5,000 square feet of retail space, a 5,000 square foot health club, a 7,000 square foot community center, and a 6,000 square foot youth center;
- new open space, parks and pedestrian connections;
- mixed income with approximately 38% market rate units;
- phasing to meet existing need, initial market demand, and subsequent market demand;
- ownership and management will be shared 50/50 between the developers and the tenants.

## University of Pittsburgh Housing Strategy

### 1995 Master Plan Requirements

In April 1995 the City Planning Commission approved the University of Pittsburgh Master Space Plan with 14 stipulations agreed to by the university, three of which were specifically about housing and community development issues. In July of 1998 the University of Pittsburgh requested approval to build new student housing on Oakland Avenue. As part of the approval process, the original Master Plan stipulations were reviewed for compliance and 14 new conditions were written to supercede them. The new conditions can be found in Appendix C.

The university issued a housing strategy in the Fall of 1995 which they presented at the September 1995 Community Housing Workshop. The Housing Strategy was updated with the issuance of the 1997 University of Pittsburgh Facilities Plan: 1998-2007. The following sections are a summary of the facilities plan document as it relates to housing initiatives in Oakland, on and off campus.

### New Student Housing Initiatives

The University of Pittsburgh Facilities Plan: 1998-2007 was released in April 1997. The Facilities Plan will be reviewed in 1998/99 by the City Planning Commission as a component of the proposed University of Pittsburgh's revised master plan. The City Planning Commission will hold a public hearing to review the plan and invite comments from all interested parties.



The Facilities Plan acknowledges that there is a large demand for university sponsored student housing and proposes the following methods to increase available student housing:

### Increasing on-Campus Housing Opportunities

For the first time, a new student entering Pitt in the fall of 1997 is guaranteed housing on campus for three years. These students will be accommodated through a variety of strategies, including:

- Increasing the occupancy of existing residential buildings;
- Converting existing on-campus buildings to residential use.

Increasing off campus housing opportunities:

- Construction of new housing on Bouquet Street;
- Full utilization of off campus residential buildings currently owned by the university for the housing of university students;
- Establishment of "quality housing partnerships" to identify and market good private graduate housing in Oakland;
- Referral to quality private rental housing. In cooperation with the City's Bureau of Building Inspection, the University of Pittsburgh set up a Voluntary Housing Inspection Program as part of the broader code enforcement efforts in Oakland. Landlords wishing to list their properties for rental in the Student Housing Resource Center must first have a rental certificate from BBI, saying their property is in compliance with the building maintenance code. This requirement applies to all properties listed with the center, not just Oakland rentals.

### Fraternity Housing

According to the 1997 Facilities Plan, the University of Pittsburgh states that the university is "aggressively pursuing the construction of fraternity and sorority housing financed by the organizations on university-owned land near existing fraternity housing on the hillside. The relocation of fraternity housing from the Oakland community to the midst of the campus would benefit both the Greek organizations and the community." The first relocated fraternity house is currently under construction.

## Public Corridors

### Oakland Issue Paper

The first attempt to address urban design issues in Oakland was the Oakland Issue Paper, produced in 1995 under the aegis of Pittsburgh's Urban Zoning Code Project. The paper was drafted by Perkins Eastman Architects. The primary concept from the paper that has shaped subsequent debate was the idea of addressing the 'Public Realm' of Oakland. The Public Realm is that area experienced as public space along a street, defined by the street and the fronts of the buildings along the street. The Public Realm is not necessarily public property, but its character is influenced by design guidelines for new development, development standards for public and private spaces, and by programs like façade grants and sign ordinances.

### Urban Design Workshop

To determine appropriate design standards and to generate ideas for the Public Realm in Oakland, the Oakland Improvement Strategy organized a weekend urban design workshop. The OIS recruited three outside experts in the areas of landscape architecture, architecture and urban design, and community/university interaction to analyze the issues and opportunities in three corridors: Fifth and Forbes, the Boulevard of the Allies, and North Craig Street. They met with focus groups on each of the three areas, and with groups representing business interests, developers, the community, and the institutions.

With the Pittsburgh City Planning Department and the help of CMU architecture students, the Oakland Design Team produced a series of recommendations for the three areas. The report of the Oakland Design Team, Public corridors of Oakland: Recommendations of the Urban Design Study, is found in Appendix D. These recommendations led to subsequent strategy development studies: the Public Corridors of Oakland Study: an Urban Design Study to Guide Reinvestment by Eve Picker, Consultant and EDGE Architects, which concentrated on the Boulevard of the Allies and Forbes Avenue west of McKee Street, and the Oakland: an Urban Design Plan for Forbes and Fifth Avenue Corridors study by La Quatra Bonci (see Appendix E).



## Oakland: An Urban Design Plan for the Forbes and Fifth Avenue Corridors

This study, by LaQuatra Bonci Associates, Landscape Architects, is included in its entirety as Appendix E. It illustrates the proposed public open space improvements to the Forbes and Fifth Avenue corridors through the Oakland Business District. The report stresses the need to enhance the pedestrian environment and give Oakland the image as the cultural, institutional and educational center of the City of Pittsburgh.

The recommendations of this report were influenced by the earlier work of the Urban Design Team, and have been integrated into the Development Strategy in section II of this document.

## Boulevard of the Allies and Lower Forbes Avenue.

Eve Picker, consultant and Edge Architects prepared the Public Corridors of Oakland Study: an Urban Design Study to Guide Reinvestment about the Boulevard of the Allies and the lower Forbes Avenue Corridor. They divided the area into five zones. They analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of each zone and proposed a reinvestment scheme which is designed to:

- Reinforce the character of each distinct zone;
- Create strong and positive arrival points into Oakland;
- Create larger parcels of developable land;
- Improve existing property in visible locations;
- Create clearer separation between commercial and residential zones.

Many of the recommendations of this study can be found in this report in the Development Strategy (pages 5–24). Other recommendations for the Boulevard can be found in Appendix D, *Public Corridors of Oakland: Recommendations of the Urban Design Study* (pages 81–89), and in the discussion of zoning, which begins on page 44.

## The Establishment of a Forbes and Fifth Business Improvement District

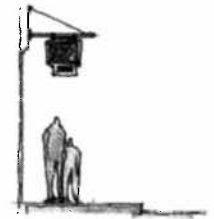
Since August 1996 OPDC has been working to plan, structure and build consensus for forming a Business Improvement District (BID) in the Forbes/Fifth commercial corridor. A BID is a legal mechanism for property owners in the district to agree to levy an additional assessment on their properties to pay for services beyond those that local government provides. A BID is seen as the clearest way to facilitate positive, noticeable change in the Forbes/Fifth corridor.

The preliminary plan is to provide services in three main areas: appearance and maintenance; marketing and promotion; and management, advocacy, and safety promotion. The Steering Committee, comprised of city, business and institutional representatives, is working on the following issues, which must be resolved before the plan and legislation is presented to City Council for approval or action in 1988:

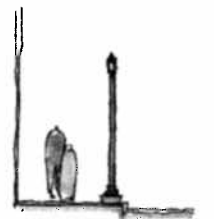
- To decide on the area and specific boundaries of the BID;
- To determine the method of assessment and revenue sources;
- To plan the BID's scope of services and budget;
- To review draft resolution and/or ordinance for City Council.

Financing the BID will combine assessment with voluntary contributions, because Oakland has so many tax-exempt properties. The City of Pittsburgh has contributed \$20,000 for the study, and has promised another \$50,000 for the first year to help leverage other funding, particularly from the owners of the Tax Exempt properties. Annual contributions are being considered by the institutional property owners for tax-exempt properties, but the amounts are not yet finalized.

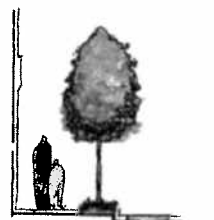
All the partners in the BID believe that improvements in the business district will make Oakland a cleaner, safer, and more inviting place to work, live and shop. An improved Business District will support housing development in the adjoining neighborhoods, because as the image and appearance of the business district improves, Oakland will become a more desirable place to live.



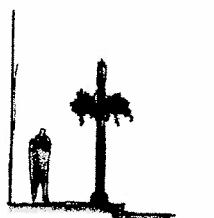
Vendor Signage



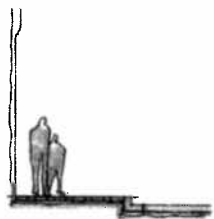
Street Lighting



Street Trees



Hanging Baskets



Sidewalk Paving

## Zoning

### Concept

Oakland is a place of unusual density and concentrated activity. While the new citywide zoning ordinance will be appropriate for much of Oakland, it does have unique needs that should be recognized through special Oakland zoning initiatives.

Much of Central Oakland is zoned for very dense development, which has encouraged both the conversion of houses into apartments and speculative development. Oakland's Fifth and Forbes Business District is more like a downtown in scale and density than a typical neighborhood business district. The Civic Center is unique to Oakland. Atwood Street represents an opportunity to reinforce and extend the existing pattern of small scale mixed use development and to provide a less expensive site for small businesses to locate. The Boulevard of the Allies has the potential to become the grand boulevard connection between Downtown, Oakland and Schenley Park that it was intended to be.

The following special districts are designed to accentuate the positive attributes of each area, and to protect and enhance the fine qualities of Oakland. Properties owned by institutions that are located outside the EMI zone will be included in their institutional master plans.



### Oakland Special Districts

#### Fifth and Forbes.

The Fifth and Forbes District should become a lively commercial environment of highly mixed uses, including housing, and multilevel retail on the blocks closest to Bouquet. Buildings should be 5–6 stories in height, and always contain first floor retail.

#### Purpose:

- To provide a zoning classification suitable for application to the Fifth and Forbes corridor, where an intensive concentration of mixed uses that accommodate office, retail, housing, institutional, classrooms, and student housing of all types is desirable;
- To encourage continuous retail business frontage at street or similar pedestrian level, with additional retail, office, classrooms, institutional, and residential uses as the primary uses of upper stories of buildings;
- To encourage private development which creates a vibrant and attractive pedestrian environment along the public streets.

#### Proposal:

- **Ground Floor Uses.** Storefront commercial uses shall be required along all sides of buildings that front on a sidewalk, plaza or other public open space.
- **Building Height.** The maximum building height shall be six stories or 85 feet. Any new building that is less than four stories or 45 feet in height shall require site plan review and approval.
- **Build-to-Line.** All new construction shall maintain 90 percent building frontage along the established Build-to-Line.
- **Ground Floor Transparency.** The street level façade shall be transparent between the height of three feet and eight feet above the walkway grade for no less than 75 percent of the horizontal length of the building façade.
- **Surface Parking.** No unenclosed surface parking lots will be permitted.
- **Setbacks.** The south sides of Fifth and Forbes should have ten-foot first floor setbacks for wider sidewalks.

### Atwood Street

The Atwood Street District would allow the mixed use pattern of development to continue on the same small scale.

#### Purpose

- To encourage limited retail and restaurant uses in the ground floors of residential-like structures.
- To promote and enhance the quality of life in nearby residential areas by providing for the retail and service needs of the residents, while minimizing the adverse impacts that are frequently associated with retail and restaurant uses in residential neighborhoods.
- To maintain the existing residential scale and character of the street in order to address potential impacts of commercial development in a residential area.

#### Proposal:

- **Uses:** In addition to residential and other uses allowed in a RM zone, allow limited retail sales and service, office and restaurant uses. If no new construction, other than Interior remodeling, is proposed, the additional uses shall be permitted by right. If new construction or exterior alterations are proposed, the additional use shall require review and approval as a Board Exception.
- **Ground Floor Use Only:** All non-residential uses shall only occur on the first level of the structure.
- **Building Design:** New construction and exterior alterations shall be designed to reflect the predominate style associated with existing residential structures in the Atwood Street District. This provision shall be interpreted as requiring similar building materials, building heights, setbacks and building coverage.
- **Off Street Parking:** There shall be no minimum off-street parking requirement for non-residential uses in the Atwood Street District. Non-residential uses shall not be allowed to provide more off-street parking spaces than the minimum number of spaces required by the off-street parking schedule.
- **Building Height:** The maximum building height shall be 3 stories or 40 feet.

### Boulevard of the Allies

The Boulevard of the Allies District should become the grand boulevard it was intended to be, as the entrance to both Oakland and Schenley Park. West of Bates Street, buildings should be consistent in character, 4-5 stories, containing non-residential, big-box retail, office, or hotel uses.

#### Purpose

- To encourage the redevelopment of the Boulevard of the Allies as a grand boulevard and an entrance to both Oakland and Schenley Park as well as an attractive connection to Downtown.
- To encourage development of the area west of Bates Street primarily for office and institutional facilities.
- To create consistency in scale, size and design of buildings on the Boulevard of the Allies in order to reflect the desire to create an urban boulevard.
- To address the need for an alternative and safe pedestrian environment which promotes strong connections between neighborhoods on both sides of the street.

#### Proposal

- **Building Height:** The maximum building height shall be five stories or 60 feet.
- **Build-to-Line:** All new construction shall maintain 90 percent building frontage along the established Build-to-Line.
- **Surface Parking:** Accessory off-street parking areas containing more than 25 spaces are allowed only if they are approved in accordance with the Conditional Use review procedures.
- **Front Setback:** All buildings on development sites of over 20,000 square feet shall be set back 30 feet from the right of way. Landscaping in the front setback is encouraged.



## Zoning

### Civic Center

The Oakland Civic Center District is unlike any other area in Pittsburgh. The public and private institutions, monumental architecture and grand public spaces do not easily fit into any traditional zoning district like "commercial", and yet the new Educational-Medical-Institutional District is not appropriate either.

#### Purpose:

- To maintain and enhance the existing civic-like character of the area, with the monumental civic buildings and open spaces, and the strong connection to Schenley Park;
- To promote a pedestrian friendly environment and the development of usable public open green space within the district.

#### Proposal:

- Building Height. The maximum building height shall be 85 feet or nine stories.
- Underground Parking. No surface parking lots will be permitted. Underground parking areas are encouraged.



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