



## SHAKER HEIGHTS

**Neighborhood Revitalization and Development Agenda  
Via Zoom Meeting Due to COVID-19  
Public Health Emergency  
Wednesday, September 9, 2020, at 6:00 p.m.**

For the safety of staff and residents, in-person attendance is not permitted.

Join online as a viewer or listener from a PC, Mac, iPad, iPhone or Android device at <https://zoom.us/j/94329525632?pwd=dFdrK2VQTTNqZDNJS2lyYVdsTGJ6Zz09>, Password: 33553400; Description: Neighborhood Revitalization and Development; or join by phone at 833-548-0282 (toll free); Webinar ID: 943 2952 5632; Password: 33553400.

International numbers available at <https://zoom.us/u/a4Kc6HFL>

1. Approval of the August 12, 2020 meeting minutes.

Documents:

[NRD MINUTES 081220.PDF](#)

2. 2020 NOACA TLCI Grant Program Application for the Lee Road Corridor Connections Action Plan

Documents:

[MEMO - NRD COMMITTEE FINAL CHANGES - TLCI LEE ROAD 2020 0903.PDF](#)

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that. There were one or two people we thought might comment, one of whom we found out earlier today was not able to join us, but we want to make sure that if the public has anything they want to say and end up joining us in this meeting, their voices will be heard as well.

Neighborhood Revitalization Director Kamla Lewis stated that since with the exception of Council member Mrs. Moore, most of the Committee members have not had much experience with the City's Land Bank, we thought it would be helpful for Director Lewis to provide an overview and give the Committee an opportunity to ask any questions and make suggestions about the land bank's operation. Director Lewis gave a five minute summary when she presented an overview of her department earlier this year but there was so much information provided to the Committee that night that they are forgiven if they do not remember. In the memo she distributed tonight she provided a detailed background and history of the land bank and will now focus on the main principles behind the operation. There is a lot of nuance and she wants to make sure there is plenty of time for questions and answers.

### **What is the land bank and why do cities have land banks?**

They are governmental entities, or in some cases like the County Land Bank, they are non-profit corporations that acquire, hold, repurpose, and dispose of properties to serve community needs. To be specific Director Lewis will only be talking about our residential land bank although we also do commercial land banking. Land banks exist because of the recognition that land is an asset and that control of land is an important tool for cities in maintaining and building their tax bases and shaping land uses in their communities. The City actively began using land banking as a tool in 2002 coming out of our 2001 Housing Plan, part of which was a call for the diversification of the City's housing options as an important way for the City to remain competitive into the future. At that time the City owned only 7 single-family vacant lots and now we own 222+ vacant lots, and we acquire on average 10 – 15 additional residential lots per year. You can see that a lot has changed.

### **How does a land bank operate?**

Land banks carry out four main functions: acquire properties; hold properties (moth balling); prepare properties for redevelopment; and dispose of properties. The specifics of how land banks carry out these functions varies considerably from community to community and the prevailing community goals and conditions. While our land bank has carried out all of these functions over time, the focus has varied considerably over the years. At the outset, the focus was on acquisition of land through purchase and encouraging the construction of new houses. Fast forward to the foreclosure crisis and the focus is on acquiring properties that would otherwise remain abandoned and unmaintained or were likely to be prey to irresponsible speculation. In addition we spent quite a bit of energy on holding properties and preparing them for redevelopment either through demolition or through rehab. As market conditions fortunately stabilized and improved our focus then shifted toward rehab of properties as well as disposition of properties for side lots and infill. These priorities are articulated annually through the budget process and the development of our departmental action plans in accordance with the City's priorities each year. While during the tenure of Mayor Leiken the priority was on holding land for future redevelopment, Mayor Weiss has identified as one of his priorities accelerating the disposition of City-owned properties. As a result of that earlier this year we modified the side lot program to make it easier for residents to acquire vacant lots available as side lots. Also prior to COVID-19 one of the things on the planning horizon

for the land bank was reviewing the City's approach to handling half-duplexes we own as well as strengthening the condo market through using the land banking tool.

### **Land banking guidelines.**

While the priorities have changed over the years, the procedures and guidelines that govern the operation have remained consistent.

- Acquisition Properties for acquisition are identified by Director Lewis and approved by Chief Administrative Officer Jeri E. Chaikin (CAO). There are certain basic things that help with this. Council authorization allows us to administratively acquire all residential properties under \$25,000 without Council approval. In order to prevent irresponsible speculation we have a policy of acquiring all vacant lots that are not purchased privately at a sheriff's sale as well as all properties that are forfeited to the state. We only acquire properties for rehab if we can identify a Shaker Renovator or a housing non-profit who is willing to undertake the rehab. The City's goals for rehabs are high quality renovations that go beyond point-of-sale violation correction to raise neighborhood values and to ensure owner-occupancy. We are very cautious when it comes to taking a property with a structure on it. Properties we do take with structures on them that cannot be rehabbed or demolished are only acquired in highly unusual situations where the alternative of leaving it to the private market will likely result in a continuing cycle of decline.
- Disposition At the time we determine we are going to acquire a property, we also identify the probable disposition strategy of the property. That is the first thing the CAO wants to know, what we will do with it. We might demolish the property and hold the vacant lot, add it to our side lot program, identify it for infill housing, use it for green space, rehab it, have an economic development purpose, etc. Because the time between when we identify we might want to acquire a property and the actual acquisition might take several years, we re-evaluate the disposition at the time of acquisition. A lot may have changed in that time. We also re-evaluate that periodically as market conditions change. When we are determining disposition we consider the lot's location, and multiple departments may be consulted on potential uses depending on where the property is. Lots that are identified internally as best suited for infill or another specific use are not made available for other uses, such as side lots. When we acquire a property we put it on the City website to identify what properties we own, but we designate whether it is available as a side lot or not. Most of the lots are designated for any purpose. The ones held back for infill are typically multiple parcels or a parcel where we know we are going to acquire the adjacent parcel so it will end up a multiple parcel, a lot that might be in a stronger market area more likely to attract infill, and lots that might be reserved under a development and use agreement. When we acquired a vacant lot through demolition that was adjacent to Chelton Park we knew that the Moreland community had been wanting the park expanded, so we did not make that lot available as a side lot and instead held it until we could expand the park. Similarly, when we acquired a rather large lot on Menlo we asked the community what they would like it used for and they wanted it as park space, so it became the Menlo Tot Lot. Because market conditions and City priorities are always changing, the availability of any given lot as a side lot may change. A lot which for years may have been available as a side lot may through an agreement no longer be available in that way. This is what happened when we entered the development and use agreement with Knez in Moreland. Also a lot which may have

been deemed for no specific use to the City when we acquired it may suddenly become strategically important because of a new City project. This happened with a property we recently acquired on Lindholm which at the time the City did not feel it had a specific need for, but now given the work that we are doing in the Chagrin/Lee corridor, we are holding it and not making it available as a side lot. Whenever it is unclear if there is a specific desired use for a property it is made available for all uses: side lot, infill, or community use. In those cases applications for those lots are accepted on a first and best proposal basis. What that means is that applications are taken in the order in which they are received and then accepted or rejected based on Council's assessment on whether they are the best proposal. The disposition of the side lot is based on the program. There are no set prices for any of our vacant lots including infill lots. Anyone interested in a lot for a new home must submit a proposal with an offer price, proof of financing to build the home, and at a minimum a front elevation of the proposed home. To date no one has offered us more than \$1. Because land should be utilized that is owned through the land bank to further community goals as identified by the Mayor and Council, applications to acquire City-owned properties are all reviewed and approved by Council. Buyers also have to demonstrate the capacity to implement the proposed use of the property and show they are in compliance with Shaker codes, not tax delinquent or in foreclosure on any Shaker-owned properties.

- Maintenance Our position has always been that all City-owned properties should be maintained so that they are assets to the community and that is why unlike most land bank programs we determined we would landscape and fence all of our vacant lots so that they fit into the neighborhood. We ensure the curbs are rebuilt where we have demolished a house and the driveway has been removed to reduce dumping. If there is a structure on the property it should either be demolished or sold for rehab as soon as possible to limit liability.

As the market has improved for both side lots and infill we are facing some current issues that we thought was worth bringing to the Committee for further discussion. Historically while acquiring and utilizing land to encourage the development of new housing has always been a City priority for most of the 20 years Director Lewis has been with the City, there has been little demand from builders for City-owned land. Even when we have received requests from neighbors to acquire lots designated for infill or other City priorities we have rejected them. In the last year, and especially in the last six months the interest by both individuals and developers in building homes on these lots has increased significantly. At the same time we are seeing an increase in the interest in side lots by neighbors. This means that we are likely to start encountering more situations where a City-owned lot is wanted by a neighbor as a side lot as well as by a developer as a potential infill site. We already saw that when the Committee considered last month the vacant lot on Fairmount with both the neighbor and developer Keystone Homes for whom we authorized the sale of the lot. Since that time Director Lewis has another developer interested in that same lot who wishes to be notified immediately if the six months option for Keystone Homes expires. This is a lot for which we had no interest before this. We also have two more lots, one that recently came into our possession on Friday and another that will come in shortly that because of their location we are considering logical candidates for infill. We already have two individuals and one developer evaluating that lot for a new home. In addition to the development and use agreement we have with Knez for building homes on up to 20 of our vacant lots over the next 5 years, in the last six months we have been working with

the County Land Bank on a pilot project to build homes on City-owned lots. We are currently at the stage where we are trying to identify builders that we both feel comfortable with. We have been working with Keystate Homes for a couple of years which led to the option agreement that Council approved last month. We are working with another developer who has expressed interest in piloting an infill project on several City-owned lots and we have had a developer from North Carolina express interest in a large scale infill program on our lots. On Friday Director Lewis received a call from one of our best rehabbers who have done a number of properties who now wants to shift into looking at evaluating infill lots. In addition Director Lewis has received a number of calls from individuals who are interested in building new homes in Shaker. She is currently working with a Shaker tenant, three existing Shaker homeowners, a gentleman from New York who wants to move to Shaker, and clients of Knez who are interested in different areas of Shaker. That is a huge increase in the interest we are seeing. The second key issue worth looking at is the price of \$1 for each lot. The City has not sought to negotiate for higher prices for its lots when new houses are going on them because our policy to this point has been to focus on having the best quality house built. We would prefer for the funds to go into higher quality housing. The philosophy has been that the short term gain of a few hundred dollars is far outweighed by the longer term gain of having a higher valued house. As we sell more lots for infill housing however, this question is bound to come up so she thought it was worth raising. Infill housing in almost all of the first ring suburbs requires subsidy. Because of the City's infill guidelines, the cost of building in Shaker is even higher than in most of the other suburbs. The two main tools we have currently to encourage infill development is our tax abatement only available in Moreland, and the availability of our low cost lots.

Mayor Weiss stated that the primary point Directory Lewis mentioned which is accurate is that this is probably the first time at least in recent memory where we have this confluence of two different things happening simultaneously, which is interesting in the midst of a pandemic, to have both an uptick in interest in the side lot program and we are beginning to see an uptick in potential infill. That intersection of issues triggered this, as well as for those residents who are caught in these situations that are maybe on one side of these properties and trying to understand what our approach should be. Although we have seen the infill inquiries and discussions going on, it does take a while. Our discussion with Knez took quite a while to negotiate. For the Keystate Homes developer option, we had also been discussing properties with them for quite a while but did not pull the trigger until just recently. It takes a while and he would certainly like to see a little more definitive progress in this area, some actual sales. Having said that, Knez does seem to be getting traction on their properties. There is no question it is a complicated issue, but we thought it was good to walk the Committee through it and get input.

Chair Roeder stated this is an invitation to a policy discussion on all of the issues presented by Director Lewis for all those present to provide their thoughts, comments or ideas on how we can make this policy even better.

Donna Whyte asked how things are going in Moreland. She is aware of a number of vacant lots there and she appreciates there is an increase in interest, but asked where the interest is occurring, whether across the entire City or concentrated in certain areas. She also asked if someone has purchased a side lot if it can later be developed. She read that double or triple lots which have been reserved for developers may be reconsidered.

Director Lewis stated that she believes that holding on to double and triple lots is really important because if we are to diversify the housing types, most of the lots are so small that they could only fit a single-family house that is vertical. We would not be able to fit a ranch style home and it is harder to have a first floor master on smaller lots. A lot of our discussions with developers were regarding alternatives to single-family housing. That is the more challenging piece so it will take longer to get there because it is an unproven market. She is asking if the community and Council still feel comfortable with that policy of holding on to multiple lots. If someone purchases a side lot and a developer wants it, the developer would have to purchase both the adjacent home and vacant lot. The side lot program requires the homeowner to consolidate the lot with their parcel so that it is one parcel. They could technically ask for it to be subdivided again. With regard to interest in infill, the area we work the hardest to build developer interest is in the Moreland neighborhood. That is what the Moreland Rising project has been about. That is because the role of the City is to encourage where the private market is not yet ready to come in on its own. That is why we offer the additional incentives in Moreland such as tax abatement. The lots that are on Fairmount or Huntington are in much stronger market areas and the private market is much more likely to step forward and do those. Typically a developer does not want to do one offs. Keystate Homes is a custom homebuilder. That is why they are taking an option because they are not building a house until they have a buyer at which time they will build the house specifically for that buyer. The approach we are taking in Moreland is focused on finding developers like the County Land Bank with Knez who wants to do something on a larger scale marketing an entire neighborhood, as opposed to an individual lot.

Council member Mr. Zimmerman stated that Director Lewis provided a great memo on this topic to the Committee. It was quite a history lesson. He remembers one of the very first things he paid attention to in the Neighborhood Revitalization area years ago when he was a new member of Council were the two houses on Lindholm. He understands why we are trying to promote development. It is the right time. There appears to be some interest, a market. The economics seem to be right but he may still be experiencing some of the scars of the foreclosure crisis when it seemed we were constantly acquiring properties, and demolishing them. He asked if there is any particular acute need to continue doing that right now in particular areas or even in general or are we sort of comfortable with the pivot that is going on right now.

Director Lewis stated that unfortunately we are still feeling the after effects of the foreclosure crisis. Even though foreclosure filings are dramatically down, the court process for processing those foreclosures takes an inordinately long time. The cases drag on and come on to the market through sheriff's sale after the foreclosure has completed and those are the properties that we are still taking into our land bank. That is because there really is no other home for them. We have taken in between 10 and 15 properties a year in the last couple of years. In 2019 we took in 21 properties, 19 of them had gone through a tax foreclosure. Of those 17 were vacant lots. Vacant lots have pretty much a value of \$1 in the market place. Nobody is picking up the vacant lots at sheriff's sale. That means they are forfeited. If they are forfeited to the state speculators buy them in mass from out of state. They buy them and realize no one wants to buy them from them so they don't pay taxes and we go back down the same road. That is why from a policy standpoint we determined that any vacant lots that are not sold at sheriff's sale or are forfeited to the state we take in to our land bank

to prevent that cycle from recurring and to make sure those properties are well maintained. A non-maintained property so significantly impacts the adjacent properties that it will negatively impact our property values. We only own half of the vacant lots that are in the City. Most of the vacant lots are privately owned. Our goal is not to take them as long as someone else will and will maintain them. Typically of the properties we get, 99% are through the tax foreclosure process, and the rest are through donations. We only take donations if it is a vacant lot, and tax delinquent. We will take as a conveyance in lieu of taxes to shorten the time it sits there being abandoned. We also take properties that have a structure if we have a good rehabber willing to take on the project.

Mayor Weiss asked Director Lewis to discuss the dollars no longer available for demolitions.

Director Lewis stated that the City's demolition program that has operated for at least the last 7 years has been funded mostly through the county, state and federal grant dollars that we applied for. Federal and state money has long dried up, and this is the last year that the county demolition funds are authorized. To the best of our knowledge the county has made no indication that it plans to authorize additional funds.

Council member Mr. Zimmerman stated that he appreciates the thorough answers and he has learned some new things. Director Lewis is right in that the foreclosure process is very long and a truly lagging indicator. He did not really think about that.

Chair Roeder stated that it is instructive to him also about how lagging it is.

Council member Mrs. Moore stated that if the question is how much additional incentive or whether the City should somehow offer an additional incentive in order to move these vacant lots to ownership either for infill or for a side lot, and if the City's cost to maintain them is approximately \$183,000/year, it was suggested as a public comment to City Council not too long ago that we could offer to pay the taxes on the side lot that would then be acquired as a side lot by the adjacent homeowner. She thinks that would be an extremely poor policy decision because we have seen how the market has changed just since this vacant lot program was created originally and if it is a stressor on City finances to carry these properties at the rough cost of \$183,000/year and we are adding money to them in the form of a tax subsidy to encourage property owners to acquire adjacent lots then we are increasing our costs and probably not at a rate that is commensurate with recouping that outlay of money.

Director Lewis stated that she had not heard that suggestion that we pay the taxes. She does not agree with that in concept. When the changes were proposed, it was important to everyone involved with the side lot program that anyone acquiring a side lot must be committed. That is why we require the consolidation. Even with that we have seen maintenance fall off. People need to make sure they can manage this. That is why we give our best estimate of the additional costs. Fundamentally as she speaks with residents taking on side lots, they have seen the value and the additional tax has not been a disincentive for them. The greater disincentive was the upfront costs of the consolidation which may put it outside the means of many people looking at these.

Council member Mrs. Moore asked about First Suburbs and if there are other programs Director Lewis knows about in other cities that have not occurred to us that we could use or concepts we could use in this area.

Director Lewis stated that when we set up the original program in 2008 we did a scan all across the board, but philosophically our land bank does look at this differently than most. Most land banks are very anxious to get rid of their properties. They are not generally cities, especially small suburban cities. The county has a huge cost to holding properties. If they own a property in Shaker and someone wants to buy it for a \$1, there is no downside to the County Land Bank. They are not responsible for that neighborhood. That is why you cannot really compare like that, we have to look at what our land bank is trying to accomplish. That is why the City of Shaker Heights made a very clear determination when the County Land Bank came into existence, after the City land bank had been operating for some time. We were not going to allow the County Land Bank to own any property here unless we had made a determination that was what we wanted. While the County Land Bank takes in most of the tax foreclosed properties for the other communities, we are very much an outlier in that case. That is also because most of those communities also decided that they did not have the financial wherewithal or were not willing to make it a priority to maintain those properties. Certainly we could use that option. The County Land Bank is there to take in those tax foreclosed properties and it does for almost every suburb in the county. In addition it takes in all of the ones with structures on them for the City of Cleveland. Communities that do have land bank programs take in properties on a much more limited basis. There really is no comparison. They do not landscape and fence, no other city is doing that, which is upwards of \$50,000 of our annual cost. Most do not require the driveway to be removed if there is a demolition. She would argue that the results that we have seen have been the way that our neighborhoods have rebounded much better than the other inner ring suburbs post foreclosure crisis. Those numbers are very clear. In all neighborhoods we are almost back to 100% of pre foreclosure values. Most other inner ring suburbs are nowhere close.

Council member Ms. Anne Williams stated that she really appreciates having this conversation tonight and Director Lewis' extremely informative memo which was very helpful with the history and for those with shorter terms on Council. She would like to relay some concerns from a resident who could not join the call tonight. The resident has been in conversations with Director Lewis, the Mayor, and CAO and lives next to a property that went into disrepair, abandoned, eventually demolished and is now a vacant lot. Of course it has taken a very long period of time which is no fault of the City. This is just a very long process, but very frustrating for the neighborhood as they watch the property deteriorate and go through these changes without knowing what path it will take and how long. The City does an excellent job of keeping in touch with residents and although she does not have any more knowledge, she understands the frustration of the resident. The resident is now expressing a general interest in the lot at a late date. This lot which was recently acquired will probably be designated, or maybe already has, for infill. She wanted to express that residents feel this frustration thinking maybe this would be a side lot for them. In other situations around the City this has occurred as well. There is the tension of how we explain to them our priorities, especially when our priorities are shifting. We have to be mindful of concerns of the residents who are looking for understanding of the process, how we determine how we dispose of property, how this is shifting, and what opportunities there are for them. She asked when we determine that a property will be

reserved for infill how long does it stay that way, if there is continued re-evaluation, and what do we do if we have a property that is reserved for infill and there is strong interest from the surrounding neighbors. She asked if we take that into consideration when we are determining how we are going to dispose of this property.

Director Lewis stated that is one of the most difficult cases that we encounter as she pointed out in her presentation. She loves to work with residents and she feels for them when they can't get the lot. There is a case where the resident has been working with us for five years to acquire a vacant lot adjacent to her but we do not own the parcel yet although it is ordered to be transferred to the City. We would not even be at this point if it were not for the residents' detective work tracking down the prior owner in India so he could be served by the court. In that five-year period of working on it the market conditions have changed and we indicated to her while when we started it was likely to be a side lot, at this point in time, it is more likely to be designated as an infill lot. She gets these calls regularly. We have had them from the outset. There is a wonderful homeowner in Moreland who from the very beginning wanted the lot that was a part of a triple lot and has never been able to acquire it. We absolutely re-evaluate these, repeatedly because we get these questions. We have guidelines but every situation is a little different. There is a five parcel lot that the City owns that has clearly strong redevelopment potential. Someone could build a substantial redevelopment project and an adjacent homeowner wants one parcel of the five. For them they feel like we are just giving up one parcel. It is really important to have this discussion to hear from the Committee on what they would like to see. Director Lewis' thoughts on cases like this is there is nothing that prevents neighbors from submitting an application because the Committee and Council always have the final determination even if it has been designated for another use. They could decide that the circumstances in that case make it worthy of making it available. Ultimately the decision is always for Council.

Carter Strang asked out of the 220+ lots, how many of them are infill versus side lots and how long have the infill lots been sitting.

Director Lewis stated that she has not counted, but she would estimate that probably 20 are designated for infill. The length of time they have been held varies. The five parcel lot in Ludlow has never had a structure so has always been there. The Knez lots in Moreland, and most lots in Moreland were more recently acquired, but it depends on when the property becomes owned by the City. We have to feel pretty comfortable that it has market potential in order for us to designate it only for infill. Even the lot on Fairmount in a stronger market area, was not designated only for infill because previously we had no interest expressed and it had some configurations that made it not as likely to be developed. There is a lovely lot on Lee Road that has been vacant for 20 years and has never had a home on it. It was privately owned for much of that time and eventually the owners let it become tax delinquent which is how the City ended up with it because nobody wanted it at sheriff's sale. Therefore we never designated it for infill, but just last week a developer stated plans to apply for that lot for infill. They come on infrequently.

Carter Strang thanked Director Lewis for her memo and her thorough responses. What the City has done through this program really has made a tremendous difference. He lived on Palmerston for

many years between Scottsdale and Lomond, where there are about four or five lots. The City's quick response has made a big difference in the quality of that neighborhood.

Council member Ms. Anne Williams asked Director Lewis to talk more about the work she is doing now with the County Land Bank.

Director Lewis stated that regarding the drying up of demolition funds, the County Land Bank is similarly making pivots in how it operates. From its inception it has focused primarily on demolition even though it also does rehabs and holds properties. With the drying up of those funds County Council worked with the County Land Bank and felt the time was right for them to shift and so they wanted their resources that go to the County Land Bank to now be used to do rehabs and infill. Those were the two demands coming from the communities. They were talking to communities about where this would fit into their strategies. Director Lewis and Mayor Weiss met last year with the head of the County Land Bank to lay out the City's vision in terms of infill and how we already had an infrastructure that would allow them to fit in. We provided them with market data, they have kept abreast of the Knez project and of course we have been working on the rehabs in the Moreland neighborhood. That has allowed them to become very familiar with the area. They see the market potential there and they believe that being mission driven is the best place for them to pilot their land banking program for infill. They are working with us and a couple of other first ring suburbs on a couple of different models. In our case, they have been spending their time getting very familiar with our infill guidelines because what it takes to build a home here will be different from some of the other communities they are working with, getting to know the community, and now we are at the stage where we are screening potential builders to be in this partnership. How it will basically work is that we would provide the land and the land bank would provide some subsidy and take some of the risk off of the developers.

Council member Ms. Anne Williams stated that she did realize they had done a shift but she thought it was only for rehabs. It is great to hear about the infill. She asked if we have designated properties for them to specifically look at for the infill.

Director Lewis stated that they have asked for one property so far to be held for them, so only that one. Until it is under a development and use agreement it is open season.

Eric Bevilacqua thanked Director Lewis for all the great information. Regarding the lots which have been sitting for a long period of time, he asked what the fundamental cause of the mismatch was between the supply of the lots and demand. He asked if it is the cost to build homes which is expensive to do in Shaker, and if anyone has looked at the work and development in modular housing and the tiny home movement. There are a lot of new housing products which can be used for either single-family homes or rental uses on lots that are very attractive and aesthetically pleasing, that are much less expensive than a typical Tudor, Georgian, etc., in Shaker. He asked if anyone has looked at an alternative option that fits better with the rental potential, home values in those areas, and where the actual equilibrium price point for demand would be for those specific lots.

Director Lewis stated that is an excellent point and one of her favorite topics because she believes we do have to keep looking at changes in building technology and materials and making sure that we

are not shooting ourselves in the foot by not opening ourselves up to options that could fulfill these needs. Yes, we are looking at modular homes. One of the developers who plans to submit an application is for modular construction. She has been sharing with the Building and Planning Departments their materials and videos to make sure we are all as educated as possible around that technology. We have been looking at modular construction from when we did the Lindholm houses. That was one of the options we looked at. There are building standards from the state that govern modular construction, but as long as it can meet that and our design guidelines we are fine with it as an approach. When we were working with Knez on the homes in Moreland we had to modify the infill guidelines because currently our infill guidelines do not allow the use of vinyl. One third of the homes in Moreland have vinyl on them. Given the cost of construction using the materials we would require and the amount you can sell a house for in Moreland and get financing for there is a total mismatch. We worked to create modified infill guidelines that will allow use of alternative materials. The way that was structured worked for that immediate need, but since then we have also had a case in Lomond where the developer wanted to build using vinyl but the City decided that is not the best way forward. Currently, she is working with the Planning Department on a proposal to expand the area in which infill guidelines would have greater flexibility. The Planning Department frequently gets requests for homes of different types from tiny homes to container homes, etc. Typically, however, the problem they run into is they don't have windows where they would need to fit in or they have not thought through how that would work on our specific lots to meet the massing requirements to fit in and not look out of place in the neighborhood.

Donna Whyte complimented Director Lewis and Mayor Weiss for their work in this area. She is a Moreland resident so she sees many of these lots. She lives on Chelton Road and she knows how well maintained they are by the City. She has often been disheartened that we lose houses to demolition and we have vacant lots; however, what she has seen over the years she really appreciates. The attention to the acquisition of these lots and the maintenance of them has been exceptional. She thanked them for this being such a priority for the City.

Council Chair Mr. Roeder asked about next steps.

Mayor Weiss thanked Dr. Whyte for her comments as well as those of others. He talks with Director Lewis all the time kicking these things around which are not easy decisions. Director Lewis' recommendation about the right balance on holding properties for side lots versus infill, is to remain flexible and fact specific. He is always trying to balance the interest of all the residents in these programs also recognizing that we have a fiduciary duty to our community. If there is an opportunity for infill where we think the greatest value can be created and enhance the housing stock that is an obligation as elected officials he along with Council takes very seriously. Each one of these cases is tough. A hard and fast rule applicable across the board may not be in the City's best interest but it is more difficult to explain that to residents. That is the tradeoff. We were hoping to get feedback and thoughts tonight from the Committee and then try to decide whether a flexible approach or something different is the better approach. For the moment we remain in a state of flexibility recognizing this is the first time these issues have really crossed in a material way. It may take just a little more study, frankly, by us to get comfortable with the right solution.

Director Lewis stated that she thinks one of the takeaways she will be recommending for those lots in this period with conflicting issues, is that we re-examine those lots more frequently, in a six-month period instead of having it open ended, when somebody wants the side lot but we have it designated for infill.

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There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Council Member Tres Roeder, Chair  
Neighborhood Revitalization and Development Committee



## Memorandum

To: Neighborhood Revitalization and Development Committee Members

From: Joyce G. Braverman, Director, Planning  
Kara O'Donnell, Principal Planner, Planning  
Laura Englehart, Director, Economic Development

cc: David E. Weiss, Mayor  
Jeri. E. Chaikin, Chief Administrative Officer

Date: September 2, 2020

Re: 2020 NOACA Transportation for Livable Communities (TLCI) Grant Program  
Application for the **Lee Road Corridor Connections Action Plan**

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This is a request to authorize a grant application to and to accept a grant from NOACA's Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative (TLCI) program for the **Lee Road Corridor Connections Action Plan**, a visionary reinvestment plan for the Lee Road commercial corridor. The **Lee Road Corridor Connections Action Plan** will provide detailed recommendations for transportation enhancements such as: traffic calming; access plan – including pedestrian and bike amenities within the district and connections with surrounding neighborhoods and corridors; urban design strategies to achieve a corridor transformation; an economic development and facilities strategy; and robust community engagement.

The Lee Road plan sets up investment in a part of the community that has not seen large-scale reinvestment since work was completed in 2005 at the Shaker Town Center shopping center area. Due to resident-led efforts, particularly through the Moreland Rising project, the predominantly Black residential neighborhoods adjacent to the Lee Road commercial district have become stronger and more vibrant. The City should help foster the same spirit and be intentional in creating equitable, inclusive approaches to planning and development in the neighboring commercial district. Investment and connectivity between the business district and adjacent residential neighborhoods, between businesses and residents, and between residents and potential jobs is important. Accordingly, the plan will involve diverse resident and stakeholder participation from the adjacent neighborhoods and from current business owners in the commercial corridor. The proposed plan will also satisfy a recently passed NOACA resolution calling for equity in transportation planning.

The NOACA Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative (TLCI) program provides assistance to communities and public agencies for transportation projects that strengthen community livability, including projects that enhance economic viability and quality of life. The NOACA Governing Board has allocated approximately \$500,000 of federal funds for the competitive planning grant program.

The City has completed traffic studies and plans in the Lee Road area in the past. With this grant application, the City seeks to not repeat but to build on those plans by seeking funding to complete a comprehensive, detailed plan for transforming the area into a thriving commercial district that is attractive, walkable, and bikeable. Other previously prepared studies that address portions of the Lee Road corridor are available at [www.shakeronline.com/442/City-Plans-Documents](http://www.shakeronline.com/442/City-Plans-Documents):

- *Joint Facilities Vision Plan (2019)*
- *Lee Road Traffic Study & Corridor Plan (2012)*
- *Economic Development Strategy (2010)*
- *Lee/Van Aken Transit-Oriented Development Plan (2008)*
- *Strategic Investment Plan (2000)*

The **Lee Road Corridor Connections Plan** will address four critical elements:

- 1) **Urban Design and Streetscape Plan**—consider and improve the overall physical design and appearance of the corridor.
- 2) **Economic Development and Facilities Strategy**—develop a place-based economic development strategy to optimize development opportunities along the Lee Road corridor and create an environment where business can thrive; consider best use and redevelopment of public facilities along the corridor.
- 3) **Transportation Plan**—Establish a multi-faceted plan for all modes of transportation using data and information collected in previous traffic studies; study traffic calming, access management, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure; enhance connectivity between the business district and neighborhoods, businesses and residents, and between residents and jobs.
- 4) **Community and Stakeholder Engagement**—implement a robust process to gather input from residents, neighborhood associations, business owners and property owners.

Applying for TLCI grant funding this year will allow the City to complete advanced planning now in order to pave the way for implementation funding and meet the expected 2025 construction year. The City has requested implementation funding from NOACA for road resurfacing, a multipurpose path and streetscape in funding year 2025. The plan would also prepare us to request State capital funds and other grant sources in 2022-24. The plan and funding strategy uses the same techniques as other successful projects, most recently the Chagrin/Warrensville intersection reconfiguration and public improvements in the Van Aken district.

The City will request a \$100,000 grant from NOACA. This competitive application does not require a match however, city participation is encouraged. Based on past TLCI grant awards, a city match of \$25,000 is proposed to achieve a budget of \$125,000. This will support a targeted plan that will address all aspects of transportation and redevelopment for the Lee Road Corridor and work with the community to craft this vision. The match funds will come from the available balance in the capital fund. The grant application and supporting legislation are due on October 16, 2020.

The City has previously received TLCI grants for the *Van Aken District Connections Plan*; *Lee/Van Aken Transit-Oriented Development Plan (2007)*; the *Warrensville-Van Aken Transit-Oriented Development Plan (2008)*; and the *Warrensville/Van Aken Intermodal Transit Center Plan (2009)* and the *Lee Road Traffic Study & Corridor Plan (2011)*.

**Recommendation.** We recommend approval and authorization to submit a grant application to and to accept a grant from NOACA's Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative (TLCI) program for the **Lee Road Corridor Connections Action Plan**, a visionary transportation and reinvestment plan for the Lee Road commercial corridor, in the amount of \$100,000 with a grant match of \$25,000 for a total project cost of \$125,000.