

Camp Washington companies to city: Don't you forget about me

Jan 20, 2016 **Chris Wetterich**, Staff reporter and columnist *Cincinnati Business Courier*

Camp Washington, an industrial neighborhood sitting between Uptown and Cincinnati's West Side along Interstate 75, wants more from the city of Cincinnati than it's getting, particularly when it comes to housing and quality-of-life issues.

Neighborhood leaders have met with the city's economic development director, [Oscar Bedolla](#), twice in the last week hoping to get traction on efforts to improve its housing stock, clean up the neighborhood and move forward on projects in the works, including repairs to the Western Hills Viaduct and [converting the former Crosley Building into apartments](#). Camp Washington has about 1,500 residents and 6,500 people come to work there everyday.



Oscar Bedolla is the community and economic development director for the City of Cincinnati

[Joe Gorman](#), executive director of the Camp Washington Business Association, said that “the Camp,” as residents and workers call it, once was the kind of neighborhood city leaders talk about wanting today: One where people both lived and walked to their job along a thriving business district.

“We kind of do feel forgotten,” Gorman said. “At one time, Camp Washington provided the city 42 percent of its earnings tax (revenue). It's still substantial. We're a little neighborhood, but we've got a pretty substantial business group.”

For years, the Camp Washington Community Board development corporation funded small-scale housing rehabilitations that would not be profitable for developers through Mad Max Bingo, a hall it owns in Cheviot. But a bloated gaming market and the opening of the Horseshoe Casino Cincinnati downtown has slashed the bingo hall's revenue.

Camp Washington businesses and residents want an effort like what the Cincinnati Center City Development Corp. has going in Over-the-Rhine directed its way. The city told it that the Port of Greater Cincinnati Development Authority is handling housing rehab, but funds are tight, Gorman said.

Bedolla told Camp Washington the city wants to help. He noted that developer Core Redevelopment has extended its purchase option on the Crosley Building after it failed to make the cut for state historic tax credits in 2015. The tax credits would have helped fund the project. The city is working with the developer to come up with a creative financial package to get the project done.

Bedolla conceded that neighborhoods that are doing well have been better able to navigate the city's processes.

"People in Camp Washington are extremely passionate about their neighborhood," Bedolla said. "We want to knock down that barrier related to access and provide everybody the same playing field."

At a meeting of the business group on Wednesday, business owners also wanted to know how Camp Washington could get direct city funding for its stock of vacant single-family homes near its business district, which is also dotted with unoccupied structures. Bedolla suggested putting a bundle of potential sites together to compete for [a \\$4.5 million competitive grant program](#).

Transportation also is on Camp Washington's front burner. One business owner suggested an east-west bus route that goes from the West Side through the neighborhood and into Uptown while also expressing dismay at litter that finds its way into the neighborhood when drivers throw it from cars as they exit I-75 onto Hopple Street. Gorman suggested the city make use of the partially completed, abandoned subway tunnel that stretches from Central Parkway downtown to Hopple Street, either by using it for the streetcar project or allowing people to bike through it.

"It doesn't hurt to ask, right?" Bedolla said, pledging to bring the ideas and concerns to City Hall.

Gorman, who noted artists are moving into Camp Washington as they once did into Over-the-Rhine, said the message to the city is simple: "Don't forget us. Keep us in any kind of meeting you have with the Port," he said. "We're poised to be a very attractive neighborhood for people and businesses."