Gordon Park Expansion / East Shoreway Relocation Proposal

“Reconnecting Gordon Park with Itself and the Community”
INTRODUCTION

The Green Ribbon Coalition is proposing changes along the Cleveland lakefront on the east side of the city that could open up a number of opportunities to increase and enhance the amount of land for public use, improve connectivity along the lakefront, and increase the economic value and livability of the adjacent St Clair-Superior and Glenville neighborhoods.

Considering the best use for the former First Energy Lakeshore Plant, the Green Ribbon Coalition (GRC) has proposed the relocation of Interstate 90 (East Shoreway) south of its current alignment, through the First Energy site, before ascending eastward along the southern edge of the city's Gordon Park. Historically, Gordon Park extended to the lakefront with recreational trails, beautiful landscaping and a meandering Doan Brook en route to a popular beach area. GRC proposes re-connecting Gordon Park with Cleveland Metroparks’ Lakefront Reservation and restoring these amenities. During the early part of the century the land was filled-in, the power plant was built, and later, the East Shoreway severed the park. (See figure 1)

The East Shoreway relocation concept and Gordon Park reconnection has in the past been discussed, in a general sense, by others in the Greater Cleveland community. The Green Ribbon Coalition is developing concept plans that suggest a more specific layout for further consideration and detailed planning.

Currently, the City of Cleveland’s Gordon Park property, south of I-90, is isolated from Cleveland Metroparks’ marinas, boat ramps, fishing piers and all-purpose trails. The city park is underutilized by both the adjoining community and by users of the Metroparks.

To the west of Gordon Park, I-90 runs between the lake and the former First Energy power plant that was built close to the lake to accommodate its large volume, cooling water needs. These conditions created a pinch point that bisected North Marginal Road and made travel between lakefront destinations disorienting and require the use of the freeway to make connections to adjacent facilities.

By realigning the East Shoreway per GRC’s concept plans, these challenges can be addressed, while a number of opportunities can be created. The plans suggest relocating the Shoreway as far south as possible without interfering with the existing electric substations and other critical infrastructure, while considering the topology and other natural features.

CONCEPT PLAN DEVELOPMENT

In Concept Plan A, both the East 72nd Street and the Martin Luther King Jr. Drive interchanges remain. (See Figure 2)

Concept Plan B aligns with the City of Cleveland’s 2004 Lakefront Plan by extending MLK Jr. Drive westward to connect with East 72nd Street, eliminating the MLK interchange and opening-up additional land for public use. (See Figure 3)

Combining the MLK interchange with E. 72nd (Concept Plan B) will direct traffic to the E. 72nd interchange and possibly increase travel time and distance between the interchange and the University Circle area. Such a change and its impacts for the overall project will need to be studied and the pros and cons weighed.
Figure 1: 1912 base map with overlay of current highway, road and water features
Among the opportunities both concept plans propose are the following:

- The City of Cleveland’s Gordon Park can be reconnected with its historic lakefront location where the Metroparks’ Gordon facilities now exist, increasing its use by the adjoining neighborhoods and Metroparks users alike.

- The existing East Shoreway and former power plant locations can become an extension of the city’s Gordon Park, containing additional recreational amenities and increasing the park from its current 45 acres to over 95 acres (See Figures 4 & 5).

- Including the existing Metroparks Gordon and East 55th facilities, the combined parkland could be over 160 acres (Concept Plan B), balancing Edgewater Park on the west side of the city at 147 acres. The Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve would add another 88 acres.

- By moving the Shoreway south, North Marginal Road can be extended through the former First Energy site to provide convenient travel between the East 55th and Gordon facilities. The extension could add more than a mile of new roadway to North Marginal Road, creating a four-mile-long Lakeshore Boulevard from North Coast Harbor to Gordon Park and MLK Jr. Drive.

- A public beach area slightly larger than Edgewater Beach can be created by filling in the lake a few hundred feet northward from the current shoreline between the East 55th and Gordon facilities. If the Shoreway cannot be relocated due to costs or logistics, this alternative could still be considered, and the lakeshore road can be placed just north of the existing Shoreway.

- The proposed re-routing and daylighting of Doan Brook can be incorporated into land use designs. The stream is currently culverted from just north of the railroad tracks, through the Lakefront Nature Preserve, before entering Lake Erie.

- Moving the East Shoreway away from the lakefront would reduce periodic hazardous conditions resulting from waves that splash onto and sometimes freeze on the Shoreway.

- The geometry of the Shoreway can be flattened somewhat, while design standards for the interchanges at East 72nd Street and MLK Jr. Drive can be updated.

- South Marginal Road can be routed to connect with the North Marginal Road extension, making property along it more marketable.

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- Green Infrastructure can be incorporated into any new freeway, roadway, and other land use designs. GI reduces and treats stormwater at its source while delivering environmental, social, and economic benefits.

- The livability of the adjacent neighborhoods could improve while the marketability of vacant parcels could increase for both housing and commercial activity. The development potential along, and to the north of St. Clair Avenue between East 55th Street and East Boulevard can be compared to what is occurring along, and to the north of Detroit Avenue between West 58th Street and West Blvd.
Figure 2: Concept Plan A
Figure 3: Concept Plan B
Figure 4: Existing Public Space – 105 Acres
Figure 5: Proposed Public Space – 158 Acres (Concept Plan A)
NEXT STEPS & RECOMMENDATIONS

In March 2017, Green Ribbon Coalition made a presentation on its concept plans to representatives from the City of Cleveland, First Energy, St. Clair Superior Development Corporation, and other stakeholders. Additional presentations to these and other entities are ongoing. GRC invites additional planners, architects, business and community organizations, and other stakeholders to comment on the freeway relocation and park plan.

Considering the positive impacts in this proposal versus other potential land uses, the Green Ribbon Coalition proposes that the former First Energy Lakeshore Plant site not be marketed for immediate development and that First Energy considers donating the property to a land conservancy until these concept plans or similar public land uses are determined. Towards that end, further study with public input on this proposal should be undertaken under the direction of the City of Cleveland, GRC, and other partners.

We have lived with past developments that have blocked access to, and along our lakefront for decades. The Green Ribbon Coalition supports future developments that will help Cleveland rival other waterfront cities and become a destination city where people will want to live, work, visit and invest.