



## TOLEDO - LUCAS COUNTY PLAN COMMISSIONS

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DATE: August 13, 2020

REF: M-5-20

TO: President Matt Cherry and Members of Council, City of Toledo

FROM: Toledo City Plan Commission, Thomas C. Gibbons, Secretary

SUBJECT: Review and approval of the Monroe-Auburn Master Plan

The Toledo City Plan Commission considered the above-referenced request at its meeting on Thursday, August 13, 2020 at 2:00 P.M.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

#### Subject

Request	-	Review and the approval of the Monroe-Auburn Master Plan
Applicant	-	Toledo Design Collective Paul Hollenbeck, Chairman One Seagate, Suite 123 Toledo, Ohio 43604

#### Applicable Plans and Regulations

- Toledo Municipal Code Part Eleven: Planning and Zoning
- Toledo 20/20 Comprehensive Plan
- 2002 Monroe Street Corridor Design & Livability Plan
- Monroe Street Corridor Overlay

### STAFF ANALYSIS

This request is for the review of the 2020 Monroe Auburn Neighborhood Master Plan, prepared by the Toledo Design Center in conjunction with the Monroe Street Neighborhood Center. The Core Planning Team started the planning process in January of 2019 with data gathering and monthly meetings. In June of 2019, volunteers canvassed the neighborhood and asked residents questions concerning quality of life and the future of the neighborhood. The Toledo Design Center professionals and interns engaged in detailed visioning, including extensive meetings with stakeholders that led to the conclusion that the neighborhood needed stabilization without gentrification.

## **STAFF ANALYSIS (cont'd)**

The planning area of the Monroe Auburn Plan encompasses 380 acres bounded by Ottawa Park to the west, Jermain Park to the north with I-75 and a railroad to the east, and back to Bancroft Street for the southerly border. Monroe Street runs through the middle of the study area, and the Monroe Street Corridor Overlay pertains to properties on either side of the right-of-way. The Monroe Auburn Neighborhood is located near several of Toledo's key anchors, with the Toledo Museum of Art one (1) mile to the southeast, ProMedica Toledo Hospital to the northwest, and the University of Toledo campus beginning a few blocks to the west along Bancroft Street. With iconic locations in such close proximity to the neighborhood, a thorough analysis will benefit not only residents, but those who utilize the neighborhood's corridors on a regular basis.

The Monroe Auburn Neighborhood Plan details the neighborhood's rich history, and emphasizes why it is important to stabilize and preserve the neighborhood. Being one of the first suburbs of Toledo, Monroe Auburn benefits from quality housing stock, high home ownership, a centralized location, and large city parks directly bordering the western and northern sides of the neighborhood. Since its settlement in the late 1800s, the Monroe Auburn neighborhood has been home to famous sites including Swayne Field, Milburn Wagon Works, and the White City Amusement Park. Over the past several decades however, this predominantly African American community has faced issues including a declining population and deteriorating infrastructure.

Portions of the Monroe Auburn Neighborhood have been included in neighborhood plans in the past, including the Bancroft Upton Monroe Neighborhood Plan (1981), the Auburn/Delaware Neighborhood Plan (1981), and the Monroe Street Corridor Design & Livability Plan (2002). These plans highlighted the downward socioeconomic trends the community was facing, and unfortunately, these trends are still relevant today. Problems identified in earlier plans included infrastructure issues such as poor lighting, sidewalk disrepair, and lack of alley maintenance. Also, the neighborhood was identified as a food desert and the high number of vacant buildings was apparent. Although these issues have persisted for decades, little has changed and blight has resulted.

After preliminary research and analysis, the Toledo Design Collective gathered feedback from the community. One (1) public meeting and two (2) workshops were held, and as an added effort to collect public opinions and bring attention to planning efforts, neighborhood canvassing took place. The planning team and volunteers went door-to-door asking residents about their quality of life and vision for the neighborhood. Business owners were also contacted and asked relevant questions. These ambitious outreach efforts resulted in detailed feedback and suggestions, which were included in the plan. Once the Monroe Auburn Neighborhood Plan was completed, there was a final public meeting on March 5, 2020 at the Monroe Street United Methodist Church where residents and stakeholders were presented with the plan's findings and recommendations.

### **STAFF ANALYSIS (cont'd)**

The Monroe Auburn Neighborhood Plan identifies needed land use changes in the neighborhood to promote stabilization. One change suggested is to amend the Toledo 20/20 Land Use Plan to have the Monroe Street and Auburn Avenue intersection designated as Urban Village. The Urban Village land use designation encourages small scale commercial and pedestrian friendly corridors. The plan also suggests that the southeast corner of W Delaware Avenue and Lexington Avenue be designated as Urban Agriculture. This neighborhood started to develop urban gardens and proper planning will encourage agricultural business to establish themselves in the community without causing nuisance issues. Lastly, the plan identifies key neighborhood centers for Public and Civic land uses. Although Public and Civic land uses are not defined in the Toledo 20/20 Land Use Plan, the importance of these sites and the public services they bring to the neighborhood is understood.

Recommended projects and actions listed in the plan are categorized into the following:

- Neighborhood Implementers
- Connectivity
- Public Space + Vacant Land
- Commercial
- Residential

The Monroe Auburn Neighborhood Plan emphasizes how projects and ideas will not come to fruition unless there is support from the neighborhood and leadership from individuals dedicated to the cause. This is why the first action is listed as the establishment of neighborhood implementers. Having at least one individual dedicated to overseeing the execution of the plan will increase the likelihood of goals to be completed. Connectivity projects address transportation issues and include road diets for Monroe and Bancroft Streets, improving the intersection of Monroe, Auburn, and Ottawa, improving Gasser Street, and gateway enhancements. The plan addresses how the neighborhood has been excluded from planning efforts in the past, highlighting how the neighborhood is the only section of Bancroft Street without a dedicated bike lane, for example. Public Space + Vacant Land suggests pocket parks, urban agriculture, and increasing access to the Ottawa River as projects to improve quality of life. Commercial projects include the adaptive reuse of existing structures and beautifying abandoned buildings as methods to encourage new businesses to settle in the neighborhood. Lastly, the Bluff Street Tiny Home Village is highlighted as a possible option to allow low income individuals to own property.

The Toledo 20/20 Comprehensive Plan lists the Monroe Auburn Neighborhood as being located within the Ottawa Neighborhood. The recommendations from the Toledo 20/20 Comprehensive Plan for the Ottawa Neighborhood area are as follows:

**STAFF ANALYSIS (cont'd)**

(151) Toledo 20/20 recommends for Ottawa:

- Cleaning and revitalizing the Monroe Street Business Corridor from Central Avenue to Collingwood.
- Providing quality, affordable housing.
- Providing a supermarket.
- Strictly enforcing historic overlay zoning.

These recommendations are consistent and compliment the initiatives that are proposed for the Monroe Auburn Neighborhood Plan.

Staff recommends the approval of the Monroe Auburn Neighborhood Plan for two reasons. First, the stakeholders in the Monroe Auburn community were involved from the beginning and their interests and concerns were incorporated into the plan. Second, the goals of the 20/20 plan and the Monroe Auburn Neighborhood Plan mirror each other in their recommendations.

**PLAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

The Toledo City Plan Commission recommends approval of M-5-20, a request to review the 2020 Monroe Auburn Neighborhood Plan as an amendment to the 20/20 Plan, to the Toledo City Council, for the following two (2) reasons:

1. The 2020 Monroe Auburn Neighborhood Plan redefined the neighborhood's vision based on extensive public outreach and created an action plan that addresses the neighborhood's goals.
2. The proposed 2020 Monroe Auburn Neighborhood Plan conforms to the recommended goals and land uses of the 20/20 Comprehensive Plan.

Respectfully Submitted,

Thomas C. Gibbons  
Secretary

DR

Two (2) sketches follow

Cc: Toledo Design Collective, One Seagate, Suite 123, Toledo OH 43604  
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Dana Reising, Planner