

The Warehouse District Plan

Downtown Development Initiative



Columbus City Council

Matthew D. Habash, President

Jennette B. Bradley

Michael C. Mentel

Frederick L. Ransier III

Maryellen O'Shaughnessy

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Charleta B. Tavares

Downtown Development Commission

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Bob Loversidge

Mike Lusk

Jana Maniace

Steve Wittmann

Ken Cookson

The Warehouse District Plan



July, 2000

Michael B. Coleman, *Mayor*
City of Columbus, Ohio

Mark Barbash, *Director*
Department of Trade and Development
Patrick Grady, *Deputy Director*
Economic Development and Planning Services
Stephen R. McClary, *Administrator*
Planning Office
Dick Ritchie, *Manager*
Neighborhood Planning Section

Prepared by:
Craig Noreen, *Senior Planner*

Graphics by:
Jay Kurowski, *Graphic Designer*

The Warehouse District Plan was adopted by City Council on July 24, 2000 as the official guide for the Warehouse District Planning Area. The plan provides recommendations and establishes guidelines to direct future decisions and influence policy development. Please direct all questions regarding the content of this plan to city of Columbus Planning Office, 109 N. Front Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215.

Letter from the Director

On July 24, 2000 City Council adopted *The Warehouse District Plan* as the city's official guide for land use, development and urban design in the Warehouse District Planning Area. As a sub-district of downtown Columbus, the Warehouse District is a vital component of our city's urban and cultural center. Implementing the plan's recommendations for this district will serve to further the exceptional growth and revitalization of downtown Columbus.

The Planning Office prepared *The Warehouse District Plan* in recognition of the area's need for a cohesive purpose and direction. The plan has been prepared with the assistance and input from numerous stakeholders including property owners, developers, design professionals, and business interests. It is our goal that this document be used by the private and public sectors as a working reference of planning guidelines and policies for the Warehouse District Planning Area.

Mark Barbash, Director
Department of Trade and Development

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Steve Burigana*
Corporate Construction Services

John Burns*
Central Ohio Welding

Sal Caradonna
Harmony Ball Company

Chan Chandler
Phillip Markwood Architects

Tony Colosimo*
3D/Group, Inc.

Fr. Ambrose Eckinger, OP*
Saint Patrick Church

Michael Fitzpatrick
Architectural Alliance

Doug Graf
The Ohio State University

Bill Hall*
Central Ohio Fire Museum

Brian Higgins
OSU Graduate Student

Dennis Horton*
Corporate Construction Services

Dwain Lee
Dwain Lee Architects

Randy Liddle
Corporate Construction Services

Sally Luken*
Faith Mission

Louis Moon
OSU Planning Intern

Dave Schroeder*
Ross Division of Abbott Labs

Steve Shinn*
Phillip Markwood Architects

Bob Shook*
Columbus State Community College

Tim Taylor*
CB Richard Ellis

Phil Yoder*
ICOM Multimedia

John Ziegler Jr.*
Buckeye Printing and Mailing

John Ziegler Sr.*
Buckeye Printing and Mailing

* Working Committee Member

The Warehouse District will be a distinct mixed-use district that includes residential, commercial, office, and light manufacturing. These uses will compliment adjacent districts and support nearby public facilities and institutions. Uses will include residential lofts, condos, and studio apartments; drug stores, grocery stores, and other retail supporting residential uses; hotels, restaurants, and night clubs; loft offices for photo studios, art studios, etc.; small corporate offices; and light manufacturing firms. A passive park will be centrally located, preferably near a public building. Streetscape improvements will serve to establish a cohesive image for the district. New in-fill buildings will reinforce the architectural character of the area and respect the district's existing buildings in terms of scale and materials. Redevelopment of existing buildings will seek to preserve/restore exterior facades.

Warehouse District Working Committee

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Introduction and Overview

Purpose and Objectives of the Plan

The Warehouse District Plan was prepared to establish guidelines for the district and stimulate interest in its future. Recommendations were prepared to guide land use, development/redevelopment and streetscape/urban design.

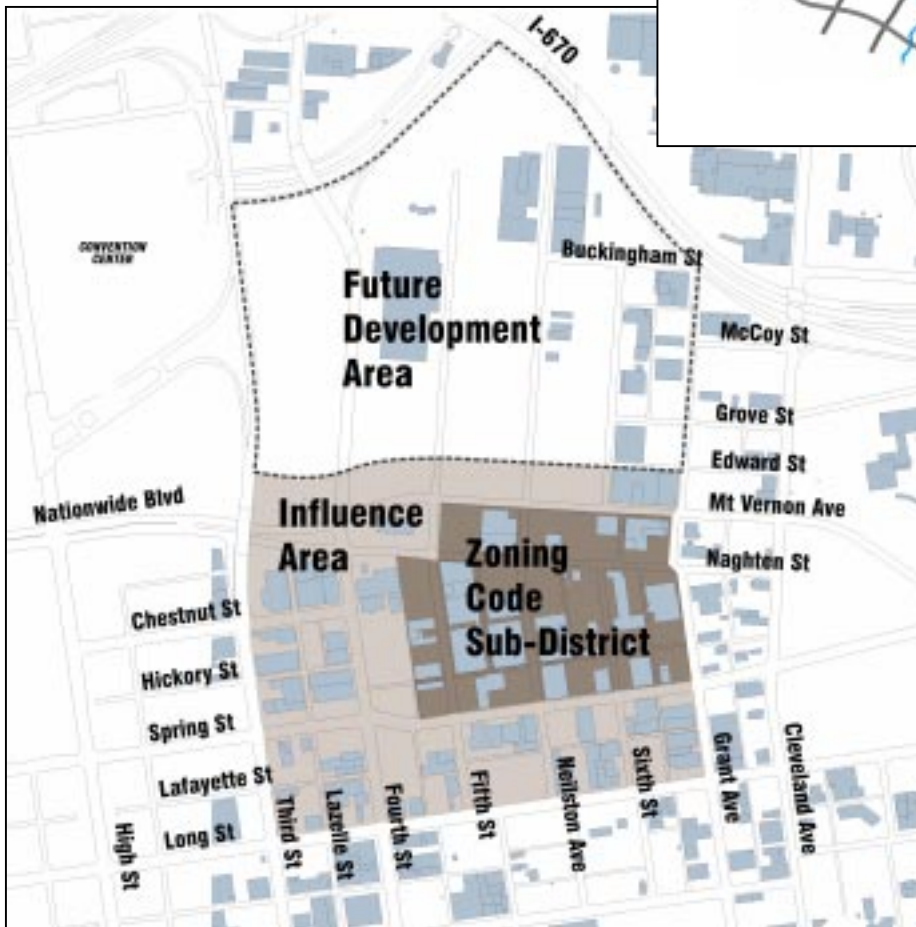
The following four objectives were identified as key goals of the plan:

- ✓ *Delineate district boundaries with major land users.*
- ✓ *Promote a mixture of uses within existing and future buildings.*
- ✓ *Encourage in-fill that reinforces the district's unique architectural character.*
- ✓ *Foster a strong district identity through purposeful urban design.*

The recommendations in this Plan provide guidance to the development community and property owners as new development and renovations are proposed for the Warehouse District. The Plan's recommendations will be used in the review of project proposals to provide guidance to the Downtown Commission as they conduct project design reviews under the provisions of the Zoning Code.

The Warehouse District Planning Area

The Warehouse District Planning Area is bound by I-670 and the Conrail railroad tracks on the north, Grant Avenue on the east, Long Street on the south, and N. Third Street on the west. The Planning Area includes the Zoning Code Sub-District, Influence Area, and Future Development Area.



Warehouse District Planning Area

Zoning Code Sub-District

The Zoning Code's Warehouse Sub-District represents the core of the Warehouse District Planning Area. This portion of the planning area contains legally established standards relating to building height, setback, and land uses. These standards ensure consistency in scale and streetscape to strengthen the Warehouse District character. In evaluating future project proposals within the Zoning Code's Warehouse Sub-District, the provisions of this plan would provide additional guidance.

Influence Area

The Warehouse District Planning Area includes a larger geographic area reaching well beyond the Zoning Code's Sub-District. This larger area contains fewer contributing buildings and a greater amount of undeveloped land. The area is clearly influenced by the Zoning Code's Warehouse Sub-

District and should be guided in a similar land use and urban design direction. However, there are opportunities to blend the old and new and to carefully introduce a broader variety of building materials without detracting from the District.

Future Development Area

The area designated as "Future Development Area" represents one of the largest undeveloped tracts of land in the downtown. As part of the Downtown District, there is a range of permitted uses for this area including residential, institutional, commercial, office, and manufacturing. Since this land is largely undeveloped, there are few physical queues in place for making specific urban design recommendations at this time. Nevertheless, future development within this area should maximize the use of the land and be sensitive to its urban context. No other provisions of this plan address this area.

Participants and the Planning Process

The Warehouse District Plan was prepared by the city's Planning Office in cooperation with a committee of area property owners, developers, design professionals, and business interests. This group, assembled prior to initiation of the planning process, was established to ensure that the plan would reflect the needs and aspirations of area stakeholders.

The planning process consisted of four stages: Formation of Goals/Vision Statement, Issue Identification/Analysis of Assets, Plan Development/Documentation, and Plan Review/Adoption. In addition, the Planning Office hosted a charette to formulate design solutions for the district and organized a tour of the district to stimulate interest in the area.

Formation of Goals/Vision Statement

This initial step in the process required that the working committee establish a direction and conceptual construct for the Warehouse District.

Issue Identification/Analysis of Assets

The working committee was asked by city staff to assess the district's assets and liabilities during this phase of the planning process.

Plan Development/Documentation

This stage involved the preparation of planning recommendations and the planning document by city staff. A marketing brochure summarizing the contents of the plan was also prepared during this period. Review and comment by committee members was solicited throughout this phase.

Plan Review/Adoption

The final step in the process included the presentation of the plan to the general public for their comments, review of the plan with the Downtown Development Commission for their endorsement, and submission of the plan to City Council for its adoption.

Background and Key Characteristics

General History of the Warehouse District

The city's original 1834 boundaries took in the southwest corner of the Warehouse District, including N. Third and N. Fourth Streets between Spring and Naghten Streets. Growth of the city eastward resulted in the annexation of the rest of the district south of Naghten Street in 1847. The remaining portions of the district north of Naghten Street were annexed in 1862 and 1870.

By the outbreak of the Civil War, a manufacturing and warehouse area had developed along the railway north of the original business district. As the city's economy and rail system grew, so did the area. As more people came to work in the district, more housing was built. St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, dedicated in 1853, also grew with the neighborhood. The original building was remodeled in 1877 and expanded in 1900 and 1913.

The district continued to thrive throughout the first half of the twentieth century. But as the railroads became less important to the city's economy, warehousing and other transportation-related activity in the area began to decline. Much of the district was vacant and deteriorating by the 1970's. Today, few remnants of the area still exist.

Downtown Districts and Adjacent Institutions

The emergence of downtown districts has played a significant role in the evolution of downtown Columbus. Presently, there are five adopted development plans for districts located in the downtown area: the *Brewery District Plan*, *Downtown South Plan*, *Grant/Washington Discovery District Plan*, *North Market Plan*, and *Pen West Plan*.

The Warehouse District, located north and west of the Discovery District, is in close proximity to its many institutions and public buildings. Columbus State Community College borders the district on its east; Columbus College of Art

and Design on its south. Many other significant institutions located in the Discovery District are within walking distance of the planning area.

Additional nearby districts include the North Market and the Arena District, both of which are located west of the planning area. Nationwide Boulevard, which links the Warehouse District with the Arena District, provides easy access for both pedestrians and vehicles. Nationwide Boulevard also provides a physical connection to the Columbus Convention Center, which borders the western edge of the planning area.

Architectural Styles and Building Type

The Warehouse District contains buildings representing a variety of architectural styles. The Schoedinger building is a second renaissance revival building designed in 1900 for the FOSCO sheet metal company. Engine House #16, built in 1908, is an excellent example of Gothic Revival architecture. The Central Ohio Paper Company building, completed in 1915, was built in the Chicago Style. Its windows and building composition are typical of this style.

The district provides several good illustrations of the warehouse building type. The Bradford Shoe Company building, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, exemplifies warehouse construction. Its concrete frame and large window openings are clearly expressed in its elevations. This building's large windows with their steel industrial-type sash are typical of early 20th century warehouse construction. Another key feature of this building type is the use of ornamentation to accentuate the building's main entry.

The COPCO building and the Bobb Company building provide excellent examples of this technique. The Bobb Company building, which was built in 1914 as a wholesale grocery warehouse, also provides an excellent example of the loading docks characteristic of the warehouse building type.

Current Conditions in the Planning Area

Existing Land Use and Zoning

The largest current land use in the Warehouse District is parking. It accounts for approximately one-third of all land in the planning area. Warehousing/light manufacturing represents the second largest land use in the district. Much of this land use is located north of Mt. Vernon Avenue. Institutional-related uses are also a significant land use, particularly along the eastern boundary of the planning area. While the number of offices in the core of the district is rising, this land use accounts for less than ten percent of the district. Commercial and entertainment-related uses, which

represent only a small fraction of the overall area, are limited to the western and southern boundaries of the district. Lastly, the Warehouse District contains several vacant buildings and large parcels of vacant land. These account for over twenty percent of the overall planning area.

The entire planning area is zoned Downtown District (see Chapter 3359 of the Columbus City Codes). Additional provisions and standards are included for a portion the planning area identified as the Warehouse Sub-District (see section 3359.23).



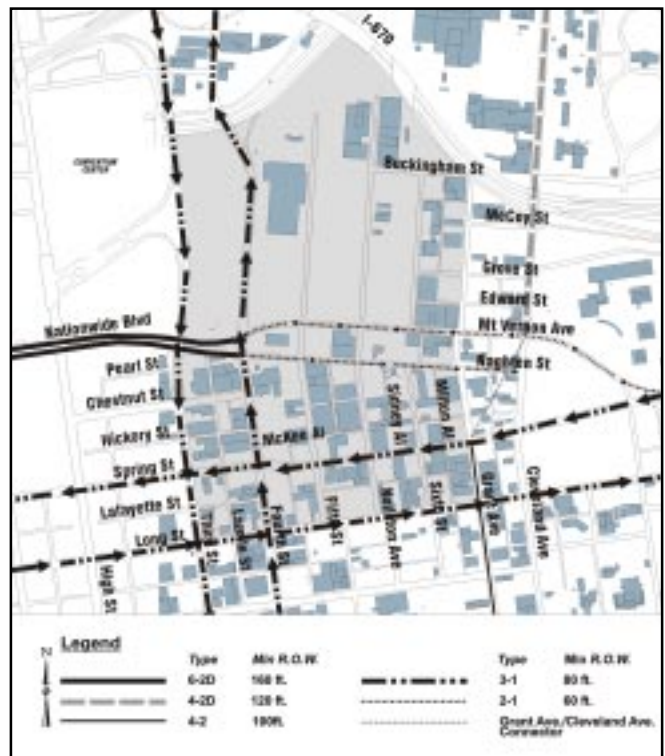
Existing Land Use Map

Traffic and Circulation Patterns in the Area

Traffic patterns in and around the planning area have a significant influence on the way in which the district is used, accessed, and linked to other districts. N. Third Street is a southbound, one-way thoroughfare, which serves as the planning area's western boundary. N. Fourth Street, which is located one block east, is a northbound, one-way thoroughfare. While both of these streets are significant for vehicular access into and out of the downtown area, they also function as barriers for pedestrians using the district or accessing other districts.

Spring and Long streets are also significant one-way thoroughfares that provide access into and out of the downtown area. Spring Street is a westbound thoroughfare; Long Street, which serves as the planning area's southern boundary, is an eastbound thoroughfare. Like N. Third and N. Fourth streets, these thoroughfares discourage pedestrian movement between downtown districts.

Naghten Street and Mt. Vernon Avenue are also one-way streets that run east and westbound. Located in the core of the district, these paired streets connect Nationwide Boulevard with Cleveland Avenue. While these streets are narrower and less traveled than streets previously mentioned, traffic volume is anticipated to increase with the opening of Nationwide Arena. This poses a more significant challenge to the actual and perceived cohesiveness of the district and its ability to be a pedestrian-oriented environment.



Thoroughfare Map

Streetscapes and the District's Image

Currently, the Warehouse District and its streets lack visual interest and appeal. Its streetscapes are cluttered with poles and overhead wires. A myriad of telephone, cable TV, and electric lines fill the sky. Existing street lights do not improve the area's appearance. Poles and luminaries are generic and fail to help establish interest or identity for the district.

Most streets in the planning area do not have street trees. Typically, concrete extends from the curb to the building's edge without a tree lawn or tree pits. In addition, most parking lots are not buffered with shrubs or trees, providing no visual relief from the large expanse of pavement.

Many of the streets, curbs and sidewalks in the planning area are in disrepair. Curbs in some locations are crumbling. Sidewalks are frequently pitted, cracked, and/or uneven; most are poorly maintained. Some brick sidewalks and alleys still remain in the district. These are generally in good condition and add to the area's visual interest.

The planning area is also plagued with billboards. These large signs detract from the district's visual appeal and hinder its ability to establish a positive image and identity.

Growth, Change, and Opportunities

Recent Developments and Emerging Trends

Downtown Columbus has experienced extraordinary changes during the past decade. New development spurred on by strong economic growth has generated renewed interest and enthusiasm in the downtown area. The addition of Nationwide Arena and the expansion of the Convention Center reflect the vitality of downtown and its identity as the centerpiece of the metropolitan area.

Several recent trends have emerged as interest in downtown Columbus continues to grow. Enthusiasm over housing in the downtown area has resulted in the planning/construction of several significant residential development projects.

The preservation and reuse of existing buildings has also become more important over the last several years. Currently, several large development projects in the downtown area involve the reuse of existing buildings.

Market Demands in Downtown Columbus

There is an unaddressed demand for affordable housing in downtown Columbus. Buildings in the Warehouse District are particularly well suited for redevelopment as residential loft space. The district's proximity to educational institutions and major downtown employers makes it an ideal location for students and professionals.

The market for hotels in the downtown area is also very good. The district's proximity to the Columbus Convention Center and the Arena District also makes the Warehouse District an attractive location for hotels.

With a strong market for downtown office space, existing buildings within the Warehouse District are also well suited for adaptive reuse as office buildings.

Retail space is also less likely in the Warehouse District given its proximity to City Center. Exceptions include businesses that provide for area residents (e.g. pharmacies, grocery stores, etc.), restaurants or other 'destination' type uses, and businesses that support office functions (e.g. office supply stores, copy centers, etc.).

Development/Redevelopment Potential

Currently, there exists tremendous capacity for development and redevelopment in the Warehouse District. This is due to the area's large amount of undeveloped and underdeveloped land.

Approximately 20% of the planning area is vacant land. Another 30% of the planning area is used for parking. This undeveloped and underdeveloped land provides significant opportunities for new development.

In addition, several warehouse and commercial buildings in the planning area are currently vacant. These structures, ripe for redevelopment, offer extraordinary potential as residential, commercial, and/or office space. In addition, a number of the buildings in the district are underutilized. These may be candidates for redevelopment as the overall district develops.

Sub-District and Influence Area Recommendations

Appropriate Land Uses in the District

- ✓ Promote and support a mixture of residential, commercial, and office land uses.
- ✓ Endorse land uses that support nearby public facilities and institutions, such as the Columbus Convention Center, Columbus State Community College, etc.
- ✓ Reinforce commercial and office land use along major thoroughfares bordering the district.
- ✓ Support sidewalk cafes for restaurant/entertainment uses.

Traffic, Circulation, and Transportation

- ✓ Work with the City's Traffic Engineering and Parking Division to develop pedestrian-friendly streets in the district.
- ✓ Reinstitute two-way vehicular traffic and narrow/landscape intersections on Naghten Street and Mt. Vernon Avenue.
- ✓ Improve signalization to facilitate flow within the district and connections to adjoining districts.
- ✓ Work with COTA to identify locations needing access to public transportation. Lobby for additional bus stops and the placement of architecturally consistent shelters.

Surface Parking and Parking Structures

- ✓ Disallow new surface parking lots within the district.
- ✓ Encourage the elimination of existing surface parking lots at intersections.
- ✓ Locate off-street parking behind or between buildings for all new development.
- ✓ Use street-front display windows or provide ground floor commercial/ office space in parking structures within the district.
- ✓ Develop a long-term parking strategy in conjunction with adjacent institutions and public facilities to address overall parking requirements for the area.

Urban Design Recommendations

- ✓ Prioritize streets and work with the appropriate entities to bury electric, telephone, cable TV, street light, traffic signal cables, and any other overhead lines.
- ✓ Encourage the removal of existing billboards and disallow construction of any new billboards.
- ✓ Install district-wide markers that help to distinguish the area, define its edges, and provide key information.
- ✓ Develop an urban park that is centrally located, pedestrian-oriented, and nearby/adjacent to a public facility, such as the Central Ohio Fire Museum and Learning Center.

Streetscape Elements for the District

- ✓ Establish design consistency among all streetscape elements, including tree grates, bike racks, etc., in order to foster a cohesive image for the district.
- ✓ Implement new pedestrian-scale “Acorn” luminaries in accordance with the *Columbus Downtown Streetscape Plan*.
- ✓ Install four to five-foot long steel benches with gloss black painted finish (Victor Stanley Model RB-28 or equivalent).
- ✓ Install steel waste receptacles with gloss black painted finish (Du More Inc. Model 107 or equivalent) at street intersections and near building entries.

Curbs, Sidewalks, and Tree Lawns

- ✓ Install granite curbs and construct poured-in-place broom finished sidewalks as recommended by the *Columbus Downtown Streetscape Plan*. Repair existing sidewalks where appropriate.
- ✓ Plant deciduous shade trees in relation to the building context, allowing trees to be concentrated in some areas and sparse in others in order to emphasize the architecture of the district.
- ✓ Adhere to the standards for tree planting prescribed by the *Columbus Downtown Streetscape Plan*.

Building Signage and Illumination

- ✓ Set standards for the illumination of signage and building facades. Focus exterior lighting downward on tightly defined areas to reduce urban light pollution.
- ✓ Confine building signage to entrances and windows in order to reduce visual clutter.
- ✓ Encourage the use of wood and metal signs on buildings rather than plastic and preserve signage with significant historic value.
- ✓ Utilize pedestrian-scale signage without internal illumination to establish a consistent character for the district.

New Development and Redevelopment

- ✓ Support in-fill development that is compatible with existing patterns of development within the district and adjacent districts, including zero setbacks along the street edge.
- ✓ Support new buildings that are three to five stories in height and compatible with existing structures in scale and proportion, particularly in the Zoning Code's Warehouse Sub-District.
- ✓ Reinforce the architectural character of the district by supporting the use of brick facades and industrial-style windows for new buildings.

✓ Support new development north of Mt. Vernon Avenue that blends the features and characteristics of historic warehouse buildings with modern architecture. Building facades along Mt. Vernon Avenue should be brick with large window openings like that of existing warehouses in the district.

✓ Support new development along N. Grant Avenue that integrates the architectural style of Columbus State University with the district's warehouse architecture.

✓ Endorse redevelopment that preserves/restores the exterior facades of existing buildings.

Next Steps for the Warehouse District

Guidelines for Plan Implementation

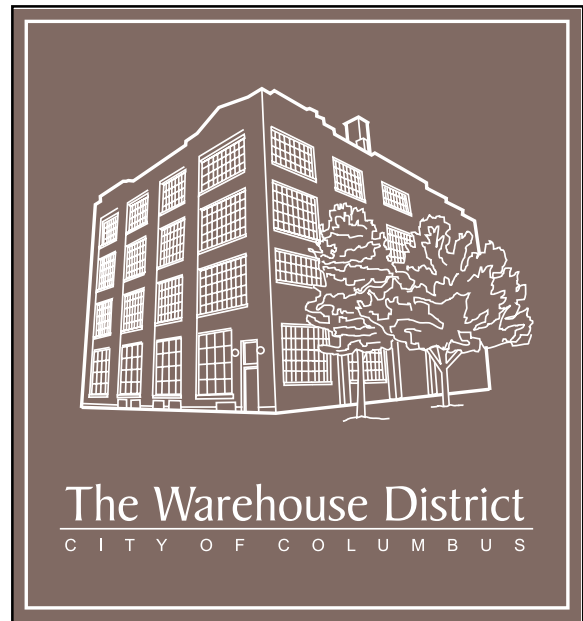
The following guidelines are provided to assist in the implementation of *The Warehouse District Plan*:

- ✓ Maintain communication among members of the Warehouse District Working Committee as well as with other individuals and groups who joined in the planning process.
- ✓ Establish a not-for-profit organization of area stakeholders to promote the Warehouse District.
- ✓ Collaborate with the Downtown Development Office and Downtown Commission on implementation of the plan and compliance with its recommendations.
- ✓ Establish a working dialog with development interests in order to find mutually beneficial solutions.
- ✓ Review the plan periodically and update its contents as conditions change and new issues are identified. Amendments to the plan must be submitted to City Council.

Suggestions for Marketing the District

The action steps listed below are offered to help promote the district and stimulate reinvestment:

- ✓ Secure a marketing consultant to prepare a comprehensive marketing strategy for the district.
- ✓ Develop a marketing brochure to highlight the district and stimulate enthusiasm among investors, developers and the general public.
- ✓ Establish a Warehouse District web site to provide easy access to information about the area.
- ✓ Work with a graphic artist to create a logo for the district that can be used in advertising materials.
- ✓ Organize tours of the district and coordinate other special events to generate local excitement and interest in the area.
- ✓ Identify and promote incentive for reinvestment in the district, including possible tax abatement for historic properties.



Warehouse District Logo