

BELKNAP NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



PREPARED BY:
**BELKNAP NEIGHBORHOOD TASK FORCE,
CITY OF LOUISVILLE,
&
LOUISVILLE COMMUNITY DESIGN CENTER**

*FINAL REPORT
December 2000*



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1. INTRODUCTION



1. INTRODUCTION

The Belknap Neighborhood Plan (“Plan”) is the vision of the Belknap Neighborhood Task Force to guide the preservation and continuing revitalization of the Belknap neighborhood. This Plan is intended as a guide for the development of commercial and residential property within the neighborhood -- to define and limit commercial uses and to strengthen the neighborhood’s residential core.

1.1 VISION

The Belknap Neighborhood Plan envisions a predominantly residential urban neighborhood that provides core commercial services on a scale friendly to pedestrians. To this end, we envision a neighborhood that will maintain its current high quality residential sector adjacent to the commercial sector at the Douglass Loop and directly fronting Bardstown Road that provides amenities and services to the residential core. The Plan will foster a model urban neighborhood: promoting community; embracing architecture in keeping with the historic flavor of the Highlands; tree-lined streets that invite pedestrian traffic; and a specifically defined and limited commercial portion that is inspired by the distinctive character and human scale of the traditional pedestrian marketplace.

1.2 PURPOSE

The Plan identifies the issues, problems, and needs that are central to preserving Belknap as a diverse residential community served by a defined retail core along Bardstown Road and at the Douglass Loop.

Upon adoption by the Board of Aldermen, the Plan will become a statement on preferred future land use, zoning, re-zoning, and related matters such as considerations of traffic, special uses, environmental enhancement, and historic preservation. This statement will allow the Board of Aldermen to review and to act upon several types of issues, using the Neighborhood Plan as a basic guideline.

Specifically, upon approval of the plan the Board of Aldermen:

- will be guided by the plan as it relates to the development of citywide plans, provision of services, and preparation of budgets;
- may make recommendations and act as applicant for changing present zoning districts by using the conclusions and recommendations of the Plan; and
- will consider the neighborhood plan as a decision making tool while reviewing zoning change requests.

The Plan will also guide the decisions of the executive branch of the City government and its associated agencies with respect to improvements within the Belknap neighborhood. The intent of the Plan is to provide guidance to the executive branch on the following activities:

- development of plans and policies as they relate to the Belknap neighborhood;
- provision of various community services such as fire, police, water, and traffic; and
- preparation and review of budgetary requirements necessary to operation, maintenance and expansion of such community services.

2. NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE



2. NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

2.1 LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

The Belknap neighborhood is southeast of downtown Louisville, its eastern boundary defined by Bardstown Road, which was the original stage road between Louisville and Bardstown, Kentucky. Bardstown Road has grown, over the years, into a major commercial corridor that serves nearby neighborhoods as well as the entire city.

A dog-leg serves as the southern boundary; it begins at the back lots of the properties on the south side of Eastview Avenue at Bardstown Road and runs southwest to Lakeside Drive, then south to Emerson and continues south along the west side of Dundee to Newburg Road. The “dogleg” runs along the boundaries of Strathmoor Manor and Dundee Estates.

The western boundary is Newburg Road, beginning at the intersection with Dundee Road and continuing north to the south boundary of the Bellarmine University campus, then following the University boundary to Douglass Boulevard. At Douglass, the boundary runs east to Bardstown Road, completing the perimeter of the neighborhood (see attached location and base maps of the Belknap Neighborhood).

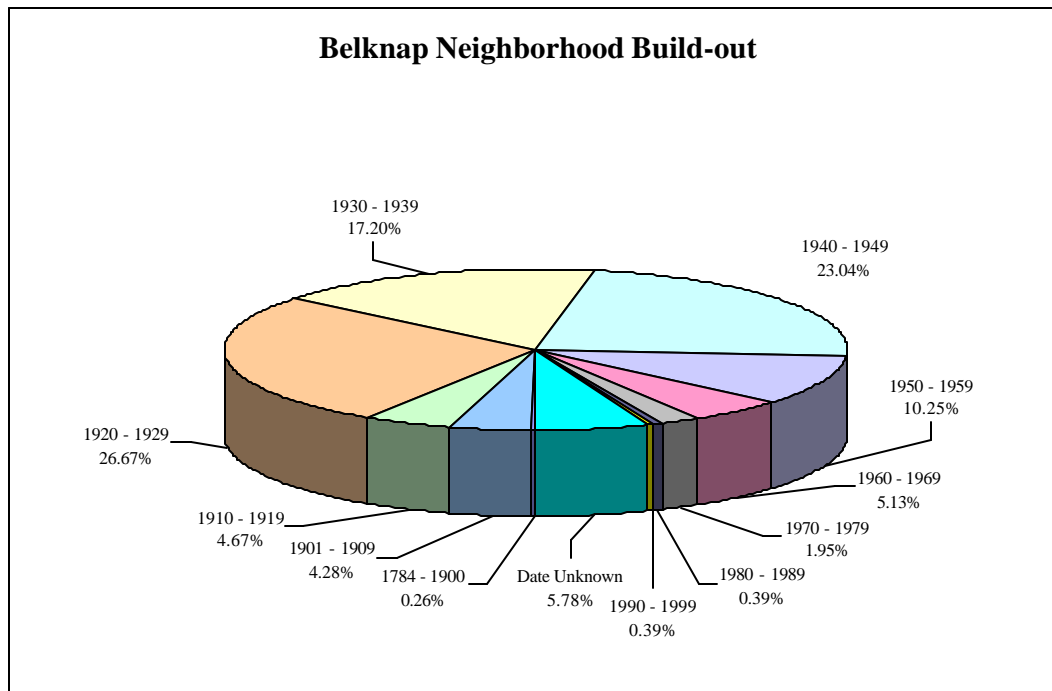


Douglass Loop at Bardstown Road – A Gateway to the Belknap Neighborhood.

2.2 HISTORIC CHARACTER

The Belknap neighborhood is an attractive neighborhood that preserves much of its historic architecture and picturesque streetscapes existing at the time of its creation. Much of the neighborhood was platted in the manner of the “street-car subdivisions” typical of residential development from 1890-1920. Nearly 75% of the neighborhood was subdivided and built-out before 1945. By 1965, the remainder of the neighborhood was built, with a few houses built over the following three decades. Figure 2.1 shows the build-out of the Belknap neighborhood from 1784 to the present.

Figure 2.1



Source: Belknap Neighborhood Association

The neighborhood’s architecture is typical of the single-family neighborhoods of Louisville’s Highlands section. Until recently, the architectural and visual integrity of the neighborhood had not been infringed upon except by some of the boundary commercial uses along Bardstown Road.

2.3 BELKNAP DEMOGRAPHICS

The Belknap neighborhood has a diverse population that crosses all boundaries of age, race, and nationality. Because the numbers from Census 2000 are not as yet available, we are, at this juncture, unable to compare 1990 census data with current census data. As this information becomes available, an addendum that analyzes the demographic trends of the neighborhood will accompany this plan. This will aid the neighborhood in better assessing existing conditions and anticipating future needs.

2.4 EXISTING LAND USE CONDITIONS

2.4.1 Residential Uses

More than 85% of the Belknap neighborhood is residential. Other than farm houses, residential development began in the early 1900's with styles typical of Louisville: one-and two-story bungalows, four squares, and shotguns. These homes were built when the original farms became available for development as the transportation system was extended. The first residential developments were laid out on a typical gridiron pattern with alleys in the vicinity of the Bardstown Road trolley line that turned around at Douglass Boulevard and Bardstown Road. Dundee Road and Harvard Drive created a turning loop. Now known simply as "the Loop," the commercial area that was created has become the cornerstone of the neighborhood.

The second major stage of residential growth occurred in the 1920's on more hilly terrain of the Lakeside, Aberdeen and Tecomah subdivisions off Trevilian Way. The gridiron used in the previously developed area of the neighborhood was abandoned in favor of a curvilinear street pattern that follows the natural contours of the land to create a sylvan suburban character. This area contains a mixture of housing styles including bungalows, Spanish and Tudor revival styles and Colonial revival homes.



Residential Character of Belknap Neighborhood

The third major period of construction between 1930 and 1950 continued the suburban expansion of the 1920s, but at a much slower pace during the Depression. House styles returned to more traditional Colonial designs. In the late 1930's, small Cape Cods also appeared as infill throughout the neighborhood, their smaller scale attributable to the fact that subdivision deed restrictions applied to overall cost of a house rather than its size. No new subdivisions were platted during World War II. During and after the war, residential construction was primarily infill.

With few exceptions, residences throughout the neighborhood are well maintained and have been upgraded in recent years. Typical improvements include: energy-saving windows, patios and enclosed porches, garage additions and interior renovations that include redecoration as well as additional bathrooms and bedrooms. These home improvements have made the neighborhood more attractive to its residents, increased property values, and drawn new homeowners.

Multi-Family Housing:

Multi-family housing in the Belknap neighborhood consists mostly of duplex units constructed before 1940 and "grandfathered" into the existing R-5 Residential Zoning District. A few four-plexes and six-plexes also exist within the R-5 Residential District. Three areas are zoned R-6 Multi-Family Residential, including a triangle bordered by Wibben, Dundee and Woodbourne where no multi-family units exist; a 20-lot section of Boulevard Napoleon, from Overlook Terrace south; and a six-lot zone on the west side of Boulevard Napoleon between Douglass Boulevard and Harvard Drive.



Traditional multi-family development in Belknap



Two small areas are zoned for multi-family housing: a triangular lot behind the Kroger Store and one large lot at the corner of Yale Drive and Dundee Road. The lot behind the Kroger store is accessible only by a city alley that can be entered either at the Kroger store or off Wrocklage Avenue. The existing R-7 allows relatively dense development and is presently used as parking by Kroger under a lease arrangement with the owner. The second Multi-Family District is zoned R-8A (Residential multi-family) and consists of one 25,500 sq.ft. lot containing condominium units in a single building fronting Dundee Road with a parking lot

accessed from an alley. The property faces Yale Drive and the C-1 Commercial District that fronts Dundee Road (see Existing Land Use and Existing Zoning Maps).

2.4.2 Commercial Uses

Commercial uses occur in a “strip” along both sides of Bardstown Road -- some in buildings dating from the trolley car era -- that serves as the commercial corridor of all the Highlands neighborhoods and runs from Baxter Avenue in the north to Gardiner Lane, ten blocks south of the Belknap neighborhood.

Dundee Road is zoned commercial from the Douglass Loop at Bardstown Road to Yale Drive. From Douglass to Harvard, an unbroken line of small shops includes a drugstore, hardware store, bread store, Italian eatery, barber shop, candy store, deli, and a bar, typical of a true neighborhood center. On the triangle formed by Dundee Road, Harvard Drive and Bardstown Road, a building formerly occupied by a chain drugstore has been renovated and now houses a café, an ice cream shop, a pastry shop, and a specialty furniture store.



Douglass Loop Commercial Center (circa 1941)



Douglass Loop now (circa 2000)

In 1992, at the instigation of the Belknap Neighborhood Association, the Douglass Loop businesses worked with the Louisville & Jefferson County Office of Business Services to complete a redevelopment project that preserved the historic flavor of this commercial district and improved the infrastructure, streetscape elements, and structural conditions of the some of the buildings. A small park-like area with plantings and street furniture now completes the triangular point of the Loop at Bardstown and Dundee Roads. A new one-way street system provided diagonal on-street parking and street trees along Dundee Road. The result is a pedestrian scale shopping area that complements the adjacent residential uses.

The Douglass Loop business district also provides customer and employee parking behind the stores fronting Dundee Road. These lots are reached from the alley between Harvard Drive and Douglass Boulevard. Most of the Douglass Loop commercial area is in a C-2 Commercial District. However, several free-standing buildings on the west side of Dundee between Harvard and Yale Drives are zoned C-1 Commercial. These include a restaurant, a lawn mower shop and a specialty shop. A double lot at the corner of Yale and Dundee is zoned C-1 but is part of the residential development along Yale.



Bardstown Road at Douglass Loop (circa 1940s)



Bardstown Road now (circa 2000)

On the east side of Dundee Road, beginning at the intersection of Dundee Road, Yale Drive and Wibben Avenue, there are residences fronting Wibben with lot depths averaging 130 feet. Here and in other parts of the neighborhood, small houses like these are a scarce commodity for those needing a smaller residence.

Behind these lots along Dundee, northeast to the portion of Harvard Drive between Dundee and Bardstown Roads, a large parking lot serves existing commercial buildings that face Bardstown Road between Harvard and the alley between Bardstown Road and Wibben Avenue. This parking lot serves as a boundary and buffer between the commercial development along Bardstown Road and the residential section of the neighborhood. Alleys that bisect blocks provide access to garages and/or rear yards of residences or businesses.

Bardstown Road commercial uses extend in an unbroken line to the south from the corner of Harvard Drive and Bardstown Road, including a florist, an antique shop, a copy center, and a parking lot that extends to the rear property line of the four houses that front on Wibben Avenue. This area is zoned C-1 Commercial.

Between Woodbourne Avenue and Sils Avenue several businesses are located in older buildings that retain the character of the small businesses in a traditional urban marketplace. Between Sils and Wrocklage, there is a group of small shops and a bank at Wrocklage.

The west side of Bardstown Road, from Wrocklage Avenue to Trevilian Way/Taylorsville Road, does not have any east-west intersecting streets because of topography constraints. Large-scale commercial development has occurred in this portion of the commercial corridor including a Kroger's grocery store, currently under renovation, that serves a major portion of the Highlands area. The new store façade is divided into smaller storefronts with display windows in keeping with the traditional architectural pattern of the corridor. South of the Kroger store, a newly renovated appliance store, and a video store, all have facades designed at a pedestrian scale.



*View of Douglass
Boulevard, in the vicinity of
the Loop.*

The remaining commercial area on Bardstown Road on the east side of the neighborhood includes a combination office and store group in a two-story brick building at the corner of Trevilian Way. A building that housed an apothecary is now the center for a pizza delivery operation and is located at the corner of Lakeside Drive. Kern's Bar, a neighborhood institution, is located on the south corner of Lakeside Drive next to a former restaurant. The last commercial corner on Bardstown Road, at Eastview Avenue, houses a photographer's studio and, on the south side adjacent to the Doup family cemetery, a commercial building that has a history of short-term rentals.

2.4.3 Special Uses



*Belknap School – now
converted to office
uses.*

The former Belknap School is a two story brick building on a raised basement in the eclectic academic architectural style of the 1910s. The property covers a full block, bound by Page, Wrocklage, Wibben, and Sils Avenues and is zoned OR-3 Office-Residential. The building has been converted to office uses. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and protected by the Kentucky State Heritage Council under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

Lakeside Swim Club, located on Trevilian Way near its intersection with Lakeside Drive, is a converted quarry and the centerpiece of the Lakeside subdivision, platted in the mid-to-late 1920s. The club covers an area exceeding four acres and has a large membership and several swim teams, including a major Masters team.

There are no churches within the neighborhood although several are located at its perimeter. Atherton High School is located nearby on the south side of the neighborhood off Dundee Road, and Bellarmine University is located between Douglass Boulevard and Newburg Road at the northwest corner of the neighborhood.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS



3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 BARDSTOWN ROAD OVERLAY DISTRICT

The Task Force views the Bardstown Road corridor adjacent to Belknap as both an asset to the neighborhood and as an immediate and long term threat to the stability of the residential areas adjoining the corridor. While encouraging neighborhood-supported businesses within the Douglass Loop and along the corridor, the neighborhood association has frequently been compelled to react to commercial development and expansion plans along the corridor that encroach upon the immediately contiguous residential areas of the neighborhood. This problem has been exacerbated by the disorganized platting of properties in the vicinity of Kroger and by the lack of a clear boundary separating commercial and residential areas.

The Louisville Board of Aldermen established the Bardstown Road/Baxter Avenue Corridor Review Overlay District (BROD) in 1993 to preserve and protect the unique architectural and aesthetic character of the Bardstown Road/Baxter Avenue Corridor (see Existing Zoning Map). The BROD Committee, consisting of eight members appointed by the Mayor, reviews development applications within the Overlay District. The committee's recommendations are then forwarded to the Director of the City's Department of Inspections, Permits and Licenses, indicating whether or not the application complies with design review guidelines "intended to promote compatibility of new development with existing land use and design features, to enhance the District's visual quality, to preserve the District's commercial character with a pedestrian friendly environment, and to strengthen the economic vitality of the District."¹ The boundaries of the Overlay District are also defined by ordinance and include a substantial portion of the Bardstown Road commercial corridor that borders the Belknap neighborhood between Douglass Boulevard and Lowell Avenue.



View of the Bardstown Road commercial corridor looking north.

¹ City of Louisville Ordinance No. 157, Series 1996, Section 3(B).

Increasingly, the access easement has also become the principal means of entry and egress to the various businesses and parking lots on the south side of Bardstown Road between Wrocklage and Trevilian. The development and redevelopment of this area has greatly increased the importance and utility of this narrow access easement, to the point that use seems to have exceeded capacity.

Both the Task Force and the Belknap Neighborhood Association vigorously oppose any widening of the easement, because such an action would represent an unacceptable encroachment of the commercial area into the residential sector. It is the position of both groups that problems in the commercial area must not be solved by encroachment into the residential sector. The inadequacy of the access easement is exacerbated by a storm drainage problem within the deep swale immediately behind the current CVS, observed by members of the Task Force and owing to the absence of an adequate storm sewer at an appropriate location within the swale.

The Department of Public Works and Metropolitan Sewer District should study the adequacy of the access easement serving as secondary access. Without such a study, neither the City nor the Planning Commission can properly judge the impact of any new development proposal that would generate additional use of the access easement and, therefore, of Wrocklage Avenue. The task force opposes any design of the access easement that would create a cut-through for traffic between Trevilian and Wrocklage. In addition to creating a hazardous situation for shoppers, a cut-through would function as a secondary commercial through street that would allow traffic to move from Trevilian all the way to Dundee without a stop light. Such a “street” termed as an access easement is not of a design that can support through traffic or function as a collector street. The result would have a destructive impact on the residential character of the surrounding neighborhood. Several designs have been put forward for the access easement that would deter such a cut-through. Furthermore, the charm and functionality of the neighborhood depends upon encouraging more pedestrian and bicycle traffic to the 2400 block of Bardstown Road.



View of the Kroger access easement at Wrocklage Avenue.

Therefore, the prime principle that should guide traffic design decisions is encouraging and facilitating pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Any conflict between the interests of these groups and motor vehicle traffic should be resolved in favor of the pedestrians and bicyclists. This position is consonant with development guidelines for interfacing commercial and residential development and will also be consonant with development guidelines under Cornerstone 2020.

With regard to the Douglass Loop, a recent initiative dividing the old Taylor's drugstore into multiple rental spaces has demonstrated that the private market, with design oversight from the BROD, can be entrusted with the redevelopment of this area. This combination of private initiative and public oversight seems to present the best hope for realization of the neighborhood's desire for pedestrian-scaled, neighborhood serving businesses in and around the Douglass Loop. However, when the Bardstown Road Overlay District was originally established, a few commercially zoned parcels within the loop seem to have been inadvertently excluded from the BROD boundaries. Because these parcels are effectively an offshoot of the Douglass Loop and are located in a way that could significantly impact the contiguous residential fabric, the boundaries of the BROD should be amended to include these parcels.

The Task Force recommends that the two parcels located at the northwest intersection of Dundee, Wibben, and Yale be rezoned from their current C-1 zoning to R8-A (Residential Multi-Family District). Commercial use at this location would constitute an inappropriate extrusion of the Douglass Loop commercial center into the residential neighborhood proper; and conversion of the site from its current residential use to a commercial use would adversely impact the several residential properties adjacent the site. Furthermore, the economic viability of a C-1 use at this location seems dubious.

Alternatively, the proposed R8-A zoning would permit a more appropriate transition and buffer between the Bardstown Road commercial corridor and the residential neighborhood. Moreover, the proposed R8-A zone will be contiguous with multi-family development located on R8-A zoned property at the southwest intersection of Dundee, Wibben, and Yale (See Proposed Zoning Map).

3.1.2 Commercial Development Goals:

- A. To establish and reinforce an effective buffer between the commercial establishments along the 2400 block of Bardstown Road and contiguous residential properties along Lakeside and Trevilian Way.
- B. Preserve and encourage limited and specifically defined commercial areas that provide goods, services and amenities to neighborhood residents.
- C. Provide internal access to the 2400 block of Bardstown Road that is in keeping with the traditional neighborhood pattern, i.e., low volume, non-through traffic access-way or alley.
- D. Support the Guidelines of the Bardstown Road Corridor Overlay District (incorporated by reference): structures should be designed to reinforce the existing pattern of small storefronts facing Bardstown Road/Baxter Avenue; facade design, where appropriate, shall be cognizant of pedestrian activity; display windows shall be encouraged; a structure's main entrance generally should face the Corridor; and

structures should be located at or near the front property line with the amount of setback designed to be compatible with adjacent properties and traditional neighborhood patterns.

3.1.3 Recommendations for Commercial Development:

1. Recommend amending the boundaries of the Bardstown Road Overlay District to include certain commercially zoned areas within the Douglass Loop currently excluded from the overlay district (see Proposed Zoning Map).
2. Recommend the rezoning, from C-1 to R8-A, of two contiguous parcels located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Dundee, Wibben, and Yale (see Proposed Zoning Map).
3. Work for and support a safe and amenable pedestrian access, good drainage, buffering (including greenery and earthen berm) that protects residential properties from commercial nuisances, in the rear of the commercial corridor of the 2400 block of Bardstown Road.
4. Request the City Department of Public Works to consider revamping the current design, character and overall adequacy of the access easement that serves as rear access to Kroger and CVS Pharmacy. The City Department of Public Works should also work with Kroger to build a pedestrian walkway from the Wrocklage entrance of the access easement to Kroger and CVS and extending to Walgreens at Trevilian Way.

3.2 RESIDENTIAL ZONING

Of principal concern to both the Task Force and the Neighborhood Association is the preservation of the single-family character of the Belknap area. Accordingly, the Task Force recommends rezoning several areas where current zoning is inconsistent with current use or would permit development detrimental to existing neighborhood character.

The five areas under consideration include:

- The triangular block bounded by Woodbourne, Dundee, and Wibben;
- The half-block fronting Boulevard Napoleon on the east and west, from Overlook Terrace south to the curve;
- The west side of Boulevard Napoleon between Douglass and Harvard;
- Several contiguous parcels located on both sides of Dundee between Overlook and Trevilian; and
- The landlocked parcel (currently used as a parking lot) behind the Kroger store.

Woodbourne. In the block bounded by Woodbourne, Dundee, and Wibben, all of the parcels appear occupied by single-family homes. The current R-6 zoning seems entirely inappropriate both to current use and to the larger neighborhood context and should, therefore, be rezoned to R-5.

Boulevard Napoleon. The two blocks cited on Boulevard Napoleon both appear, from visual inspection, to contain some structures originally built as multifamily dwellings, and still in use as such. However, in both instances multifamily use appears to be the minority use of total structures in each block; and the current R-6 zoning would therefore seem to support this minority, rather than the single family use that is both predominant along Boulevard Napoleon and within the surrounding neighborhood.

In order to protect against multifamily conversion of single family structures within these zones – a use inappropriate to the original design of most of the structures within each block, and to the street and neighborhood at large – the Task Force recommends that the two blocks of Boulevard Napoleon, as well as the previously-cited block on Woodbourne, be rezoned from R-6 multifamily to R-5 single family, consistent with their larger residential context and with the predominant use found within each block.

Dundee. In analyzing the composition and character of the neighborhood, the Task Force has identified a contiguous cluster of relatively large lots located along Dundee that are currently zoned R-5, like most of the surrounding neighborhood. As the neighborhood was developed, these lots may have been platted at sizes larger than the norm in response to unique physical characteristics, including steep hillsides or low-lying wetlands (see Lot Size Classification map). The goal may have been the creation of an enclave of estate lots in character with their immediate neighbor, the old manor house at Dundee and Overlook. Now, however, the size of these lots relative to their current zoning seems to make them vulnerable to subdivision and further development.

The Task Force therefore recommends that these contiguous lots be rezoned to R-4, a classification consistent both with the original subdivision plan and with their current use. Such rezoning would include the site of the Manor House, whose original lot size has been reduced through development of the Courtyards of the Highlands, but still encompasses more than an acre. Rezoning these contiguous parcels below Overlook would reinforce the intent of the original subdivision plan, maintaining the open, sylvan, and low-density character of the neighborhood. Rezoning the site of the Manor House would also protect a landmark site from further encroachment.

3.2.1 Residential Development Goals:

Protect and preserve the residential and historic character of the neighborhood.

3.2.2 Recommendations for Residential Development:

1. Recommend the rezoning, from R-6 to R-5, of certain blocks along Woodbourne and Boulevard Napoleon in keeping with the predominant character of each subject block, or sub-block, and of the neighborhood general (see Proposed Zoning Map).
2. Recommend the rezoning, from R-5 to R-4, of certain contiguous parcels on both sides of Dundee between Overlook and Trevilian, consistent with the apparent intent of the original subdivision plan (see Proposed Zoning Map).
3. Recommend the rezoning of the existing R-7 multi-family zoning district on a landlocked parcel (currently being used as a surface parking lot) behind the Kroger

- store to Residential R-5 in order to maintain compatibility with the abutting residential area.
4. Discourage any development activity that would lead to losing any of the smaller houses within the neighborhood.
 5. Advise that any multifamily development be sited along Bardstown Road by redeveloping the single story, front parking commercial buildings as two or three story buildings meeting the requirements of the BROD, sited at the front of the lot with professional offices and apartments and condominiums on the second and/or third floor and parking located in the rear and/or as underground.

3.3 *URBAN FORESTRY*

3.3.1 Urban Canopy

Mature trees are a fundamental aspect of Belknap's character and appeal. These trees are beloved members of the community, and residents take special interest in the health of the neighborhood canopy.

Most trees in the neighborhood stand on private home lots, and are therefore the responsibility of their respective property owners. On the other hand, the neighborhood has few instances of "street trees," i.e., of trees deliberately planted within the public right-of-way as part of a larger plan. The notable exception is along Boulevard Napoleon, where pin oaks were planted, probably when the subdivision was originally created in 1916-1918, according to a plan similar to that found along the city's Olmsted parkways. While these trees, fully matured, have created a grand effect, the particular characteristics of pin oaks present a significant problem and challenge. These trees, by nature, possess a shallow root structure that in normal circumstances spread broadly. However, in street settings typical to Louisville, the relatively constrained growing area available to the roots and their proximity to runoff from the street together contribute to the instability and demise of these grand trees. Too frequently, such pin oaks have fallen during rainstorms, sometimes with disastrous and even tragic results.

To preserve Boulevard Napoleon's formal character and to conserve Belknap's urban canopy, the Belknap Neighborhood Association should establish a committee or Task Force to develop an urban forestry inventory, plan and strategy. Working with Alan Bishop, the Urban Forestry Manager of the City of Louisville Department of Public Works, the Belknap Neighborhood Association shall conduct a thorough evaluation of the trees in the public rights-of-way throughout the neighborhood, and create a plan for their maintenance and eventual replacement. The results, through proper promotion to the neighborhood, could be much greater awareness within the neighborhood of the urban forest and how individual homeowners can better maintain their own trees; coupled with a strategic approach to the care, maintenance, and appropriate replacement of trees standing within the public rights-of-way. Information regarding additional resources available to homeowners, to help them evaluate and maintain their trees, will be disseminated through the neighborhood newsletter.

3.3.2 Urban Canopy Goals:

Recognize fully the value of the neighborhood's trees, in both public and private sites, and protect the healthy and replace the damaged trees.

3.3.3 Recommendations for Urban Canopy:

1. Sponsor a full survey of street trees in the neighborhood, and advise on developing a plan for maintenance and any necessary replacement.
2. Publish a series of articles within the neighborhood newsletter informing home owners and property owners of "best practices" for tree care and maintenance.

3.4 *PARKS AND GREEN SPACE*

There is currently no dedicated public park within the Belknap neighborhood, although Atherton High School, Joe Creason Park, and the Bellarmine University campus and playing fields are immediately nearby. Many residents consider the grounds of the former Belknap Elementary School to be an important component of the neighborhood's green or open space. The 1983 rezoning agreement promised that the site's recreational areas would be available for neighborhood use and the neighborhood has traditionally used the school lawns (see Historic Preservation below).

Within the block bounded by Overlook Terrace, Yale Drive, and Boulevard Napoleon, Belknap resident Hal Warheim has assembled a group of undeveloped parcels for the purpose of creating a contemplative park. Mr. Warheim has commissioned a landscape design for the site, including benches and walking paths, and is prepared to deed the area to a public agency or non-profit organization. However, none of the entities approached have yet indicated a willingness to accept the gift, citing liability and the responsibility for long-term maintenance of a small and relatively inaccessible site.

Because of its location in a natural swale, or valley, the Task Force began exploring the possibility of conveying the entire site to the Metropolitan Sewer District as a drainage easement. Even if MSD were to accept the easement, however, some person or entity other than MSD will need to accept responsibility for maintenance and oversight of the area. The fear expressed by many is that the site will attract loitering or mischief and that excluding such activities will be difficult or impossible if the custodian party is a public entity distant from the site.

One possible response to this concern would be to create a homeowners association composed of the contiguous property owners, and then to deed the property to the association as a semi-private greenspace. Public access to the area would then be governed by rules established by the homeowners, enforceable by their continual presence immediately nearby.

3.4.1 Green Space Goals:

Maintain the green space that is crucial to the neighborhood's character.

3.4.2 Recommendations for Green Space:

Continue to endorse the concept of a passive recreation area and support the transfer of the Warheim property to a public agency, non-profit organization, homeowners association, or other responsible entity, for the creation and custody of a new neighborhood park.

3.5 HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The William R. Belknap School building, located at 1810 Sils Avenue, is one of the Belknap neighborhood's most significant historic sites. It was one of a group of seven schools that were built between 1914 to 1916 and funded by the first million-dollar local bond issue for schools. The design of the building is attributed to J. Earl Henry who was the architect of schools at the time and designed most of the seven school buildings constructed with the funds allocated by the bond issue.

A two-story brick structure on a raised basement, the Belknap School Building is recognized as an outstanding example of the eclectic styles popular during the early 20th century. Its applied decoration, perhaps of unglazed terra cotta, is especially remarkable, and includes Classical and allegorical motifs as well as Sullivan-esque foliate designs and geometric elements suggesting the influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Its polygonal smokestack is ornamented with some of the same elements found on the main structure. The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in August 1982.



*View of historic Belknap
School building*

The building functioned as a neighborhood school from its opening day in September 1916 until it was closed in 1978. It stood vacant until it was rezoned OR-3 in 1983 for use as an office building. The zoning agreement stipulated that the site would remain available for use by the neighborhood, and thus the building was used initially as a meeting space for the Belknap Neighborhood Association, and residents have continued to use its grounds as a recreational resource. The site's function as a symbol of Belknap Neighborhood was made explicit when the Belknap Neighborhood Association adopted a geometric motif from the building's terra cotta decoration as its logo in 1995.

There have been continuing attempts to develop the site further since the building ceased functioning as a school. At one point there was a move to develop condominiums along the Wrocklage Avenue side of the property and, in late in 1999, the building's owner proposed constructing another office building on the site. Both proposals for additional buildings on the property were dropped.

In the fall of 1999, residents of the neighborhood opposed the erection of a cellular phone antenna tower on the school's smokestack. The Kentucky Heritage Council agreed that the tower negatively affected the National Register-listed structure. The Heritage Council ordered Tritel Communications, the company that had leased the smokestack for the tower, to replace the visually incompatible structure with one that would be more in keeping with the building's historic significance. The company complied with the order, and subsequently designed an antenna consisting of three rectangular plates attached to the side of the smokestack and which are painted to blend in with the color of the brick.

Further development of the property should be designed in ways that will not adversely affect this important historic building. In light of the school's architectural significance, which is acknowledged by its National Register listing, and its central role in the life and history of Belknap Neighborhood, the Task Force has concluded that local landmark designation is needed preserve this historic site by providing design review for future development. The Task Force supports the Belknap Neighborhood Association's participation in a petition to have the William R. Belknap School site designated as a local landmark.

3.5.1 Historic Preservation Goals:

Protect and promote the neighborhood's historic architecture and associated resources.

3.5.2 Recommendations for Historic Preservation:

Obtain local landmark status for Belknap Elementary School building and grounds and continue the use of the site as a recreational resource².

²Binding Elements of the rezoning ordinance are incorporated by reference

3.6 VEHICULAR TRAFFIC PATTERNS

The Belknap neighborhood is well-served by a network and hierarchy of thoroughfares and local streets – from major arteries such as Bardstown and Newburg roads to connectors and collectors such as Trevilian Way and Douglass Boulevard and the network of lesser streets that serve as the basic framework of the residential subdivision. These latter streets combine a traditional rectilinear street grid in and around the Belknap School with a curvilinear street pattern conforming to the hills and valleys that compose the bulk of the area’s original topography.



View of the intersection of Bardstown Road, Taylorsville Road, and Trevilian Way.

The Task Force cited few concerns over current traffic patterns within the neighborhood. The Task Force did, however, acknowledge hazardous conditions created by access to and egress from the larger retail businesses standing along Bardstown Road between Wrocklage and Trevilian Way. Furthermore, members of the Task Force expressed the desire for a left-turn signal governing eastbound traffic on Trevilian turning north (left) onto Bardstown Road. The Task Force also cited the need to safely connect both sides of Bardstown Road to pedestrian access.

The Task Force cited the persistent problem of speeding on Trevilian and Dundee and “cut-through” traffic on residential streets such as Valley Vista, Fleming, and Lakeside. While there are those who claim that the speeding can be reduced only through police enforcement; the Task Force recommends the installation of a traffic calming device at the intersection of Woodbourne, Page, Dundee and Overlook streets.

The Task Force observed that a short segment of Overlook Terrace between Dundee and Boulevard Napoleon has long been unpaved and blocked by a guard rail, making passage from one street to the next impossible. The Task Force recommends maintaining these barriers to eliminate through traffic.



View of the intersection of Woodbourne, Page, Dundee and Overlook streets.

Dundee Road from Douglass Boulevard to Emerson Avenue is the only identified shared road bicycle route located in the Belknap neighborhood. The Task Force recommends that a study be conducted that evaluates the feasibility of other neighborhood streets for bicycle transportation. Such a study would promote the use of alternative transportation within the neighborhood and between city neighborhoods.

3.6.1 Transportation Goals:

- A. Ensure accessibility into and out of the neighborhood, while maintaining the neighborhood's peaceful, pedestrian-friendly character.
- B. Discourage any plan that would deflect commercial traffic back into the residential section of the neighborhood.

3.6.2 Recommendations for Transportation:

1. Work with the Louisville Police Department to develop a community-oriented plan intended to reduce speeding through the neighborhood.
2. Advocate the use of well-designed and appropriate traffic calming devices at appropriate locations.
3. Urge the Board of Aldermen and the Department of Public Works to keep Overlook Terrace closed to through traffic between Dundee and Boulevard Napoleon.
4. Encourage a traffic charrette to address a variety of traffic problems in the neighborhood.
5. Advocate more frequent street cleaning of Bardstown Road to make it safer and more functional for bicyclists.
6. Encourage a study of bicycle routes through the neighborhood so further improvements in design and maintenance can be recommended.

7. Request a traffic study of the Bardstown Road, Trevilian Way – Taylorsville Road intersection for consideration of signalization changes favoring left turns to Bardstown Road from Trevilian Way.

3.7 STORMWATER DRAINAGE

In spite of the relatively steep hillsides common throughout the neighborhood, the Task Force cited very few deficiencies with respect to erosion or storm water runoff. To guard against such in the future, the Neighborhood Association is encouraged to publish regularly a “hot line” number through which neighbors can notify the City of Louisville, the Board of Aldermen, and the Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) of any persistent runoff problems. Through this point of contact, citizens can alert the appropriate public agencies of problems that need to be corrected either through minor repair of an obstructed system or through a major project funded as part of the City’s annual capital improvement program. Otherwise, MSD has a clear system to deal with customer-reported drainage problems, with reporting possible by phone and the Internet. Often, videotaping the drainage problem as it is occurring (i.e. as the rain is falling and water pools or runs inappropriately) is very useful to MSD. The Belknap Neighborhood Association will facilitate such observation and reporting to MSD through newsletter reminders and reminders at regular association meetings.



View of the Kroger access easement, another site of drainage problems

MSD does plan to complete one major drainage improvement and undertake another in the next five years. A project to resolve drainage problems down the hillside behind 1735 Fleming will catch some of the water that comes down that hill and runs behind all the houses in that block. This project will go into the design process soon (in the 2000-2001 Fiscal Year, beginning July 1, 2000). In another 2 or 3 years, a similar project will improve runoff drainage along Fleming, Gresham and Dundee.

Another drainage problem, previously cited, occurs in the access easement behind Kroger, where water pools at the lowest point. After Kroger completes renovation, this spot is likely to become even busier, which will make such a problem more pressing. MSD should monitor this site and situation for new or recurring drainage problems.

3.7.1 Stormwater Drainage Goals:

Ensure the maintenance of an effective storm water drainage system throughout the neighborhood.

3.7.2 Recommendations for Stormwater Drainage:

1. Promote, through neighborhood newsletter, the established system for reporting stormwater drainage problems to the Metropolitan Sewer District and to the City of Louisville.
2. Encourage the appropriate public agencies to examine and to resolve possible drainage problems within the trough of the alley behind CVS Pharmacy.