



# LIVINGSTON AVENUE STABILIZATION PROPOSAL

Livingston Overlay Committee

**Prepared for:**

2015 Bexley City Council Retreat &  
Bexley Community Improvement Corporation



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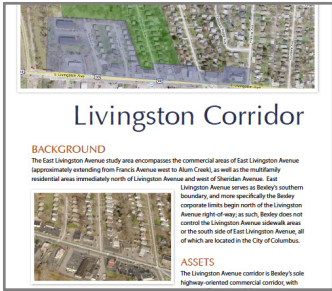
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# LIVINGSTON BACKGROUND

## Background

The Livingston area bordering Berwick and Bexley encompass the north and south side of Livingston Avenue from Alum Creek to Chelsea Avenue. The primary area of concern involves the commercial and residential properties from Francis Avenue west to Alum Creek.

Current land use in the area includes parkland, service-oriented retail along Livingston Avenue, and multifamily residential. In total, the Bexley portion of this area has 11.8 acres of land, 3.83 of which are currently controlled by the city of Bexley. The remaining commercial frontage on Livingston Avenue is 2.74 acres in area.

A variety of challenges exist that make it difficult for substantial redevelopment and improvement to occur within the East Livingston Area of Bexley and Berwick.

## Surrounding Uses

Development along Livingston Avenue and within the Ferndale and Mayfield area is largely comprised of older improvements with little versatility and with limited desirability. New development is suppressed due to the low quality of existing commercial improvements both in Bexley as well as on the southern side of East Livingston.

## Crime Statistics

The Ferndale and Mayfield area has the highest density of crime in Bexley. This is due to the prevalence of absentee landlords and the low standard of maintenance and upkeep on rental housing, resulting in subpar living conditions.

## Limited Control

Redevelopment plans along East Livingston will always be complicated by the City's lack of control over the south side of East Livingston.

## Accessibility

Ferndale and Mayfield, a primarily multi-family residential area which is of particular concern to the City, is only accessible via East Livingston Avenue, and as such is isolated from the surrounding residential neighborhood. This lack of accessibility and structural integration makes it very difficult for the Ferndale/Mayfield loop to connect to the rest of the community physically and socially, and is seen as a major deterrent to the rejuvenation of this area.



# PLANNING HISTORY

## 2003: The Southwest Bexley Master Plan

In 2003, a plan for Southwest Bexley was enacted. Facilitated by MSI, now MKSK, the primary study area included the areas south of Main Street and west of Montrose Avenue. The overall plan was geared more towards developing a growth plan for Capital University and Trinity Lutheran Seminary. The plan did include sections on Livingston Avenue and the Mayfield and Ferndale area, which is summarized below.

Both Livingston and the Mayfield/Ferndale areas need a lot of work to make them into economically viable developments. Livingston Avenue, with its connection to I-70, was slightly easier to create a plan for, whereas Mayfield and Ferndale proved to be a bit more of a challenge.

### **For Livingston Avenue, the recommendations were as follows:**

- Upgrade aesthetics of the street (trees, buildings)
- Limit auto-oriented uses
- Support pedestrian features
- Create gateway entry points
- Create mixed-use opportunities in collaboration with the City of Columbus

Mayfield and Ferndale Place's had three scenarios which were considered. The scenarios varied from strictly residential to a mix of residential and office space.

### **Scenario One:**

- Extending Mayfield/Ferndale to Charles
- Add ten new housing units
- Rehabilitate current units
- Park land added west of Mayfield

### **Scenario Two:**

- Curved Mayfield place connected to Charles
- High density housing along Mayfield
- Large park to the west of Mayfield
- Gateway features along all entrances

### **Scenario Three:**

- Curved Mayfield connected to Sheridan
- Mayfield Place to have two, two-story tall residential buildings
- West of Mayfield would be three office buildings



# PLANNING HISTORY



*Concept site plans for Ferndale and Mayfield from the Southwest Bexley Master Plan, 2003 (MSI)*



# PLANNING HISTORY

## 2011: The Bexley Land Use Strategy

In late 2008, Bexley City Council passed an ordinance authorizing the creation of the Bexley Land Use Strategy Commission. The commission was charged with creating a Land Use Strategy in order to facilitate future land use policy and development efforts within the city, and in order to encourage a perpetual culture of proactive planning and appropriate redevelopment.

After an extensive public process, the Land Use Strategy Commission presented the 2011 Bexley Land Use Strategy to Bexley City Council in early 2011. The strategy was unanimously adopted by council.

The Land Use Strategy Commission was formed to achieve at least the following goals:

- Assist the City in reaching consensus on development-related goals and standards.
- Focus on land use and urban design policies that will serve as a basis for evaluating development proposals.
- Build upon existing land use recommendations, highlight development opportunities, and outline how development principles may be applied.
- Develop conceptual designs for one or more sites.
- Address key issues, including development density and design.
- Examine the current zoning code, and provide any pertinent recommendations to appropriate alterations to the code.

The Land Use Strategy studied four major study areas, with Livingston Avenue area being one of the four. The key recommendations of the Land Use Strategy relative to Livingston Avenue were:

- **Form a Community Improvement Corporation (CIC)**  
Assemble properties along Ferndale and Mayfield in order to comprehensively redevelop this area. The goal of the CIC should be to assemble the land and sell the land to a developer whose development plan is congruous with the city's vision for a redeveloped Ferndale/Mayfield area.
- **Create a Ferndale/Mayfield Planned Use Zoning District**  
A Ferndale/Mayfield PUD should be put in place, to help guide concerted, planned development in the corridor. The following uses were identified as being possible uses for the area:
  - Institutional senior housing (assisted living, independent living, nursing home)
  - Hotel development
  - Recreational uses, such as athletic fields or recreational facilities
  - Limited municipal facilities
  - Anchoring retail uses such as small neighborhood grocery uses



# PLANNING HISTORY

## Land Use Strategy Recommendations (Continued):

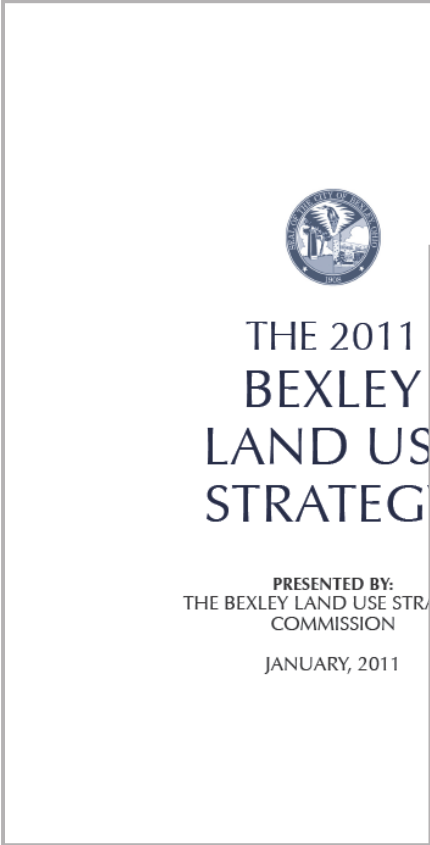
- **Ease Restrictions Against Drive-through Food Service Along Livingston**

- **Explore the Use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) at Ferndale and Mayfield**

The commission recommends that the city explore the use of Tax Increment Financing to fund the remediation and redevelopment of the Ferndale and Mayfield area. TIF funding could be used to clean environmentally impacted sites, provide new infrastructure to the area, and even possibly create site conditions that would make the redevelopment of the former landfill more financially feasible.


- **Provide Neighborhood Connection to Ferndale/Mayfield**

Connect the Ferndale and Mayfield area to Sheridan Avenue by connecting Charles Street through to Livingston Avenue.



**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **Purposeful Redevelopment of the Ferndale/Mayfield Corridor**  
Form a Community Improvement Corporation (CIC), or work closely with the Franklin County Improvement Corporation (FCIC) to assemble properties along Ferndale and Mayfield in order to comprehensively redevelop this area. The goal of the CIC should be to assemble the land and sell the land to a developer whose development plan is congruous with the city's vision for a redeveloped Ferndale/Mayfield area.
- **Create a Ferndale/Mayfield Planned Use Zoning District**  
A Ferndale/Mayfield PUD should be put in place, to help guide concerted, planned development in the corridor. The following uses have been identified as being possible uses for the area:
  - Institutional senior housing (assisted living, independent living, nursing home)
  - Hotel development
  - Recreational uses, such as athletic fields or recreational facilities
  - Limited municipal facilities
  - Anchoring retail uses such as small neighborhood grocery uses



**Livingston Corridor**

**BACKGROUND**  
The East Livingston Avenue study area encompasses the commercial areas of East Livingston Avenue (approximately extending from Francis Avenue west to Alum Creek), as well as the multifamily residential areas immediately north of Livingston Avenue and west of Sheridan Avenue. East Livingston Avenue serves as Bexley's southern boundary, and more specifically the Bexley corporate limits begin north of the Livingston Avenue right-of-way; as such, Bexley does not control the Livingston Avenue sidewalk areas or the south side of East Livingston Avenue, all of which are located in the City of Columbus.

**ASSETS**  
The Livingston Avenue corridor is Bexley's sole high-way-oriented commercial corridor, with strong traffic counts and direct access to Interstate 70. It is better positioned than any other area of Bexley to cater to uses which thrive off of highway accessibility. Additionally, the area's proximity to the Jewish Community Center and its ancillary improvements is considered to be a strong asset.

2011 Bexley Land Use Strategy - East Livingston Avenue Study Area Section F, Page 1



# PLANNING HISTORY

## Where are we today?

Tracking the City of Bexley's progress on the 2011 Land Use Strategy goals for Livingston Avenue:

Recommendation	Status	Notes
Form a Community Improvement Corporation	Completed	CIC formed in 2012
Use CIC to assemble Ferndale/Mayfield	In Planning	Initial funding included in draft 2015 budget
Create a Ferndale/Mayfield PUD	Modified/ In Process	The concept of a PUD has been put on hold in favor of enhancement of current zoning standards and interim stabilization of Ferndale and Mayfield. A Livingston overlay committee has been meeting since early 2014 to discuss zoning standards for Livingston.
Ease Drive-Through Restrictions	Completed	Completed in 2011 - charter amendment via ballot
Explore the use of TIF	On Hold	This concept has been reviewed with the Bexley City School Board, with tentative consensus as to the type and extent of TIF. Timing of the TIF should coincide with substantial new development.
Provide neighborhood connection to Ferndale/ Mayfield	On Hold	Some neighborhood stabilization is needed before connection to Sheridan is created.





# PLANNING HISTORY

## 2013: The Bexley Strategic Plan

The current Bexley Strategic Plan (rev. 2013) incorporates a series of recommendations and priorities organized by the following categories: Development, Finance, Safety, Services, Infrastructure, Recreation, Communication, Technology, and Community. Rather than being its own stand-alone effort, this plan catalogues and builds off and essentially unifies a series of strategic planning efforts leading up to it, including previous Mayor-submitted City strategies, the Southwest Bexley Master Plan, and the 2011 Bexley Land Use Strategy, among others.

Working towards redevelopment of Livingston Avenue was a key recommendation in the development section of the 2013 Bexley Strategic Plan, with the following specific recommendations:

- Pursue a joint streetscape plan with the City of Columbus that includes the following aspects:
  - Unified streetscape fixtures
  - Procurement of planting easements along both sides of Livingston in order to install a tree lawn on the street
  - Undergrounding of utility lines
  - Unified signage standards
- Work with the JCC and the Jewish Federation to identify acquisition targets in order to provide a tangible presence and entrance to the JCC from Livingston Avenue.

# DEVELOPMENT

## VISION GOALS IMPLEMENTATION.

### Continue to Work Towards Meaningful Redevelopment of Livingston Avenue

Driving meaningful redevelopment of the Livingston Avenue corridor is a major area of focus for the City. Livingston Avenue has excellent freeway access and is adjacent to two quality neighborhoods - Berwick and Bexley. Lasting redevelopment of Livingston will require a concerted effort among all of the stakeholders in the area including the City of Bexley, the City of Columbus and the Berwick Civic Association, Bexley City Schools, the



# PLANNING HISTORY

Additionally, the streets of Ferndale and Mayfield, located just north of Livingston Avenue, are developed with multi-family housing that is constructed on a former landfill. As a result, soil conditions have resulted in structural issues with the existing housing and present a health and safety hazard. Fragmented ownership has resulted in inconsistent housing standards, with often inattentive landlords and with a higher ratio of criminal activities than is experienced in other areas of the City. The City needs to take a proactive role in remediating the environmental, structural, and police challenges in the area, while ensuring that affordable housing options continue to be available for residents in the area. It is recommended that the City work to:

- Utilize Clean Ohio and other funding, as available, to remediate the former landfill surrounding Ferndale and Mayfield
- Develop the Ferndale/Mayfield area with assisted living, medical office, and/or other uses deemed appropriate. It is not recommended to return this area to residential usage based upon development and land use patterns on Livingston Avenue.
- Work to ensure that any residents displaced as part of Ferndale/Mayfield redevelopment are able to secure long-term affordable housing options within Bexley.

## 2013: The Alum Creek Park Plan

The 2013 Alum Creek Park Plan was commissioned by the Alum Creek Corridor Committee, which was formed as a result of the Bexley Land Use Strategy recommendations for the Alum Creek study area. The proposed Alum Creek park interfaces with the Livingston corridor on its south end. A major emphasis of the creation of the Alum Creek Park and the formation of the park plan is the stabilization of the Livingston corridor, with an emphasis on the stabilization of the Ferndale and Mayfield area.

The Alum Creek Park Plan calls for these improvements to benefit the Livingston Avenue corridor and the Ferndale and Mayfield area:

- **Trail and Park Improvements**

The Ferndale/Mayfield area is planned as a primary interface with the Alum Creek Park. It will provide a primary point of entry to the park and parking for the park, as well as a dog cleanup station, an emergency call box, and portable toilet facilities, per the park plan.

- **Athletic fields at City-owner property on the north side of Ferndale and Mayfield**

The City owner property is currently used by the Bexley Community Garden, and by the City of Bexley for landscape material storage. The plan preserves the community gardens, and calls for the addition of athletic fields. Provisioning athletic fields would increase the amount of programmable athletic field space in Bexley by 25%. It would increase the amount of exposure to the area, resulting in greater stability and awareness of the neighborhood as a part of the Bexley community.



# PLANNING HISTORY





# PLANNING HISTORY

## 2014: The Livingston Overlay Committee

In 2014, the Bexley City administration formed a Livingston Overlay Committee, comprised of representatives from the City's boards and commissions.

### Livingston Overlay Participants:

Don Brosius, BZA  
Larry Helman, Tree and Public Gardens Commission  
Ben Kessler, Mayor  
Mike Simpson, Planning Commission  
Jason Sudy, Planning Consultant

The purpose of the committee was to assist with the creation of a recommended zoning overlay to incorporate into the Bexley zoning code modernization project, which was underway. During the investigation and discussion of an overlay for Livingston, the group consistently came back to key provisions of past plans for Livingston Avenue and the need to make progress on the implementation of past recommendations for the corridor. From the work of past plans, distilled and clarified by the overlay committee, comes the recommendations in this plan.

## Livingston Action Item: Improve Livingston Corridor Public Ammenities

The Livingston plan is focused on improving the quality of the natural and built environment along Livingston Avenue.

### Landscape:

- Establish a tree lawn first in Bexley but ultimately on both sides of commercial corridor
- Specify a side yard landscape buffer of 5' for new applications
- Specify a uniform rear fence design and requirement

### Lighting:

- Install streetscape quality streetlights on both sides of Livingston (need an easement to do this, at least on the Bexley side)

### Signage:

- Extend Bexley's commercial sign standard to Livingston
- Extend Bexley's commercial street sign installations to Livingston

### Speed Mitigation:

- Work with Columbus to encourage greater speed enforcement, and lobby for speed actuated signage on Livingston

### Recreational Ammenities

- Install athletic fields and trail ammenities per the Alum Creek Plan



# STABILIZATION PROPOSAL

## Livingston Action Item: Ferndale/Mayfield Stabilization Program

The Ferndale and Mayfield area is located at the extreme southwest quadrant of the city of Bexley. Current land use in the area includes parkland, service-oriented retail along Livingston Avenue, and multifamily residential. In total, the area has about 11.6 acres of land, 4.7 of which are currently controlled by the city of Bexley.

### Issues of Environment, Structure, and Crime

The root challenge presented by Ferndale and Mayfield is largely structural. These two streets were developed on top of what was a landfill, and the public and private improvements in the area sit on top of between 7' to 12' of compacted fill in areas. This has led to structural issues in the properties and in the public improvements constructed here, which has in turn led to a landlord population that has in many ways neglected property due to the underlying structural issues and the lack of any economic return on investments back into the properties. Landlord neglect has in turn led to tenant neglect. The net result is an area that has substantially higher police activity than other areas of the City, and more extensive code enforcement issues.

### Concepts for Redevelopment

Bexley's guiding document concerning this area, the 2011 Bexley Land Use Strategy, calls for "purposeful redevelopment of the Ferndale/Mayfield area", including the formation of a Community Improvement Corporation, the possible use of TIF funding for infrastructure improvements, and the provision for a planned zoning district that would open the area up to mixed uses.

Over a period of many years the City has reached out to developers, including a variety of developers who specialize in hotel, residential, mixed use, assisted living and senior housing, and brownfield redevelopment. Consistently, the City has been advised that development of the area is made difficult by the number of property owners and the logistics of assemblage combined with the cost to environmentally and structurally mitigate the underlying conditions presented by the landfill that occupied much of the area. It is clear from experience exploring development options that a pure market-driven solution will not result in stabilization of the Ferndale and Mayfield area. It is also clear that progress will not occur in the area without purposeful reinvestment back into the Ferndale and Mayfield area.

### Assemblage of Property

Regardless of the end result - whether it be stabilization, redevelopment, or a combination of the two - waiting for a developer to take action in assembling the properties is clearly not going to yield results. The first step is for an entity to commence assemblage and gain control of the properties, in order to affect stabilization of the area. As entities that can take a long-term approach to tackling the issues in this area, the City of Bexley and the Bexley Community Improvement Corporation are ideally suited to this task.



# STABILIZATION PROPOSAL

## Assemblage Plan

An assemblage plan is necessary in order to have a planned and communicated strategy for the area. The assemblage plan should recognize the need to progress over a realistic time frame, and to work on stabilizing the area during the holding period. Key components of the Mayfield/Ferndale assemblage plan are:

- Commence a an approximately 10 year schedule to acquire smaller residential properties on Ferndale and Mayfield via a structured and transparent purchase program that allows the City/CIC to purchase a defined number of units per year at a defined price.
  - 2 properties purchased per year
  - Non-negotiable purchase price based on appraisal (est. average value of \$60,000 as of 2015).
  - Cash closing within short period of time.
  - Sellers do not need to pay realtor fees and would benefit from a known buyer and a quick closing.
- Holding period strategy: leverage rents during the holding period to improve property conditions in the area
  - Engage a third-party apartment management company to manage the properties based upon the below criteria
    - Rental and occupancy only to tenants with no criminal background history
    - Free rent to first responders
  - Reinvest rent income back into property maintenance exclusively, with an emphasis on:
    - Lush landscaping
    - Lighting
    - Common design elements (address signage, color pallettes, etc) designed by Bexley architect panel.
- “Return to Market” strategy

A strategy to return the property to market must be kept flexible in order to be responsive to market demand for the area. Such strategy could include:

  - Securing state and federal funding for remediation of landfill
  - Creating a TIF prior to redevelopment to help fund site cleanup and infrastructure costs
  - Identifying a use and a developer(s) to help create the use after environmental and ownership issues are addressed

- or -

  - Returning the stabilized rental properties to market. If maintained as housing, preferable end user would be an institution, such as perhaps Trinity Seminary or Capital University (would require modification of the Campus Planning District and the Southwest Bexley Master Plan), who could maintain the stabilized condition.



# STABILIZATION PROPOSAL

## What is the end result of a stabilized Ferndale & Mayfield?

The end goal is to create an area that is a thriving asset to the City of Bexley. This table details three scenarios as a result of a stabilized Ferndale and Mayfield.



### Redevelopment Scenario:

#### **A private developer redevelops Ferndale & Mayfield**

The underlying premise of assembling Ferndale & Mayfield is the belief, after decades of Bexley development office efforts to source a developer to redevelop the area, that the first step to redevelopment will require a single entity owner (the City/CIC) in order to remove the most daunting hurdle faced by private redevelopment of the area. Having the City/CIC as a single entity will allow the City to control the type of redevelopment that occurs, with an appropriate level of sensitivity to preserving lower income housing options and identifying a use or uses that will ensure stability and vitality in future years.



### Redevelopment Scenario:

#### **Stabilization leads to preservation**

Another end result of assemblage, careful management of property maintenance and management, and eventual rerouting of Ferndale and Mayfield through to Sheridan and blocking off access to Livingston could be preservation of the existing multifamily improvements. Under this scenario, assemblage and preservation of the properties could lead to a suitably stable condition that redevelopment is not indicated. While this scenario is felt to be less likely due to the structural conditions in the area, it is a possibility.



### Redevelopment Scenario:

#### **Preservation and Conversion to Campus Housing Use**

A possible third scenario, or even hybrid scenario of the first two scenarios is a campus housing use. While Capital University and Trinity Seminary do not currently have expressed interest in using properties in the area as student housing, the assemblage and stabilization of the area could lead to enough stability to allow for a student housing use. Having institutional investment and oversight of the area through student housing could lead to long term stability in the area.



# STABILIZATION PROPOSAL

## Livingston Action Item: Long Term Improvements

- Undergrounding of above-ground lines on north and south sides of Livingston Avenue
- Removal of billboards on Livingston Avenue
- Continue to encourage the JCC to create a front driveway and presence coming off of Livingston