
WICK NEIGHBORS, INC. UPDATE

A Status Report on Recent News

March 2007

Wick District-Smoky Hollow Demand Demonstrated

A market study completed last October by Vogt, Williams & Bowen, a national real estate firm based in Columbus, has affirmed what Wick Neighbors, Inc. and friends have known for years: that healthy demand exists for new, for-sale housing in Smoky Hollow. Consumers willing to spend between \$125,000 and \$250,000 are looking for single-family homes, townhouses and condominiums.

Armed with that confirmation, a Wick Neighbors, Inc. oversight task force has been working closely with developer Zaremba, Inc. and City Architecture to complete the Wick District-Smoky Hollow site plan details, including street grid, retail locations, housing types, Harrison Commons, parking, gateways, and project phasing. With this information in place, the Zaremba Team has now finalized estimates for infrastructure financing and construction. This information will be presented to the WNI board at its March 28 meeting. Wick Neighbors, Inc. and Zaremba are also exploring government loans, grants, and other available assistance with city, state and federal representatives. All these steps are part of the Wick Neighbors, Inc. and the Zaremba, Inc. Pre-Development Agreement signed last summer, which specifies steps critical to the success of the project: market study, price points, site plan revisions, land assembly, infrastructure costs, project pro-forma and project financing.

On March 8, WNI Executive Director Margaret L. Murphy met with Congressman Tim Ryan in Washington, D.C., and discussed the importance of this \$120 million Wick District-Smoky Hollow Mixed-Use Development on the larger economic agenda within the region. On March 9, State Senator John Bocchieri met with WNI leadership and Brian Blasinsky of Zaremba, Inc. and discussed the impact of the project. Infrastructure financing alternatives also are being discussed with city officials.

Youngstown 2010 Downtown Initiative

Wick Neighbors, Inc., as part of the Youngstown 2010 Downtown Initiative, has joined with the City, State, the Regional Chamber, Youngstown State University, Mill Creek Park, and the Youngstown Central Area Community Improvement Corporation. The charge is to identify and prioritize projects and determine the funding allocation for each. As a first step, a unified wish list, per a request from Congressman Ryan, was prepared. Wick Neighbors, Inc.'s request included sanitary and storm sewers, road construction, land acquisition, and support for the Bliss Hall Arts Walk.

Bliss Hall Arts Walk: Connecting the Wick District Neighborhood

Finalized plans for the Bliss Hall Arts Walk unveil an arts district that encompasses and interweaves the Butler Institute of American Art, the Butler Education Center, the McDonough Museum of Art, and Youngstown State University's Bliss Hall performance hub.

A diagonal arts-inspired connection featuring a public plaza and an urban park, the walk will directly link the Smoky Hollow neighborhood with the cultural and educational institutions of Wick Avenue. Members of the public, students, faculty and area residents will find themselves engaged in a pedestrian experience that integrates performance spaces and public art with a coffee shop, ticket booth and landscaping highlighted with appropriate lighting, comfortable benches, and a new façade for the parking garage.

As part of the University's Centennial Master Plan, in December the trustees of Youngstown State University endorsed the Arts Walk gateway between the main campus and the Smoky Hollow neighborhood with a \$2.2 million commitment. In addition, the University intends to expend approximately \$1 million on interior and exterior improvements to the Wick Avenue garage and intends to make this mundane and functional modernist building a contributing element in the Arts Walk. Wick Neighbors, Inc. and Youngstown State University also requested a \$2 million Congressional appropriation to support the full development of the Arts Walk.

Walnut Street Gateway Improvements: A Team Effort

A coalition of major stakeholders has banded together to reopen and enhance Walnut Street as a major gateway between the Wick District and downtown. The aim of reopening this connection between Commerce Street and Wood Street is to enable both pedestrian and vehicular traffic to move easily between Smoky Hollow and downtown.

As Joe Cassese Jr. of the MVR points out, "Our customers want to walk down to the Chevrolet Centre and enjoy other downtown attractions."

Working in partnership with the City of Youngstown and Youngstown CityScape, the immediate (Spring) plans are resurfacing the roadway, thus providing a pedestrian-friendly walkway with new lighting and landscaping. Already, ugly concrete barriers have been replaced with new planters and signage.

The effort is a testament to teamwork. Co-chairpersons Donna Buzulencia and Sharon Letson have had a lot of help from Councilman Artis Gillam Sr. and Carmen Conglose, city engineer, as well as CityScape, Leadership Youngstown, the MVR, Youngstown State University, Mahoning County Juvenile Court, First Energy, Choffin Career Center, the Public Library of Youngstown & Mahoning County, First Presbyterian Church, the Better Business Bureau, the downtown YMCA, Butler Presbyterian Church, Iron & String Life Enhancement, Inc., and the residents of Smoky Hollow.

Follow-up to Neighborhood Reinvestment Workshops' Success

A "Neighborhood Reinvestment-How To" booklet for distribution throughout the city will summarize last year's successful series of five workshops. A grant from the Charter One Foundation is funding the booklet. National and regional experts at the workshops provided successful strategies necessary for rebuilding distress neighborhoods. Topics included "Reversing Decline: Goals for Neighborhood Investment in Weak Market Cities" (May 17); "Vacant Properties: Neighborhood Liability or Asset?" (June 14); "Financing Neighborhood Reinvestment: How Do Cities Do It?" (September 27); "The Role of the Private Sector as a Catalyst in Neighborhood Development" (October 18); and "Who Speaks for the Neighborhood? Who Sets the Neighborhood Agenda?" (November 8). The Workshops were in conjunction with Youngstown 2010 and supported by regional and local banks and churches.

Wick District Design Review Update

One of the most critical elements of any urban revitalization effort is the establishment of design standards. Such standards have proven to promote and attract reinvestment and engender positive results including:

- Enhancing the unique character of a target area such as the Wick District.
- Stabilizing and improving property values.
- Enabling property owners to improve the image of their properties.
- Protecting everyone's investments by promoting compatible development on adjacent properties.
- Providing property owners with free technical advice from various professionals, including architects, design professionals, historic preservationists, residents and business owners.

Thanks to a grant from the Senator Maurice & Florence Lipscher Charitable Fund, Wick Neighbors, Inc. is preparing a "Friendly Guide to Design" and making plans for a design workshop open to all Wick District constituents and stakeholders in the next few months. Both the new publication and workshop are based on the Wick District Design Guidelines, which address quality in design for new construction, rehabilitation of residential and commercial buildings and Wick Avenue.

Thank you, friends ...

Special thanks to WNI supporters Mary Alice Schaff and Connie Knecht for hosting a gathering of 50 community leaders on November 9. The elegant evening, at the Wick Neighbors, Inc. office, highlighted the role WNI plays in neighborhood development as well as its position in the larger community. Additionally, attendees were impressed with the high design standards being implemented in the Wick District.

Get out your running shoes (or comfortable walking mocs)

Plan on joining us for the Fourth Annual Smoky Hollow 5 K Run and 1 Mile Family Fun Walk scheduled for Saturday, July 7, 2007. The Run will begin at 9:00 A.M. Registration starts at 7:45 A.M. The Entry fee is \$10.00 if received by July 1st, or \$12.00 for late registration and race day. Children under 12 can register for \$5.00. The award ceremony and post-race party with a free brunch for all participants and volunteers will be held at the MVR Restaurant on Walnut Street.

Save the Date!

Wick Neighbors, Inc. Fourth Annual Meeting and Dinner

Wednesday, May 2, 2007

Chevrolet Centre

5:30 Social Hour ~ 6:30 Dinner

Visit our website www.wickneighbors.org to R.S.V.P.