

# City of Cincinnati



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**Evan Nolan**  
*Councilmember*

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## **MOTION**

**WE MOVE** that the City Administration design a Neighborhood Planning Cycle to be implemented and managed by the Department of City Planning and Engagement (“Planning”) that spans approximately a ten-year period and provides each neighborhood (or group of neighborhoods, if appropriate) with a new comprehensive neighborhood plan, or comprehensive plan update, approximately every ten years;

**WE FURTHER MOVE** that the City Administration and Planning consider the following phases to be conducted over such ten-year period for the design and planned execution of the Neighborhood Planning Cycle:

1. *Pre-Planning Phase* – the City Administration shall engage with neighborhood stakeholders in a particular area, including residents, community councils, community development corporations, businesses, property owners, schools, churches, potential resource providers, police, and fire, to solicit participants and prepare for participation in the formal neighborhood planning process, and the City Administration shall consider collaboration with the University of Cincinnati College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning (or similar programs with similar educational institutions) to partner with professors, staff, and students to conduct such engagement with the neighborhood stakeholders;
2. *Neighborhood Planning Process* – Planning (or qualified consultants to be engaged by Planning) shall work with a neighborhood to educate and inform the neighborhood stakeholders about the City’s pro-growth policies and goals, strategic objectives, and funding opportunities and to develop and produce a neighborhood plan that sets the aspirations, vision, goals, and strategies for the long-term physical, social, and economic development of a neighborhood, paving a path forward such neighborhood and our city to achieve future goals and growth, guiding future development, setting budget priorities, and identifying specific funding requests;
3. *Economic Development Discussion* – the City Administration shall collaborate with other public partners and potential funding sources to coordinate a discussion between the relevant stakeholders, including property owners and potential development partners, regarding the specific development opportunities, alignment with the recently adopted neighborhood plan, and the funding requirements for activating development in line with

the neighborhood plan and the City's growth goals and strategic objectives, which discussion may be conducted by Council's Community Investment Subcommittee and may be scheduled to occur in the subject neighborhood;

4. *City Implementation* – in pursuit of the vision and goals of a neighborhood plan and in conjunction with the results and takeaways of the economic development discussion, the City Administration, either directly or through City Planning Commission or Council, shall take the necessary steps to proactively amend the zoning requirements or allocate funds to promote and incentivize the desired development in the neighborhood, by funding pre-development costs, property acquisition, or funds to close a financing gap; and
5. *Continued Activation* – the City Administration shall facilitate the continued pursuit of the vision and goals of a neighborhood plan and continue to take the necessary action to spur development, with the recognition that such neighborhood will be cycling back to the Pre-Planning phase every ten years for additional attention and consideration;

**WE FURTHER MOVE** that the City Administration prepare and provide a report within 90 days detailing a final proposal for implementation of the Neighborhood Planning Cycle, along with the necessary additional staffing and budget requirements to fully implement and sustainably conduct all five phases of the Neighborhood Planning Cycle in pursuit of the City's strategic objectives and growth goals, so that such requirements can be taken into consideration by Council for updating the 2027 Operating Budget;

**WE FURTHER MOVE** that the City Administration and specifically Planning prepare a list within 90 days of neighborhoods (or groups of neighborhoods, if recommended) to be designated across their respective five phases of the Neighborhood Planning Cycle as evenly as practicable, prioritizing neighborhoods who fall under the "Lift" classification of the Residential Tax Abatement Program, who do not have (or have not had approved in the longest time) a current neighborhood plan, and then those who recently expressed interest in a new neighborhood plan.

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## **Statement**

Neighborhoods across the City of Cincinnati have experienced a hollowing out, particularly in neighborhood business districts, and have not enjoyed the same resurgence that has been taking place downtown, at The Banks, and in Over-the-Rhine. Big-box retailers, movie theaters, grocery stores, and hardware stores have consolidated in fewer but larger locations, and along with the proliferation of delivery services (like Amazon), have deprived the neighborhood business districts of the amenities we have historically come to expect.

When development opportunities do come forward, neighborhoods, often under the leadership of the neighborhood community council, typically engage with development opportunities on a very reactive basis. Neighborhood volunteers often do not have the time or capacity to keep up with the latest development news and can get stuck facing an immediate decision on a development proposal at a meeting that occurs only once-a-month, potentially with only a handful of community members present.

With a more consistently updated neighborhood plan, a neighborhood can more proactively establish a vision and goals for development in their community, and City Planning Commission and Council can more effectively evaluate the compatibility of a development proposal with the City's growth goals and strategic objectives and with the vision and goals enshrined in the latest neighborhood plan.

Yet, today more than thirty of our neighborhoods have a neighborhood plan that is more than ten years old or do not have one at all. The current process for pursuing a neighborhood plan requires application through the Community Budget Request process that is conducted biennially and does not breed confidence about future opportunities if funding is not secured in a particular budget cycle, which leaves community members feeling ignored or overlooked and frustrated.

Until recently, there was no regular forum for conducting an economic development discussion and the development conversations often occurred in tight circles without sufficient or productive community engagement. Intentional and proactive discussion about the opportunities, and the financing and practicability of such opportunities, can attract better alignment between neighborhoods and development partners and avoid the frustration of last-minute approval requests.

It is incumbent on the City Administration, City Planning Commission, and Council to sustain and maintain the consistency of the Neighborhood Planning Cycle and to consistently conduct the Economic Development discussions so that the City gains clear guidance on what actions the City can take, and that neighborhoods and development partners alike can work around a common timeline.