



City of Shaker Heights

LEE ROAD ACTION PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



SHAKER
HEIGHTS

March 21, 2023

Prepared by





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Shaker Heights has developed a visionary reinvestment plan for the Lee Road commercial corridor. Under the City's Lee Road Action Plan, the ¾-mile Lee Road corridor south of Van Aken Boulevard will be transformed into a thriving commercial district that is attractive, walkable, and bikeable.

Development of the Lee Road Action Plan, its conclusions, and recommendations are based on a collaborative effort of City leaders, residents, businesses, and regional representatives. It reflects considerations of transportation, urban design, land use, and economic development.

The desired outcomes and community benefits are:

- Raising the quality, character, and design of the commercial area to match the level of Shaker's residential neighborhoods
- Creating opportunities for future economic development, including improving the business experience, creating jobs, and increasing the tax base
- Establishing positive perceptions about the commercial district
- Improving automobile travel, bicycle infrastructure, and pedestrian access, safety, and comfort
- Bettering access to and from businesses (defined as access management)
- Renovating the streetscape according to a comprehensive plan
- Connecting to adjacent residential neighborhoods and transit hubs
- Providing opportunities to collaborate with the city of Cleveland where business districts connect



Background, Purpose & Goals

As a first step in drafting the Lee Road Action Plan, residents, businesses, and property owners collaborated with the City in identifying a vision and goals for the district.

VISION

The City of Shaker Heights, in partnership with the community, envisions a Lee Road commercial district that is commercially vibrant, aesthetically attractive, equitable, sustainable, safe, connected, and accessible to all. Successfully integrate transportation, land use, economic development and an engaged community in development of the District.

GOALS

- Reimagine Lee Road between Van Aken Boulevard and Walden Avenue
- Bring a fresh perspective to an aging corridor
- Create an environment in which businesses can prosper
- Effectively engage residents, businesses and property owners using a variety of tactics
- Identify solutions that are both creative and practical
- Enhance placemaking through public infrastructure
- Undertake a comprehensive, inclusive planning process, memorialized in the Lee Road Action Plan

Existing Conditions

Understanding the existing conditions set the baseline for the plan and helped identify steps to achieve the project vision and goals. Existing conditions include features and characteristics related to transportation, urban design, and land use. This includes motorized and

non-motorized transportation, transit, and parking. Economic and market conditions are addressed in Chapter 3, Market Study & Economic Analysis.

Lee Road (CR-8) is classified as a major arterial. It is one of three north-south roads that connect through Shaker Heights to communities to the north and south. It serves as a truck route connection to I-480. Lee Road is a five-lane road between Van Aken Boulevard and Lomond Boulevard, with on-street parking between Library drive and Van Aken. South of Lomond, Lee Road is a four-lane roadway with two northbound and two southbound travel lanes. On-street parking is available south of Scottsdale Boulevard in Cleveland. The posted speed limit is 25 mph.

Today, vehicular traffic dominates Lee Road, with minimal focus on pedestrian and cyclist comfort. There is no designated bicycle infrastructure. Pedestrians use the continuous sidewalks along the east and west sides of Lee. The sidewalks between Lomond and Scottsdale are relatively narrow (5 feet); they are set back from the street with



Figure 1: Lee Road at Library Drive intersection



Figure 2: Lee Road south of Lomond

street trees, creating desirable character. However, the sidewalks abut off-street parking lots for many businesses along the east side of Lee Road between Lomond and Walden, resulting in unsafe and uncomfortable pedestrian conditions.

Project area transit service includes RTA bus route 40 (north-south on Lee), east-west transit service via the Blue Line light rail at Van Aken, and RTA bus route 14/14A on Chagrin.

The majority of parking along the corridor is provided by privately owned off-street parking lots. Most parking between Lomond and Scottsdale is limited to small lots on individual parcels accessed by separate driveways for each parcel. This causes challenges for vehicles entering and exiting business parking lots and is a traffic safety concern. As mentioned above, parking is often not buffered from the public sidewalk, resulting in an unsafe and uncomfortable pedestrian experience.

Urban design and development vary along the corridor. Civic and retail uses dominate the segment between Van Aken and Chagrin. South of Chagrin, the corridor is predominantly lined with small, one- to two-story commercial buildings.

Market Study & Economic Analysis

The market study and economic analysis formed the baseline upon which the Lee Road Action Plan is built. The market study evaluated the presence of residential, retail, office, and other uses and how these uses expect to evolve with changes to Lee Road. The economic analysis identified trends specific to the Shaker Heights market and how such trends translate into opportunities for Lee Road.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Office**
 - ▷ Leverage short-term demand for Class B and Class C office space on Lee Road
 - ▷ Add Class A office space citywide and attract and encourage the development of supportive businesses
- **Residential**
 - ▷ Offer right-size housing options
 - *Provide step-up housing options*
 - *Accommodate mixed incomes*
 - *Cater to desired occupations*
 - ▷ Conduct housing study to match available inventory to step-up/step-down housing price options
- **Retail**
 - ▷ Program Lee Road with retail that draws consumer spending potential from the entire City and nearby communities
 - ▷ Emphasize a mixture of brands that allows for price-point flexibility



Community Engagement

Community engagement was integrated into each phase of the planning process. Community perspectives and ideas shaped the plan, from defining the vision and goals through concept development and refinement to drafting of this Lee Road Action Plan. Community participation was accomplished through multiple levels of engagement and a variety of outreach tools. Each phase of the planning process included engagement, which solicited input from:

- Stakeholder Committee
- Business & Property Owner Focus Group
- Institutional Stakeholder Group
- General Public

The plan was developed in three phases, as outlined below. Each phase included engagement methods targeted at reaching a broad cross-section of the community and achieving the desired outcomes. A total of 687 residents, business owners, and property owners participated in the three phases of plan development via virtual meetings, in-person meetings, tours, and surveys. Nearly 2,400 respondents participated in online polls and a survey.

- **Phase 1: Initiate & Understand.** Understand the existing conditions and establish the vision and goals for the Lee Road Action Plan to transform the project area.
- **Phase 2: Shape.** Present potential concepts for Lee Road, including aspects related to transportation, urban design and land use, as well as ideas and potential opportunities for redevelopment. Community input from this phase was instrumental in shaping the plan.
- **Phase 3: Define.** During Phase 3, community reactions to the draft plan were solicited, documented, and integrated into the final plan.



Figure 3: Phase 2 Public Meeting, Concept Development



Figure 4: Biking & Walking Tour (July 20, 2022)



Figure 5: Lee Road Action Plan Concept

Action Plan

The Lee Road Action Plan concept recommends targeted strategies to improve transportation, urban design, land use, and economic development on Lee Road (Figure 5). This illustrative plan represents best practices in transportation, urban design, and land use. The proposed initiatives included in the plan are listed in Figure 6 and shown in Figure 7. The plan transforms Lee Road from an arterial focused on moving cars through the district to a more balanced roadway that calms traffic and integrates and prioritizes other modes of transportation. Roadway

reconfiguration creates character for the Lee Road commercial district, calms traffic, adds bicycle infrastructure, and enhances the pedestrian experience. Improved public realm treatments, shared parking, an expanded Chelton Park and better pedestrian connections to the adjoining residential neighborhoods will bring vitality to Lee Road.

The Action Plan includes potential to increase the mixture of uses in the commercial district and to provide the

community with greater access to services, public and private amenities, and shared resources. The economic and market analyses support these land use recommendations. The recommended economic development strategies will help achieve desired business and redevelopment outcomes in the commercial district.

PROPOSED INITIATIVES

- Lee Road Reconfiguration
- The Neighborhood Center
- The Southern Gateway
- Van Aken-Lee to Chagrin-Lee Improvements
- Kenyon Intersection Improvements
- Shared Parking & Access
- Infill Development

Figure 6: Lee Road Action Plan Proposed Initiatives

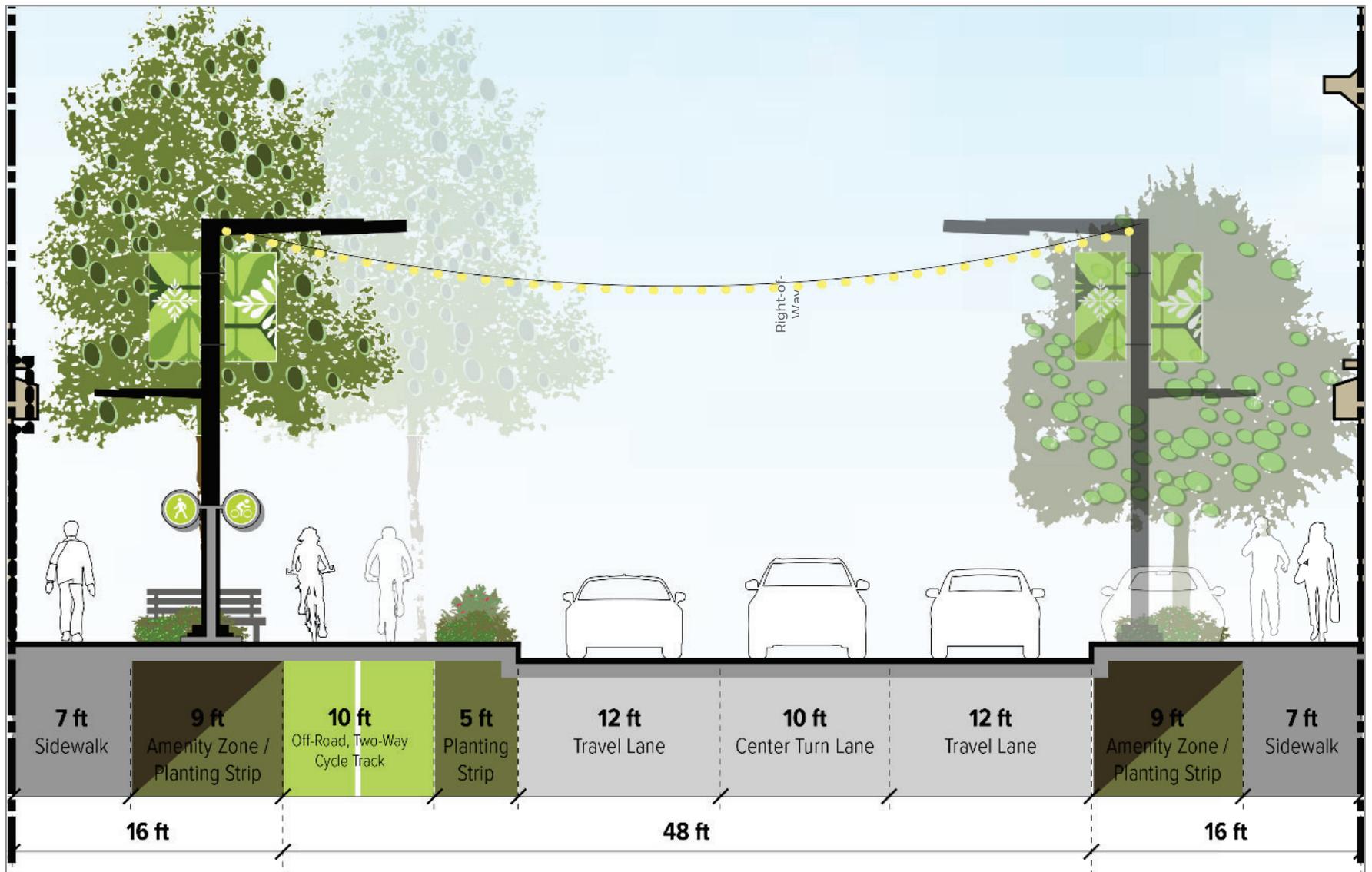


Figure 7: Proposed cross-section of Lee Road between Scottsdale & Lomond, looking north

PROPOSED INITIATIVES

Seven proposed initiatives support the realization of the vision and goals of the Action Plan (Figure 6 and **Figure 55 on p.67**). These initiatives facilitate phased implementation of the plan.

- 1 The Lee Road Reconfiguration** initiative features a “road diet” that changes Lee Road south of Chagrin from the existing four-lanes to one lane in each direction with a center turn lane. The Lee Road-Road Diet Evaluation (Appendix G) assessed traffic operations and found that this conversion is feasible. The roadway reconfiguration also includes the addition of median sections, creation of a sidewalk-level two-way bikeway (cycle track), improved sidewalks, streetscape, pedestrian crossings and amenities, and integration of potential shared parking opportunities.

The new street configuration will calm traffic and increase safety for all modes of transportation, both motorized vehicles and non-motorized travelers (i.e., bicycles and pedestrians). It will create a sense of place and character that will help to build interest and excitement for existing businesses and potential future development in the area. The south end of Lee Road will transition smoothly from Shaker Heights into Cleveland between Scottsdale and Walden. Shaker Heights and Cleveland will continue to coordinate the integration of this roadway reconfiguration initiative across municipal boundaries. At the north end of the corridor, the planned roadway reconfiguration will transition to a planned road diet north of Van Aken Boulevard to the Shaker Heights-Cleveland Heights border, where a three-lane roadway configuration is already in place. A cross-section of the roadway reconfiguration between Chagrin and Scottsdale is illustrated in Figure 7.

- 2 The Neighborhood Center** is a major focus for redevelopment located at the heart of the project area on Lee Road. Establishing the Neighborhood Center requires relocating the existing school bus depot. Relocating the Shaker Schools bus depot was first proposed



Figure 8: Rendering of the Neighborhood Center

as part of *A Vision for Community Facilities*, a City, schools, and library vision plan adopted in 2019. The Neighborhood Center will be developed with new uses that will transform both sides of Lee Road into an active community hub built around an improved and expanded Chelton Park. Illustrated in Figure 8, the portion of Lee Road between Hampstead and Nicholas will transition from predominantly single-story commercial uses and under-utilized public land into a mixed-use center with three- and four-story buildings, additional neighborhood amenities, and new public spaces unique to the businesses and residents that call Lee Road home.

- 3 The Southern Gateway** initiative includes fostering redevelopment opportunities and strengthening connections between Shaker Heights and the City of Cleveland, as well as streetscape enhancements that will be incorporated as part of the Lee Road Reconfiguration initiative. The gateway strategy is intended to build on existing resources such as the historic Lee-Scottsdale building and successful area businesses. It will create a focal point where Shaker Heights and Cleveland meet (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Rendering of the Southern Gateway

4 Van Aken-Lee & Chagrin-Lee Improvements are proposed in the area surrounding the Van Aken-Lee and Chagrin-Lee intersections, which is well-developed. There are opportunities to integrate new civic uses desired by the community as well as potential infill development. This includes a new mixed-use/indoor recreation facility with basketball and the addition of a relocated and improved outdoor playground near the Stephanie Tubbs Jones Community Building and the Shaker Heights Public Library.

5 Kenyon Intersection Improvements will convert the Kenyon leg of the Chagrin-Lee intersection from two-way to one-way inbound (Figure 10). This modification to traffic operations will reduce the width of Kenyon, providing opportunities to improve pedestrian accommodations and public spaces while retaining necessary access to adjacent businesses. It is also expected to improve traffic safety and the efficiency of traffic operations at the intersection.

6 Shared Parking & Access. Many existing properties (businesses and buildings) have their own driveways and parking areas. This causes challenges entering and exiting parking lots, negative



Figure 10: Concept plan for Kenyon intersection

impacts to pedestrian safety and comfort, and cramped, substandard parking for many businesses. The proposed shared parking concept is expected to create more parking spaces with standardized layouts. Consolidating driveways will facilitate safer, more efficient traffic flow, improve the pedestrian experience, and create streetscape opportunities. There are no anticipated negative impacts to existing buildings or businesses. Shared parking will be implemented in locations where business and property owners agree to the concept and the layout.

- 7 Infill Development.** The plan identifies potential infill development sites in underutilized areas. Opportunities for these sites are dependent upon property owner and developer interest. The City will coordinate actions related to potential infill development and will move forward with proposals as opportunities arise.

Implementation

Plan recommendations are grounded in economic and market analyses, set forth in Chapter 3. Further, public infrastructure investment combined with other City-supported and coordinated programs and initiatives will drive accompanying private investment.

FOUNDATIONS | KEYS TO SUCCESS

Implementing the plan hinges on four keys to success listed below:

- 1. Lee Road Reconfiguration.** See Proposed Initiative #1 outlined above and described in further detail in Chapter 5, Action Plan.
- 2. The Neighborhood Center and relocating the Shaker Schools bus depot.** See Proposed Initiative #2 outlined above and described in further detail in Chapter 5, Action Plan.
- 3. Economic development strategies.** To successfully achieve desired business and redevelopment outcomes in the Lee Road commercial district – including creating a Neighborhood Center, Southern Gateway and

TRANSPORTATION

Reconfigure Roadway

- ▷ One travel lane in each direction
- ▷ Center turn lane with raised median sections

Off-Road Bike Facility

- ▷ Two-way cycle track
- ▷ Sidewalk level
- ▷ All ages & abilities

Mid-Block Pedestrian Crossing

- ▷ Neighborhood Center at Chelton Park

Reconfigure Kenyon Leg of Chagrin-Lee Intersection

- ▷ One-way inbound
- ▷ Business operations considerations

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Community Programming

Infrastructure Programming

Business Programming

Development Incentives

Public Policy Considerations

URBAN DESIGN & LAND USE

Public Realm Treatments

- ▷ Sidewalks & seating
- ▷ Amenity zone
- ▷ Lighting
- ▷ Sustainable stormwater management
- ▷ Bus stops
- ▷ Public art
- ▷ Pedestrian connections to neighborhoods
- ▷ Minimize impact to trees
- ▷ Plant new trees

New development nodes

- ▷ 2-4 stories

Integrate Existing Businesses

Parking

- ▷ Shared surface lot(s)
- ▷ Internal parking and shared access for new developments

Expand Chelton Park

- ▷ Park & plaza areas
- ▷ Food trucks
- ▷ Outdoor theatre

Trail Connections to Moreland & Lomond

Figure 11: Overview of Action Plan recommendations & key takeaways

capitalizing on potential infill opportunities – the Lee Road Action Plan recommends targeted economic development strategies, including community and business programming, policy considerations, and the use of development financing and incentive tools to effectively deploy resources to the redevelopment on Lee Road. See further detail in the last section of Chapter 5, Action Plan.

- 4. **Regional collaboration.** Continued coordination with local businesses, property owners, residents, institutions, and local and regional partners will be important for plan implementation and transformation. Involved agencies will include the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA), Cuyahoga County, Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA), Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority, Shaker Heights Development Corporation (SHDC), and the cities of Cleveland and Cleveland Heights.

STRATEGIC FIRST ACTIONS

The City of Shaker Heights and its partners should take strategic initial actions to begin to advance the plan and to continue building excitement within the community:

- **Transportation**
 - Conduct a Chagrin-Lee intersection safety study
 - Complete design and engineering for reconfiguring Lee Road
 - Seek additional implementation grants
- **Urban Design / Land Use**
 - Conduct a Shaker Schools bus depot relocation feasibility study
 - Consider zoning and land use changes
 - Develop shared parking and access plans
 - Conduct a housing study
- **Economic Development**
 - Support business programming, in coordination with SHDC, including:

- *Entrepreneurship support*
- *Business attraction, retention, and expansion strategies*
- *Business visibility strategies*

- Collaborate with SHDC to establish a Business Improvement District (BID)
- Prioritize land assembly and control via the Shaker Lee Development Fund
- Amend the City’s existing 725 Urban Renewal District to exclude Lee Road properties so that other incentives may be leveraged
- Conduct required studies and establish new Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) Districts in the commercial district
- Obtain historic designation for historic properties
- Evaluate whether a New Community Authority would effectively assist in development
- Develop commercial district marketing and promotion strategy, in collaboration with SHDC

- **General**

- Regional collaboration and coordination
- Commercial code enforcement strategy/policy

GENERATING EXCITEMENT & COLLABORATION

A series of small projects implemented in key locations can generate excitement and result in high impact. These projects help sustain momentum while engineering and reconstruction of transportation-related improvements are advancing. Examples include:

- Public art projects
- Food, retail and entertainment pop-ups
- Programming
- Prioritize storefront renovation on Lee Road