

Watterson-Lake FAQ
Bridging the Gap LLC
Updated as of 11/30/2023

In September 2023, the [City of Cleveland selected Bridging the Gap LLC](#) to redevelop the Watterson-Lake school site. These FAQs follow the community meeting that held on November 8, 2023.

Q: How can I get updates about the project?

A: The Bridging the Gap LLC (BTG) development team is planning to create a project landing page that will be the new source for information and updates about the project. BTG will provide the link to be shared once it goes live. In the interim, the project website, www.wattersonlakecle.com, will provide project information.

Q: Why is affordable housing included in the project?

The City of Cleveland's [10-Year Housing Study](#) shows that there is a pressing need for affordable housing citywide. Councilmember Jenny Spencer is a strong supporter of affordable and mixed-income housing in order to ensure that our community remains diverse and mixed-income far into the future. Councilmember Spencer also believes that for the time being, the demand for market-rate (luxury) rental housing is sufficiently met in the neighborhood, with nearly 2,000 market-rate rental units recently developed and/or planned north of Detroit Avenue. Finally, the [Site Engagement Report](#) completed in 2022 showed a community desire for affordable and mixed-income housing.

Q: How many units are affordable?

A: Currently, the project is anticipated to consist of an apartment building with 112 units and 12 townhomes. The apartments will be a mix of income levels, with a range from 30%-80% of Area Median Income. BTG also anticipates that 25% of the units may be eligible for project-based vouchers. The townhomes will be mixed income rental housing similar to the apartment units but will be available for larger family sizes. The range of income levels will be the same. Note: This is based on the current plans and is subject to change as we incorporate zoning or other City input, funding requirements, and community feedback such as bringing the building forward to Detroit Avenue to create more density and scale at this street level of the development.

Q: What sources of subsidy will be used?

A: As a public private partnership, the development team is planning to bring federal 4% Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), State of Ohio Tax Credits (OLIHTC), mortgage financing, and project based vouchers, as well as other sources of subsidy (TBD).

The 4% LIHTC is a federal program that is commonly used to help finance larger scale affordable and mixed-income rental development projects. The State of Ohio Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (OLIHTC) is a new state tax credit used to help finance affordable and mixed-income housing units in the State of Ohio. It is a state supplement to the federal LIHTC,

designed to create additional housing units that would not have otherwise been created with other state, federal, or private financing throughout state fiscal years (SFY) 2024 to 2027 (July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2027). Modeled after the federal LIHTC, OLIHTC allows owners of qualifying affordable rental projects to claim tax credits against state taxable liabilities over a 10-year Credit Period. These credits are then exchanged by investors and syndicators for equity to help construct or preserve affordable rental housing throughout the state. In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2024 and 2025, the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) will implement OLIHTC exclusively as gap financing on 4% LIHTC new construction proposals that would not otherwise be financially feasible without the addition of OLIHTCs.

Q: What role does Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority have with this project?

A: Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) is anticipated to be a joint venture partner to support the lead developer and will most likely be the project manager for the project. CMHA will also provide project based vouchers. The anticipated amount of project based vouchers is 25% of the units or less. Because BTG is a first-time developer in the state of Ohio, in order to apply for 4% tax credits, one of the development partners has to have completed a 4% tax credit project in the city of Cleveland. CMHA helps the lead developer fulfill this requirement.

Q: How will you ensure the housing stays affordable after the tax credits expire? Or will this developer sell and make a huge profit?

A: The City of Cleveland is working jointly with the development team to explore a land-lease model that will help ensure long-term affordability beyond the requirements set forth by the Low-Income Tax Credit compliance period (generally 15 years). Though this process has just begun, a land-lease model will give the City of Cleveland control over the disposition of this property to ensure that the building continues to provide affordable housing well into the future. This model will also give the City of Cleveland the opportunity to vet any future owners and/or operators of this building if the building was sold.

Q: What are you planning to do for construction to minimize the impact on direct neighbors?

A: We understand that construction can be disruptive. The development team plans on communicating when, and steps we will take to minimize disruption. These updates will be posted on the new project landing page at the appropriate time.

Q: Some community members have concerns about the amount of parking that will be provided for this project. Can you clarify how many parking spaces are planned and how those are sufficient to meet the needs of the project?

A: Currently, 80 parking spaces are projected on site, which meets City of Cleveland code. Additionally, this is a transit oriented development which means it is highly accessible and has public transit options and other modes of transportation such as buses and bicycles. Lastly, we are evaluating the possibility of providing bus passes from RTA for a certain amount of the affordable housing residents. The City may also require this as part of our funding.

Disclaimer: These responses provided above are based on the development team's initial feedback in November 2023. However, development is an ever evolving industry and components of the project are subject to change based on funding requirements, City zoning and other approvals, community feedback, etc.

As noted, the BTG development team plans to create a landing page for the Watterson Lake project and at the appropriate time, we will post updated information about the project. Once the landing page has been created and is live, we will provide the new project link to the City and Councilwoman's office to share with the community.

The following is a summary of all the comments the BTG team received from the November 8, 2023 community meeting. Thank you for providing so much feedback and we are very appreciative of all your positive comments.

Summary of Community Feedback:

Greenspace:

- Multiple requests for seating, types, fixed as well as moveable.
- Loved the placement of the greenspace and how it is open to the street.
- Love the curvy walkway, great for meandering, it is a promenade. Widen it.
- Love there will be public art.
- Drought tolerant and low-maintenance plantings, like the High Line in NYC.
- Include Prairie grasses, pollinators that do not require fertilizers, sturdy groundcover.
- Area for people to bring dogs, with poop bag dispensers and appropriate trash receptacles.
- Adult play area.
- Hiding parking was great.
- Lots of trash receptacles, regularly picked up.
- Covered pavilions with access to electrical and lighting.
- Year-round usage.
- Community art.
- Community garden.
- Increase the greenspace.
- Lawn and pickleball courts.
- Add a tree lawn to all sidewalks, desperate need for trees.
- Microforest to combat climate change.
- Take elements from the "Arts District" neighborhood, recognize all the galleries and multiple theaters.
- Ability to cut through W74th and W75th, not in a car.
- Vintage lamp posts along walking paths.

- The engagement of Herman Park at the Cyan development is simple, but elegantly done.
- Add lots of large trees.

Playground

- Edgewater Park playground suggested as a model.
- Would like to seating around the playground.
- Regular maintenance.
- Both for big and little kids.
- Access to water, even if it requires a key.
- Meet ADA standards.
- Sports, basketball not pickleball.
- Slide and Monkey Bars.

Commercial Tenants

- The tenant should fully activate the space.
- Incentives for tenants to participate in block events and membership in CDC.
- More density and retail towards Detroit, the neighborhood feel towards Franklin.
- Incentives for business currently not available, locally owned.
- A great location for Neighborhood Family Practice.
- A deli to be located at 74th and Franklin.
- No food and beverage tenants.
- Encourage multiple tenants.
- Dentists along with retail.
- Ideally, a grocery store, bakery.
- Both retail and office space to keep professionals living and working in the neighborhood.
- Business incubator/start up space.
- Service retail, already enough restaurants, local.

Event Ideas

- Regular movie nights, concerts.
- Winter, outdoor events.
- Love the food truck idea, community events.
- Art shows, thrift fair.
- Community concerts.

Anything Else You Would Like To Tell Us

- Facilitate a plan to deal with traffic from the parking lot.
- Bus pass program.

- Inexpensive, rental indoor community space, preferably with a kitchen, open to greenspace.
- Increase density toward Detroit and scale back from there (mentioned multiple times).
- Keep the 5 story apartment building from towering over the existing houses.
- 5 story building set back on 74th for greenspace/trees.
- Onsite property management.
- If people can drive through the parking lots, speed bumps are imperative.
- Barriers for cars on the pedestrian parkway.
- The parking lot should not be able to be used as a cut through.
- Accessibility.
- Security, good lighting, security detail on site.
- Housing to be mixed income.
- Brick facade, please avoid corrugated metal siding panels.
- Review potential for Detroit side building massing to increase to match multi-story development that already exists. Then, the apartment building could be shorter, so it fits within the residential character. Permanent affordability.
- Less parking to allow for more greenspace.
- Include bike parking.
- Intergenerational apartments.
- City's S&L parking lot integration/separation from project. Land swap & valuation.
- Careful with garage treatment on residential street.
- Increase massing on Detroit- keep/develop urban corridor.
- The echo of the former school is particularly not important. The decay, debate and demolition of the former Historic portion of the school is somewhat traumatic.