

FORT THOMAS COMMUNITY PLAN SWOT ANALYSIS				
Chapter 1: Land Use and Zoning				
Category	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
	Existing, Internal, and Positive factors	Existing, Internal, and Negative factors	Future, External, and Positive factors the City may seek to capitalize	Future, External, and Negative factors the City may seek to minimize
General Land Use/Community Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to the major freeways and Cincinnati creates a demand for development in Fort Thomas.</li> <li>• Business districts</li> <li>• Scale of development</li> <li>• Safe neighborhoods</li> <li>• Ft Thomas schools attract families</li> <li>• Greenbelt and parks</li> <li>• Streetscape/street trees provide ambiance and character</li> <li>• Low crime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fort Thomas is landlocked/ surrounded by other cities and the river</li> <li>• Gateway districts and entry corridors aren't as good as they could be</li> <li>• Major gateway routes don't connect to business districts</li> <li>• Streetscapes aren't strong city-wide</li> <li>• Haphazard mix of housing styles/unit types in some places</li> <li>• Lack of riverfront use/connection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ohio River forms a very strong boundary for the city</li> <li>• Improve the streetscapes where needed</li> <li>• Add more trees (continue Tree Commission's activities)</li> <li>• Improve entry corridors</li> <li>• Better bike access</li> <li>• If reservoirs are again opened for recreation, could be a focal point/amenity for surrounding parcels - would need to determine impact on surrounding area</li> <li>• Investigate establishing federally designated historic districts (which does not obligate preservation, but provides eligibility for historic tax credits)</li> <li>• Keep residents/businesses informed about the planning issues being discussed</li> <li>• Be sure to get community buy-in on major changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big threat - doing nothing. Our neighboring cities are developing and redeveloping</li> <li>• Most people are wary of change – Citizen awareness and acceptance is paramount to success</li> </ul>
Vacant Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hillside greenbelt</li> <li>• Community values the green space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of vacant land for future development</li> <li>• Because most of Fort Thomas' developable land is fully "built out", most vacant land is on steep slopes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undeveloped parcels with views to downtown Cincinnati; Consider zoning that would allow high rise condos to take advantage of views, with significant amount of required open space</li> <li>• Could be used to provide connectors and trails</li> <li>• Develop along Alexandria Pike (27) near DEP</li> <li>• Make reservoirs more attractive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development pressures may lead to developers trying to develop on steep slopes</li> <li>• The use of flag lots increases the potential for developing narrow lots or lots impacted by steep slopes</li> </ul>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen zoning to preserve green space</li> <li>Encourage conservation easements</li> <li>Be strategic about redevelopment to reduce pressure to develop green space</li> </ul>	
Housing/ Neighborhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing stock remains attractive, and has retained its value</li> <li>Historic homes</li> <li>Good location; Proximity to Cincinnati</li> <li>Quaint character</li> <li>Bedroom community</li> <li>Topography - ridges and valleys creates distinct neighborhoods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need a balance of multi-family units in appropriate locations</li> <li>Lack of yard maintenance in some areas</li> <li>Lack of transitional housing for seniors, especially near business district. Long-term residents want to downsize and can't find a place in FT</li> <li>Perceived lack of affordable/starter housing for the next generation of homebuyers - youth go to Newport</li> <li>Age of housing: Older housing stock requires \$\$ maintenance</li> <li>Questions about code enforcement</li> <li>Home prices are high</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage infill housing that is compatible with the neighborhood</li> <li>Encourage landscaping</li> <li>Encourage higher density housing in business districts</li> <li>Some areas are ripe for redevelopment - need to identify these areas</li> <li>Redevelop multi-family housing to meet zoning and character of surrounding neighborhood</li> <li>Look for additional options for code enforcement</li> <li>Create a form-based code that describes the design requirements for row houses, townhomes, etc.</li> <li>Provide incentives to homeowners to invest in housing</li> <li>Investigate potential for establishing historic districts (such as Sargeant Ave neighborhood) that would provide eligibility for historic tax credits</li> <li>Determine where single-family home rentals are concentrated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aging homes and size of units do not meet current needs</li> <li>Absentee landlords and rental units that are not maintained</li> <li>Difficulty in preserving smaller older homes</li> </ul>

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General Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City has an economic development director</li> <li>City has assisted/facilitated development projects and parking improvements in the past</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited vacant land to attract “greenfield” economic development</li> <li>City does not currently provide tax incentives</li> <li>Some business districts seem to have higher priority for improvements than others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a development committee that would be proactive about economic development</li> <li>Identify the types of businesses that are/ will be suitable for local business districts and resilient to changing retail environment</li> <li>Provide financial incentives to attract economic development and small businesses to FT</li> <li>Evaluate whether or not truck rentals are a desirable use in the City</li> <li>Attract high-tech businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rent/lease rates too high in general</li> <li>Lack of parking (real or perceived)</li> <li>Changing nature of retail, banking and other services that could cause vacancies in business districts</li> </ul>
<b>Commercial Business Districts</b>				
Central Business District (zoned CBD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High level of pedestrian activity, and pedestrian scale with excellent orientation and access to surrounding neighborhoods</li> <li>Local business base with fairly strong physical identity</li> <li>Not connected to a major highway</li> <li>Small scale, highly walkable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not enough parking</li> <li>Not connected to a major highway</li> <li>Layout and types of buildings (i.e. former homes with large setbacks from street) are not conducive to a thriving business district</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historically significant to development of Fort Thomas</li> <li>Bring back green line; or consider some type of shuttle service, especially for seniors, to improve access and connectivity</li> <li>Mixed-uses/housing</li> <li>Need a street crossing identifier</li> <li>Consider offering façade improvement grants</li> <li>Redevelopment opportunity if school board relocates to 20 Grand</li> <li>Redevelop to create more leasable square footage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doing nothing while our neighboring cities are reinventing their CBD's</li> <li>The bus system (TANK) is cutting routes</li> </ul>
Midway Business District (zoned CBD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High level of pedestrian activity, and pedestrian scale with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visual intrusion of overhead utility lines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historically significant to development of Fort Thomas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking constraints</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>excellent orientation and access to surrounding neighborhoods</li> <li>Local business base with fairly strong physical identity</li> <li>Midway is becoming a vibrant, hip area to be for younger people that enjoy the "bar scene"</li> <li>Streetscape improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of strong urban "core"</li> <li>Aging run-down housing behind CBD, and between businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher density housing potential for young and older householders</li> <li>Need a street crossing identifier</li> <li>Continue to build on momentum - gain control of low income housing and return to mixed use, business on first floor, housing on upper floors</li> <li>Investigate/identify parcels that are ripe for redevelopment</li> </ul>	
Inverness Business District (zoned GC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High level of pedestrian activity, and pedestrian scale with excellent orientation and access to surrounding neighborhoods</li> <li>Local business base with fairly strong physical identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multi-family along Memorial Parkway</li> <li>Larger buildings are "tired" looking, in need of a facelift</li> <li>Backside of buildings facing Memorial very unattractive</li> <li>Pedestrians walking from 915 to cars parked in center of street - hazardous at times</li> <li>Unattractive freestanding aluminum signs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historically significant to development of Fort Thomas</li> <li>Need a street crossing identifier</li> <li>Rehab the Balloons Across the River building, attract exciting biz in corner space</li> <li>Consider rezoning to the CBD district</li> <li>Redesign parking spaces located in the center of N Fort Thomas Ave right-of-way</li> <li>Improve look of "little barns"</li> <li>Use landscaping to screen the backs of buildings that are visible from Memorial Parkway</li> </ul>	
Grand/Highland business area (zoned GC & PO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pocket park and BP - attractive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mechanic shop very unattractive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvements to 20 Grand (underway)</li> <li>If school board relocates to 20 Grand, leaves CBD building available for new tenant or redevelopment</li> </ul>	
<b>Major Corridors/ Gateways</b>				
Grand Ave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major gateway to the community</li> <li>Green belt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traffic travels at high rate of speed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large sections zoned R-3; allows multi-family</li> </ul>	

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change Grand Ave roadway</li> <li>• Potential for bike path / multi-modal transportation</li> </ul>	
Memorial Parkway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major gateway to the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic travels at high rate of speed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undeveloped parcels with views to downtown Cincinnati; Consider zoning that would allow high rise condos to take advantage of views, with significant amount of required open space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effect of Wessels apartment development have yet to be felt - good for city? Bad for schools?</li> </ul>
Alexandria Pike corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major gateway to the community</li> <li>• Exit from I-471</li> <li>• High visibility/good access except for narrow bike paths, 2 large and confusing center turn lane and instructions for same. e.g. Going northbound on 27, the turn directions painted on the highway if followed would prevent you from turning left into St. Stephens Cemetery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too narrow for bike path</li> <li>• Large and confusing intersections</li> <li>• Poor street signage</li> <li>• Unsightly vehicle repair &amp; leasing businesses</li> <li>• Poor streetscape appearance</li> <li>• Fort Thomas plaza</li> <li>• Decline in quality of businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make into a gateway, improve visual character</li> <li>• Adequate space for new development and redevelopment on Alexandria Pike</li> <li>• Potential connection to CBD and Midway</li> <li>• Beautify gateway at south end of corridor</li> <li>• Tear down and build high rise condos</li> <li>• 70+ acres from 471 to Blossom (former Beverly Hills) may be available for development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern about increase of visible commercial activity.</li> <li>• Traffic volumes are reduced and the street is no longer a major corridor due to I-471</li> </ul>
Highland Ave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major gateway into the community</li> <li>• High visibility and good access</li> <li>• Connects CDB to interstate, though route is circuitous</li> <li>• Primarily a residential street</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual intrusion of overhead utility lines</li> <li>• Primarily a residential street</li> </ul>		

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Current zoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Averaging provision in code helps preserves character of existing neighborhoods when new infill housing is constructed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large majority of existing houses/lots are nonconforming in at least one way (area, setback, height, narrow lot)</li> <li>• Complaints from Airbnb houses - parking and noise issues</li> <li>• Bed and breakfast establishments are not currently permitted - and therefore not regulated</li> <li>• Flag lots have been an issue and the city has tried to address by revising the code</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add more flexibility in the range of uses permitted in business districts (while ensuring their compatibility)</li> <li>• Consider more form-based and performance-based regulations</li> <li>• Enhance/ expand design review</li> <li>• Review sign regulations - address allowance for illuminated signs in business districts and window signs for 2nd floor businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current zoning and decision making practices in CDB may make it difficult to attract and retain businesses</li> </ul>