

## **City of Ashland - Housing Committee Meeting Notice**

The City of Ashland Housing Committee will be holding its **Wednesday November 10, 2021** meeting at **8:00am via GoTo Meetings**.

The meeting can be accessed using a computer, tablet or smartphone at <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/877602781>. The meeting can also be accessed by phone at 1-877-309-2073 using access code: 877-602-781

### **Agenda**

- 1) Agenda Approval**
- 2) Consent Agenda**
  - a) Approval of minutes from the July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Housing Committee meeting
  - b) Approval of minutes from the August 13th, 2021 Housing Committee meeting
- 3) Citizen Comments**
- 4) Old Business**
  - a) Update on progress with CDBG, HIP and property maintenance
- 5) New Business**
  - a) Discussion of strategy for updating inventory of Ashland housing stock from Comp Plan
  - b) Discussion of strategic demolition strategies to address abandoned and/or dilapidated housing
- 6) Announcements**
  - a) Updates on residential development on the Timeless Timber site
  - b) Upcoming discussion for possible creation of an ordinance regulating short term vacation rentals
  - c) Updates on the Emergency Residential Facility at 2300 Lake Shore Dr W
- 7) Adjournment**

*It is possible that members of and a possible quorum of members of other governmental bodies of the municipality may be in attendance at the above stated meeting to gather information or speak about a subject, over which they have decision-making responsibility. Any governmental body at the above stated meeting will take no action other than the governmental body specifically referred to above in this notice.*

*The City of Ashland does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in employment or provision of services, programs or activities.*

*NOTE: Upon reasonable notice, the City of Ashland will accommodate the needs of disabled individuals through auxiliary aids or services. For additional information or to request this service, contact Megan McBride at (715) 682-7041.*

## **City of Ashland - Housing Committee Meeting Minutes**

A meeting of the Ashland Housing Committee was held on **Wednesday, July 14 , 2021 at 8:00 a.m. via GoTo Meetings.**

**Committee Members Present:** Liz Franek, Kaas Baichtal, Anne Whiting and Megan McBride

**Committee Members Absent:** Kathy Beeksma, Sam Ray

**Staff Present:** Chris Luebben, Mayor Lewis

**Citizens Present:** Millie Rounsville

Mayor Lewis opened the meeting at 8:00 a.m.

### **Agenda**

#### **1) Consent Agenda**

Motion to approve the agenda by Sam Ray. Seconded by Kaas Baichtal. Passed unanimously.

#### **2) a.) Approve minutes from the May 12, 2021 Housing Committee meeting**

Motion to table approval of the minutes from May 12, 2021 Housing Committee meeting by Sam Ray, seconded by Kaas Baichtal. Passed unanimously.

#### **3) Citizen Comments**

None.

#### **4) Old business**

##### **a) Updates on progress with CDBG, HIP, and property maintenance**

HIP – Chris Luebben explained that there are three new projects, she received 5 applications since the last meeting. Three of the five projects have been approved. Two still need to be discussed and reviewed for eligibility.

Property Maintenance – Chris Luebben noted that there are several cases that concern garbage and bush overgrowth that inhibits traffic views. She explained that she will continue to prioritize garbage and long grass issues.

Kaas Baichtal mentioned that a constituent came to her with a property maintenance issue regarding a fence; she said that they were unsure who to go to regarding fencing violations.

Megan McBride said that concerns regarding fencing can be brought to anyone in the Planning Department.

HIP – Megan noted that there is around \$20,000 worth of funds in the HIP account. Finding available contractors who are interested in working on smaller projects continues to be a challenge for the program.

CDBG – Megan explained that a loan has been paid off and another has had worked completed, so payment to the contractor on the new project will go out next week. Updated 2021 flyers are being sent with property maintenance letters, as well as local realtors to educate prospective homebuyers about the program.

b) Updates and discussion regarding Task Force to address homelessness

Mayor Lewis noted that the task force has not met in a few weeks.

Millie Rounselle said that there has been progress on the task forces goals. She mentioned that they are moving forward with a purchase on a hotel to utilize as a homeless shelter and are one step closer to closing.

Mayor Lewis noted that Millie has been working hard on the purchase process, and Millie will help with communication education about the proposed shelter once they are sure of the location.

Millie said the current offer to purchase NWCSA has made is on a hotel with 34 rooms. They would be converting 2 rooms to be accessible, and have already identified funding sources and community partners to help improve the property. She noted that some citizens are concerned that this shelter will attract more homeless people to the area, and that data from our region shows that this is highly unlikely. She also noted that the shelter will not house sex offenders.

Anne Whiting asked if there are any ways to address stereotypes about homelessness in our community.

Millie said that there are certain groups of homeless that are stigmatized and some that are easier to house, such as children or veterans. She noted that the site they are looking at would be able to safely shelter both individuals and families.

Mayor Lewis agreed with Anne's point that community education will be important. She explained that a public hearing notice will be issued through the Conditional Use Permit process, but that this would not be sufficient for community outreach. The task force will be working with Millie to create educational materials, and host public informational sessions to help dispel myths and try to ensure that accurate information is circulated within the community.

Liz Franek noted that another category of homeless individuals to consider is those who are "couch surfing."

**5) New Business**

a) The Housing Improvement Program Approval Procedure and Program Structure.

Megan noted that Kaas seems to have exited the call and that the committee no longer meets quorum. This meeting was tabled for future discussion.

b) Discussion of the Beaser Development site.

Mayor Lewis provided a brief background of the site, and the development proposals received by the City in the past.

This item will be brought back for discussion at a future meeting.

**6) Announcements**

None.

**7) Adjournment**

|                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Motion to adjourn made by Anne Whiting, seconded by Megan McBride. Passed unanimously. |
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*Meeting was adjourned at 8:45 am. Minutes by Mandelyn Lyons.*

## **City of Ashland - Housing Committee Meeting Minutes**

A meeting of the Ashland Housing Committee was held on **Wednesday, August 11th, 2021 at 8:00 a.m. via GoTo Meetings.**

**Committee Members Present:** Liz Franek, Kaas Baichtal, Anne Whiting, Eric Lindell and Megan McBride

**Committee Members Absent:** Kathy Beeksma

**Staff Present:** Mayor Lewis

**Citizens Present:** Millie Brownsville, Elizabeth Seefeldt

Mayor Lewis opened the meeting at 8:00 a.m.

### **Agenda**

#### **1) Consent Agenda**

Motion to approve the agenda by Eric Lindell . Seconded by Kaas Baichtal. Passed unanimously.

#### **2) a.) Approve minutes from the May 12, 2021 and June 9, 2021 Housing Committee meeting**

Motion to table approval of the minutes from May 12, 2021 and June 9, 2021 Housing Committee meeting by Liz Franek, seconded by Kaas Baichtal. Passed unanimously.

#### **3) Citizen Comments**

Kaas Baichtal said that there will be an article published by Rick Olivo in the Ashland Daily Press regarding the upcoming eviction moratorium lift.

Deb said that the moratorium will likely be extended and there is assistance available to people who are behind on rent and utilities.

#### **4) Old business**

##### **a) Updates on progress with CDBG, HIP, and property maintenance**

Megan explained that the CDBG has been repaid and that another will be issued soon, there are also new materials for marketing the program. She continued and mentioned that Chris Lubben is no longer with the city, the position description is being updated, and the job posting will be made next week. There will be an update to the property maintenance violation procedure with the addition of a resource letter instead of a violation letter to integrate CDBG and HIP. Also there will be more emphasis on commercial buildings.

Kaas Baichtal asked if the position will continue to be full-time.

Megan explained that it will be a full-time, year-round position. The only changes will be some adjustments to the process to lead with resources and help promote HIP and CDBG funds available.

b) Updates and discussion regarding Task Force to address homelessness

Millie gave a brief summary from the Homeless Task Force meeting that occurred the day before. The meeting primarily focused on presenting the homeless shelter to the public, including what questions might come up including the length of time people can stay. There were also conversations about who should be contacted about this facility.

Deb Lewis mentioned Sara Adams will help with a public meeting before the conditional use permit hearing and that these things could take place in early September at the library.

Anne Whiting wanted clarification on the process regarding two hearings before the public.

Deb answered that because of the site's zoning, a conditional use permit will be needed. The public hearing is meant for the public to learn more about the facility and to ask questions. Sara has decided to help organize this meeting to help inform the public. These dates have not been set.

Liz Franek asked how many people the motel facility will be able to house.

Millie answered that it will theoretically house 34 households at a time, however the inspection will confirm that.

Deb Lewis mentioned that there are some people who will not be able to use the facility.

Millie elaborated that registered sex offenders and people with active warrants won't be housed. Individuals that are under 17 and those with recent violence convictions on their records will also not be allowed. However, accompanied minors under 17 can be housed.

Deb also mentioned that there will be rules that prohibit drug use in the facility.

Kaas asked if there will be mental health and other resources on site or if it is just housing.

Millie said that there will be case management, meals, housing navigation, referrals to other agencies. The shelter is still determining what other services would want to come on site.

Deb clarified that this is not a detox or drug treatment center.

Kaas asked if those resources can be provided.

Deb said that they are working to get resources for shelter residents on site.

**5) New Business**

**a) Discussion and recommendation regarding priorities, approval structure and criteria for the Housing Improvement Program (HIP).**

Mayor Lewis said that the HIP program has been around for about 6 years and explains the start of the funding was an anonymous donor who wanted to help people maintain their properties.

Megan McBride provided additional background about the program funding structure and typical projects. When the program was established, the Planning Director and an appointed liaison of the anonymous donor were placed in charge of vetting and approving projects based on eligibility criteria. With staff turnover and the fact that the original donor funding was expended several years ago, projects are currently reviewed and approved solely by Megan McBride (Planning Director). She said she would likely feedback from the committee on this review structure.

Eric Lindell said he did not feel every application would need to come to the Housing Committee for review, but said that adding income qualifications may be beneficial. He asked for details on how income limits would be set and administered.

Megan said that the same income guidelines used for the CDBG program would be utilized for the HIP program. This would increase administrative demands on Planning Department staff to review and collect required documentation for income limits of applicants.

Mayor Lewis said that the original intent of the program was to be accessible by having as little bureaucracy and hassle for the applicant as possible.

Anne Whiting said that she felt not having income requirements is fine since it isn't large grant amounts, and helps projects move forward faster. Eric agreed.

Mayor Lewis asked for a consensus from the group on if there should be changes to the existing HIP project approval process. The committee agreed that the process will remain as is, and projects will not come forward to the Housing Committee for review.

Megan McBride said that she is also looking for feedback from the committee regarding future funding and contractor solicitation strategies. She explained that one of the largest barriers for the program right now is contractor availability, as many of the projects are too small in cost to be attractive to contractors but are too technical to be completed by volunteer labor.

Mayor Lewis suggested this be discussed again at a future meeting to plan for the 2022 construction season.

**b) Discussion and recommendations regarding priorities and timeline for marketing Beaser Avenue Redevelopment site.**

Megan McBride explained that the last Request for Proposals (RFP) used to solicit development proposals for the Beaser Avenue Redevelopment Site was intentionally very broad in identifying development goals to allow for a variety of housing types. Megan would like feedback from the committee on having more specified development goals now that the City knows what type of residential use the Timeless Timber site will be used for.

Deb Lewis mentioned that the committee should look at the regional housing study that was done in 2021. This could be included to make better choices for our community.

Eric mentioned the long term financial impacts of this housing area and that we need a diverse housing market, so he recommended the City be very intentional about the type of development we want to see on this property.

Liz Franek said that she supports housing development that will provide for a variety of backgrounds and income levels, and would not want the goals to be so specific that it excludes quality proposals.

Megan asked for input regarding an appropriate timeline to begin updating the RFP and soliciting new proposals.

The committee agreed that there is no rush to develop this site, so the City should be patient and make sure the future use of the site diversifies housing options and is compatible with the current neighborhood. Neighborhood listening sessions could be held in the next year at the new Police Station to start getting input on what types of uses surrounding property owners think would make a good neighbor.

- c) Discussion and vote on future committee meeting format (virtual or in-person).

The committee agreed to continue to meet virtually in light of recent increases in COVID-19 cases. Meetings will continue to be held virtually, and this can be discussed again at a future meeting.

## **6) Announcements**

- a.) Updates on residential development on the Timeless Timber Site

Megan McBride said that the developer, Commonwealth Companies, has been working on their site design plans and other required approvals related to their tax credit award. A Development Agreement will be coming forward to City Council this winter, and construction is anticipated to begin in spring 2022.

## **7) Adjournment**

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Motion to adjourn made by Eric Lindell, seconded by Megan McBride. Passed unanimously. |
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*Meeting was adjourned at 9:15 am. Minutes by Mandelyn Lyons and Megan McBride.*

## Strengthen the Housing Market

### WHY IT MATTERS

A shrinking and aging population, a lack of investment in older homes, and a mismatch between the housing types that buyers want and what Ashland offers has resulted in a housing market dynamic that does not benefit the city's future. Where newer, more marketable housing has been built, it has only drawn demand away from the city's core neighborhoods – which increasingly struggle. Diffused demand notwithstanding, Ashland's neighborhoods are attractive, walkable, and often conveniently located – exactly what emerging generations of homeowners want, if the homes themselves are upgraded. This is the opportunity Ashland cannot fail to seize because Ashland's housing and neighborhoods are inextricably linked to its future. A collection of neighborhoods with excellent bones are destined to decline unless the housing stock within those neighborhoods can be changed to meet the needs of Ashland's desired future residents, many of whom are residents already but may be drawn away from the city at some point.

### HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

Ashland should pursue actions that positively and strategically influence the housing market so its neighborhoods become marketable, brand-enhancing assets instead of the liabilities they are otherwise destined to be. Successful interventions must simultaneously do the following:

- 1 Diversify existing stocks through creative infill development at the intersections of weak and middle strength blocks, and within middle strength blocks**
- 2 Rebalance supply and demand by thinning excess supply through locationally-precise demolition and establishing a conservation buffer**
- 3 Pursue strategic demolition to remove excess housing supply and relieve downward pressure on property values**
- 4 Impose intensive standard-setting code enforcement on middle market and weaker blocks**
- 5 Encourage owner-reinvestment on blocks of middle market and strong market strength**
- 6 Develop disposition strategies for large land holdings that reinforce other strategies in this plan.**

Successful interventions must consciously prioritize the retention of strong households on middle strength blocks, as well as definitively marketing home ownership opportunities to new graduates of Northland and new employees of Memorial Medical and other employers.



## 1 Diversify and Upgrade via Infill Housing

Because Ashland's city core is not overly dense, and because there are fairly sizable swaths of unused land (especially within only a few blocks of downtown), the strategic assembly of relatively few parcels and redevelopment at higher densities is possible. Redevelopment could take the form of apartments, townhomes, or other attached and/or new housing types in the local market. As development on the periphery has shown, there is a market for new housing product in Ashland. As a demographically different Ashland emerges over time – one with younger professionals seeking housing near downtown and more elderly people downsizing or seeking lower maintenance – newer housing can fill the needs that the city's current housing stock cannot.

The market for new housing types in Ashland is untested. The local market will not absorb large numbers of new units all at once. The low absorption rate means projects will need to be built gradually and with fewer units per project, perhaps 2-8 units at a time. It will be difficult to achieve economies of scale, so per unit construction costs will be high compared to sales prices or rents. In order to build the first few projects, to prove that it can be done, the city will need to provide subsidy in the form of land, tax incentives, cash or all three.

Location: SoDo East and West provide the best opportunity for infill housing for the following reasons:

**Excellent location near downtown and Fifth Street Corridor**

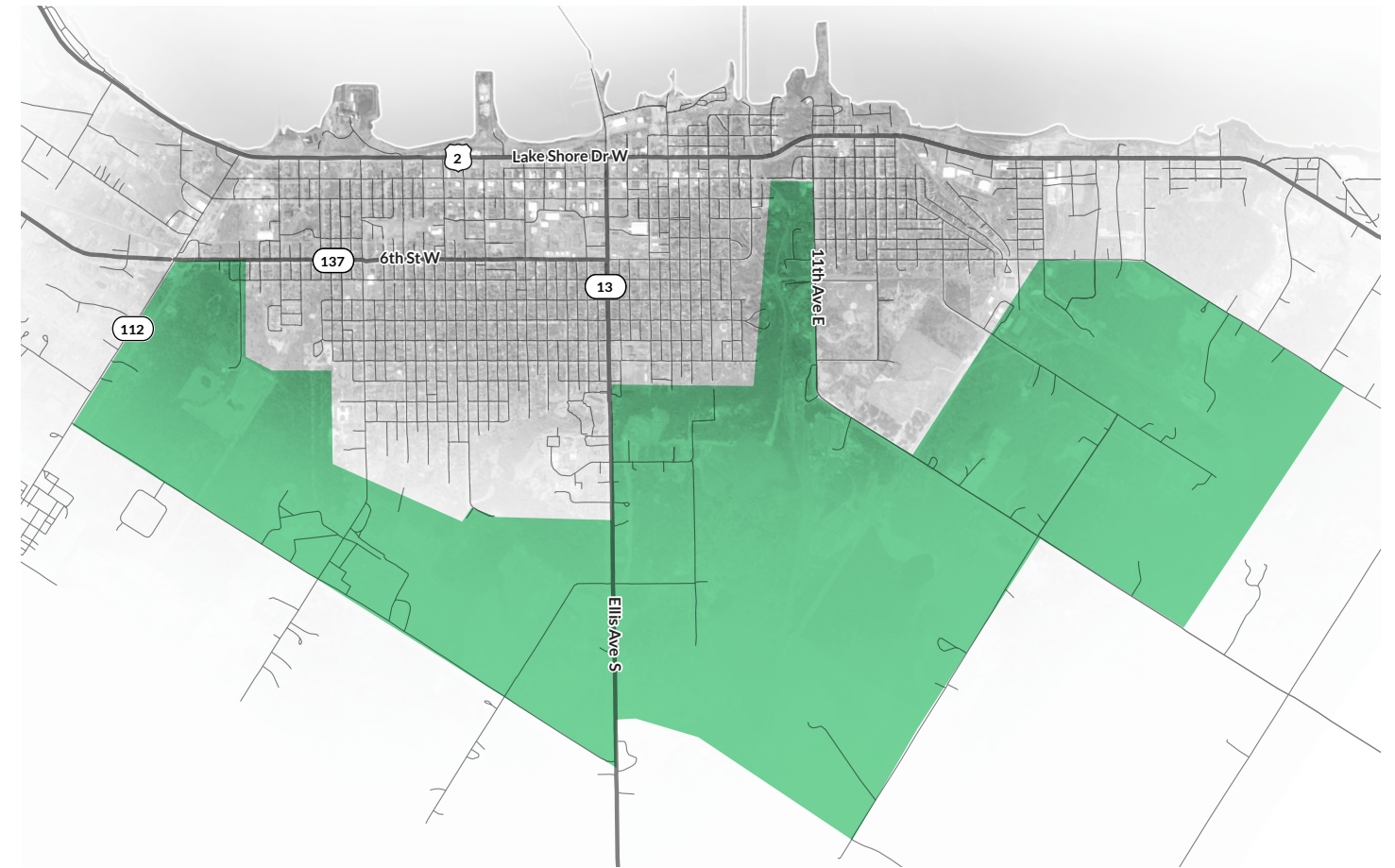
**Availability of vacant or underutilized land**

**Connective corridors between middle-market neighborhoods and downtown**

Infill efforts should be focused, to the greatest extent possible, along Chapple, Vaughn, and Ellis. Infilling these locations, as opposed to other opportunities in the SoDo areas, accomplishes the following:

**Adds value to the new units by taking advantage of convenient north south access to downtown, the lake, and Northland.**

**Beautifies and fills in key north south connective corridors which are seen regularly by Ashland residents and influence the way residents perceive the city. New infill can send a positive message to the Ashland market as well as help reconnect downtown with core neighborhoods to the south.**



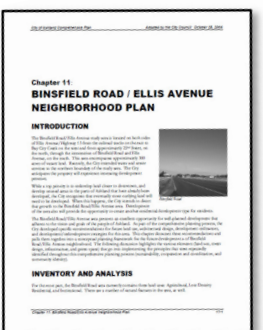
## 2 Conservation Buffer

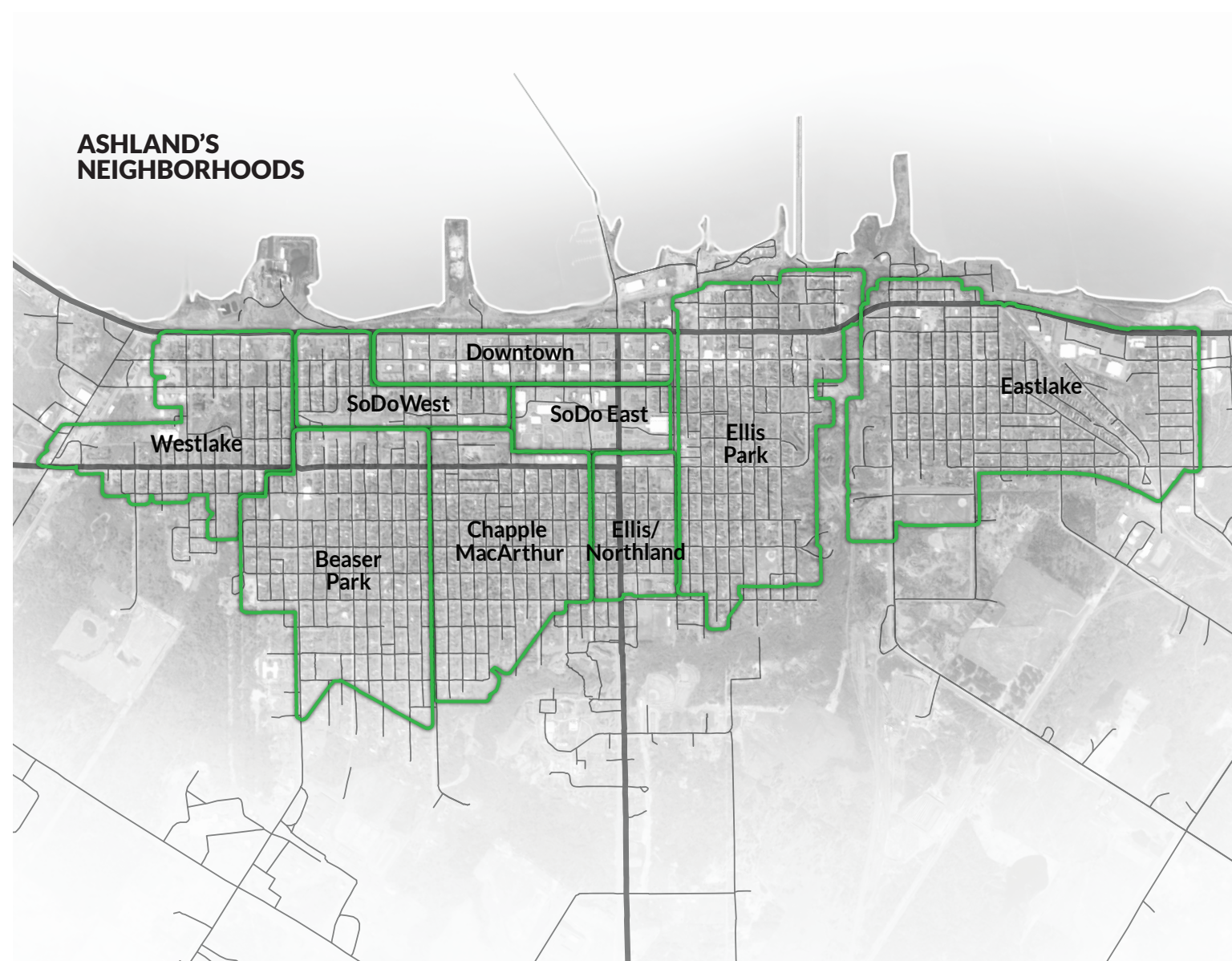
As core neighborhoods and their houses have become less marketable, Ashland households with purchasing power have pursued newer homes on larger lots on the city's periphery. While it may only be fewer than a dozen new homes each year, this new construction represents Ashland's own version of sprawl. The new development on the periphery diverts housing demand from the city's core. In addition, new water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure – even if paid for up front by the builder – becomes a future cost to be borne by the community as it ages. As new residential development has occurred on the city's edge, buildings and infrastructure in the core of the city have been left to deteriorate. These deteriorated neighborhoods represent a significant future liability.

Ashland should establish a conservation buffer around the southern part of the city and end residential development there. By ending peripheral development, the city can refocus its public and private resources back into the core, thereby providing new housing opportunities and dealing with previously deferred issues of deterioration. Housing demand is the lifeblood of Ashland's neighborhoods, and every ounce of housing demand must be diverted back into the city's core neighborhoods.

### Important Change from 2004 Plan

*The city's comprehensive plan from 2004 recommends the redevelopment of nearly 300 vacant acres at the intersection of Ellis Avenue and Binsfield Road as a neo-traditional neighborhood. While sound from a neighborhood design perspective, the recommendation was built on an assumption of future growth that did not come to pass. The 2004 plan did not foresee that Ashland's population would shrink and its housing market would remain weak. This plan update recommends leaving the area undeveloped for the planning horizon. The idea of a new neighborhood at Binsfield and Ellis may be revisited if market conditions improve and if the city's core neighborhoods have been revitalized.*





### 3 Strategic Demolition

In neighborhoods with weak demand like Eastlake, Westlake, and Ellis Park, revitalization is not realistic in the short term, or perhaps even in the long term. Values are too low to justify reinvestment. The city, in order to preserve neighborhood order and safety of the structures in those areas, should develop a strategy for acquisition and demolition of properties that are not likely to be restored and that rob surrounding properties of value. These are the neighborhoods where the majority of the worst rated properties exist. By removing structures with moderate-to-severe levels of distress – which received ratings of 4 or 5 during a citywide property survey in 2016 – a certain type of stability may be in reach.

The same should be done, but on a much more surgical basis, in middle market neighborhoods such as Beaser Park, Chapple MacArthur, and Ellis Northland. In these middle neighborhoods, there are very few if any structures with a 5 rating. More prevalent are those with a 4 rating which are holding back otherwise healthy blocks with well-kept homes. Where they are found, the deteriorated buildings are obvious candidates for code enforcement action or potential acquisition and removal.

From a real estate market perspective, the removal of excess housing units also reduces the oversupply that puts downward pressure on property values.

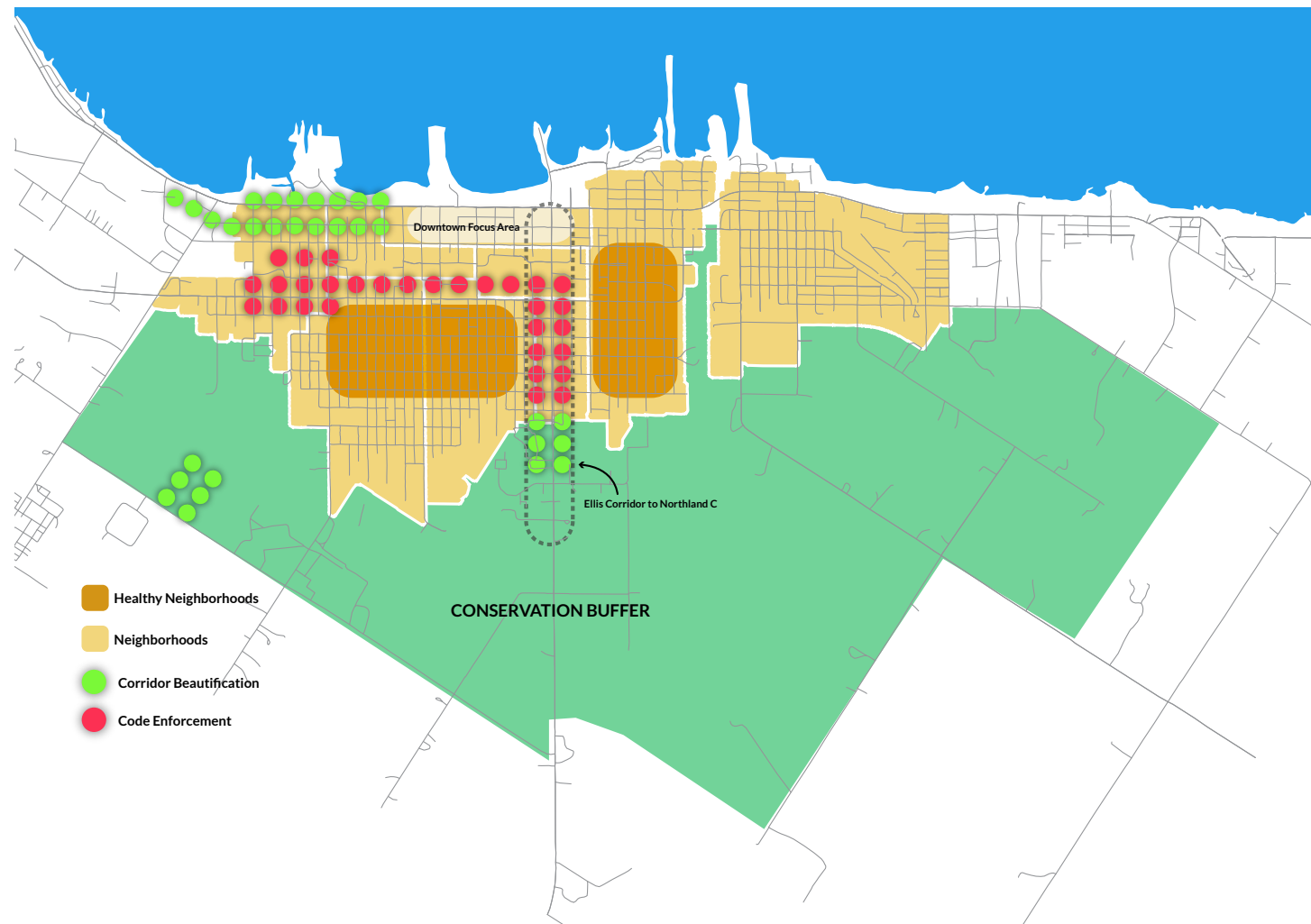
### 4 Strategic Code Enforcement

It is rare that code enforcement actions result in a property making a strong positive contribution to a block or neighborhood. Rather, the aim of code enforcement is minimum compliance with building safety codes. Within this context, code enforcement can neutralize the worst effects of deteriorated buildings on their neighbors and help to build a floor for acceptable standards of maintenance.

**Weak Demand Neighborhoods:** In the weaker neighborhoods where compliance with building and safety codes is less likely to be achieved due to more difficult economics, code enforcement actions may result in city acquisition of problem properties. These acquisitions are likely to be demolition candidates.

**Middle Neighborhoods:** In middle neighborhoods where the economics are generally better for landlords and owners, it may be easier to achieve the desired result of a code compliant building. The ideal targets of code enforcement actions in middle neighborhoods are properties that are threatening an otherwise stable block. It is critical that code enforcement neutralize any threat to property owners who are responsible actors or who are trending in that direction.

**Corridors:** In much the same way that code enforcement helps preserve property owner confidence in middle neighborhoods, it can also support community pride and market perception by cleaning up key corridors in the city. Internal corridors like Ellis Avenue or 6th Street must not be allowed to deteriorate lest they begin to reinforce a negative self-perception by Ashland residents.



Intersections and corridors for Healthy Neighborhoods strategies

## 5 Healthy Neighborhoods

Healthy Neighborhoods is a market oriented approach to neighborhood stabilization and revitalization. It focuses on building pride, capacity, and resident leadership which all support neighborhood and market health. Practitioners of the approach, which has been used in cities as varied as Baltimore, Battle Creek, and small towns across western New York state, believe a healthy neighborhood is one in which it makes sense for residents to invest their time, energy, and money. Healthy Neighborhoods, when successfully implemented, positively influences the cycle of neighborhood investment.

Healthy Neighborhoods is best applied in middle market neighborhoods where residents have both the willingness and ability to take action to celebrate and improve their homes. Activities typically include home improvement grants and loans for upgrades that make a visible difference on a block; small block beautification projects completed by groups

of neighbors; and social activities that develop neighbor relationships and build positive feelings about living in the neighborhood. Successful city collaborations are possible when city departments partner with neighborhood groups. In Healthy Neighborhoods work, city governments do not do things FOR neighborhoods; government does things WITH them. Financial incentives, whether in the form of small grants to homeowners or discretionary improvements to public property and infrastructure by the city, are not entitlement programs. They are not low income housing subsidies. They are not the answer to a code enforcement action. They are targeted investments made in neighborhoods where property owners are putting their own skin in the game and doing the right thing.

To implement a Healthy Neighborhoods program aimed at preserving or restoring market health, the city should:

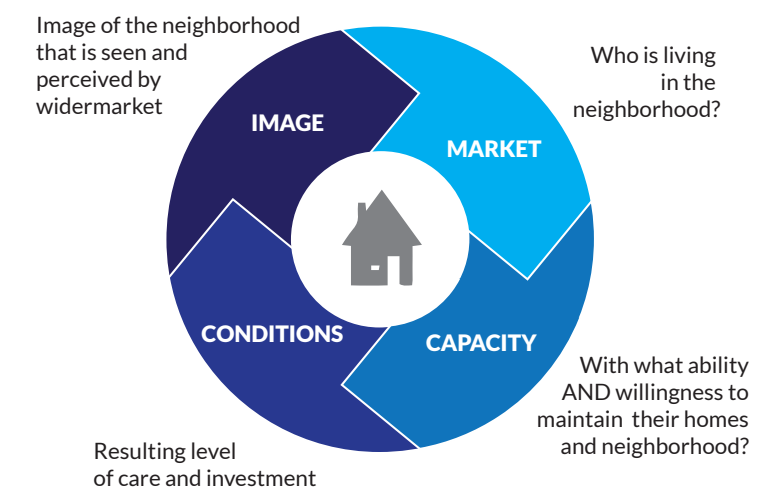
Support existing or help develop new neighborhood organizations using the neighborhood boundaries in this plan. The city can help by providing coordination capacity for neighborhood groups and co-creating work plans.

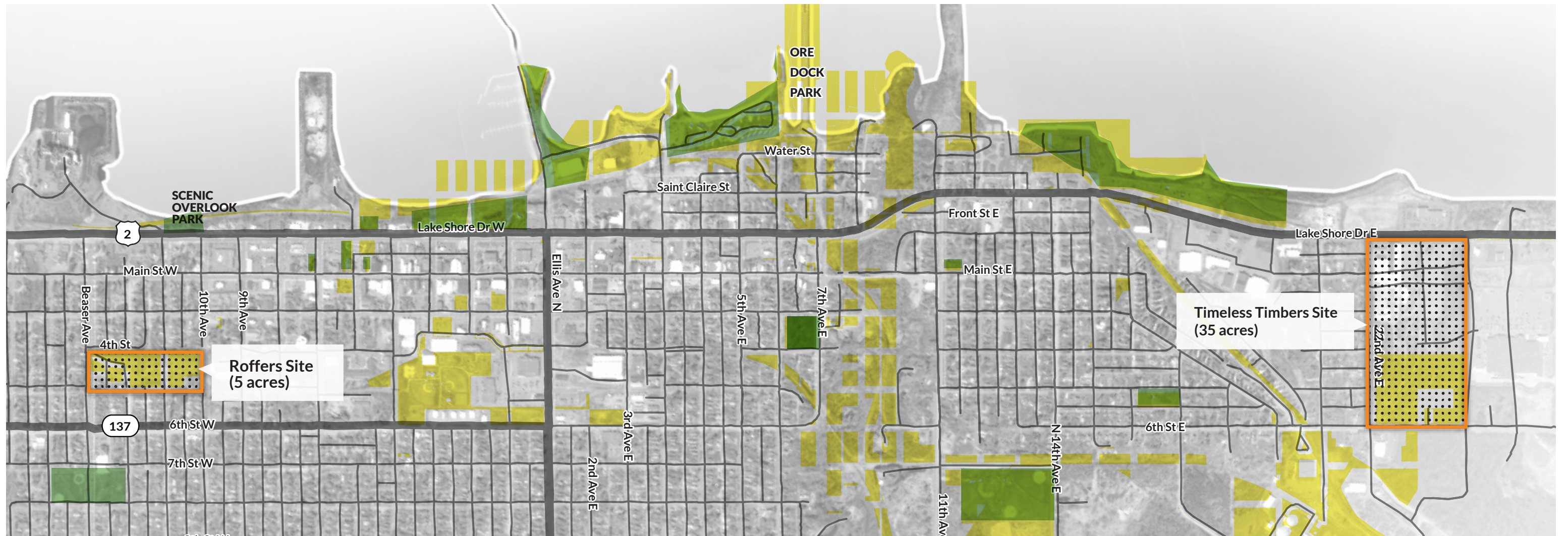


Craft concise, time limited, and market appropriate work plans for each of the city's neighborhoods and work with all city departments and neighborhood groups to implement them. The first neighborhoods in which to start are Beaser Park, Chapple/MacArthur, and Ellis/Northland. A strategically prioritized and targeted list of activities should focus on neighborhood organizing across entire neighborhoods, but also housing and block improvement projects on key corners and highly traveled streets that will be easily seen by the maximum number of Ashland residents. Visibility matters because image matters.

Develop flexible incentives and grant programs for home improvement projects and block projects. The city's Housing Improvement Program represents a very meaningful start in the right direction, but it must be fully aligned with a Healthy Neighborhoods philosophy and additional funding should be raised from both public and private coffers.

### czb Cycle of Neighborhood Investment and Disinvestment





## 6 Careful Disposition of Vacant Land

The City of Ashland owns the Roffers site (approximately five acres) located between 9th Avenue West, Beaser Avenue, 4th Street, and the 5th Street Corridor, as well as the Timeless Timbers site (approximately 35 acres) on the city's east side on Lake Shore Drive East, just west of 22nd Avenue East.

The city's ownership of land is a position of strength in terms of guidance and direction for future development. In this case, the City certainly has the opportunity to sell this land to a developer to build within the parameters of the Zoning Ordinance. Concerns regarding the weak market and the quality of development that may be adhered to upon the sale are valid. Market forces may not build what is in the city's best long-term interests.

To guide the destiny of these sites in ways that align with other strategies in this plan – to create new housing opportunities, to attract young

entrepreneurial talent, to refocus development into the core – the following concepts should be considered when discussing land disposition for these two strategic areas.

### Community Land Trust

A community land trust (CLT) is an independent, not-for-profit corporation that is legally chartered in the state in which it is located. Typically, CLTs acquire land or are deeded land from a municipality to provide land for housing development that meets one or more local needs, including affordability. The CLT does not sell the land, but rather leases land to those who intend to build a house on the property. In this way, the CLT keeps the cost of homeownership to a minimum by taking land costs out of the mortgage equation. The CLT retains an option to repurchase any residential (or commercial) structures located upon its land, should their owners ever choose to sell. The resale price is set by a formula contained in the ground lease that is designed to give present homeowners a fair return on their investment, while giving future homebuyers fair access to housing at an affordable price. By design and by intent, a CLT

is committed to preserving the affordability of housing and other structures – one owner after another, one generation after another, in perpetuity. A CLT may be a viable option for land disposition from the city to qualified homeowners.

### The Great Ashland "Land Rush"

The city's ownership of land on the Roffers and Timeless Timber sites could also provide an opportunity to either give land away or sell at a discounted value to new residents. In an effort to attract young entrepreneurs to Ashland, the city could offer the land to potentially new residents that agree (1) to build a home on the property within a specified amount of time, (2) to live in the house for a minimum period of time, and (3) agree to work or start a business within the city. The city would maintain first right-of-refusal on sale of the property and would likely incorporate deed-restricted language similar to what is seen in most CLTs. Various cities throughout North America have looked to attract talent to their locality and grow their economy via land offerings of a similar nature.

