

BLUE ASH CITY COUNCIL

March 13, 2014

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**1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

A regular meeting of the Council of the City of Blue Ash, Ohio, was held on March 13, 2014. Mayor Lee Czerwonka called the meeting to order in the Blue Ash Conference Room at 7:00 PM.

**2. OPENING CEREMONIES**

Mayor Czerwonka led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. APPOINTMENT OF KARLA PLANK TO SERVE AS ACTING CLERK OF COUNCIL IN THE ABSENCE OF JAMIE K. EIFERT, CLERK OF COUNCIL**

**4. ROLL CALL**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Vice Mayor Tom Adamec, Councilman Rick Bryan, Councilman Robert Buckman, Councilwoman Stephanie Stoller, Councilman James Sumner, and Mayor Lee Czerwonka

MEMBERS ABSENT: Councilman Mark Weber

Councilman Bryan moved, Councilman Sumner seconded to excuse Councilman Weber from the meeting. A voice vote was taken. All members present voted yes. Motion carried.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager David Waltz, Solicitor Bryan Pacheco, Acting Clerk of Council Karla Plank, Assistant City Manager Kelly Harrington, Treasurer Sherry Poppe, Parks & Recreation Director Chuck Funk, Public Works Director Gordon Perry, Fire Chief Rick Brown, Police Chief Paul Hartinger, Community Development Director Dan Johnson, and interested citizens

**5. ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA**

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

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4. ROLL CALL
5. ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA
6. WORK SESSION – Comprehensive Plan
7. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS
8. EXECUTIVE SESSION
  - a. Personnel Matters – *to consider the appointment, employment, dismissal, discipline, promotion, demotion, or compensation of a public employee or official.*
9. ADJOURNMENT

**6. WORK SESSION – Comprehensive Plan**

City Manager David Waltz explained to Council, residents and Sycamore students attending the work session, that Blue Ash adopted a Comprehensive Plan 30-40 years ago as an opportunity to decide what types of buildings, land uses, etc. would be developed and in what parts of the City. The Comprehensive Plan is updated every 10 years. Most of what exists today was born from the last Comprehensive Plan. Because the City is mostly built out, the challenge in updating the City's Comprehensive Plan is how to build out what remains, how to redevelop areas that need to be converted, and what the City should look like over the next 20-30 years.

Mr. Waltz introduced Greg Dale, Principal of McBride Dale Clarion which is a planning consulting firm.

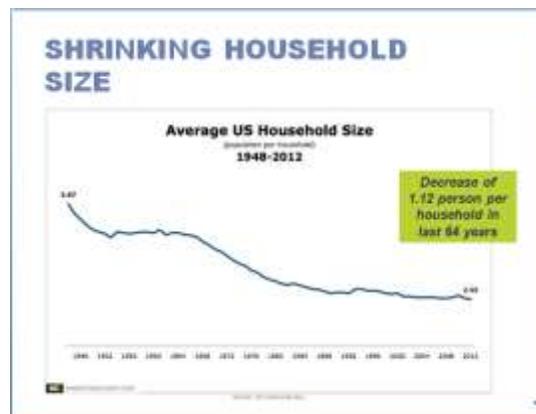
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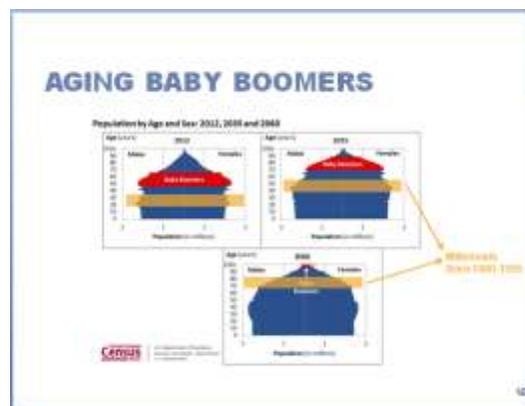
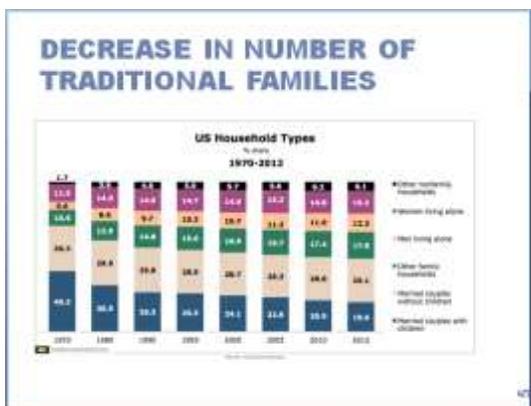
Mr. Dale thanked Council for the opportunity and introduced his partner, Elizabeth Fields. Mr. Dale is excited to assist the City of Blue Ash to kick-off the first stage of updating the Comprehensive Plan. He was asked to facilitate a series of focus group meetings as a precursor to the full fledge launch of the Comprehensive Plan. Two focus groups were held on Wednesday, March 12<sup>th</sup> and three more will be held on March 24<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Dale explained that the input will help in working with Administration to develop an essential scope of what the update to the Comprehensive Plan will be. The presentation is to provide an understanding of where the trends are going in suburban communities over the next 20 years.



Mr. Dale explained that there are three patterns that occur around the country and suburban areas. One is the changing demographics of this country and the impact it might have on housing and housing demands. Second is what is happening in the suburban office market. Over the past 30-40 years, Blue Ash has been a high quality stable suburban office market in the region. Third is improving quality of life and livability.



The changing demographics and the forecasted impact on the housing market and demands. Mr. Dale explained that the average household size is shrinking which isn't a new trend. In 1942, after World War II, the average household size was 3.6 and today it is 2.55.



Related is the changing composition of households. Since 1970, the traditional married couples with one or two children has been shrinking. In contrast, people living alone and other non-traditional households have been growing in the same time period. By 2035, the

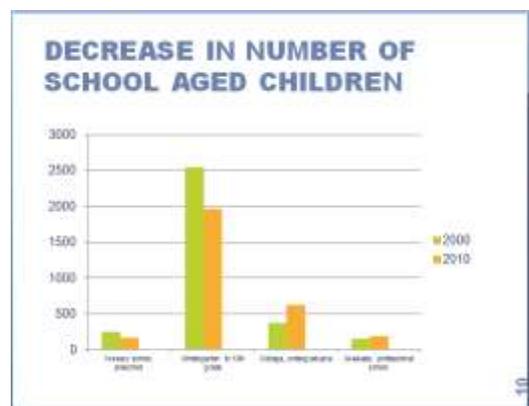
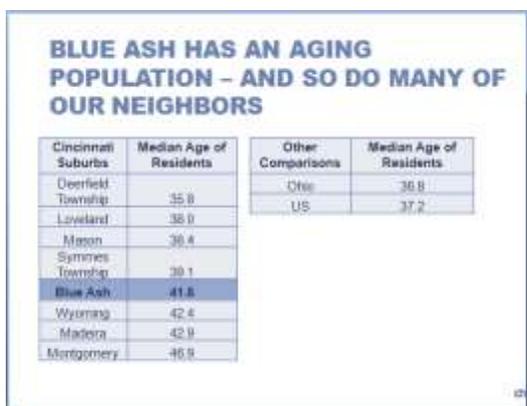
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baby boomers will reach the peak of the chart; and by 2060, baby boomers will nearly be gone. Coming up behind the baby boomers is the millennial generation. The implications of housing choices of these generations are changing.



As a national trend, Blue Ash’s small household size is more pronounced as compared to its peer communities.



The same is true in terms of the average median age. Blue Ash tends to be more in the middle and is younger in age in the surrounding suburbs, but is older than some other communities, and higher than the State and United States average as a whole.

A similar trend is played out in the decrease in the number of school aged children, kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade – 2000 vs. 2010 – which has implications for school aged children as well.



**What, if any, alternative housing choices should Blue Ash consider to meet changing demographics?**

Forecasted trends into the future are 40% of the population growth by 2040 will be 65 and older; housing growth of ages 35-64 will be half; 80% of the household growth will be households without children; 40% will be a single-person household; and half of the new housing demand is forecasted to be for attached housing with the other half forecasted to be on much smaller lots than what has been experienced. Mr. Dale realizes that City Council has been wrestling with this issue as with many suburban communities in terms of renters. The forecasts are about half of the housing demand is going to be in the renter segment. The question is what, if any, alternative housing the City should consider to meet changing demographics. Is this something that should be on the City’s agenda to be thinking about

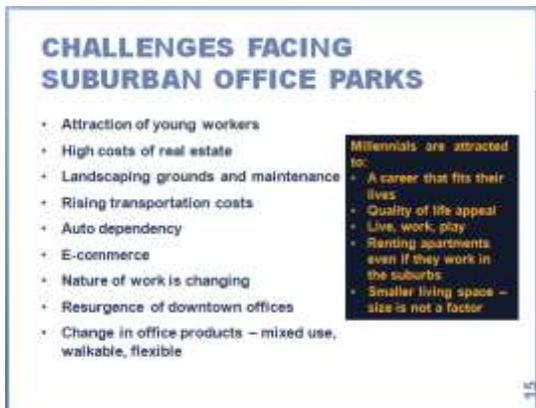
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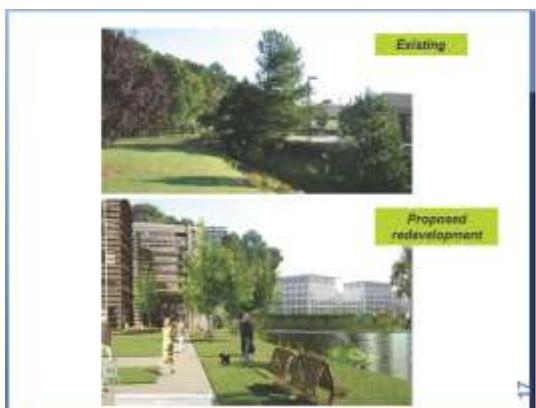
and planning for going forward with a comprehensive plan.



The evolving suburban office parks are important to the City of Blue Ash. Blue Ash has been the premier regional location for the suburban office park. Along Reed Hartman Highway are developments of approximately 4.6 million square feet of suburban office space that is doing well. The vacancy rates are low, rents are solid, and there are clear signs of stability but are also aging. Most of the buildings were built in the 1970s and 1980s and slowing down in the 1990. None of the multi-tenant offices were built in the last five years. Around the region and the country, that suburban office market is not what is being built today.



A lot of communities are beginning to look at some challenges they are facing with office markets. Surveys have shown that the millennial workers are going to be the workforce for the next 20-30 years. Their career and work environment choices are different than the baby boomer generation. The millennials want the career that fits their lives, quality of life appeal (live-work-play). They are concerned about the increased costs of maintenance, rising transportation, and auto dependency. As a result, communities are thinking about the viability of this model.



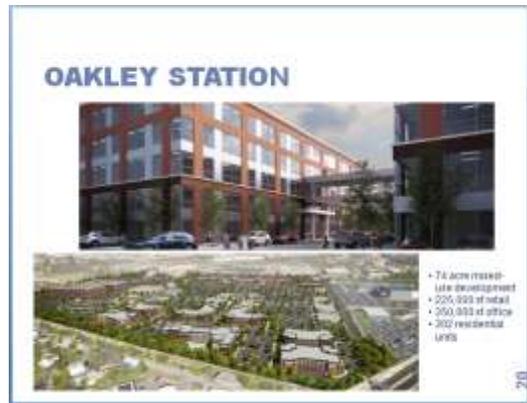
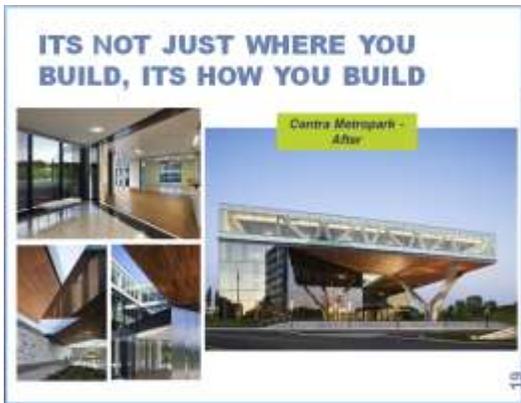
The Research Triangle in North Carolina near Raleigh and Durham area has been an iconic suburban office park. The image of the offices in the woods – woodland campus feel. They are going through a massive master planning process to reinvent themselves to be viable for the long term – intensification, urbanization, mixture of uses, amenities in terms of pedestrian

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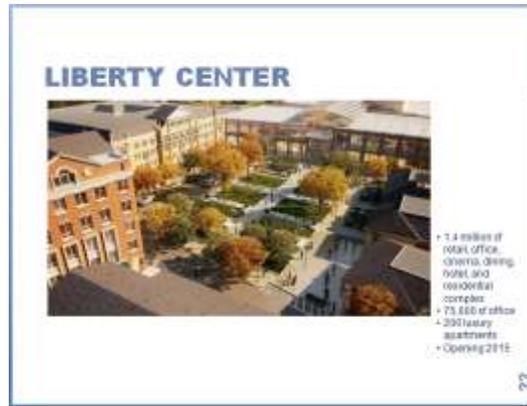
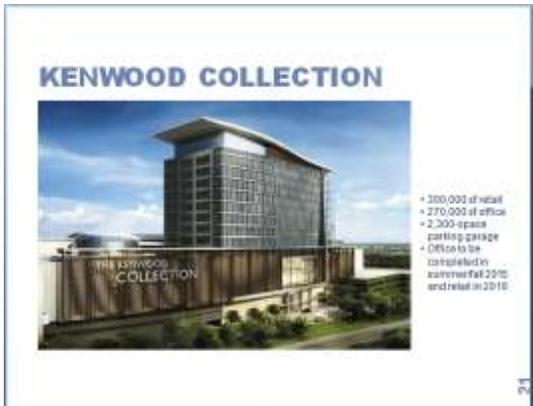
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facilities.

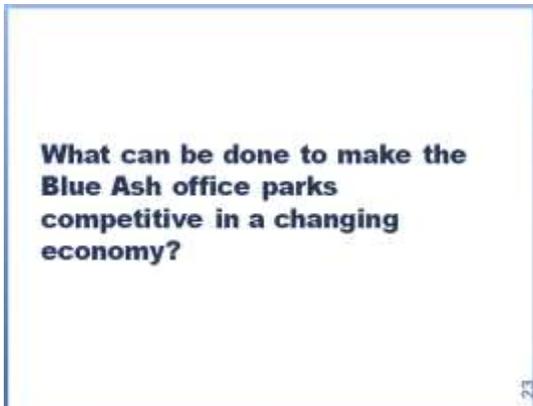
New Jersey was the place where the suburban office market grew to serve the New York City metro market. In the 1970s and 1980s, it was the area that became the model. New Jersey is going through a similar process of where they are trying to rethink that model. More and more suburban communities around the country are beginning to look at the suburban office, auto dependent, free standing buildings surrounded by parking, single use facility and are concerned about how competitive it is going to be for the next generation.



The surrounding competition has about a 1.5 million sq. ft. of office coming online in the next couple of years but in settings different from the single use, auto dependent, office buildings surrounded by parking. Oakley Station in Cincinnati has mixed-uses, including 350,000 sq. ft. of office with residential in walking distance.



Kenwood has 270,000 sq. ft. of office. Liberty Center has 75,000 sq. ft. of office. All in a very mixed-use environment.



The next question is what can be done to make the Blue Ash office parks competitive in a changing economy? In the 1970s and 1980s, there were approximately five thriving regional malls. Today, there is one in the region that is healthy. Kenwood Mall has repeatedly reinvented itself and is the one in the region that remains healthy. It may be hard to imagine Blue Ash having problems when its vacancy rates and rents are nice and healthy, but looking 20 years into the future, it is something that needs to be thought about. What can be done to make this hugely important part of the community and fiscal picture viable and sustainable

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for the long-term.

**QUALITY OF LIFE ELEMENTS**

Many elements can improve an area's quality of life for its residents including:

- Access to parks and recreation facilities
- Walking paths and trails
- Desirable commercial destinations
- Restaurants and entertainment amenities
- Quality work environments
- Safe transportation networks and complete streets
- Housing options that are affordable, safe, and desirable

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**COMPLETE STREETS CAN IMPROVE SENSE OF PLACE**

Communities across the Country are implementing complete street programs to increase the comfort, safety, and convenience of travel for everyone – motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, transit

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The broad category of quality of life and livability is the other thing that is being heard in suburban communities. Zoning codes in suburban communities separate uses, keep density down, and put lots of open space around building. Today more and more communities are thinking that if they are going to be competitive, it needs to be more than a city of independent nice developments. It manifests into community character and curb appeal. The idea of better access to parks and recreation, walking paths and trails in a pedestrian orientation is huge around the country and is resonating with people. More desirable commercial destination, restaurant and entertainment amenities, quality work environment are in the broad category of quality of life. Suburban communities around the country are thinking about complete streets. Complete streets are the idea that streets and the way they are being designed to maximize the most flow through them with the least resistance.

**BLUE ASH STREETS ARE AUTO-ORIENTED AND LACK OPTIONS**

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**BLUE ASH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONNECTIVITY PLAN**

**NEW SIDEWALKS ALLOW FOR EASY CONNECTIVITY AROUND THE CITY**

During the last summer alone, Blue Ash installed more than 100 miles of new sidewalks and crosswalks to help connect to other areas around the city. The City will continue to work on projects for more sidewalks, crosswalks, and trails, and will continue to work on projects for more sidewalks, crosswalks, and trails.

**SIDEWALK SAFETY TIPS:**

- Walk on a sidewalk or path whenever possible.
- If no sidewalk is available, walk facing traffic in the direction of travel.
- Look for vehicles before crossing streets, and always use the crosswalk.
- Never drink and drive.
- Use crosswalks, and look for vehicles and other pedestrians.
- At night or in low light, wear bright clothing and reflective gear.

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Streets should be more welcoming to people and bicyclists, more esthetically pleasing landscaping, etc. People are realizing in a suburban community, there can be a better job of making streets places where people can be walking.

**BLUE ASH SUMMIT PARK DEVELOPMENT**

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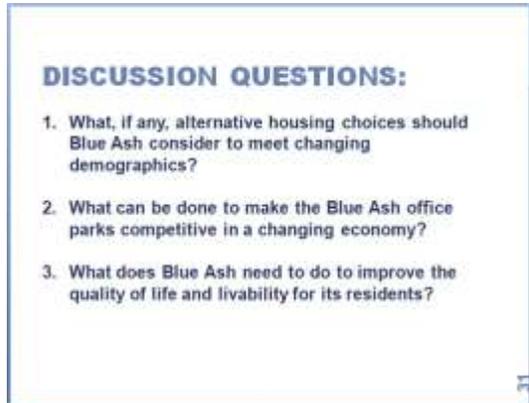
**What does Blue Ash need to do to improve the quality of life and livability for its residents?**

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Summit Park is a tremendous opportunity to increase the quality of life and livability and is designed to be pedestrian friendly. The potential private development that will occur will help further some of those as well. The third question is what does Blue Ash need to do improve the quality of life and livability for its residents.

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Mr. Dale encouraged Council to take a few minutes and jot down notes in response to the questions and shared what their responses were.

Councilman Bryan felt the City needed more single, one-level homes.

Councilman Buckman felt the City needs more townhomes.

Councilwoman Stoller felt the City needs smaller homes with smaller lots that are more affordable.

Vice Mayor Adamec felt the City needs more townhome development closer to super markets and walking paths. He believes the City needs more mixed-use areas combined with apartments and condominiums and not devoted to one type of housing mix.

Mayor Czerwonka felt the City needs to improve old housing stock by updating, remodeling or replacing the aging housing stock.

Mr. Dale stated that while suburban communities all over the country are thinking about these issues they struggle with them as well. The millennials believe that buying a house is not a good investment and don't want to be tied down to a house. The millennials are under the belief that if they buy a house, they are committed to being there for a period of time to create an investment, even in a good economy. The value of homeownership is not for everybody.

Councilman Sumner commented that millennials do not want to be tied down to a house. Council struggles with apartments in Blue Ash and that the millennials are not necessarily invested in the community but it doesn't mean that they cannot be vested.

Mayor Czerwonka commented that a campus environment should be considered as a component to office parks.

Vice Mayor Adamec feels that soft trends are not where they were in the 1960s through 1980. The majority of residents then were homeowners who wanted privacy, in a good school district.

Mr. Dale reminded there are big trends but the land use patterns in Blue Ash are largely set. He explained that the City's office parks are not going anywhere. Carpenter's Run isn't going anywhere. The question is how does the City retrofit and infill.

Mayor Czerwonka stated the City was set up originally as a balanced community with 1/3 residential, 1/3 commercial, 1/3 recreation and doesn't want to upset that balance.

Vice Mayor Adamec stated that if there is an office park, it should be multi-use. He feels it needs to be a certain percentage of commercial, office and residential.

Mr. Dale stated that there is a lot of land between the office parks in the City. Mr. Dale feels the City's codes may not allow for setbacks, densities, and uses. The strategy may be to get out of the way of these trends. He suspects, in the next 20 years, the owners of those office parks will want to be competitive with the market. The City has to start doing things such as going up in density and filling in, adding amenities, adding other uses, mixing other uses. The land around those office buildings, there is a tremendous opportunity to do something more than what is currently there. He feels the City does not want to be in a position where someone wants to come in and make a positive reinvestment to only realize that the City codes will not allow them to do it.

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Councilman Buckman stated that the City needs to make sure that there is easy ingress and egress. Access should be a big feature.

Mr. Dale stated that connectivity, pedestrian friendliness, the ability to have more options whether they are vehicular connectivity or pedestrian connectivity. Young professionals as well as older residents want to be able to get out and walk somewhere and have different options.

Councilman Bryan felt the City needs to integrate amenities such as restaurants and movie theatres.

Councilwoman Stoller commented that with the City being 1/3 office, 1/3 residential, 1/3 recreation, she feels the City needs to try to integrate them.

Councilman Bryan included non-automobile transportation through the means of bicycles, rental bicycles, segways, etc. should be considered.

Mr. Dale moved Council onto the subject of the quality of life. He explained that suburban communities are wrestling with the livability quality of life. He questioned what it means to Council and what might be done to improve the quality of life and livability, if anything.

In talking about the City's 1/3 division, Mayor Czerwonka feels it should be blended or create more connectivity.

Councilman Sumner feels that the City is good in terms of quality of life and livability despite the economic pressure to cut costs.

Mayor Czerwonka feels maintaining the City's fiscal health and amenities is the number one attraction to the City.

Vice Mayor Adamec stated there are two things that the City does well with and why people come to live in Blue Ash is because of its great amenities and a great school system. He feels that anything that is done to overload that, it takes away from the livability.

Councilman Sumner reminded that Blue Ash's success is because of the Sycamore School District. If the City did not have a good quality school district, he feels the City would not be as much of an attraction. He feels it perpetuates itself because people want to move their family here and bring their children here which results in business investment that provides for the schools.

Councilwoman Stoller stated that the downtown area needs to have more of an urban atmosphere where people could walk around downtown and have a square that people could meet, shop, and eat at restaurants to meet the demand.

Mr. Dale stated that, as a planner, Blue Ash's downtown has made a lot of effort to create that mixed-use, vibrant, walkable area downtown but it still has low density parking lots and one or two story buildings.

Councilman Sumner commented the land values in the downtown area are so high that it makes redevelopment very expensive. The City's Downtown Master Plan has targeted for high density housing hoping that it would bring the mass of population to downtown which would then foster redevelopment of the City's downtown businesses and bring that pedestrian flow.

A Sycamore student indicated that they wanted Blue Ash to continue to be a model city. When you create the office parks and affordable living, he feels the City should collaborate with University of Cincinnati engineers to provide an energy in the office parks. The City has all the resources to succeed and feels collaboration with University of Cincinnati to help continue to make Blue Ash as the model City.

Mr. Dale indicated that other suburban communities are starting to emphasize sustainability and best management practices when planning. It is not just in private development but also in public infrastructure. The whole concept of sustainable infrastructure – green, LEED, etc. are a big part of what a lot of communities are looking at.

Another Sycamore student liked the idea of a movie theatre in the Blue Ash.

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Councilman Sumner felt a movie theatre in the downtown area would be a good destination point for small restaurants.

Mayor Czerwonka and Councilwoman Stoller felt there should be more nightlife.

Councilman Bryan struggled with the cause and effect when the young professionals talk about wanting to have an urban experience, but questions if they want the urban experience in a suburban environment.

A Sycamore student feels that apartments are more for those who work in Blue Ash. The City should be targeted more towards the families that come for the schools and the sense of community.

Councilman Bryan believes the millennials want to live in the downtown urban environment and not necessarily just live in apartments. He doesn't believe that building a big apartment will bring in the businesses that make it a fun place to live.

Mr. Dale encouraged Council to think about when the millennials graduate, get their first job, and want to live in the City, do they have options?

A Sycamore student responded that the younger generation wants to live in an apartment and believes they would not want to live in Blue Ash where there are little kids and in a school district but rather in an environment where there are events are going on. She stated that the joke in high school is that there is nothing to do in Blue Ash on the weekend. She loves living in Blue Ash and going to school in Sycamore but there is nothing to do.

Another Sycamore student responded that when deciding on a college to attend, they tend to gravitate to a college where they can do things. Their plans are not to return to Blue Ash.

The Sycamore student responded that they would probably move to an apartment close to their work. She would like to see Blue Ash as a community that one can walk to neighboring restaurants.

Mr. Waltz stated that the City has a variety of housing choices that are being made. Some young professional indicated that they wanted to live in a suburb but wanted more amenities, others indicated that they work in Blue Ash but get out of the city as soon as they can. The City of Blue Ash is a suburban area and cannot necessarily have that urban environment, but feels the City can continue to make it an exciting, relevant suburb.

Mayor Czerwonka stated that he sees two different synergies – one is residential and the other is commercial. The same benefits have to be given to the residents as well as to the work force.

Councilman Sumner feels there should be a diversity of housing mixes. The key question is what types of mixed of housing does the City want? Currently, the City is at 21% apartments and another 9-10% rental homes. There are only a few places where the City can allow apartments but Council needs to decide whether that is what they want. There are few places where one can build single family homes in Blue Ash. Does Council want them to be high density, single family homes or the traditional low density, single family homes. The City only has only one big plat of land for single family homes and then a couple small plats that could have 5 to 6 homes.

Mr. Dale added that a determination should be made as the type of single family residential and in what type of environment. An apartment complex has one driveway into it and is entirely the residential version of the office park. One can only get there by driving to it and the only other thing you can do is to drive somewhere else.

Mr. Dale feels the changes for the City of Blue Ash would be incremental or retro-fitting opportunities and be thoughtful of the idea of embracing some of the values but being clear that it is being done on a selective basis where it can be done without damaging the integrity.

Judi Hosbrook doesn't feel the City needs more small housing. She believes people want to build medium-sized housing and entertains the idea of tear downs and rebuilds of bigger homes and should encourage incentives. It would increase the tax base and be better for the community. She would also like there to be smaller, affordable condos for retired people that come and live here because they love the City and the amenities.

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Councilman Buckman responded that the City of Montgomery has 150x200 foot lots where one could tear down a ranch and build a large home. In Blue Ash, there are specific areas that need to be torn down but the lots are not necessarily large enough for a rebuild.

The next exercise Mr. Dale asked Council to look at a City map and draw some things on the map as a group that allows one to think about these things that were talked about but more in a real physical setting. Green markings highlight both residential and commercial and office developments that are stable, healthy, and successful. Blue markings are areas in transition that are in the process of redeveloping. Red markings represent areas that are in need of significant change.

**7. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS**

Mr. Waltz indicated that Council should have received a memo and white paper in their packets restating the background as to why the City is rezoning the 98 acres at the former airport to M-1.

Councilman Sumner moved, Vice Mayor Adamec seconded to accept the Plans for the former Blue Ash Airport rezoning summary into the record. A voice vote was taken. All members present voted yes. Motion carried.

Plans for the former Blue Ash Airport

*The former Blue Ash Airport site now contains Summit Park (130 acres) and the residual runway parcel (98+ acres) that is still owned by the City of Cincinnati.*

*The zoning covering these two parcels has remained the same since long before the site was divided for the sale of the land that would become Summit Park. It is based on a prior land use scheme that does not match either the intent of prior Comprehensive Plans or the reality of the combined site today. Prior plans had considered only that the entire 230 acres would become available for development, which will not happen. There were never any formally adopted plans that considered a land use scheme for the runway site as it exists today.*

*The 98-acre runway site (as well as Summit Park) is currently zoned a mix of R-1 residential, R-2 Residential, and M-2 Planned Office-Industrial. Such zoning does not represent any logical boundaries of development likely to occur on the entire site. Nor are such existing districts related to physical constraints of the land. The runway site also no longer has direct access to Glendale Milford Road, except through Summit Park.*

*Blue Ash has not undertaken a Comprehensive Planning and Zoning process since the Airport was subdivided and closed so there has been no formal opportunity for the City to develop its position relative to the future zoning of the land. Generally, when a zoning map no longer fits because of a change that significantly affects the ability of the land to develop in the manner previously laid out, then it is prudent to apply a "placeholder" district that*

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*could then be changed when there is some formal impetus to change it. This could include an application from a landowner or an update to a Comprehensive Plan or another area plan that contemplates a specific use scheme upon which new zoning could be based.*

*Blue Ash administration originally considered rezoning the entire area to M-1 because much of the adjacent zoning is M-1, and much of the land area is logically within the area of the Reed Hartman Highway corridor; an area that is appropriate for office commercial development and that contributes significantly to the City's attractive image.*

*In 2012, Cincinnati representatives asked the City of Blue Ash to work with a developer on a land use scheme that would provide a mix of office, commercial, and residential uses on the runway site. To that end, Blue Ash City Council met in October 2012 to review a plan that included about equal parts residential, mixed-use, and office development. Blue Ash did not take any formal action in support of the scheme, but agreed that it would likely be willing to further examine such a development pattern, if a developer formally proposed it.*

*Without any formal proposal having been submitted, Blue Ash continued towards rezoning the entire site to the M-1 district. By letter, the City Cincinnati asked Blue Ash to suspend its rezoning process until March 2013 to give it time to work with a developer on a plan similar to the one reviewed by Blue Ash City Council in October. Blue Ash agreed to do this.*

*After no contact from Cincinnati for almost an entire year after the requested March 2013 time proposed by Cincinnati, the Blue Ash administration believed it would be prudent to move forward with the rezoning as originally proposed.*

*Only after Blue Ash notified Cincinnati that the process was again underway did Cincinnati offer any input. An attorney representing Cincinnati submitted another letter requesting that Blue Ash again postpone the process to allow time to work with a developer. The Blue Ash Planning Commission decided to move forward and considered the proposed M-1 zoning at its meeting on March 6, 2014 and recommended that it be approved by City Council as proposed.*

*The proposed rezoning simply protects the interests*

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*of Blue Ash absent any formal input that would dictate another zoning scheme. Nothing would prevent Blue Ash from again amending the Zoning Map to reflect a request by a property owner or a plan that is formally considered and adopted by the City of Blue Ash. The City is just now embarking on a process to update the Comprehensive Plan, which may include an updated land use plan. It is likely that a more refined policy or land use vision will be developed relevant to the former airport site as part of the Comprehensive Plan update.*

**8. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

After all items on the agenda were acted upon, Councilman Buckman moved, Councilwoman Stoller seconded to convene an Executive Session to discuss matters pertaining to Personnel Matters. The Clerk called the roll. Councilpersons Adamec, Bryan, Stoller, Sumner, Buckman, and Mayor Czerwonka voted yes. Six yeses. Motion carried.

After matters pertaining to Personnel Matters were discussed, Vice Mayor Adamec moved, Councilman Buckman seconded to convene to the regular meeting. A voice vote was taken. All Council members voted yes. Motion carried.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

All items on the agenda having been acted upon, Councilman Sumner moved, Councilwoman Stoller seconded to adjourn the meeting. A voice vote was taken. All members voted yes. The Council meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:35 PM.

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Lee Czerwonka, Mayor

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Karla Plank, Acting Clerk of Council

MINUTES RECORDED AND WRITTEN BY:

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Karla Plank, Administrative Assistant