



Minutes of the Oberlin City Council Work Session

Held on Tuesday, September 4, 2012

6:00 p.m.

A work session was called to order at 6:00 p.m. President Rimbert explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the future plans for the Green Acres site.

Council heard a report from Planning & Development Director Gary Boyle regarding possible development options for the former Green Acres site. He began the discussion with a general overview of a study completed by North Star Planning and Design consultant Mark Majewski. The scope of the study was to complete a site analysis of the location to determine potential reuse alternatives. The analysis covered a wide array of topics including:

- A description of the general site conditions.
- Explanation of potential land uses of the site.
- A review of the existing land use including utilities and other infrastructure.
- Adherence to Oberlin's Comprehensive Plan.
- Overview of the Zoning Classification of the site and its surroundings.
- Conceptual goal to acquire land for recreational use as outlined in Oberlin Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan. (He noted this aspect was a popular choice among the public)

Boyle remarked that given the information revealed by the analysis as well as the condition of the site location (which didn't present any real physical limitations on its future use) efforts were then directed to making the determination on what would be the best way to use the site. Several alternatives were presented:

- ALT1: North Park and Residential.
- ALT2: South Park and Residential.
- ALT3: South Park and Office/Industrial Campus.
- ALT4: New Commercial Area, Neighborhood Park, and Residential Subdivision.

An April open house was hosted by the Planning and Development Department with the goal to receive public input on suggested land use. Most public responses were in favor of the single family residential and park use on the property while the least favored choices were for industrial and commercial use.

Boyle stated that recreational park areas were emphasized in the alternatives due to the results of the City's Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan which had identified this portion of the City as being deficient when it came to National Park Standards. He recalled this being one of the reasons why staff initially felt it was important to acquire the land. For this reason the different scenarios presented were intended to address some sort of open space/park issues; how it is defined, what its size and shape are, are all subject to further discussion.

Boyle noted that the April 10th open house was very well attended. Summary information had been provided to the public at that time which resulted in Council's request for a work session.

Action items to be obtained with tonight's discussion included receiving clear direction to hear how Council would like to proceed with possible redevelopment of the proposed site.

Following comments the presenter entertained questions and comments from Council and the public.

Soucy remarked that one of the challenges as they move forward is to come up with solid guidelines that offer some flexibility to developers so that we don't limit the types of development opportunities that may present themselves.

Boyle concurred and expressed that the Planning Commission felt it was important to remain flexible when considering the options available but in the meantime set some general parameters as to what they would like to see happen.

Gerry Rhodes, 65 E. College Street felt that a recreation center in the space would compliment goals of the City to adhere to National Park Standards. The City has consistently supported sustainable practices in bringing debilitated buildings back to its original use. This can be seen with the reuse of the Union School, the Peoples Bank, and the Apollo Theater. A recreation center would come as close as possible to the original use of the Green Acres site. She suggested that the City not take a defeated stance and give up before trying and reconsider that site for a future recreation center.

Shirley R. Johnson, West College Street asked if the April open house meeting was represented by a cross-section of people or if the people who attended the meeting were mainly residents surrounding the project area and College representatives. Norenberg remarked that the public meeting was attended by people from across the community. Notice was mailed to all property owners within 500 feet of the Green Acres property, notice of the meeting was announced at a City Council meeting, and the Oberlin News Tribune published information in advance of the meeting.

Bryan Stubbs, Managing Director of the Oberlin Project, expressed sentiments from the Clinton Climate Initiative consistent with the MOU previously adopted this year. A prepared statement was read into the record as follows:

The Climate Positive Development Program was created to meet the dual challenge of urbanization and climate change. The Network, which Oberlin is a member of, aims to create a model for urban communities that reduce greenhouse gasses and serve as urban laboratories for cities seeking to grow in ways that are environmentally sustainable and economically viable. Guided by the "climate positive" framework, the network supports the development projects that seek to meet a "climate positive" emissions target of net-negative on-site, operational greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. This "climate positive" outcome is achieved by reducing emissions on-site and offsetting emissions in the surrounding community.

The program is actively encouraging greater collaboration between "climate positive" projects and their government partners, as they work to implement and pilot new policies that facilitate and enable the development of highly efficiency buildings, so that all participants in the Climate Positive Development Program (CPDP) can learn from their experiences. Oberlin and every Climate Positive Development program project, has a unique profile, given its distinct economic, political, climate challenges, yet each is striving for the ambitious goal of lowering their operational GHG emissions below zero. Development Partners accepted the CPDP are expected to pursue the integrated planning of energy efficient buildings, low carbon transportation solutions, and waste and water management systems at the district scale. There are many different paths to the Climate Positive outcome of net-negative operational GHG emissions. Each project will use a different set of strategies and technologies according to its local opportunities.

Because there is no singular path to achieving a Climate Positive outcome, and because projects of this size may take decades to complete, the framework provides a broad structure under which development partners can work

on creative solutions to emissions reductions and adapt strategies as needed over time. Identifying opportunities to pilot and test an RFP that encourages developers to embrace energy positive homes through a discounted purchase rate for the property – to set the example of how future homes will be built is exactly in line with the aspirations of the program.

Stubbs noted that from a City revenue perspective, the last residential development in Oberlin built with an eye on high road energy principles, has had an enormous positive impact on the City's bottom line which has created a return over five times what the previous property values were getting in an annuity component. It was further noted that many building's will be built in an efficient manner over the next 15 years; what Oberlin does best is make history and within this development they did have a potential to develop energy positive homes that will be the setting for all homes in this country.

Carl McDaniels, 495 East College Street thanked City Council for having this open comment session on the Green Acres property. A prepared statement was read into the record:

Many possibilities exist for how to use Green Acres. My statement accepts the input from earlier discussions that residential will likely be the major use along with some recreational elements.

Oberlin City is committed to creating an economically and environmentally sustainable community, in particular to become a "climate positive" community in conjunction with Oberlin College. New and existing buildings are an integral part of these goals. The Green Acres Development provides a golden opportunity for the City of Oberlin to create a development that stimulates economic activity and provides a model for a new "eco" zone designation for development of high-performance, affordable housing that meets the varied needs for future housing in Oberlin; that is, housing affordable to the range of incomes found in Oberlin. This model, if done well, will raise the bar for all new development in Oberlin and provide a valuable example for other communities.

We do not have in Oberlin at this time the expertise that can provide us (City Council and citizens) with the full range of possibilities for the Green Acres Development. To truly take advantage of the Green Acres Development, the City will need to take time to discover the exceptional possibilities for creating a mix of housing sizes and costs that Oberlin can support. We also need to discover the design possibilities:

1. for the design that will reduce to the greatest degree possible the materials and costs for the development's infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, electrical, ground source heat pumps for heating and cooling, storm water management, etc.) and its future maintenance, and
2. for the number of houses, type of houses (stand alone, duplex, etc), sizes, and their relationship to each other to create an aesthetically pleasing development in which all homes can by design run on solar energy.

The challenge before Oberlin at Green Acres is getting the design right for the goals we seek to achieve. I encourage City Council to consider carefully the two major design issues stated above (housing needs in Oberlin and development design) and provide funds to hire accomplished experts to provide Oberlin with the input needed to understand the possibilities for Green Acres.

David Sonner, 107 Groveland Street read a prepared statement into the record:

My first purpose in speaking is to praise Council for its earlier decision to purchase the Green Acres property. That decision gives the Oberlin community the best possible circumstance to realize the maximum benefit from this community asset; the best possible opportunity to combine the short-term goal of recovering the City's investment with the long-term goals and commitment to achieve an economically prosperous and environmentally sustainable Oberlin. I see three possible outcomes for the Green Acres property:

1. The entire 15 acres can remain as an open space, park and play ground.
2. The worst outcome would be to use the entire lot for housing and/or commercial use.
3. The best outcome, would be a carefully – wrought combination of parkland and housing development.

The combination of some housing, with the balance to remain as public parkland, offers the best reach for maximum benefit. In the past Oberlin, has had several deficiencies in housing types and availability. The most severe deficiency, in my observation, one that distorts and damages our community (economically and sociologically), is Affordable Housing; that is, the lack of it.

The Green Acres housing development that I advocate, whether housing for rent or for purchase, would include, as mandated and incentivized by the design and development requirements of the City, a substantial element of Affordable Housing.

He felt certain, and encouraged thereby, that City Council and the City administration, understand that to identify the best way to realize the maximum benefit from this opportunity, a careful thoughtful and thorough process is necessary.

David Lazcko, 525 East College Street said he would encourage the City to continue public meetings and have public input taken seriously by members of Council. He also expressed concern that the property not be turned over to a developer. He felt the City should retain some public use on this property.

Tony Mealy, 328 South Professor Street noted various amenities on the Green Acres site that can be used to accommodate recreational activities; the site had playgrounds on the location with three basketball courts, a volleyball court, baseball diamond, and soccer fields. When the 15 acres lot came up for sale he viewed it as a valuable piece of property and supported Council's purchase of it. He assumed that the last Council had a plan for the site, but much like the seated Council, they didn't. He remarked that he was on the 2006-2007 City Council when it adopted the ordinance to participate in the Clinton Climate Initiative program to build a sustainable community. He felt that if Council really wanted to do something about sustainability then they would have reused the building on the site for a good purpose: like recreation or City offices. On the other hand if Council didn't have a plan for the location and wanted to do residential development then Council shouldn't have touched it at all. Council should have left it on the market and allowed a developer to buy it and make good use of the facility, that way it could have gone on the tax roll immediately and it wouldn't just sit there year after year until a decision was made, like the 32 acres the City purchased across the street on Oberlin road. He suggested that the City consider light industrial with some residential development or consider maintaining the site as a recreational area for Oberlin's youth, which was the initial intent of the property housed an orphanage.

Rimbert announced that Burgess was speaking as a citizen and not on behalf of Council.

Burgess said his goal for this evening was to further the discussion that was started back in April. The presentation was not to present a plan that he was pushing for, it was simply representing the ideas that he had heard at the open house. First and foremost the general consensus of those discussions held, were to eliminate the idea of there being any commercial development on the parcel. Those in attendance were in support of the site being used for future residential and recreation use. He followed remarks by reviewing several conceptual drawings outlining potential land uses of the site. In closing he suggested holding more planning sessions in the future like the one held at the Depot and hoped that Council would be open to doing this as early as October in order to continue conversations about redevelopment options. (Memo pertaining to presentation and site plans attached).

Casey Gilfether, North Pleasant Street said that he has extensive experience in the development and housing sector and the concept of energy positive development is exciting to him. He remarked that when the housing market fully recovers, in the next 10 to 15 years, houses would be energy positive in design and function. He

supported earlier statements from Carl McDaniel that choosing the right developer will be a key component in making this a successful endeavor. He encouraged the City to seek professional design assistance for its concepts in order to ensure that the future housing will be as energy efficient as possible and that the overall project design will be a community asset.

Meadows said she is thankful for the public input that has been provided tonight as well as at the open house last April. The richness of the Oberlin community is the fact that Council does solicit feedback from the public and listens. She was glad that Council had not made the decision to redevelop this property without the public being involved. In addition she agreed that more meetings should be schedule in order to better define the approach to redeveloping this property. She was confident that they will come up with a plan that most people in the community would be able to support.

Soucy asked Mr. Gilfether if he were aware of there being any developments featuring energy-efficient design within 50 miles or so of Oberlin that could be visited. Gilfether replied that to his knowledge there wasn't anything of the caliber that is being discussed tonight. He suggested that Council members visit the McDaniels' house or visit the energy positive home recently built in Cleveland Heights. It was noted that in the earlier stages of development the key for passive solar to work is the orientation of the buildings that are being raised on the site.

Soucy indicated that some commercial development along East Lorain Street may be appropriate. NACS has been such a wonderful piece of the Oberlin community, her thought is that if NACS should need to expand, she would like to be able to provide them with some land rather than have them leave town. She felt that the City could find some combination of land uses that wouldn't be offensive to have an organization like NACS directly across the street from it. She thought that the City should not limit its options.

Broadwell commented that after much thought, he is of the opinion that commercial development may not be desirable along East Lorain Street as there was already plenty of vacant space for such uses. He supported keeping all options open but he was more inclined to do some sort of planned development with a well thought out park space.

McDaniel said that he talked to Joseph Ferut a local architect in Elyria. He is an instructor at Kent State University's architectural program and has a senior design class that would be willing to consider options for the City if it is interested.

Norenberg said he had made contact with a few developers interested in green building projects and consultant Mark Majewski has suggested other potential names. In addition he has been in close contact with the president of NACS and it does not have any future space needs at this time. NACS acquired a building in Westlake at a favorable price due to the depressed commercial market for less than what it would cost to build new. The City had made an attractive offer of space in the Research and Commerce Park but we could not compete with the offer they received. The door is somewhat still open as to whether this lot will fit current or future need for NACS, but he hadn't heard anything lately.

Mucciolo asked what things may be attractive to increase developer interest in a green building project? Norneberg remarked that Oberlin offers a pedestrian-friendly, attractive environment which may be of interest to a developer pursuing an energy- efficient development. Oberlin also offers many amenities and quality-of-life aspects, social services, etc. Mucciolo asked if any developers expressed an interest or ability to construct a mixed income project? Norenberg said that level of detail has not been discussed to date.

Mealy, 328 S. Professor Street said there were several residential development lots that were still vacant in Oberlin. It was his opinion that residential development wasn't the highest and best use for this property. He listed several failed projects stating that the City continued to lose tax dollars by not pursuing non-residential development.

Stubbs said the former Green Acres lot is a "gateway" to the community. He noted that other land is available for commercial development. He felt that they were faced with an opportunity to draw a strong line in the sand outlining where industrial space and residential space should be developed.

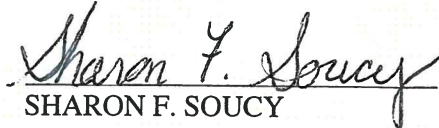
Rimbert remarked that the discussion concerning the Green Acres site remained open. He urged members of the public to feel free to express their opinions about the project anytime. Being that there was no additional business coming before Council, the meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

Attest:



BELINDA B. ANDERSON, CMC
CLERK OF COUNCIL

APPROVED: 09/17/2012



SHARON F. SOUCY
ACTING VICE PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL

POSTED: 09/18/2012

TO: Ronnie Rimbart, City Council President
City Council Members

FROM: Bryan Burgess, Council Member

RE: Green Acres Sample Site Plans

DATE: September 2nd, 2012

In April 2012, a community open house was held to discuss future plans for the Green Acres site. A planning consultant, Northstar Planning + Design, presented conceptual redevelopment schemes to incorporate commercial, residential, and recreational use of the property. The four scenarios outlined in this initial study were very general in nature but were useful in soliciting feedback from the public. In short, residents were not in favor of any commercial development on the Green Acres site. The five sample site plans I have prepared consider only residential and recreational use.

There are a number of common design elements between each sample site plan. First and foremost, only the construction of high-performance homes which incorporate “green” design principles will be allowed. Features such as southern orientation for passive solar heating, geothermal heating & cooling, high insulation R-values, and natural daylighting will ensure that these homes are inherently energy efficient and have operating costs far lower than the average house. Neighborhood design features such as short front setbacks, wide front porches, immediate proximity to park space, and separation from busy thoroughfares (Oberlin Rd. and Lorain St.) ensure that this will maintain a quiet residential atmosphere that facilitates a sense of community. Secondly, this project must strive to provide homes for all income levels and all age groups. Unique and varied homes, large and small, are the hallmark of Oberlin's long-established inter-generational neighborhoods. Green Acres is a golden opportunity to expand upon the best neighborhood design features of Oberlin.

Other common design elements include:

- Raised earthen berm along Lorain St. to visually and acoustically shield the neighborhood from the busy street and industrial park.
- Continued use of the existing garage
- Single-family residential homes continued along College St.
- Single-family, duplex, and multi-unit condos envisioned
- equal access for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles

Scenarios

#1 Horseshoe

A new street is installed running North/South between College and Lorain providing access. All interior lots are accessed via the central “U” street surrounding the park. The short eastern street ties the “U” into Oberlin Rd. and would provide easier access to common parking for the multi-unit lots. Most houses are oriented facing the park across the street.

#2 East to North Arc

A new street is installed between Oberlin Rd. and Lorain St. providing interior access. The very large park remains accessible to the existing homes along Oberlin Rd. A dedicated walk/bikeway is essential to tie the park and central lots into E. College St. Most houses are oriented facing the park across the street.

#3 "T" Streets

A new residential street is installed running North/South between College and Lorain providing both access to lots along the northern edge of the property and a new street installed East/West which ties into Oberlin Rd. Most houses are oriented with the park in their back yards.

#4 South to North Traditional

A new residential street is installed running North/South between College and Lorain. This design runs parallel to Orchard St. and would continue the traditional street grid. A very large amount of park land would be available.

#5 East to North Arc with Park Housing

A new residential street is installed between Oberlin Rd. and Lorain St. providing interior access. The northern lots would be multi-unit condos or apartments accessed by a common drive and parking parallel to Lorain St. The multi-unit homes would front onto the park and a walk/bikeway which ties the neighborhood into E. College St.

Conclusion

I believe the redevelopment of Green Acres should showcase our commitment to being a climate positive community. These various scenarios are offered as examples in order to further refine our expectations for this site. Further planning should be guided by a market analysis to determine housing market demand for various housing types. A request for qualifications (RFQ) should be solicited from interested real estate consultants and architects prior to any further professional analyses. I urge City Council to commit funds for a market study and a more detailed, professional site plan in the City's 2013 Budget.







E. College St.

E. Lorain St.



Google earth

21 1-Unit Lots
6 2-Unit Lots

75' x 150'

75' x 175'

raised berm

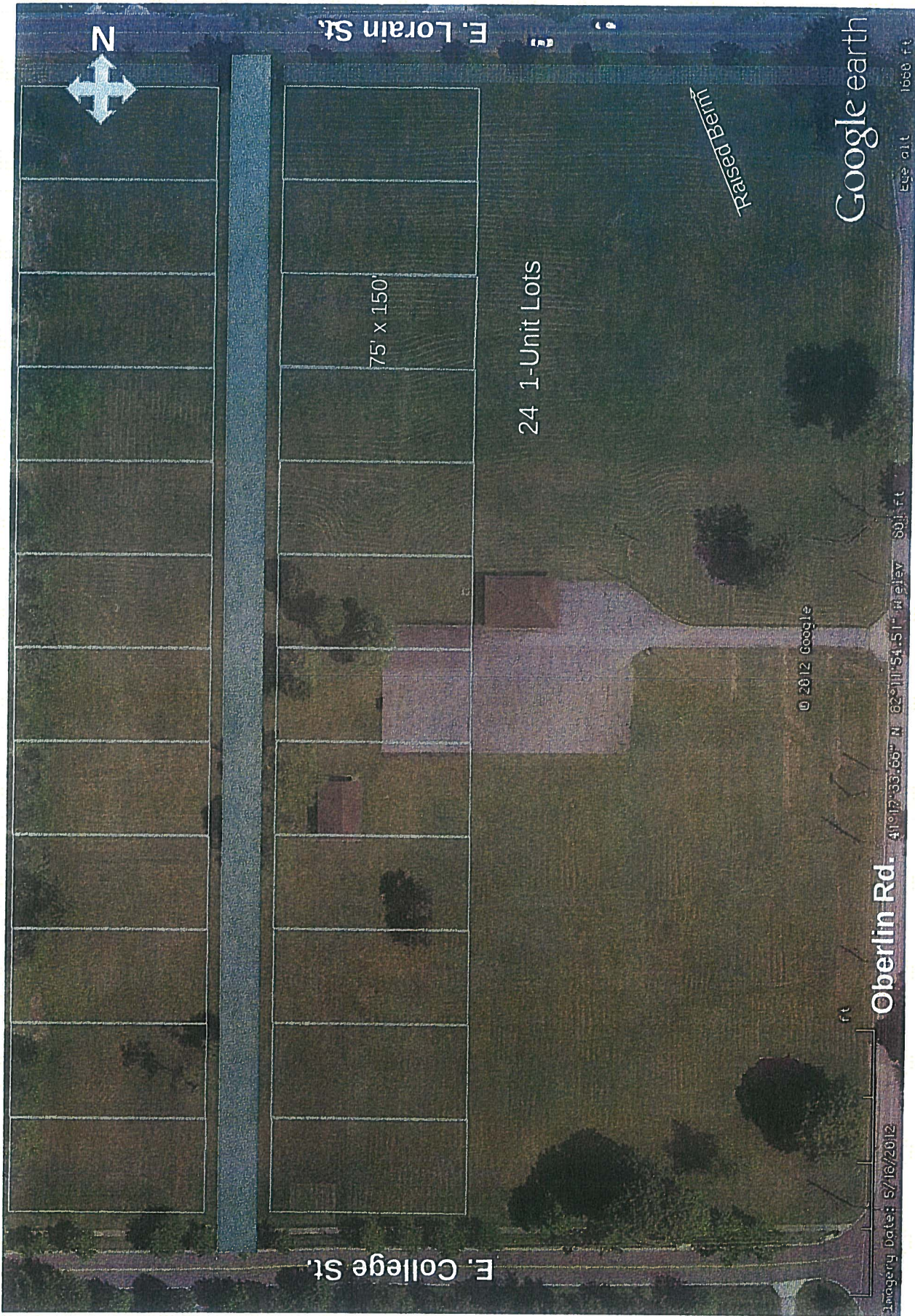
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Oberlin Rd.

Imagery Date: 5/18/2012

41°12'33.66" N 82°11'54.51" W elev 501 ft

Eye alt 1550 ft





E. College St.

Oberlin Rd.

E. Lorain St.

Pedestrian / Bike Way

Pedestrian / Bike Way

Raised Berth

22 1-Unit Lots
2 2-Unit Lots
4 Multi-Unit Lots

75' x 200'

75' x 125'

200 ft

Google earth

Eye alt 1050 ft

Imagery Date: 5/15/2012

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41°17'33.66" N 82°11'54.51" W Elev 501 ft