

# LORAIN AVENUE **PLAN UPDATE**

SEPTEMBER 2021



WESTOWN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

CITY ARCHITECTURE

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A SUCCESS STORY STILL BEING WRITTEN...

# THE ORIGINAL PLAN(S)

## The Lorain Avenue Master Plan



For the Westown Community Development Corporation  
Spring 2008

## Variety Village



Variety Village / Westown Neighborhood  
Cleveland, Ohio  
December 2011

## Streetscape Plan

Concepts for reinvesting in a vibrant, active, pedestrian friendly commercial district



**WESTOWN**  
Community Development Corporation



In 2008, the Westown Community Development Corporation, (WCDC) completed a master plan for the Lorain Ave corridor extending from W 123rd Street to W 110th Street. Thirteen years have elapsed since the completion of this planning process and many of the goals set forth in the master plan have been realized. Additionally in 2011, the Variety Village Streetscape Plan, which was influenced by the 2008 master plan, provided a framework for enhancing the streetscape along this same stretch of prominent roadway on the City of Cleveland's near west side.

Recognition of the time that has elapsed since a planning process was conducted in this geography, the need for a more current plan to attract resources encouraged the community development corporation to pursue an update to the work that has been done, as a quality foundation has been set. Additionally, an expanded study from the original master plan footprint that encompasses both the Lorain Variety and Lorain Station Historic Districts was defined to incorporate the full extent of progress that has been made and the future investment that is anticipated.

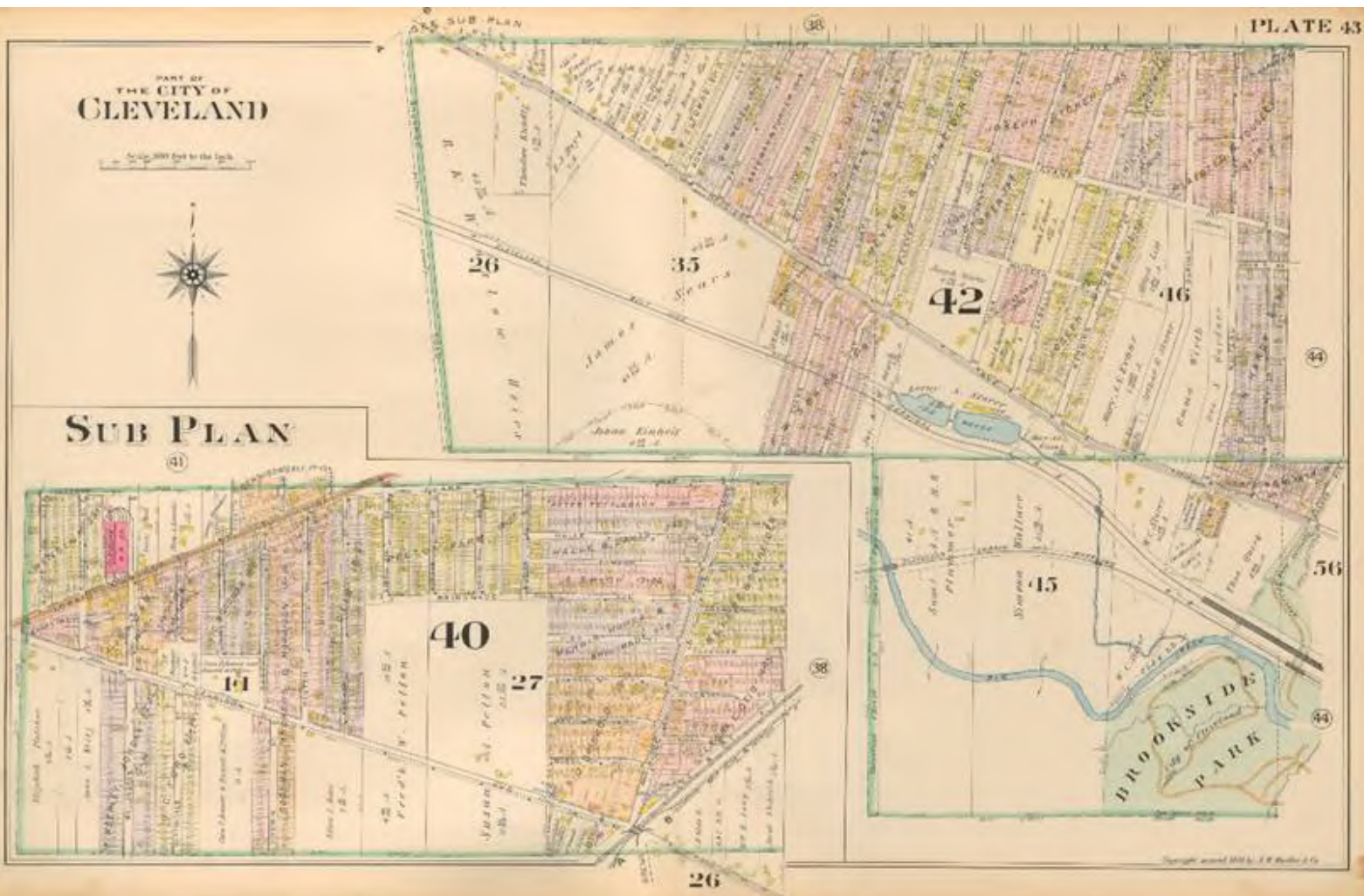
This planning process also coincides with planned investments in a key community asset, the Eastman Branch, where Cleveland Public Library intends to make both interior and exterior improvements. The capital improvements will focus on creating a more welcoming space with an improved relationship with the street, modifying the facade to allow light to enter the building, and dissolving the hard brick edge.

While Cleveland Public Library resources are to be inserted into the neighborhood in the short-term, the most critical element along the corridor is the Variety Theater Complex (VTC). The Friends of the Variety Theater, with support from WCDC, continue to maintain the property. The VTC is located in the Variety Village Historic District (VVHD) and is listed in the National Register of Historic Buildings. The VTC has been listed with a real estate broker and it is generating significant interest locally and regionally. The VTC redevelopment plan includes the preservation and restoration of the first floor and balcony theatre and the integration of the first floor storefronts with the second floor apartments to provide up to ten live/work spaces.

# LORAIN STATION HISTORIC DISTRICT

Additionally, the Lorain Avenue corridor encompasses the Lorain Station Historic District (Lorain Avenue between West Boulevard and West 90th Street), where two studies were performed in 2006 on the impacts of the new big-box retailers to the near westside of Cleveland and neighborhood safety. The recommendations of these analyses remain relevant to the Westtown community today.

**Big-Box Centers and Neighborhood Business Districts: Impact Analysis and Competitive Strategy** (Michael J Berne/MJB Consulting, Nov 2006). The 2006 study was commissioned by Cleveland City Council in consideration of the development of 1 million square foot Steelyard Commons and its anticipated impact on neighborhood retail. The Lorain Station Historic District (LSHD) was one of the 6 retail areas identified as suffering retail use losses, as a result of the addition of the large shopping center. This study



ultimately became the foundation for the Cleveland City Council's enactment of the Steelyard TIF Program, Ordinance 1780-05 passed January 4, 2006 and amended in June 2011 as Ordinance 766-11.

The Steelyard TIF legislation authorized grant gap funding for the following eligible Neighborhood Retail Projects:

1. Parking Lots
2. Interior improvements of retail locations & other costs that are not funded by the City of Cleveland Storefront Renovation Program
3. Neighborhood Small & Startup Businesses to assist with small business expansion, refine business plans, assist entrepreneurs;
4. Neighborhood Arts Projects that enhance neighborhood commercial retail district;
5. Neighborhood Streetscape

These eligible activities were intended to help address challenges faced by the LSHD that were discovered in the initial study, such as, low traffic counts, tenants and shoppers gravitating to Westown Square, greater presence of social service tenants than retail tenants, a lack of a strong pedestrian connection to the district, and limited parking. Opportunities for both building preservation and demolition were recommended to be equally considered, as well as the attraction of black business owners to support and stabilize the growth in

the black community on the westside during this time period.

In 2015, WCDC conducted a parcel by parcel survey of the buildings, including the conditions and vacancy of the storefronts; At that time there were 79 total storefronts and 39 vacancies; An RFP was issued to building owners that provided opportunity for technical assistance, gap grant funding through the TIF Fund and rebates and design assistance through the City of Cleveland's Storefront Renovation Program. To date there are 33 vacant storefronts, 6 of which are currently under development. Of these 6 new businesses under development in the community, 3 are black-owned businesses, demonstrating a recognition of the opportunity for growth in the community and support by local leadership for diverse ownership.

**Neighborhood Safety Action Plan** (McNeeley & Sons Inc. Security Consultants, Sept 2006). This study analyzed historical crime data, conducted a parcel by parcel survey at various times and days of the week, surveyed area merchants to understand their experiences, and studied the potential impact of building appearance and vacancy on the prevalence of crime. Recommendations from the study included increase surveillance through closed circuit cameras, as well as providing support for all businesses in the district to have alarm systems installed. The study also noted the need for increased lighting in the district, particularly on Henley Court, which remains a problem area for dumping and human trafficking. Additional sustainable measures are needed to address the challenges in the district today.

# ACHIEVEMENTS

## WHAT GOT DONE?

A review of both the 2008 and 2011 plans by the WCDC and the City of Cleveland's neighborhood planner revealed that a significant amount of the recommendations within both planning processes have been achieved.

**Private Investment:** From 2016-2021, private investments exceeded \$10 million along the Lorain Avenue Corridor. In 2015, as part of the Code Partnership Agreement between WCDC and the City of Cleveland, WCDC launched a comprehensive survey of existing building conditions of commercial properties between West 130th and West 110th Street, contacted property owners to share findings, and negotiated compliance agreements for completing repairs. Resources utilized for this effort included the City of Cleveland's Storefront Renovation Program, and this work resulted in achieving an 80% voluntary compliance.

The chart featured on page 7 summarizes the business investments in the Lorain Ave commercial district.



Mike Wolfe, creator and star of HISTORY's popular TV series American Pickers, appeared at the Variety Theatre 11835 Lorain in June of 2017 to announce that the efforts to restore The Variety Theatre complex won the This Place Matters national competition, in collaboration with the National Trust for Historic Preservation.





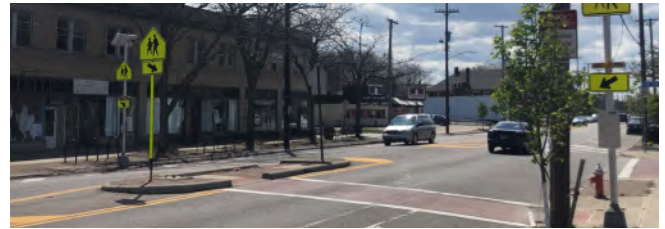
Business	New/Existing/ Expansion	Improvements
Wingstop, 10514 Lorain Ave	New	New Construction
E & A Locksmith, 10500 Lorain Ave	New	New Construction
Keller Jewelry, 10527 Lorain Ave	Existing	Storefront Renovation Program/Exterior & Interior
Jackson Hewitt, 10609 Lorain Ave	New	Corporate Renovation/Existing Storefront
McDonalds, 10710 Lorain Ave	Existing	Corporate Upgrade/Interior & Exterior
Taco Bell, 10800 Lorain Ave	Existing	Corporate Upgrade/Interior & Exterior
PNC Bank, 10900 Lorain Ave	Existing	Corporate Upgrade/Interior & Exterior
Morgal Manor, 11420-11422 Lorain Ave	Existing	-
Hayat Dental Clinic, 11501 Lorain Ave	New	Corporate Renovation / 2 Existing Storefronts
Almadina Market, 11500 Lorain Ave	Existing	Signage/Windows/Comprehensive exterior
Green Thumb Garden Center, 11515 Lorain Ave	Existing	Comprehensive Exterior
Cleveland Mofongo Latin Grill, 11645 Lorain Ave	Expansion	Comprehensive Interior/Exterior & Expansion from carry out to 40 seat full service dine-in
Smart Clothing Outlet, 11645 Lorain Ave	Existing	Comprehensive Exterior Site Work & Parking Lot
Neighborhood Family Practice Medical Center, 11709 Lorain Ave	New	Corporate Renovation/Comprehensive Exterior/Interior
12027 Lorain Ave	Existing	Comprehensive Exterior/Interior Renovation 4 Storefronts
Future Kids Day Educational Center, 11225 Lorain Ave	New	Comprehensive Exterior/Interior Renovation 6 Storefronts
Botas Mexico Leather/Apartments, 12119 Lorain Ave	Existing	Comprehensive Exterior/Interior Renovation 2 Storefronts
Hudec Dental Clinic, 12409 Lorain Ave	New	Storefront Renovation Program/Interior & Exterior
Barber Shop/Apartments, 12117 Lorain Ave	Existing	Storefront Renovation Program/Interior & Exterior
West Park Corps Salvation Army, 12645 Lorain Ave	Expansion	Compressive New Construction/Expansion exceeding \$2.5 million
Durk Building/Apartment/2 Storefronts, 12025 Lorain Ave	Existing	Storefront Renovation Program/Interior & Exterior
Assads Bakery, 12719 Lorain Ave	Existing	Comprehensive Interior/Exterior/Outdoor Seating & New Parking Lot & Site Improvements
Meryma'at Barber Supply & Barber College, 12822-31 Lorain Ave	New	Comprehensive Exterior/Interior Renovation/Site Work & Parking Lot/ 4 Storefronts



**Multiple Modes of Travel:** Recommendations from each of the planning processes had a focus on improving the quality of movement along the Lorain Avenue corridor. This commercial corridor experiences dense travel by automobiles that dominates the landscape, however the road width provides opportunity to incorporate dedicated bike lanes without any significant disruption of traffic. Bike lanes or sharrows extend west from West 117th along the corridor to West 150th, and east beyond the community development corporation's service area to the West 80's. Additionally, transit waiting environments that include new bus shelters and waiting accommodations support transit by providing protection from the weather and accessibility for those in need.

As part of the \$9 million Ohio Department of Transportation roadway and sidewalk replacement from West 140th Street to West 117th, the Variety Village Historic District received \$800,000 in streetscape improvements in 2017.

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Improved pedestrian conditions have been realized throughout the corridor in the wake of the previous planning efforts. A consistent style of street furniture was selected, with benches, trash receptacles, and bike racks found at West 117th and extending west toward West 123rd. Brick pattern crosswalk were installed at multiple pedestrian crossing locations within the defined corridor with the West 117th and Lorain Ave intersection serving as the most prominent. A signaled mid-block crossing, with center median, can be found just east of West 117th and Lorain intersection connecting the Variety Theater and its newly constructed parking area. Included in the streetscape plan pursuant of the City of Cleveland's Public Art policy is the installation of the Top Hat sculpture with an integrated bench, located at the crosswalk between the VTC and the new parking facility.





Designed by nationally recognized public artist, Steven Manka, the Magic Hat pays homage to the golden age of Hollywood, when the Variety Theatre was owned and managed by Warner Brothers.

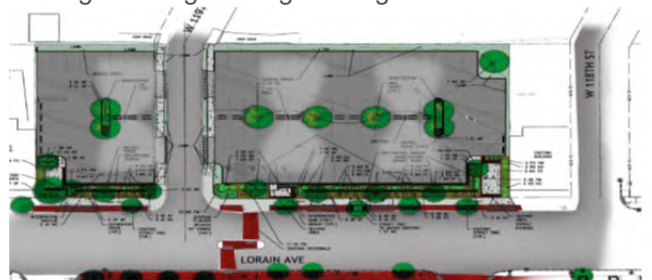


**Variety Village Historic District:** The 2011 study recommended the re-establishment of a traditional commercial corridor on Lorain Avenue between West 110-West 123, with key findings that off street parking is characterized as “much-needed” in the plans for the Theatre Core.

In response to these recommendations and to support the redevelopment of the VTC and other businesses in the VVHD, WCDC completed land acquisition between West 118th & West 119th Streets for the development of a public parking facility.

In 2017 WCDC was awarded a Green Infrastructure Grant from the Northeast Ohio Sewer District to design a ‘green’ parking facility. In partnership with the Cuyahoga County Land Reutilization Corporation and the City of Cleveland, demolition of underutilized and vacant structures was completed in 2018 and construction of the parking facility was completed in 2019.

The municipal owned facility provides 95 parking spaces and features the greatest advancement in green building technology. It includes numerous bioswales, native plantings, ecofriendly tree pits and decorative impervious pavers. Annual storm water runoff is reduced by 461,692.28 gallons (\*US EPA Storm water Calculator ver.1.1). The Variety Village Parking Facility was also recognized at the 2019 Sustainability Summit for its green engineering & design.



### Redevelopment of the Eastman Public Library Branch:

In 2017 WCDC was invited to participate in Cleveland Public Library's (CPL) Community Vision Plan; a two year project led by the Kent State University's Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative (CUDC). The primary goal was to engage neighborhoods around their respective CPL branch libraries, to make recommendations for the facility, neighborhood, and programmatic improvements. As a member of the advisory committee final recommendations included:

- Formalize a community partnership between WCDC & Eastman CPL
- Outreach with area schools to engage them with Eastman CPL programs
- Develop the front entrance plaza to complement the new streetscape improvements and allow for public performances, community events & programs there
- Promote the historic significance of the Variety Theatre Complex and its preservation as crucial to the stability of this neighborhood and retail corridor

In 2017, the WCDC Board of Directors created a board position held for the manager of the Eastman Branch Library Manager and designated the branch as a focus for developing arts & culture programming through WCDC's funding from Cuyahoga County Arts & Culture Grants. WCDC has sponsored the following events at the Eastman Branch Public Library:

- Meet The Author: Dr. Edgar Geil of Doylestown, *The Forgotten Explorer*
- Meet The Author: Laura DeMarco, *Lost Cleveland*
- Meet The Author: John Hidebrand, *Always Cedar Point*
- Meet The Author: Phil Bova, *Throwing Back The Chair*
- Library's Rock- outdoor cookout with live music to celebrate CPL's work in the community
- Center for Arts Inspired Learning workshop with Sogbety African Drumming
- Public Art Installation of FORGET ME NOT, a seating & shade structure on the front plaza
- Performance by Dancing Wheels integrated dance company



In late 2020, the Cleveland Public Library began another public engagement process for the Eastman Branch, located at Lorain and West 116th. This process seeks to incorporate the recommendations of the Lorain Avenue streetscape plan of 2011, which sought to improve the outdoor public space adjacent to the library's entrance, while softening the exterior of the brick structure to create a more inviting space. It maintained existing tree cover that provides a great source of shade, while also making improvements to the tree pits, seating and street furniture to improve the public gathering space. This process is ongoing with construction anticipated in 2022, further demonstrating the continued momentum and investment in the district.



 A poster for a community event. The top half features a photograph of a wooden structure with the text "YOU'RE INVITED" in large, blue, stylized letters. Below the photo, the text reads:
 

**Community Event**

Tuesday, August 29, 2017

4:00 pm to 8:00 pm

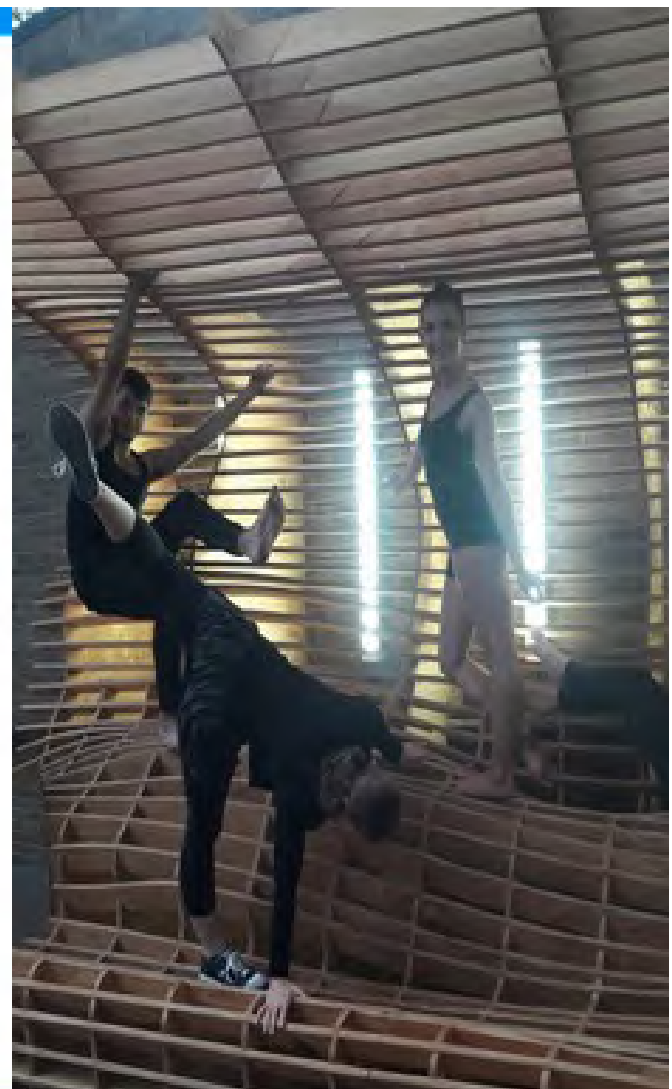
Eastman Branch Library Gallery and Plaza

For more info contact Jenee Harris  
Phone: (216) 387-8427  
Email: [jharris@clib.org](mailto:jharris@clib.org)

**Forget Me Not**  
is an installation brought about by the CPL150 planning process. After meeting with patrons at the Eastman Branch library, a seating and shade structure was designed, along with a re-programming of the mezzanine level as a gallery. The project attempts to utilize some of the momentum from the Variety Theater in reinvigorating Lorain Avenue.

Please join us for a community event to commemorate this structure and the new gallery space. There will be performances by the Dancing Wheels Company and an exhibition of art from the library's digital collection.

Logos at the bottom include: ENT STATE, CDC, CAED, WESTOWN, and DANCING WHEELS COMPANY.



# NEW INITIATIVES

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Leveraging the private/public investments exceeding \$10 million that have been made in the past 10 years will support additional investments for the desired future of the Lorain Avenue corridor: a vibrant mixed use district that represents the diversity of the community, while providing for the needs of its community members. The following four focus area recommendations were selected to help guide future decision making.

**A. Variety Theater:** The theater remains the anchor of the corridor, and with development interest rising, big changes could be forthcoming for the district. As the COVID-19 pandemic wanes, and the potential for local and federal dollars to support development potentially becomes available, putting together a feasible financing package for use such as housing or a mixed-use property could increasingly become a reality. A recommendation for



the creation of a Special Improvement District (SID) remains, but this relies on first establishing a viable use for the structure.

**B. Eastman Library:** The incorporation of public art at the entry is a method of space activation that the design team intends to include in the redesign of the Eastman branch. However, the corner of West 117th and Lorain provides the opportunity for an outdoor experience that extends beyond the walls of the library. Currently, this interaction lacks interest and excitement, and the presence of the library is understated. The potential introduction of landscaping, artwork, seating or other pedestrian amenities that wrap the corner and extend north up West 117th opens the door for this neighborhood asset to have greater presence.

**C. Cleveland Christian Home to Westown Square:** Streetscape improvements that have been made at West 117th and extend west down the corridor have made a significantly positive impact on the character of the district. Meanwhile the feeling of the corridor begins to change east of West 117th, with larger land uses like the Cleveland Christian Home and Westown Square Shopping Center. This portion of the corridor could benefit from similar streetscape treatments that provide tree planters, seating, trash receptacles and bike racks, further unifying the district. This recommendation is particularly appropriate on the south side of Lorain, in addition to a buffer along the Cleveland Christian Homes property line. Buffering at the Westown Square shopping center feels healthy, along with the quality and activity within the center. Beginning at the south side of the street at the Square and extending east toward Denison are where the greatest opportunity for streetscape enhancements can be incorporated into the recently striped bike lanes, sharrow and vertically striped crosswalks.

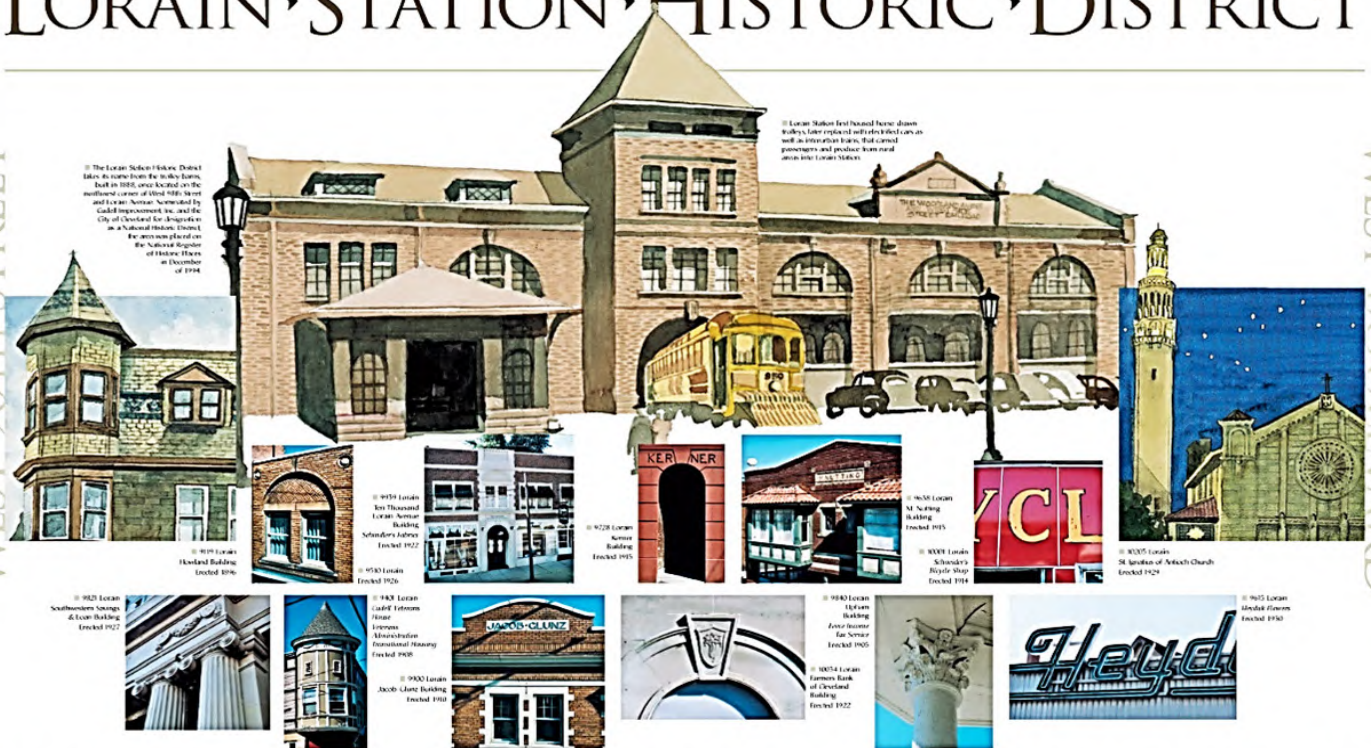
**D. Lorain Ave & Denison Ave Gateway to the Lorain Station Historic District:** The significance of this district to Cleveland's transportation history is important. The Lorain Station Historic District (LSHD) is an important part of Cleveland's transportation, industrial and settlement history. The LSHD begins at West 98th Street where the first toll gate house was built in 1848. In 1890 Lorain Avenue was a wooden plank road. Horse-drawn trolleys, later followed by Electric Street cars, were the dominant form of urban mass transit and narrow corridors from downtown Cleveland were established throughout the city with commercial, industrial and residential development occurring along these routes. In 1889, local entrepreneurs built the Woodland Avenue & West Side Railway Streetcar Station, which provided the first crosstown service between the east and west sides. This paved the way for economic development in this ten block area. Later The Interurban, Northeast Ohio's most prominent railway, had a crosstown east/west transportation station hub which became a major stop until 1952. Passengers, motormen, railway workers, and their families worked, shopped, and settled here creating a housing business boom. By World War II, 74 businesses, including butchers, grocers, pharmacies, produce stands, restaurants, bars, bakeries, banks, dry goods, and barbers thrived in this ten block area. Today, much of the District's significant historic architecture remains intact.

In 1994, the LSHD was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the City of Cleveland designated it as a local landmark in 1998. Since 2014, WCDC has worked extensively with the business and property owners in the LSHD providing technical assistance for new and existing businesses, expansion and stabilization; weekly court community services provide litter control.

# LORAIN STATION HISTORIC DISTRICT

WEST 90TH STREET

WEST ROUTE AVENUE



## FROM THE TURRETS TO THE TOWER & ALL THE HISTORY IN BETWEEN



The Lorain Station Historic District honors the growth of the area that resulted from its being an early transportation hub. In the early 1900s, the District was home to nine butcher shops, five drug stores, eight grocers, six produce stands, thirteen restaurants, six candy stores, three dry goods stores, five barber shops, four clothing stores, three banks, four bakeries and three taverns.

Image above is copyright material. Westtown Community Development Corporation and City Architecture are not claiming ownership of graphic.

As a result, we have seen significant private property and business investments exceeding \$2 million, including five Storefront Renovation Projects in partnership with City of Cleveland, Department of Community Development and Economic Development. Over 20 historic structures in the district have been restored through public & private investment, many with assistance from the City of Cleveland.

In 2019 the ODOT completed a \$1.8 million curb to curb and sidewalk replacement project. The project funds did not authorize or include any streetscape amenities such as crosswalk infrastructure, transit waiting areas, bike parking or wayfinding signage.

The businesses and other anchor organizations in the LSHD which includes the Veterans Administration Domiciliary, West Side Community House, Eden Housing Services, the County Children & Family Center and Genesis Child Education Center have primary operating hours from 9

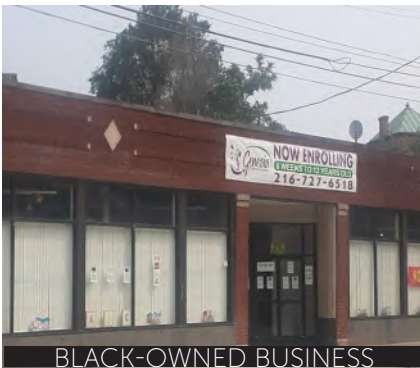
AM till 5 PM. As a result, pedestrian and vehicle traffic is reduced which creates a desolate environment and ongoing problems with street vandalism, human trafficking and other criminal behavior. In meetings with the business owners and stakeholders, they have expressed a need for a comprehensive security camera plan. Other amenities that would support a less desolate night time environment include better lighting and flashing crosswalk signalization at major intersections. During the daytime hours, traffic through the district is significant. Lorain Avenue is a busy truck route and although the road way narrows significantly at the Lorain/Denison intersection, traffic does not slow to meet the roadway conditions. This was addressed by the business owners with the City of Cleveland traffic engineers, however the 2019 ODOT funding did not include funding for traffic calming or new signalization.





The LSHD was named for the trolley barns that were built in 1889 and were located on NW corner of West 98th & Lorain Avenue. They served as a depot & where where trolley cars were repaired.

9600 Lorain Avenue



Genesis Day Care opened April 2021 : Formerly vacant new business now under exterior Storefront Renovation Program development. COMPLETED 2021

10001 Lorain Avenue



Formerly Schneider's, new owners rebranded it as Upcycles- completed new site work, exterior building restoration, signage, and sidewalk garden with the assistance of WCDC. COMPLETED 2016

9609 Lorain Avenue



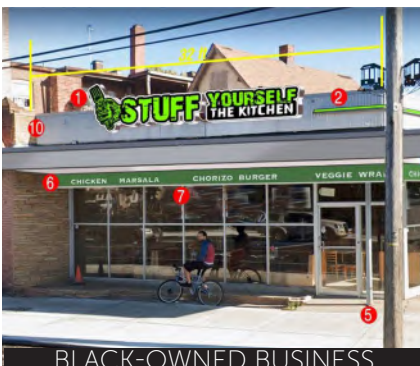
Currently vacant, new business, White House Nail Salon/School under re-development as a Storefront Renovation Program Project.

10024 Lorain Avenue



Formerly Annie's, new owners West of Venus, restored interior/exterior, site work & participated in the Storefront Renovation Project. COMPLETED 2018

9611 Lorain Avenue



Formerly vacant new business now under exterior Storefront Renovation Program development. COMPLETED 2021

10025 Lorain Avenue



Formerly vacant, new business Scrubs Galore Uniforms, restored interior as a part of the Storefront Renovation Program. COMPLETED 2021

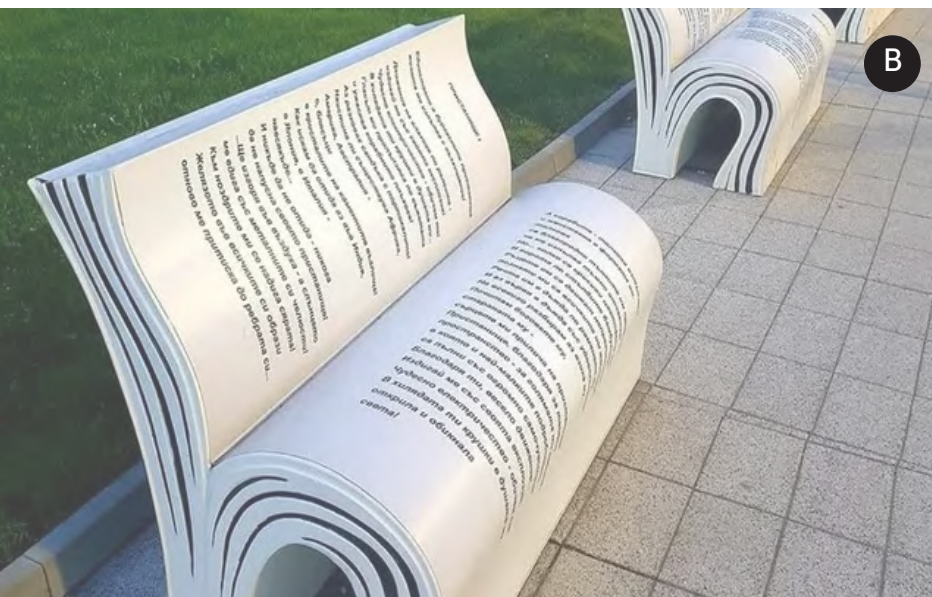
# NEW INITIATIVES

## WHAT COULD BE?



**Agora Theater, Cleveland** (photo credit: cleveland.com)

While the Agora Theater still operates as a performing arts venue, it has adapted portions of its adjoining spaces into offices, and as recently as January 2021 is considering introducing housing. The conversion of historic theaters into new uses remains a challenge across the country, as communities seek to preserve these spaces that have been integral to a neighborhood's history.



**Book Benches, Bulgaria**

Infusing public art with functional outdoor components of the library, such as the benches along Lorain Avenue, could serve as an extension of the art and place-making the district is becoming known for. The benches and tree pits located along the library entrance are in need of an upgrade, and public art has been discussed by the Cleveland Public Library leadership as an item the community has expressed an interest in incorporating into the redesign of the Eastman branch.



**Parking Lot Screening** - Chagrin Boulevard, Shaker Heights, OH

Westown Square remains a stable shopping center for the west side neighborhoods of the city, with fully occupied retail spaces and patrons arriving via multiple modes of transportation to frequent the shopping center. A healthy relationship exists between the center ownership and WCDC, therefore recommendations remain more high level here. Screening of the Westown Square parking area through creative installation of art, vegetation and pedestrian scaled lighting could serve to improve the quality of the center’s connection to the Lorain Avenue corridor. Additionally, the Cleveland Christian home would benefit from an improved screening of their property, however a request for the group’s privacy will be maintained. Further study of how the stretch of Lorain Avenue between these two large land uses is a recommendation of this plan.

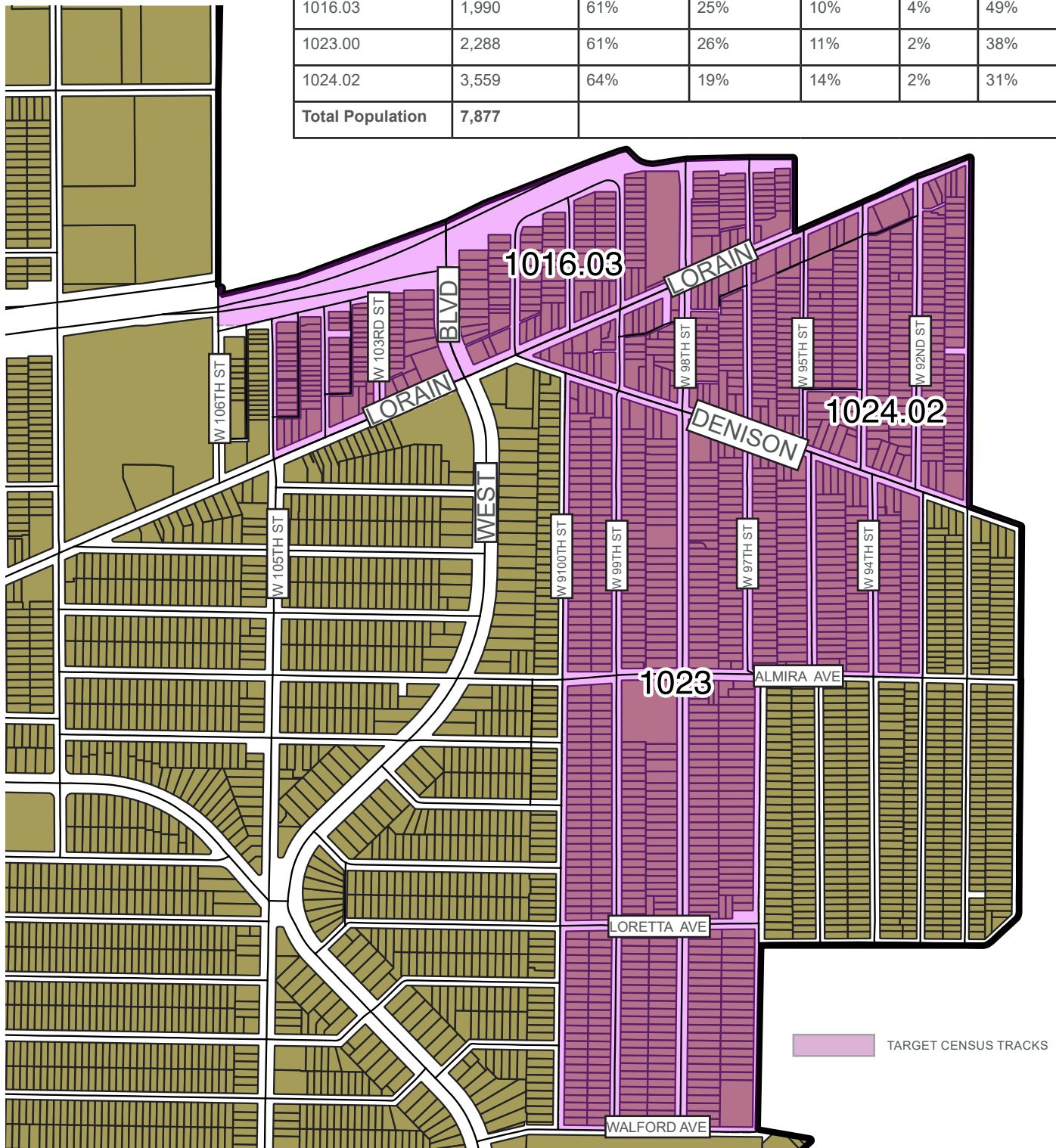


**Welcome Sign** - Geneva on the Lake, OH

The welcome gateway signage in Geneva on the Lake was referenced as a potential model for the entry into the Lorain Station Historic District. The gateway arch represents a strong statement and becomes both a recognition of arrival and a work of art. Color selection, font, material and style can all embody meaning that is representative of the district’s current character and its integral role in the history of Cleveland.

# PRIORITIZING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Census Tract	Total Population	White Population	Black Population	Hispanic	Other	% of Poverty
1016.03	1,990	61%	25%	10%	4%	49%
1023.00	2,288	61%	26%	11%	2%	38%
1024.02	3,559	64%	19%	14%	2%	31%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>7,877</b>					





Leadership at the Westtown Community Development Corporation has recognized a growing need for creating affordable housing within their service area. With largely stable housing stock and intact blocks across the neighborhoods WCDC serves, there are limited options for new construction.

Census data however reveals a significant need for financial stability in 3 tracts that surround the Lorain Station Historic District gateway. These census tracts, listed in the table on page 18 represent the demographic diversity of this westside community, while also revealing the shared need irrespective how residents racially identify. At least 31% of residents of 1016.03, 1023, and 1024.02 are living in poverty, with essentially half of 1016.03 meeting the poverty threshold. Access to quality affordable housing can provide the foundation for moving up and out of poverty.

This eastern edge of both the plan study area and WCDC service represent the focus of future investment in housing to address the concentrated poverty currently present. The following recommendations support realizing strategic investment within this target area.

- Partnerships with a range of housing developers specializing in single family infill housing, multi-family and mixed used development
- Seek out atypical development partnerships, including female and minority led developers with local ties to the neighborhood or region
- Strengthen relationships with both the City and County Land Banks to assist in securing land that is currently vacant or available, as well as property that is trending toward state forfeiture, foreclosure and demolition
- Pursue Low Income Housing Tax Credits with development groups that have experience obtaining funding and success with implementation.

Additionally, 9731-9741 Lorain Ave presents a unique location along the largely intact Lorain Avenue corridor for new Mixed-Use development with frontage along the spine of Lorain Station Historic District. Incorporation of affordable housing into a potentially large scale project at this location offers a unique opportunity to restore the fabric of the historic district.

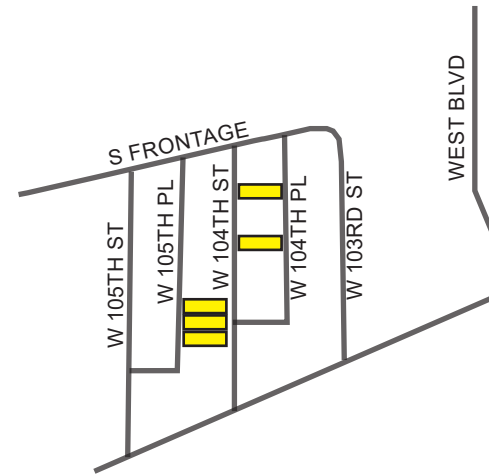
# FOCUSING ON INFILL

Due to the lack of contiguous vacant land and the character that looks to be maintain in the Lorain Station Historic District, leadership at the Westtown Community Development Corporation has determined that infill housing is the most suitable approach to providing affordable housing in their service area.

Within the target census tracts of 1016.03, 1023, and 1024.02 there are roughly 50 land bank lots available as of September 2021. This presents several opportunities for infill development, however a strategic approach to bringing new housing options to community must be taken. This approach must begin with destigmatizing ‘affordable housing’. Centering the development of new income-based housing on challenges that are relatable across race, gender, or socioeconomic status helps to direct people’s focus to the primary objective of affordable housing – improving the condition of an individual or family’s life.

An example of affordable housing model for single family or infill homes are rent to own. Under this structure, the lease agreement allows the resident to incrementally work toward ownership, with the goal of building wealth through homeownership. Similarly, there are multi-family housing models such as workforce housing, adult-student housing, and intergenerational housing (where grandparents have legal custody of their grandchildren) that could be applied to a collection a single-family homes to strengthen the purpose driving the project, in addition to attracting dollars and partnerships.

Once WCDC has selected the why behind the housing development, establishing a relationship with an experienced real estate development entity or team will be key to realizing success. There are local examples, such as, Burten Bell Carr, that can be looked to for early guidance. Forging new connections with private development entities that have experience developing affordable or income-based housing will also be a necessary next step.





# MAKING A STATEMENT







While roadway and sidewalk investments provide a level of consistency within the district, there is not a prevalence of unique celebratory features of the area's character or historical identity. The incorporation of prominent gateway signage that celebrates both past and present could pair nicely with the historic district designation obtained by the neighborhood. With appropriate planning and engineering, a gateway sign, such as an archway, could also serve to calm Lorain Avenue eastbound traffic at the intersection of Lorain & Denison Avenue. The LSHD neighborhood's focal entry point lies at the intersection of Lorain and Denison, and a statement piece at this location that announces arrival and gives recognition to the community could serve as a unifying element that celebrates a corridor rich in Cleveland history.

A prominently positioned public placemaking feature would support the Westtown neighborhood in establishing a greater presence among Cleveland's westside communities. Lying at the intersection of the neighborhoods West Boulevard, Jefferson, and Cudell, it can be challenging to distinguish where the separation lies. However, there are many unique features and historical places of significance that separate the Westtown neighborhood from its peers.

Placement is critical. The Variety Theater Complex currently anchors the western end of the corridor in this neighborhood, and is an instantly recognizable icon equipped with features not found in any other neighborhood in the city. Westtown's Lorain Avenue Corridor lacks this anchoring landmark on its eastern end, specifically at the Lorain Avenue & Denison Ave node.

# LORAIN STATION HISTORIC DISTRICT GATEWAY ARCH

## PREFERRED OPTION

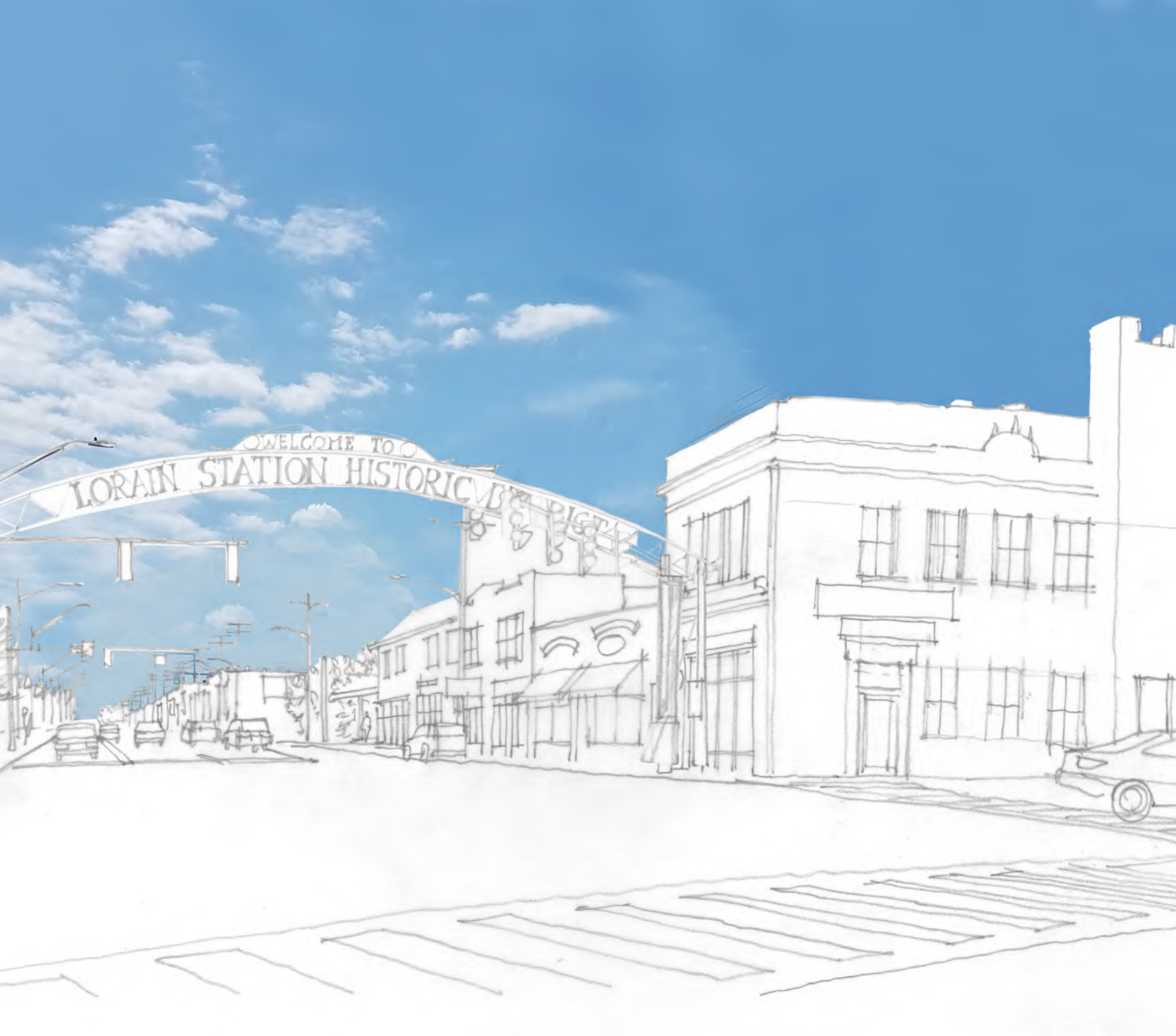
A prominent acknowledgment of the Lorain Station Historic District can be powerfully communicated through the installation of a gateway arch. The vertical structure would span the width of Lorain Avenue and include a lettering type/style that is reflective of the historic character of the district. Signage would be dual sided, with mirrored views as you approach from the west and the east along the corridor. The scale of the gateway arch creates a nearly imposing statement, as visitors and residents pass through and around the structure. However, this prominently featured element in the public realm is representative of the significance of this neighborhood to the City of Cleveland's story.

Ultimately, the project would require coordination with local property owners and stakeholders, the City of Cleveland, Department of City Planning, Local Historic Design Review Committee, and the Department of Traffic and Engineering. This would ensure appropriateness of design, evaluation of existing vertical obstructions and underground utilities, such as traffic lights and electrical lines, as well as protect private setbacks and public right of way property interests.





Existing Condition



# NEXT STEPS

A lot has been accomplished since 2008, however WCDC and the Westtown community remain hungry for additional progress. In order to effectively capitalize on the growth and investment along the Lorain Avenue corridor, particular focus should be given to the Lorain Station Historic District.

The Steelyard TIF Funding legislation sunsets in 2026. In the culminating years of the program, WCDC intends to work with the Director of Economic Development, the Cleveland City Council Representative and local property and business owners to prepare a five year plan that includes:

1. Develop and issue an RFP that offers technical assistance for both the Steelyard TIF grant gap funding and Storefront Renovation programs to aid property owners of underutilized and vacant storefronts;

2. Develop guidelines for the TIF grant for the development of a parking facility at the vacant land bank lot at 9117 Lorain Avenue to support the redevelopment of the adjacent vacant storefronts at 9019-9025 Lorain Avenue.

3. Develop and issue an RFP to select a designer and fabricator to develop the Lorain Station Historic District Gateway Arch.

4. Stabilization of historic character of existing structures and education on owning historic property.

To support improved safety within the LSHD, the following next steps will be taken by WCDC:

5. With advanced technology and increased affordability of CCTV and alarm systems, WCDC will issue a survey to area merchants to determine if there is a current need for affordable security systems.

6. Issue a request to the Cleveland Division of Police's traffic control unit for an additional camera to be installed at 9508 Lorain, to bolster the coverage currently provided by the City of Cleveland installed a homeland security camera/ CCTV on the utility pole at the northeast intersection of Lorain Avenue & Denison Avenue. This has been utilized for several CPD investigations for both traffic control and criminal prosecutions.

7. Survey existing property owners along Henley Court to understand what problems continue to persist in this area, while also evaluating locations for better lighting options with Cleveland Public Power.

8. Development of an affordable housing strategy in partnership with a development team that has experience with infill housing in the City of Cleveland.

Variety Theater Historic District:

1. Pursue further study of surrounding bike network and explore what connections might be possible to the bike lanes along Lorain Avenue.

2. Leverage Eastman Library Branch renovation for development of updated landscaping plan for the corridor including improved library entry, bike parking, al fresco dining, coordinated signage for public parking and neighborhood branding.

The positive change the Lorain Avenue corridor has experienced over the last 10 years is a reflective of the collective grit and strategic positioning of residents, business owners and local community development leadership. The work is not complete, as the story of this community is still being written.

TILL BEING WRITTEN...