

Final Plan

10/24/02



CONTEXT TOWN PLANNING AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
PRACTICE

Bonnycastle

This Plan for the Bonnycastle Neighborhood was approved by the City of Louisville Board of Alderman and has further been approved for inclusion in the Land Use Element of the Cornerstone 2020 Comprehensive Plan for Louisville and Jefferson County.

The vision, goals and implementation strategies presented here are the parts of the overall Neighborhood Plan that were selected to be included in the Cornerstone Plan. Other strategies to preserve neighborhood assets, and to guide future planning decisions of the Bonnycastle Homestead Association can be viewed in the overall Plan.

The Bonnycastle Homestead Association developed the Vision and Goals for this Neighborhood Plan. These statements represent what the residents and property owners value about the neighborhood and wish either to preserve or create for their future benefit and enjoyment.

The Vision and Goals are the basis for the planning and implementation strategies of this neighborhood plan and should be utilized by the Planning Commission and Metro Council in any decision affecting the Bonnycastle Neighborhood.

The Vision for Bonnycastle

Bonnycastle is a diverse neighborhood. The diversity is exhibited in the types of property; commercial and residential, condo and rental; the

expense of housing; ages of buildings and people; types of terrain; both high and low densities; and levels of income. Cherokee Park adds a special dimension to the neighborhood.

Bonnycastle will remain a vital, safe, attractive, livable neighborhood that reflects its history, preserves its diversity, and continues to assert its importance in the economic, civic and cultural life of the community.

Neighborhood Goals

1. Limit or severely restrict the conversion of single family properties to multifamily use.
2. Maintain the character of the residential and commercial aspects of the neighborhood as well as their balance and interdependence.
3. Revitalize the commercial district on Bardstown Road by adopting and enforcing design and use standards as permitted under comprehensive plan guidelines and at the same time engaging and supporting the business community.
4. Take advantage of the form district concepts in the comprehensive plan to adopt neighborhood zoning revisions that recognize and preserve the distinct characteristics of the diverse sub-

neighborhoods in Bonnycastle.

5. Maintain public safety (actual and perceived).
6. Ensure streets and thoroughfares reinforce cohesiveness, while facilitating movement of pedestrians and vehicles and providing adequate on-street parking.
7. Preserve and expand alleys and sidewalks.
8. Enhance the urban forest while minimizing utility impact.



This picture depicts a small triangular shaped public open space between Sherwood and Cherokee Road that is an example of an asset..

9. Work with the Olmsted Conservancy, Parks Department, and other interested parties to ensure that development of Cherokee Park continues and that it remain open, clean and safe.
10. Insist on, and monitor strict code enforcement.
11. Facilitate the preservation and restoration of historical properties, while maintaining the urban diversity they reflect.

Preserving a Neighborhood Planning for a Third Century

The Bonnycastle Plan and Cornerstone 2020

The Bonnycastle Neighborhood Plan is a small part of the Cornerstone 2020 Comprehensive Plan for Louisville and Jefferson County.

The process to develop Cornerstone 2020 began in 1992 and through the efforts of many people, including neighborhood associations, the Plan has been adopted by the Louisville and Jefferson County Planning Commission and legislative bodies.

The Bonnycastle Plan is intended to supplement the city/county plan, providing additional guidance for planning commissioners and metro council officials in addressing development and zoning issues affecting the neighborhood.

However, before this Plan could be used as a guide for decision-making it was first reviewed and approved by the Board of Aldermen for the City of Louisville and then incorporated in Cornerstone 2020 through official action of the Planning Commission. The Board of Aldermen approved the Bonnycastle Plan by resolution on September 24, 2002.

The second reason the two plans are related is that Cornerstone 2020 introduces the concept of a Traditional Neighborhood Form District. This is a type of land use and zoning district that now applies to the Bonnycastle Neighborhood. Much of this plan has been developed to be consistent with, and supplement, the concept of a Form District.

Finally, like Cornerstone 2020, the Bonnycastle Plan should be reviewed and updated at least every five years in order to remain current with preservation and development issues. Doing so will ensure the plan will be effective over a long period.



Neighborhood Planning Strategies

There are a handful of major ideas and recommendations that have been identified to address a number of issues discussed during the planning process.

Neighborhood Planning Strategies is the heading under which these ideas and recommendations have been placed. Most of the strategies will require the combined efforts of the Bonnycastle Association, the City/Metro Council and the Louisville and Jefferson County Planning Commission in



The turret (neighborhood icon) which tops the Spring Drive Apartments at the intersection of Bonnycastle Avenue and Cowling Ave.

order to be fully implemented. Some recommendations require expenditure of funds for improvements. Where such funds are needed, methods to identify and secure funding have been identified.

Finally, some recommendations represent new approaches to some issues - these will require some creative and cooperative thinking and if the approaches are to prove usable under existing legal and political constraints. Therefore, the Bonnycastle Association should be very active in communicating these strategies and recommendations with members and elected officials.

Neighborhood Planning Strategy—Create a Bonnycastle Traditional Neighborhood Zoning District

Land use regulations should fit

the neighborhood and not the other way around.

The recommendation described below is certainly a candidate for creative and cooperative thinking. There is a consensus among many who participated in the planning process that one of the good things about the neighborhood is its wealth of housing types and styles—ranging from the Edgewood pedestrian court to the Commodore condominiums and the apartments on Alta and Sherwood.

There is also a consensus among those same participants that existing zoning districts in some parts of the neighborhood do not contribute to the preservation of important assets nor to maintaining the balance of owner occupied versus non owner occupied housing.

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Traditional Neighborhood Form and Zoning

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As was pointed out in an earlier part of this document, the designers of the Bonnycastle neighborhood did a great job of incorporating a variety of housing types in the neighborhood. This is a difficult task at the beginning stages of neighborhood development, and particularly challenging in mature



neighborhoods like Bonnycastle.

Recommended Strategy

First, a new zoning district—titled the **Bonnycastle Traditional Neighborhood Zoning District (B—TNZD)**—should be created and adopted by the LJCP/ City of Louisville or Metro Council.. The district would apply to the entire neighborhood (exclusive of the Bardstown commercial corridor) and would replace all existing zoning districts.

How would this type of zoning district work?

The district would be developed specifically for the Bonnycastle neighborhood and permit the wide variation of densities necessary to accommodate all of the Bonnycastle

housing alternatives without making any one existing use non-conforming.



Using Alleys as a Planning Tool

One of the most consistent comments heard during the course of the planning process was about the benefits of alleys and the deplorable condition of many neighborhood alleys.

The recommendation for using alleys as a planning tool attempts to pull together and coordinate the seemingly disparate elements of alley physical condition, alternative traffic circulation system and redevelopment to higher densities. How this can be done is described below.

First, redevelopment proposals should be tied (where applicable) to the condition and capacity of the



The condition of this alley is better than most.

adjoining alley. An alley rating system should be developed with three criteria—functionality, condition and capacity.

All alleys would be rated under this system and redevelopment proposals conditioned according to the system recommendations.

“Functionality” refers to whether the alley provides access and service to only those properties it adjoins; whether the alley is utilized consis-

tently and historically as a pedestrian path in addition to its service and access function; and, whether an additional function is connected with neighborhood traffic circulation.

For example, the Bonnycastle Terrace pair of service alleys would be rated in the functionality category as a “B” since it provides access and service to properties and it has consistently and historically been used as a pedestrian path.

The “condition” criteria can take into account several factors such as condition of the pavement, type of pavement (brick, asphalt, gravel), and presence/location of structures within or near the right-of-way or pavement.

Generally, these criteria should be combined to produce a simple description of the alley condition such as good, fair or poor. An alley rated as poor in condition would obviously be a serious drawback for a redevelopment proposal.

Why? A redevelopment proposal would add additional service and access demands further impacting the condition of the alley. This type of rating would probably require the sponsor of the redevelopment proposal to upgrade the alley condition to at least a fair rating.

Finally, the “capacity” criteria would measure the capacity of the alley to handle property and service access as well as general traffic circulation requirements.

This category is more difficult to define but elements that should be considered include the width and length, spacing of structures and



driveways, connections to major streets, and other features that may enhance or hinder access.

An alley that is commonly used for general neighborhood access as well as access to individual properties would have a lower capacity rating than one not used for general access.

This aspect of the rating system would tend to discourage redevelopment proposals involving access to these lower capacity rated alleys.

If the rating system indicates that an alley is in poor condition, is approaching its capacity to handle service and property access needs, then redevelopment proposals for adjoining properties would have to be conditioned on improving the alley to a certain standard as well as an approvable strategy to increase its capacity to handle additional service requirements.



Aesthetic and Functional Improvements to the Bardstown Road

One of the chief concerns of neighborhoods all along the Bardstown Road corridor is the possibility of “commercial creep” into the neighborhood. As commercial uses grow and expand in the corridor, creating a need for more parking for customers, the users seek property or methods to provide more off-street parking



Addressing this issue on a corridor wide basis as opposed to incrementally as redevelopment proposals are presented and considered is the focus of this recommendation.

It is recommended that additional “pools” of parking be created through the closure of some alleys that penetrate through to Bardstown Road. These closures would not only free up valuable land for parking, but would also limit the amount of traffic using the alley system as an alternate to neighborhood streets or as short-cuts to vari-

ous destinations along the corridor. There is only one opportunity for such a closure along the Bonnycas-



tle side of the corridor, although there are others on the south side of Bardstown Road. This alley is shown in the picture above.

If it were determined to be feasible, the benefits of closure would be an increased number of parking spaces, an opportunity to insert more “green” within a predominately concrete environment, the elimination of a point of conflict between pedestrians and cars, and possibly an opportunity for the expansion of adjoining businesses.

Recommendations pertaining to which alleys could receive this treatment cannot be made at this point since it will be necessary to review each potential location in terms of the alley rating system, the configuration of properties adjoining the alley at Bardstown Road, and the

availability of funding for such improvements.

It may also be possible to consider these pools as possible locations for transit stops and shelters and this opportunity should be coordinated with TARC.

One additional recommendation is that the Bonnycastle Homestead Association may wish to partner with other associations with Bardstown Road commercial frontage in order to investigate the feasibility of alley or street closures. It may be possible that an alley closure (on one side of Bardstown) and the subsequent conversion of the space to additional off-street parking may be crucial to the expansion/parking needs of a business on the other side of Bardstown Road.

For this reason it may be advisable for several associations to approach the Bardstown Road Design Overlay District Committee and the Louisville Development Authority with this strategy.



Preserving a “One-of-a-Kind” Asset

Beginning or ending at either Speed Avenue or Eastern Parkway (depending on your perspective), Cherokee Road is seen by many as a neighborhood boundary, a character defining element, a link between the past and the present, and an example of the best that Louisville has to offer in terms of living environments.

Cherokee Road does provide a boundary between neighborhood and park, but also connects neighborhood and park. Large single family homes and well-placed examples of compatible multifamily structures line the street and overlook Cherokee Park.

This street provides one of the best

examples in Louisville of the connections that Frederick Law Olmsted set out to provide through his park and parkway plans that were developed in the late 1800’s. The “road” and its homes on one side and park on the other is a legacy that Bonnycastle has inherited.

(Continued on Page 6)

Preserving the Cherokee Road Corridor

Continued from Page 5

It connects our past as a burgeoning community growing along streetcar lines and around extensive planned open spaces to our future based on preserving such treasures



Such legacies create value in a number of ways but maintaining that value requires a careful balancing of the demands placed on the limited resource. The designers of the Bonnycastle neighborhood and Cherokee Road recognized and understood this need for balance.

The corridor contains a variety of housing types that appear to be well-balanced with the capabilities of services lanes and the number of residential units. This balance is also strengthened through common design elements involving building mass, height and relationship to the Road.

This is why we see examples of well designed multifamily blended seamlessly and compatibly with single family homes. As the neighborhood moves further into its third century the challenge will be to maintain the character of this corridor in the face of growing value and demand to accommodate additional people who wish to experience this quality of life.

Preservation Strategy/Action

How do you preserve something as valuable and desired as the Cherokee Road Corridor?

The balance of single family and multi family uses currently in the

Corridor should be maintained. This means that conversion of single family homes to multifamily should not be permitted unless the following conditions are met.

First, the existing façade of the structure should be maintained so that the view from Cherokee Road is preserved.

Second, the characteristics of the building envelope for the principle structure should be maintained. This preserves the visual integrity of the Corridor as seen from the street and in relationship to the structures adjoining the property.

Third, a conversion which complies with conditions one and two should be evaluated in terms of the impact of additional units and auto-



mobiles to the capacity and condition of the rear service lane. This impact should be evaluated using a ratio of 2.5 (as compared to existing multifamily zoning standard of 1.5 cars per unit) cars per dwelling unit to represent both owner and visitor parking and access requirements.

Furthermore, a service lane with a “C” or worse condition should not be subjected to any additional use without the entire service lane being improved to a condition of “B” or better. Fourth, driveway access from Cherokee Road should not be permitted.

Finally, a major enhancement for this Corridor would be to add a pedestrian walkway along the south side of the Corridor (the house side). This would provide residents with the ability to walk along the park without venturing into the roadway or through the unimproved portion of the park adjacent to the right-of-way.

It may be necessary, given the topography of the Corridor in some locations, to utilize the full extent of right-of-way and Metro Parks easements to accomplish this task.

The recommendation for the addition of a sidewalk along the “house” side of Cherokee Road is one that should be very carefully implemented.

Experience with a similar project to the west of Eastern Parkway indicates that a careful design and extensive communication with property owners and others will be necessary. For that project, much of the sidewalk was placed within existing right-of-way and pavement areas—similar to what is recommended in this plan.

The purpose of this approach is to minimize the impact of the sidewalk to existing lawns, landscaping and particularly street trees. However, the topography and grades of the street and adjoining property present significant challenges to the designers to prevent drainage problems. These types of problems can be overcome through the design process.

It is recommended that when it becomes feasible to implement this recommendation that the Bonnycastle Association facilitate a meeting with all Cherokee Road property owners and form a working group to ensure effective communication and participation during the design process.