

University District Plan

October 24, 2014

The November 2014 final draft of the University District Plan is the culmination of a process involving input from hundreds of stakeholders, public meetings, a close look at current conditions, and review of planning policy spanning several decades. This highlights and frequently asked questions document attempts to provide a brief summary of the plan. To view the entire plan or obtain additional information, visit the project webpage or contact our office:

<http://www.columbus.gov/planning/universitydistrictplan/>

Columbus Planning Division
50 West Gay Street
Columbus, OH 43215
(614) 645-6823, mcdravillas@columbus.gov

Plan Highlights

- Serves as single source for land use and development policy guidance.
- Draws on decades of planning work by community, city and university.
- Includes first ever recommended land use map covering entire University District.
- Includes first ever design guidelines for commercial and residential development to cover the entire area.
- Focuses denser mixed development on High Street south of Lane and Lane Avenue between the river and High Street through use of increased height limits and reduced parking requirements.
- Designates predominantly single-family neighborhoods further from campus as lower intensity areas with corresponding parking, open space and building mass guidelines.
- Designates High Street north of Lane, Fifth Avenue and other commercial nodes as Neighborhood Mixed Use areas to reinforce smaller scale community oriented development.
- Reinforces protection of the area's ravines and other natural resources.
- Includes guidance for considering new uses of institutional sites.
- Recognizes and encourages preservation of district's historic resources.
- Will serve as an updated basis for reviewing proposed zoning changes and variances requests.
- Recommends code updates to align development regulations with updated plan policy.

Frequently Asked Questions

How does this plan relate to existing plans for the area?

The draft University District Plan draws on decades of planning and policy work for the University District. It will replace all existing plans for the area and serve as a consolidated source of planning.

How does this plan benefit the University District?

The plan will replace several existing documents to serve as a single planning guide for the entire University District, including a land use plan, commercial and residential design guidelines, and capital improvement-related recommendations. The plan will provide an updated policy framework to review proposed zonings, variances and development proposals.

How was the community involved?

Public involvement in the planning process has been extensive. To date approximately 350 people have participated in the process via stakeholder interviews, three public workshops, online surveys, and numerous meetings with civic associations, developers and others.

What happened with the community's input?

Over 2,000 pieces of input were received during the roughly one year of plan preparation. While many of the comments reinforced initial plan recommendations, the process also led to substantial changes to the initial plan draft. These changes included such things as lowering the density recommendations for a number of areas and adjusting height limits for other areas. A separate document outlining changes from the initial to current draft is available on the project webpage or from the Planning Division office.

Is the plan proposing increased densities for the District?

For the majority of the district, the plan's density recommendations are consistent with existing zoning and policy. Higher density development is recommended for portions of High Street (south of Lane) and Lane Avenue (west of High). This is intended to focus development closer to the university campus as numerous plans and studies have recommended. Increased open space and limitations on parking are intended to reinforce traditional building patterns and scale of lower intensity areas.

Will the plan change existing zoning?

No, the plan will not change existing zoning. The plan does include recommendations about potential changes to zoning standards, such as height limits and parking requirements. While these provisions can be used to review zoning and variance applications, a separate process will be required to make them part of the zoning code. This would involve updating the existing University Planning Overlay. (The plan's recommendations, including the Land Use Plan and associated standards, very much build upon and are true to the intent of the Planning Overlay.) Additionally, the plan does not recommend any changes to the underlying zoning districts in place throughout the area.

What are the plan's recommendations on landscaping?

The plan recommends increased open space requirements for residential areas. The proposed standards are balanced with parking requirements and typical building sizes. Incorporation of these new standards in the zoning code will require a separate process. The plan also stresses increased protection of natural areas within the district.

How does the plan address parking?

For most areas, no changes are recommended regarding the amount of parking that should be required for new development. A key exception is that for higher intensity residential and mixed-use areas, residential parking requirements should be calculated on a *per bed basis* (as opposed to *per dwelling unit basis*). Current code uses either a complicated formula (residential areas), or in areas zoned commercially (High Street, Lane Avenue, etc.), counts parking on a per-dwelling unit basis, regardless of the number of beds that may be in a given unit. This means that a development that includes 10 one-bedroom units would be charged the same as a development that includes 10 five-bedroom units. Requiring that parking be calculated based on beds/bedrooms will help to ensure that future development be parked at an appropriate level. The accompanying recommended ratios of .375 spaces per bed for Regional Mixed Use and .75 spaces per bed for Neighborhood Mixed Use and High Intensity Residential can result in requirements that are either higher or lower than current code depending on the type of units proposed.

For lower density (primarily single family) areas the plan's recommendation is consistent with existing code, but recommends a maximum of 4 spaces and no double-stacking in order to minimize the paving of rear yards. It is important to note that these parking recommendations would be used to guide evaluation of rezoning or variance applications, but will not be code unless a separate process takes place to modify the existing university zoning overlay as suggested by the plan.

The Plan recommends code updates. How would that happen?

The plan includes a number of changes in such areas as open space, parking requirements and height limits. While the plan's recommendations can be used in reviewing zoning and variance applications, a separate public process is required before they are part of city code. Such a process would involve property owners mailings as well as input from the University Area Commission, civic associations, developers, and other stakeholders.

Will the plan change the University Area Review Board (UARB)?

The University Area Review Board is a panel appointed by the Mayor to review exterior property changes and development proposals within a core area of the University District, known as the Impact District. Among the input received during the planning process, is the suggestion that the UARB's geographic scope be increased to cover the entire district. The plan recommends that a separate process take place to consider this issue. The UARB authority and responsibilities are outlined in the zoning code. Any decision to change the board's geographic scope, composition, and authority will require a separate public process. Such a process would involve property owner mailings as well input from the University Area Commission, civic associations, developers, and other stakeholders.

How is the plan approved?

The adoption process for the University District Plan involves consideration by the University Area Review Board, University Area Commission, and Columbus Development Commission. The final stage is City Council adoption.

For additional information, contact Mark Dravillas, Columbus Planning, at mcdravillas@columbus.gov.