

Springfield, Ohio

ENGAGED NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

PHASE 2

June 2022



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Springfield 2030

Southside is a **thriving** and **diverse** community with a **rich history**. **Housing** varies from **19th century folk Victorians** through to **contemporary townhomes**, sheltering **families** and a rich neighborhood **tradition**. **Children** walk to school along **tree-lined streets** and a neighborhood **business district** helps meet daily needs as well as offering spots for **friends** to meet for **coffee or dinner**. **Parks** both large and small, **sunflower fields**, **walk and biking paths** and **pocket urban farms** testify to this community's commitment to **natural beautification** and **health**. A thriving **small business incubator** and a **youth athletic center** are important **community developed** assets. The beautifully restored **Gammon House**, an important stop on the **Underground Railroad** anchors a **historic district** which is both a source of local pride and an attraction for **visitors from throughout the region and beyond**. **Community leadership** in Southside is strong and committed to ensuring that **every neighbor** – youngest to oldest – has a **safe and delightful place to live, work, play and succeed**.

INTRODUCTION

STOP!!!

Please read this before proceeding further into this document.

Plans are like road maps; they are not meant to be read from front to back. We encourage the reader to focus on the sections that will most help them to understand, embrace, and enact the goals of this document, similar to the way in which a map that is well worn from many adventures on the road would be used.

Encompassed within this document is a calibrated strategy for neighborhood success. The Engaged Neighborhood is full of heritage, diversity and independent strength— All qualities that when working together are a foundation that residents, business owners and others can utilize for community success.

The Engaged Neighborhood once encompassed the site of Springfield’s largest African American business district. Located along South Yellow Springs Streets, longtime residents recall a bustling and vibrant stretch of home-grown stores from grocers and butchers to bakers and tailors. While decades of decline have taken their toll, the stories remain, and potential grows.

Engagement Process

The Engaged Neighborhood Plan was built upon the hopes, dreams, aspirations, reflections, and stories of the community, businesses, organizations, and other people who participate in the neighborhood, Springfield and beyond. For the development of this report, several rounds of engagement were held.

Workshop one, conducted in the fall and winter of 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, was online via virtual conference and through website engagement. Workshop two, the presenting and discuss-

ing of ideas, was conducted outdoors in May of 2021, and attracted over 80 attendees. Workshop three, focusing on the final recommendations was conducted in September 2021.

Overall, the Engaged Neighborhood Plan saw over 170 people contribute comments and other feedback on the plan.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Covering about 222 acres in Springfield, the Phase II area is bounded by West Pleasant, Perrin, South Yellow Springs, and Center Streets. Until the 1950s, South Yellow Springs Street was home to a bustling, mostly minority-owned commercial district. Today, few businesses remain, but those present are fixtures of the community.

The Little Miami Scenic Trail runs the length of the neighborhood along former industrial land. Demolition of warehouses and manufacturing buildings has left large vacant swaths of cleared though potentially contaminated land in the center of the neighborhood. Environmental assessments have not been conducted for many of the sites so possible future uses remain undetermined.

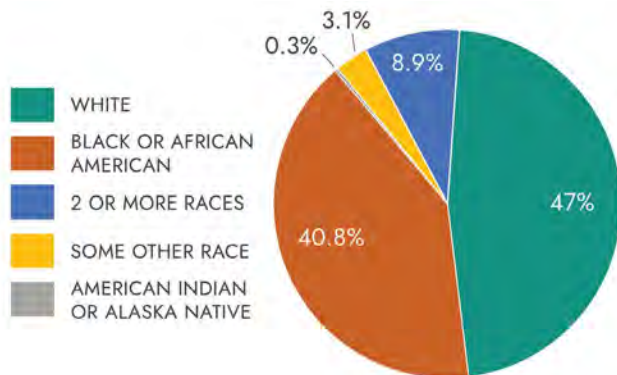
There are 1,130 housing units in the neighborhood. 58% of the housing stock is rental with 42% owner-occupied. The median rent is \$730 a month. Over half of the 475 owner-occupied homes in the neighborhood have held the same ownership for 11 years or more. Housing stock in this area consists mostly of wood frame structures with roofed front porches. Condition ranges from impeccable to severe disrepair. Vacancy is a defining feature of the neighborhood with 35% of land and homes, an unfortunately high percentage, considered vacant or deteriorated.

The neighborhood is diverse with 47% of the population identified as White, 40% Black and just under 9% of residents noted as mixed race. The median household income is \$33,488 which is 35% below the Clark County Median Income.

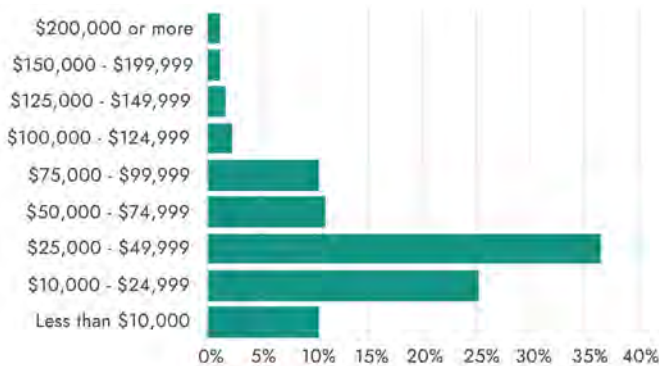
44% of neighborhood residents have a high school degree or equivalent with 10.5% with completing college or higher. There are 16 active businesses within the neighborhood ranging from funeral homes to childcare centers, trucking and manufacturing operations also present.

The charts below highlight the demographic and economic conditions of the neighborhood.

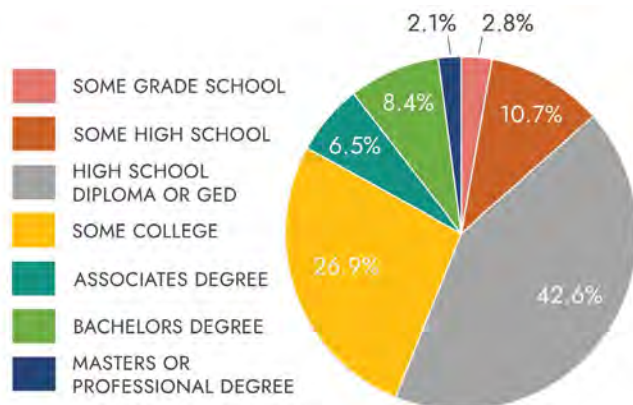
RACE



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME



EDUCATION LEVEL



THE INITIATIVES

Build Capacity

- Identify Resource
- Create a Community Development Finance Institution
- Empower Community Development Corporations to Lead
- Reestablish an Inclusive Neighborhood Association

Rebuild a Neighborhood Business District

- Create a Community Business Center
- Strengthen the Neighborhood Business District

Redevelop Vacant Lots

- Redevelop Small Vacant Lots Throughout the Neighborhood
- Redevelop Larger Lots

Strengthen Connections Between Recreation Assets

- Improve the Little Miami Scenic Trail
- Strengthen Connections to Davey Moore Park

Establish Policies and Programs

- Home Improvement Program
- Objective-Based Zoning Reform

Build Capacity

Identify Resource

The first step is to begin to identify potential sources for funding, working with City officials, local philanthropies, potential backers, and lending institutions.

Create a Community Development Finance Institution

Building a high-functioning CDFI is critical for the community to drive its ambitions forward. CDFIs tackle traditionally risky projects by combining loan funds, leveraging public financing, and utilizing tax credits. They often provide patient capital and gap

financing for projects deemed too risky by more conventional lenders. The nature of such financing allows them to apply flexible underwriting standards.

A local CDFI can provide a variety of different tools to existing homeowners, rehabbers, and other small-scale developers such as:

- Assist with gap financing for owner-occupied renovations,
- Support low down payments for new homeowners,
- Offer predevelopment funds,
- Provide construction financing for development projects.

Springfield’s financial institutions should pool resources into an initial fund of

\$5 million. Creation of a fund for the southside of Springfield is critical. Money from the initial \$5

million fund can be used in both the Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas and ideally would be committed not later than the end of 2022.

Empower Community Development Corporations to Lead

A Community Development Corporation, or CDC, can convene community conversations around development, activating sites, placemaking, and other essential community goals. It can then take action to move toward agreed initiatives.

The Planning Team and community stakeholders identified an effective and inclusive CDC as a critical EN component in Phase 1. It is no less essential for Phase 2.

Within the Engaged Neighborhood (EN) there currently are at least two nonprofit community development groups operating:



- South Fountain Preservation Association
 - » Works primarily along South Fountain Avenue and surrounding blocks
- 1159 South
 - » Works in the neighborhoods that share South Yellow Springs Street

Collaboration between these two, deeply invested organizations, would benefit both sides of the EN, especially if a shared vision could be developed and implemented.

CDC's working within the EN may engage in activities such as developing and acquiring real estate, obtaining financing, recruiting developers, managing development funds, acting as a conduit for funding and programming public spaces with events. Most importantly, the CDC should make things happen, whether that is working with potential partners at the City, county, regional, state and federal level or through other non-profit organizations such as the Chamber, Visit Springfield and beyond.

Reestablish an Inclusive Neighborhood Association

People within the Engaged Neighborhood (EN) are very disconnected at present. There are few meaningful opportunities or information sources even for those seeking to increase their engagement and knowledge. The EN used to have a neighborhood association, but it ceased operating years ago. A neighborhood association should be reestablished now to capitalize on momentum created by the EN planning process and

to help guide the local CDCs, government agencies, and other interested influential partners through the next several, critical years.

The value of connection is demonstrable. Residents who know each other are more likely to also care about one another. They are more invested in their local businesses, City, and region. Residents who work together are more powerful; they have influ-

What Does a Neighborhood Association Do?

- Discuss crime and safety
- Provide input on zoning issues
- Request funds from public or private sources
- Plan neighborhood events
- Recieve updates from local organizations

ence at City Hall, with businesses, and with property owners. They are better patrons and employees of local businesses because they feel pride of ownership.

A Neighborhood Association could meet regularly to discuss crime and safety issues, provide input on zoning variance requests by developers, and request funds from public or private sources. It could initiate neighborhood clean-up days, festivals, and events for kids.

The ideas put forth in this plan will not implement themselves; they need tenacious stewards to drive change forward. A strong, inclusive neighborhood association can be a key component of future success.

Rebuild a Neighborhood Business District

Create a Community Business Center

Stakeholders from Workshops 1 and 2 overwhelmingly expressed the need for greater economic opportunity. This sentiment was especially strong on behalf of those who want to own a business in order to control their future, establish economic independence, and/or seed generational wealth.

Stakeholders noted that some residents already run home-based businesses and others wish to start

their own home-based businesses, many, however, need financial and technical assistance to grow, potentially moving out of their homes and into the wider marketplace.

Establishment of a thriving small business is difficult— Many have ambitions but limited access to space and training. A neighborhood center with small business incubator space, located in Springfield’s southside and developed to support the professional ambitions of area residents, would give practical support to entrepreneurial ambitions.

This will not be a community center in the traditional sense. Rather than serving as a space to host boy scout meetings and basketball games, this center will be home to entrepreneurs learning to start or grow their small businesses.

The business center would have the following components:

- **Business Training and Accelerator Lab:** This would be a series of classroom-style seminars, scheduled at times convenient to budding entrepreneurs and designed to introduce, coach, and prepare participants for success.
- **Makerspaces:** A flexible space containing equipment to build things, a Makerspace can be an invaluable resource for those working in, or hoping to learn about, construction, electronics, and/or handcraft industries.

One of the most common elements is a woodworking shop with table saws, routing tables, drill press, sander, and other tools. Such shops often require introductory classes to train in safely handling professional grade equipment.

Other Makerspace uses might include ceramics/pottery studios, sewing and upholstery, hacker spaces devoted to circuit and electronics crafting, and 3D printing.

- **Retail and Restaurant Launching Ground:** a collection of small retail and restaurant spaces, between 200 to 400 square feet each, which retailers and restaurateurs could use to work on proof of concept and scale operations prior to moving into a full bricks-and-mortar location.
- **Community Gathering Space:** an outdoor park or plaza where the community can see the businesses from the Business Incubator come alive. The gathering space could be used for weekly events such as weekend sales, live music lunches, or small festivals. These events, and the space itself, would promote the Business Incubator and make it more approachable.

The South Yellow Springs Street corridor is the best location for the business center.

Strengthen the Neighborhood Business District

Neighborhood business districts are often the heart and soul of a community. These districts, especially those that are pedestrian-friendly, are the places where people connect to shop, transact business, and socialize. Whether a planned meeting for a cup of coffee or a chance encounter on the sidewalk, it is here where friendships are established and affirmed, daily needs are met, jobs are created, and where small businesses thrive.

During Workshops 1 and 2, the Planning Team heard many fond memories of the neighborhood. Nearly all of those recollections included the business district along South Yellow Springs Street. While it would be easy to chalk these up to nostal-

The Planning Team studied several potential locations. The intersection of South Yellow Springs Street and Dibert ranked highest.

gia, it also would be a mistake. Stakeholders envision a pedestrian-friendly district where they can gather, patronize local businesses, and re-establish the sense of comfort and belonging that fuels pride in their neighborhood.

The Community Business Center and other non-profits can provide technical support and a nucleus of activity from which other businesses can benefit. Some form of financial assistance must also be available, perhaps on a competitive basis. But starting a business or moving into fixed premises is expensive. Most small entrepreneurs have limited access to capital and conventional lenders are risk averse about such operations.

Rebuilding a neighborhood business district in the EN will take resource, focus, and tenacity by several key partners. But it's a worthwhile and important objective.

Vibrant neighborhood business districts usually share certain commonalities:

- A manageably sized district in which pedestrians can walk from end-to-end in less than about 10 minutes (~ 3 blocks)
- New Building/Renovation Design
 - » Allow buildings up to 3-4 stories
 - » Require storefront buildings and fosters the right mix of offerings
 - » Prohibits incompatible uses and street facing surface parking lots
 - » Require plenty of storefront glass at street level retail
- Parking
 - » Require off-street parking to be in the rear of the building or site
 - » CDC, City, or other aligned non-profit can manage as revenue stream
 - » Metered on-street convenience parking should be provided along main

“Quality should not be something residents have to seek elsewhere.”

retail corridor

- Pay via meter, pay box or mobile app
- High-quality streetscape which includes:
 - » Wide sidewalks
 - » Streetlights
 - » Street trees
 - » Street signage and wayfinding
 - » Trash cans
 - » Well-curated street architecture such as bike racks, benches, and art
 - » Traffic calming and 25 mph signage
- Small, thoughtfully designed, public gathering spaces in key locations
- Surrounding residential density to supply potential patrons

Redevelop Vacant Lots

Redevelop Small Vacant Lots Throughout the Neighborhood

Vacancy also is detrimental to surrounding home values, resident pride, and community safety. 34% of the land in the Engaged Neighborhood (EN) is vacant or hosting deteriorated structures. This is largely concentrated on scattered small lots. It is recommended that these empty lots be redeveloped into some, or all the following uses based on size and location:

Single/Duplex Family Houses

Of all the options presented to stakeholders for small lot redevelopment, single-family homes were most popular and identified as an urgent need. Developing such homes could fill in crucial gaps, making streets more cohesive and people more connected. It also could bring new homeowners, potentially young families, into the area.

New single-family houses and duplexes could be a variety of sizes to provide a range of affordability and living arrangements. It is important that construction costs be controlled so that homes are priced for working families, but newly built homes are convincing evidence of momentum and investment.

Townhouses

Townhouses offer another single-family option while permitting greater density on a single lot. They often can be a more affordable option, again potentially opening homeownership to a wider range of residents.

Playgrounds

Playgrounds can easily fit onto small lots and provide families throughout the neighborhood with accessible recreation spaces close to home.

Unique environments might be more interesting for repeat users and can create opportunities for sponsorship.

Activation

Not all vacant lots can be developed immediately no matter how popular the proposed use. For community pride and a sense of momentum, however, these should not remain empty. Most can be activated as community spaces with a modicum of preparation and relatively minimal materials.

Activations can be as simple as mowing the grass and installing benches as a place for respite. Larger lots can host food truck or live music events. Programming is essential for some of these larger spaces as these act as introductory places for visitors and residents.

Murals and Public Art

Art is a powerful tool for bringing attention to an overlooked space. The Gammon House, Hartman Rock Garden, and Johnny Lytle Avenue all offer inspiration for art installations and murals. This might also be an opportunity for property owners or community groups to bring in partners such as Project Jericho, to help make new projects a reality.

Dog Parks

Vacant lots are well-suited for small dog parks, as all these canine family members really need is an empty piece of land to explore. Fencing, trash cans, and a dog-secure entry quickly create a space likely to be heavily used by pet owners. As with any park, ongoing maintenance is crucial to success and to acceptance by nearby residents. Dog parks foster conversations between dog owners leading to friendship, shared experience, and neighborhood pride.

Basketball Courts

Portable basketball hoops set up in the streets of Springfield's south side are commonplace. During input sessions, residents explained that these allow neighborhood children to play while still in sight of home. Building half or full courts on vacant lots could offer this same peace of mind while also getting players away from the hazard of cars.

Assembly of Multiple Lots

There are areas where adjacent parcels could be combined to provide opportunities for larger developments.



Redevelop Larger Lots

In addition to the variety of smaller lots, there are at least four sites of considerable size in the Engaged Neighborhood (EN). These offer an opportunity to place multiple uses on one site. Several conceptual plans are illustrated herein and contain components which can be paired in a variety of ways.

The four key sites are:

1. Oakwood, Plum, and Fair
2. Liberty
3. W. Euclid
4. Grand to Euclid

Housing

Multi-Family: Any multi-family project on a larger lot should respect the surrounding architectural context. Height should be scaled to nearby buildings, generally not more than 3 or 4 stories with massing broken up to make a more pleasant façade, sensitive to its setting. If environmental contamination is present, dwellings units may be restricted to the second and third floors of the building, with only parking and common spaces below.

Multi-family housing is appealing to young adults who want to be in a great place and are building savings or for older adults who are looking to stay in the neighborhood and no longer need the extra rooms in traditional single-family housing. It's important for these housings to remain affordable for both market rate and income-restricted households.

Single-Family: With over 35% of the EN vacant, rebuilding single-family housing is desirable in maintaining and reestablishing the character of the neighborhood. While there are many houses prime for rehabbing, not everyone wants an old house – even a renovated one. New single-family and duplex housing development can be configured in multiple ways but, when possible, should incorporate the alley system which is an integral part of neighborhood context. Those alleys allow vehicles to park in areas and garages to the rear. Front-facing driveways and garages are a suburban

model which would degrade the intrinsic charm of the neighborhood.

Each house should be permitted one accessory dwelling unit (ADU) to be used either by family members or, when the owner occupies the primary residence, as rental property. This can allow homeowners to additional income to defray costs and thus make home purchase more achievable. Home + ADU properties should be prohibited as rental only with absentee landlords. Onsite owner + rental will help ensure each property benefits from the pride of an owner-occupant.

New build houses in this area would be best between 800 and 1600 square feet across two stories. A substantial number of windows and a building entry facing the main street will be both pleasing design and a positive contributor to neighborhood safety. Eyes on the street are always helpful watchers. It also is strongly recommended that all houses have a roofed front porch of at least 55 square feet with no dimension (width or depth) smaller than 6 feet.

Assistive: The COVID-19 pandemic created a surge of un-housed people in Springfield. City leaders have addressed temporary housing needs but now needs a permanent solution. Preferably, this will be provided in a way which helps with wealth creation such as small single-family homes which can be acquired by tenants in a rent-to-own scenario. Some of this housing can be in the EN.



Parking: While parking is not the most exciting aspect of any plan, it is necessary for the uses proposed elsewhere. The trailhead and dog park, for example, need to be accessible for both those in the neighborhood who can walk to the site, but also for those who will drive. Well located and multiple parking lots of various sizes, proximate to area amenities also minimize the need for street parking and help protect on-street spots for adjacent homes.

Recreational

Several of the larger sites could accommodate one, two, or several of the lifestyle amenities repeatedly requested by the community. The Planning Team's assessment of the lot running from Euclid to Oakwood is that its highest and best use is a public park. This is due to the shape of the property, its location centered in the neighborhood, and its long adjacency to the Little Miami Scenic Trail. Potential recreational uses include:

- Dog Park
- Water Recreation
- Community Gathering Space
- Basketball Courts

Strengthen Connections Between Recreation Assets

Improve the Little Miami Scenic Trail

The Little Miami Scenic Trail runs through the neighborhood, providing both a recreational asset and a transportation connector. Creating additional recreational opportunities along the Trail would enhance this corridor for residents as well as visitors. Creating additional recreational opportunities along the Trail would enhance this corridor for residents as well as visitors.

Discussions with community residents revealed a strong negative perception of the current Trail. Poor lighting, overgrown vegetation, and lack of

signage contribute to a sense of unease. Below are some ways to tackle these perceptions and improve the trail:

Trail/Trailhead

The addition of a trailhead could be an important element of that. Initially, it can be as simple as parking spaces, bike racks, a bike repair station, and a few tables. Eventually, restrooms, playground equipment, and other amenities can be added. But as a first step to leveraging the value of the trail, the City and community need to ensure that it feels like - and actually is - a safe corridor for both cyclists and pedestrians.

Prune

Forested sections of trails are fundamentally inviting as the trees provide shade and interesting scenery. Overgrown vegetation, however, limits visibility, appears unkempt, and creates worrying areas of shadow and isolation. The City, National Trails, or appropriate authority should remove all low vegetation along the Trail throughout the Engaged Neighborhood (EN), also trimming up trees where needed. This will foster a feeling of safety and encourage greater usage while preserving the natural charm of larger trees.

Install Wayfinding and Signage

The Planning Team recommends that wayfinding and directional signage, branding, and cohesive theming be developed for the entire Trail, both within and outside the EN. Such signage should be prominent, interesting, and coordinated to create an appealing directional plan throughout the EN and into greater Springfield. It also should point the way clearly to other assets such as Davey Moore Park.

Fix the Tunnel – Use Art

The tunnel under Pleasant can be a particularly uncomfortable section of the Trail for users. Vegetation on either side creates an isolating effect, worsened by low to no interior light. That inside could be painted, either with murals or colors and lighting added. This would provide a perception of investment and care, creating greater comfort. It

also would, with minimal investment, turn it into a more distinctive feature for the neighborhood, and build connection to local artists whose work would be showcased.

Add Lighting

Increased lighting in the tunnel and along the Trail would add to the sense of security, particularly at dawn and dusk. Lighting options can include conventional fixtures such as historic luminaries to more artistic alternatives.

Make the Trail Visible and Celebrate a New Connection

Currently, the Trail cannot be seen or accessed from Pleasant Street. This disconnection contributes to the perceived lack of safety and so undermines benefit to the area.

As the trail is pruned and made more visible it needs to be reconnected to the street grid. Small concrete plazas with bike repair and tire inflation stations on one or both sides of Pleasant Street would help.

Stairs of at least 15' (so they won't be narrowed by vegetation over time), with bike-wheel troughs from the Pleasant Street plazas would further encourage connection. Ornamental iron fencing and seasonal flowers could also be installed to celebrate the intersection. Gateway signage or colorful banners announcing the entrance to the Trail could be constructed.

Strengthen Connections to Davey Moore Park

Neighborhood stakeholders repeatedly expressed a feeling of disconnection from Davey Moore, also noting that its facilities are tired. In recent years, though its athletic fields

may have been filled, other parts of the park have been underused. Engagement sessions uncovered strong sentiment that the park was more accessible and better used prior to 2003, the year Fulton School was rebuilt.

This construction cut off direct access from South Yellow Springs Street making entry harder for pedestrians and farther for all which seriously diminished overall appeal. The basketball courts, for example, are rundown and mostly ignored even as makeshift games pop up throughout the neighborhood. Below are some recommended steps community partners should take to improve the park and its connection the rest of the EN:

- Build and improve pedestrian connections to park at existing street entrances
 - » Build a new pedestrian entrance from South Shaffer Street and connect signage theme to the South Yellow Springs Street brand



- » Ensure pathways are well-maintained and well-lit
- » Bike lane or path as part of the new entrance to connect to Little Miami Trail
- New connections should accommodate future buildings in the South Yellow Springs Business District

Park improvement ambitions should be scaled to accommodate the budget of the National Trail Parks and Recreation District. Community partners should also consider shifting facilities and activities to the potential new facilities like the park illustrated here that could be located along the Little Miami Scenic Trail.

Establish Policies and Programs

Home Improvement Program

Home rehab was identified as a major need throughout the Engaged Neighborhood (EN). A housing improvement program, led by a neighborhood located non-profit, would offer the best opportunities to accomplish community goals including:

- Preserve long-term homeownership
- Promote energy sustainability
- Stabilize property values

This is another instance where nothing can happen without money. However, flexibility in administering and raising funds for the program is also essential. Ideally, the process would allow for a diversity of applicants with clear guidance on the way forward to meet program requirements for funding.

Retain Long-Time Owners

The EN is home to folks who have stayed in their houses even as the neighborhood has changed. Now, many wish to age in place, following developing national trends. Unfortunately, deferred maintenance such as chipped paint, broken hand railings, deficient HVAC systems and water heaters, drafty windows, and aging roofs is common. This

deferral leads to further deterioration, rising home heating and cooling bills, and unsafe conditions. It also creates a circumstance in which some residents struggle to retain ownership which contributes to declining value of nearby properties.

Aging residents often require modifications and improvements to facilitate continued occupancy. These can include handicap ramps, widened doorways, wheelchair-accessible interiors, and even stairlifts or elevators. This program could fund these needs as well.

Creating a fund to finance home improvement and restoration is a primary need. Monies available should be used not only to pay for materials but also the cost of labor. Such a labor force should come, when possible, from area tradesmen and potentially even young helpers looking to learn skills for adult life. These tradesmen may come from the Small Business Incubator.

Incentivize Sustainability Retrofits

Where resource allows, a second home improvement program should focus on sustainability projects such as installing residential solar panels, geothermal heating, grey-water cisterns, and other elements which are additive to home value and increases overall efficiency. These efficiency improvements are designed to not only be achieve broader environmental and sustainability goals but to also reduce on-going energy costs for homeowners.

Funding and Operations

There is potential funding already available from various entities including state, federal and foundations. One originates with government, at the federal, state, or local level. Most are administered through the City's Community Development Office or a non-profit intermediary though some state funds are administered directly at that level. Other potential sources of money are non-profits, individual donors, and foundations.

Specific programs vary and often are competitive yet many support home improvement objectives. Navigating the process can often be time con-

suming, confusing, and frustrating. A potential workaround would be to establish a one-stop-shop which can act as a facilitator and guide for potential applicants.

While funding might come from a variety of sources, there can be a single point of contact for applicants. This is often an administrator, ideally an accountable entity such as the City or housing organization or, a CDC such as 1159 South.

The managing organization should establish an office inside the EN, becoming known to neighborhood residents who will then more clearly see that these programs are for them. This can help some feel comfortable applying for assistance. A neighborhood-based office also can educate on the range of possibilities, build relationships with funders as well as residents, and expedite service as needed.

Objective-Based Zoning Reform

Last revised in 2001, the city's zoning code is well past the need for an update. Barring a complete rewrite, city and community partners should consider the following tweaks to the zoning code:

Rezone South Yellow Springs Street to Facilitate Change

Throughout the first and second workshops conducted, stakeholders consistently chose two business district images that show wide sidewalks, on-street parking, and buildings close to the front lot line. Current zoning prohibits that form of development in the corridor. In revisions of district requirements, special attention should be paid to the following:

- Desired building footprint
 - » Include setback minimums and maximums
- Desired uses
 - » Mixed-Use and Retail with design focus on commercial frontage
 - Clear glazing requirements
 - » Front entrances

- Parking configuration
 - » Require parking in rear
 - » Allow for reductions based on:
 - Mix of uses
 - On-street availability
 - Adjacent and nearby lots
 - » OR: Eliminate minimums
 - » Allow shared parking or use of nearby public spaces
- Signage Standards
 - » Awning/Projecting
 - » Sandwich boards
 - » Other types such as flags and temporary constructions
- Allow Accessory Commercial Units (ACU's)

Modify Residential Zoning to Allow Housing Type Diversity

In general, zoning in this area should allow for townhomes, two, three, and four family buildings. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU), colloquially known as Granny Flats, should be permitted to allow multi-generational housing opportunities. These units also provide an opportunity for rental income through either long or short-term tenancies, again increasing potential homeownership by sharing cost burden.

Consider Comprehensive Zoning Reform

While this report focuses on analysis to drive revitalization within the EN, recommendations herein also may apply to the City overall. Moreover, there are larger macro trends to address, including challenges of climate change, growing housing inequality, increasing remote work, and e-commerce. To better address these issues, city and community leaders should consider comprehensive zoning reform.

IMPLEMENTATION

Plans are not designed to sit on shelves. As reflected in the opening statement of this plan, the intention is for this document to be used as a guide for neighborhood change. The chart on page 93 is a summary outline of the steps, community partners, and actions needed to begin realizing the potential of the Engaged Neighborhood.

It is highly recommended that a steering committee work on developing sub-groups which can meet on a regular basis. Monthly meetings usually work best. Groups should outline clear action steps and build in accountability with follow ups and deadlines.

Overall progress should be measured in years, not months, as these initiatives can take time. Small steps, such as street painting, clean-ups and other tactical “Phase 0” activities can generate quick wins and build momentum if done consistently and intentionally.

Community growth takes time. Celebrate the small wins, reassess setbacks, and practice flexibility. Maintain focus on the long-term vision and resist the temptation to be led astray by half-measures. The Engaged Neighborhood can and should be a vibrant, diverse, and desirable place for this generation and those to come.



PUTTING THE PLAN TOGETHER

The consulting team began work in the Engaged Neighborhood (EN) in the summer of 2020.

Gathering Information

The team gathered both data and opinions to start the planning process.

Data sources included:

- United States Census
- ESRI
- Housing in the Champion City from the Greater Ohio Policy Center
- Clark County Auditor & GIS service
- City of Springfield

The team made multiple site visits, documenting the built environment with photographs and evaluating occupancy and building condition throughout the area.

The team also took measurements of street curbs and sidewalks to develop maps and illustrations for urban design.

Online Engagement Platform

Collection of opinions and resident information began with a website launched on December 11, 2020, using the platform Bang the Table.

The website was designed to facilitate two-way communication; users could view ideas and plans the team had developed thus far and offer feedback and ideas for improving the neighborhood. Content was divided into sections, each containing topic-specific information as well as tools to share opinions and feedback. These included mapping exercises, surveys, and forum discussions.

The consulting team, City staff, and key stakeholders promoted the website both via social media and email blasts, as well as physically. City staff hung posters in municipal buildings and mailed postcards to residents in the EN. Those postcards

gave the website address as well as a City phone number in case a paper survey form was preferred. This helped ensure that all residents were notified of Workshop #1 and had opportunity to provide input regardless of technological capabilities.

“People in this community aren’t transactional. They need relationships. When they need services, they go to someone they trust. It’s relationship first.”

-Workshop #1 Participant

Workshop 1

Engagement began in Fall of 2020 as COVID-19 presented barriers to in-person connections, the team had to adjust.

Consequently, the first workshop became a series of Zoom meetings. 29 individuals, businesses, and organizations participated in six virtual sessions throughout October and November, during which participants:

- Mapped community assets, challenges, and opportunities
- Discussed policies and programs
- Engaged in visual preference surveys for various aspects of the neighborhood



Discussion between stakeholders during Workshop 1.

An estimated 80 community members attended this open house-style gathering. Participants viewed draft recommendations and had one-on-one conversations with consulting team members. 33 participants completed surveys at the event, and a further 19 completed the online version.

Feedback on recommendations was largely positive, with the Small Business Incubator and Home Improvement Program being among the most well-received.

Community input received at that workshop was used in refining plan components to align with community desires.



Community members review boards at Workshop 2 in Grand Harmony Park.

“How do you get people to believe again? Its all about restoring hope.”

-Workshop #1 Participant

Workshop 3

Workshop 3 was an in-person presentation and discussion on October 9, 2021, at Covenant United Methodist Church.

There were some 50 attendees at the two-hour workshop, during which the consulting team and community partners presented four proposed initiatives from the final plan.

Neal Browning of 1159 South Community Development Corporation and Dorian Hunter of Young Black Professionals & Businesses spoke as community partners and Steve Thompson, Cheryl Dover, and Aaron Clark spoke on behalf of the City of Springfield.

Each initiative was presented by the consulting team or community partner, after which attendees took part in questions, answers, and discussion.

Input received during this workshop was used to make final adjustments to recommendations.



Neal Browning, of 1159 South speaks about small businesses during Workshop 3.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Area

Covering about 222 acres in Springfield, the Phase II area is bounded by West Pleasant, Perrin, South Yellow Springs, and Center Streets.

Until the 1950's, South Yellow Springs Street was home to a bustling, mostly minority-owned commercial district. Today, few businesses remain, but those present are fixtures of the community.

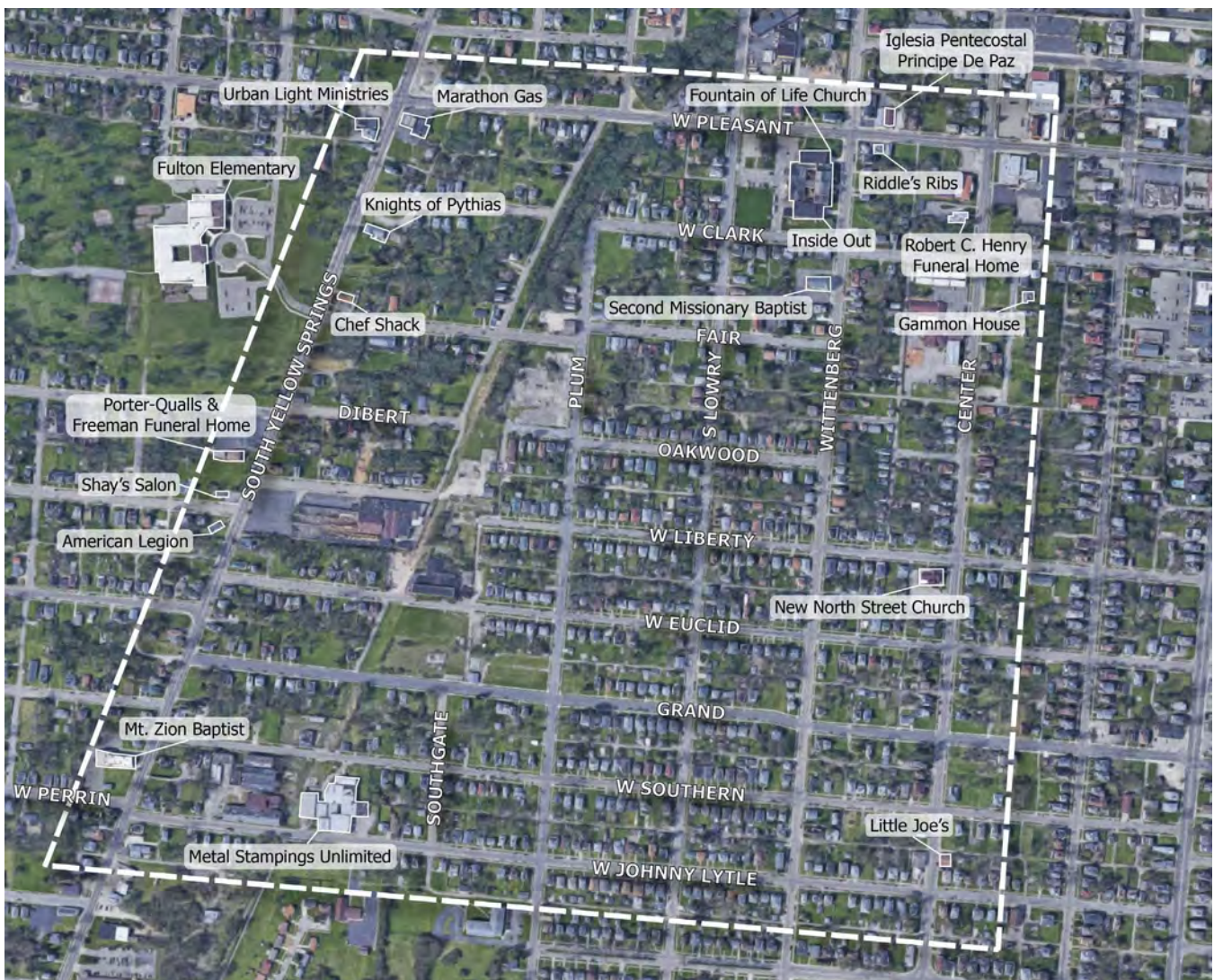
The Little Miami Scenic Trail runs the length of the neighborhood along former industrial land. Demolition of warehouses and manufacturing buildings has left large vacant swaths of cleared though potentially contaminated land in the center of the

neighborhood. Environmental assessments have not been conducted for many of the sites so possible future uses remain undetermined.

Housing stock in this area consists mostly of wood-frame structures with roofed front porches. Condition ranges from impeccable to severe disrepair.

Vacancy is a defining feature of the neighborhood with 35% of homes, an unfortunately high percentage, considered vacant or deteriorated.

Generally, the condition of street asphalt is fair. Sidewalks also are fair overall though many small places are deficient.



The street network is largely well connected, although several running east-west are interrupted by the Little Miami Scenic Trail (previously railroad tracks). Interestingly, many east-west streets do not cross South Yellow Springs Street directly, resulting in an inordinate number of offset intersections and making crossing South Yellow Springs challenging for pedestrians.

The neighborhood also has a robust alley network which allows for garages and parking to be placed behind houses, although most alleys are not paved.

Demographics

According to the American Community Survey (ACS) 2015-2019 estimates, the total population of the area is 2,043 in 766 households. Average household size is 2.75 and the median age is 33.2 years.

47% of the population is white, 40.8% are Black or African American, and 8.9% are two or more races.

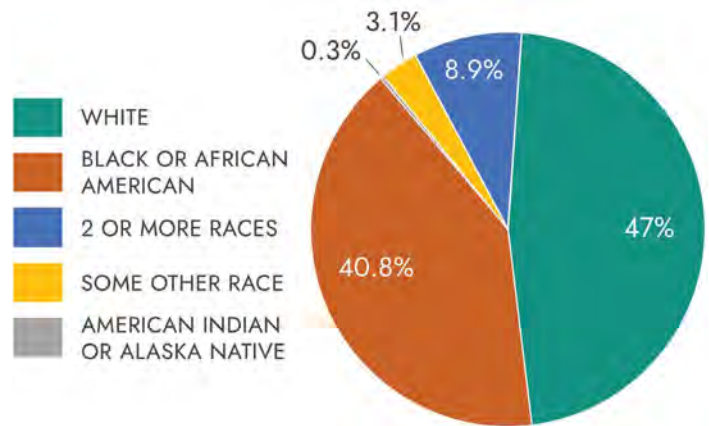
The median household income in this area is \$33,488, significantly below the Clark County median of \$50,873. Over a fifth of the households in the study area make less than \$20,000 per year. Just 6.4% of households earn more than \$100,000 annually. 31.6% of households have income below the poverty level.

44% of residents have high school diplomas or GEDs, 27% have some college, 8.4% have a bachelor's degree, and 2.1% have a graduate or professional degree.

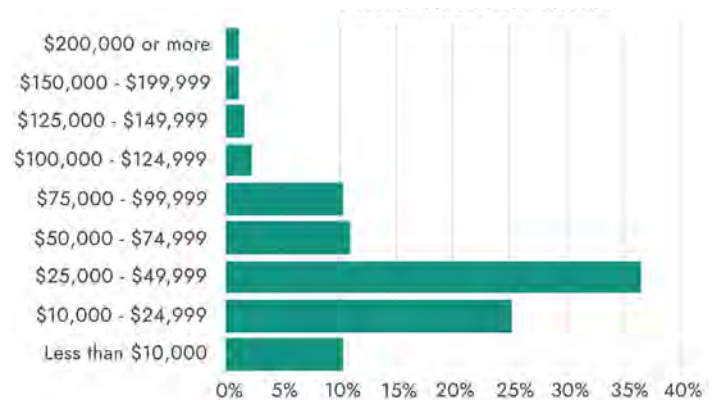
The unemployment rate for the area is 8.6%, compared to an overall rate of 7.6% in Springfield as a whole. Of those employed, 54% work in service and other blue-collar industries, and 46% work in white-collar industries.

*Data from the American Community Surveys is compiled from a survey of a select sample representative of community population. Projections note a 5-year trend of changes from the 2010 decennial census. The Census Bureau has stated a 90% confidence level in data used from these surveys.

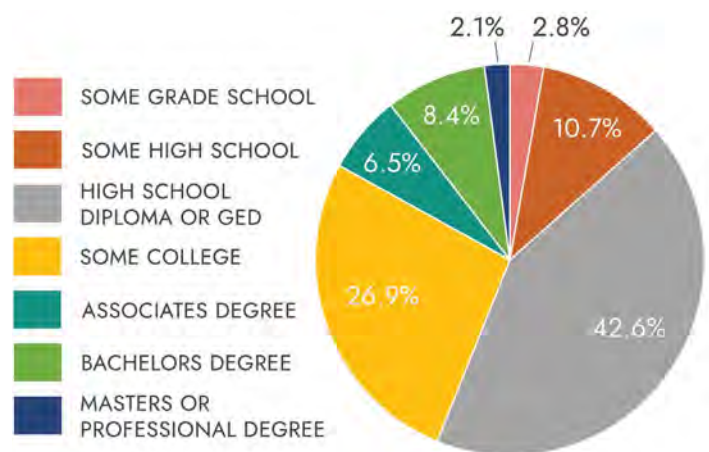
RACE

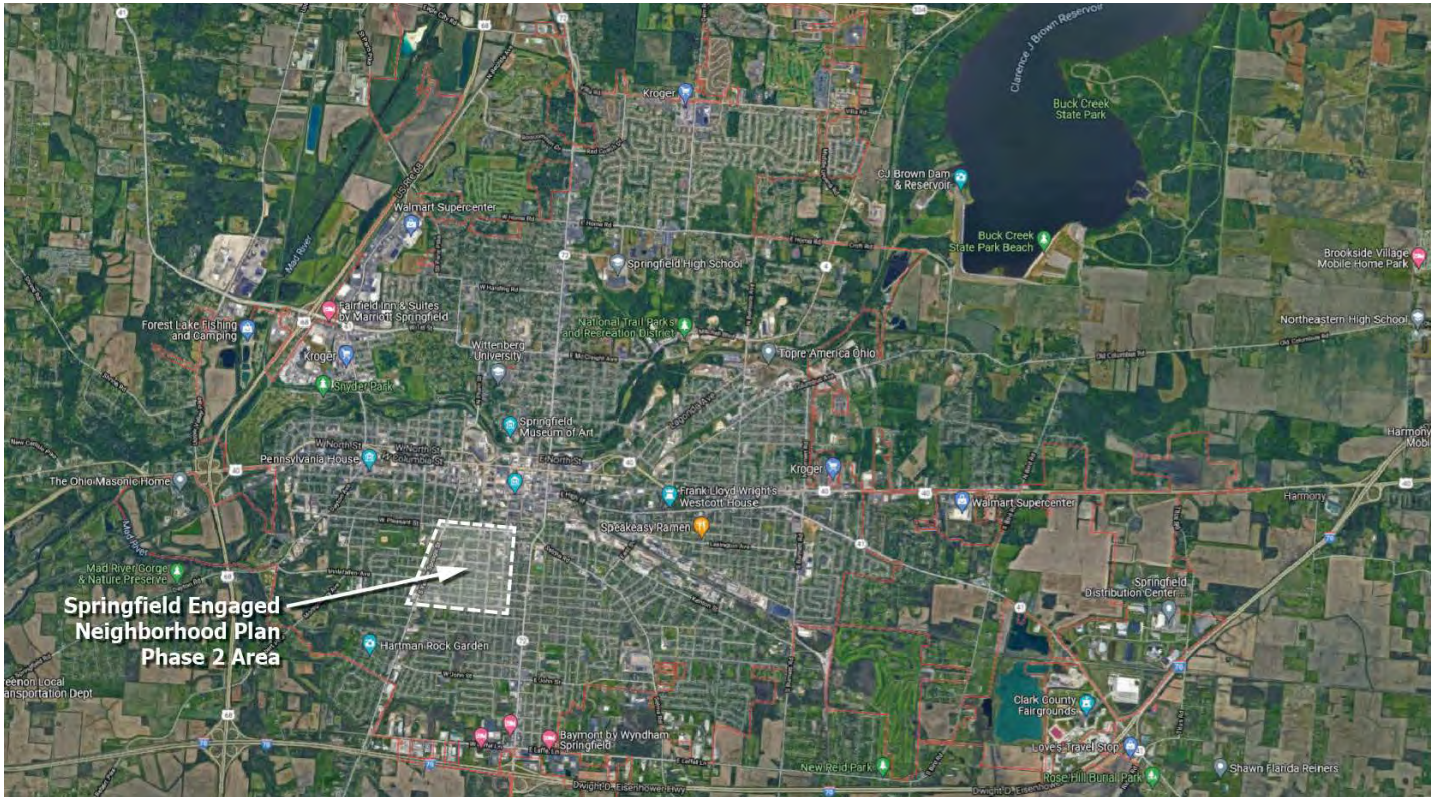


MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME



EDUCATION LEVEL





Housing

ACS 2015-2019 estimates show 1,130 housing units in this area. Nearly 75% are single-family, 21% are 2-4 family structures, and 3% are 5+ units. 766 (68%) of the units are occupied, with the rest vacant.

About 42% of the housing units in this neighborhood are owner-occupied with 58% rental homes. The median gross rent is \$730/month.

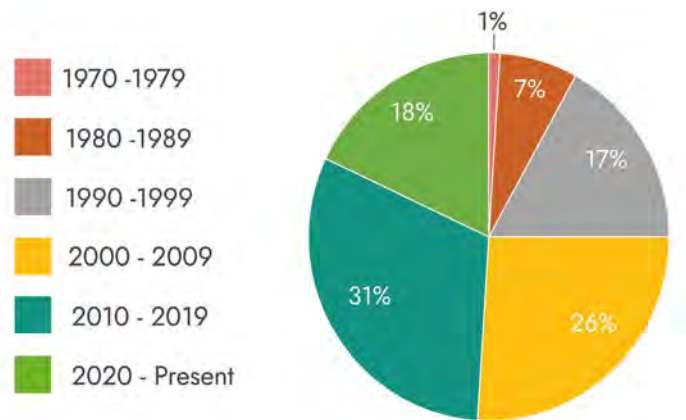
The majority of houses, almost 80%, were built before 1939. Only 6.6% were built after the year 2000.

More than half of the homeowners in this neighborhood have owned their home for 11+ years. 25% have owned longer than 20 years.

Businesses

According to ESRI's Business Analyst, there are currently 16 active businesses in the EN with a total of

DECADE OF OWNERSHIP

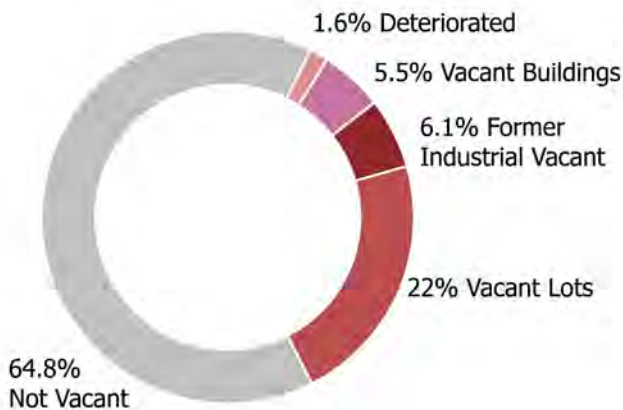


112 employees. The business types include restaurants (3), funeral homes (2), childcare services (2), salons and barbershops (2), services (2), retail (1), convenience store/gas station (1), trucking (1), and manufacturing (1).

Some businesses are home-based while others have physical brick-and-mortar locations along South Yellow Springs Street and elsewhere. It is possible that there are additional unrecognized businesses operating in homes.

Vacancy

The consulting team analyzed the entire planning area, evaluating all 1,241 parcels and each structure. Generally, vacant parcels were identifiable, as were most empty buildings. However, there were some structures that appeared uninhabitable but were ultimately discovered to be occupied. Such structures, along with those of indeterminate occupancy status, were labeled deteriorated.



Based on land area:

- 1.6% deteriorated buildings (appear vacant)
- 5.5% verified vacant buildings
- 6.1% vacant former industrial land
- 22% vacant land

In all, 35.2% of the Phase II planning area can be considered vacant or deteriorated.

Property Values

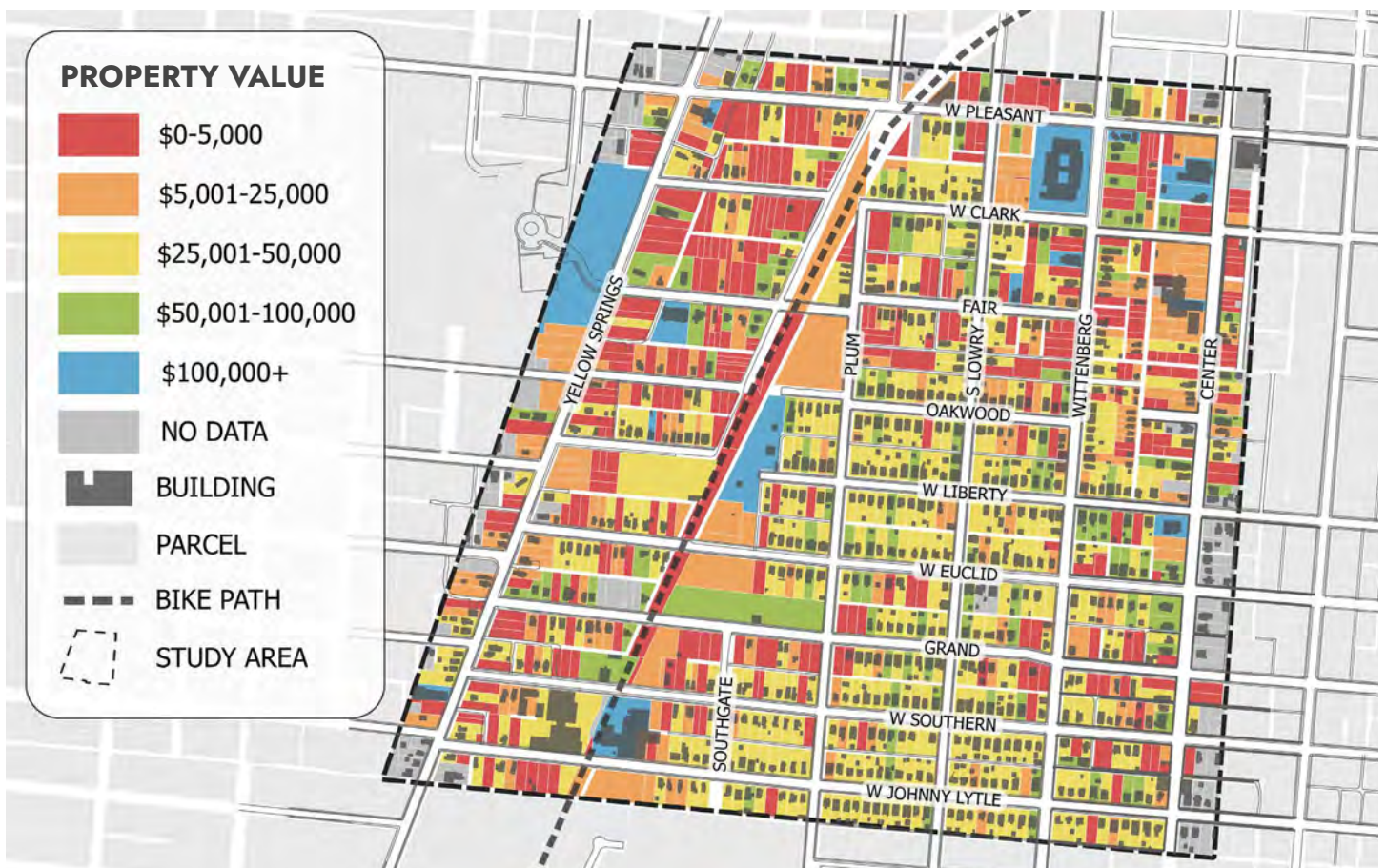
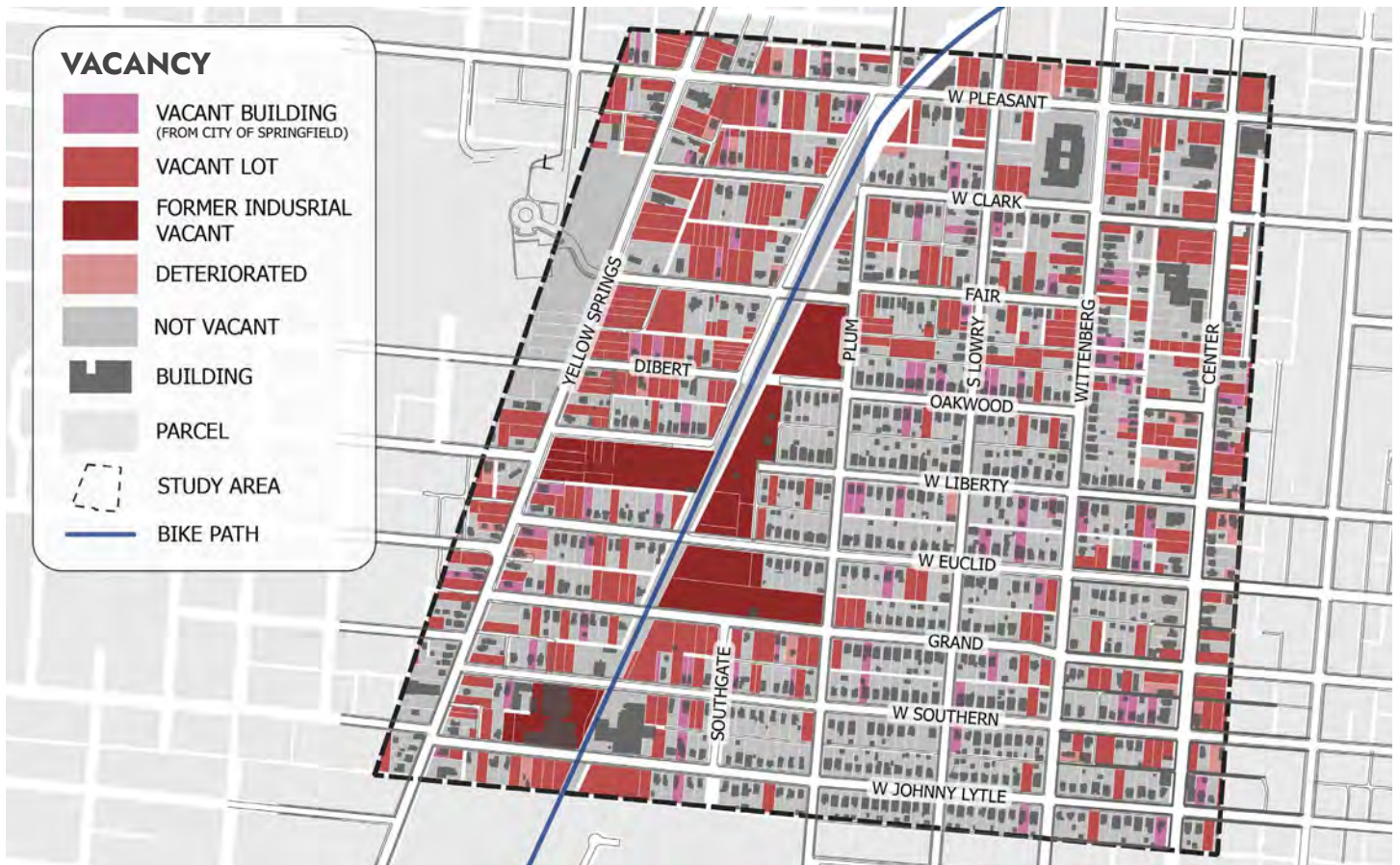
The team created a map of property values using data from the Clark County Auditor:

- Average parcel value: \$37,085
- 333 parcels (20.7% of total land area) valued under \$5,000
- 401 parcels (28.9% of total land area) valued between \$25,000 and \$49,999
- Only 13 parcels (11% of total land area) valued over \$100,000

Note: 165 parcels did not have property value information available.



The large vacant lot between Euclid and Grand is now a sunflower field.



THE INITIATIVES

Build Capacity:

1. Identify Resources – Public and Private Investment
2. Create a Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI)
3. Empower Community Development Corporations (CDCs) to Lead
4. Reestablish an Inclusive Neighborhood Association

Rebuild a Neighborhood Business District:

5. Create a Community Business Center
6. Strengthen the Neighborhood Business District

Redevelop Vacant Lots:

7. Redevelop Small Vacant Lots Throughout the Neighborhood
8. Redevelop Larger Lots

Strengthen Connections Between Recreation Assets:

9. Improve the Little Miami Scenic Trail
10. Strengthen Connections to Davey Moore Park

Establish Policies and Programs:

11. Home Improvement Program
12. Objective-Based Zoning Reform

THE INITIATIVES: BUILD CAPACITY

- 1. Identify Resources – Public and Private Investment**
- 2. Create a Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI)**
- 3. Empower Community Development Corporations (CDCs) to Lead**
- 4. Reestablish an Inclusive Neighborhood Association**

IDENTIFY RESOURCES - PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT

What:

Develop a list of potential funding sources, grants and programs

Why:

To build connections with funders, resource for implementation and further action

Who:

1159 South
The City of Springfield
Philanthropies
Banks/lending institutions

When:

Within the first six months of plan adoption, and then ongoing as implementation proceeds

Where:

N/A

How:

Consolidate existing information, develop database

Progress requires diverse funding.

By whatever means and potentially from a variety of sources, the community will need financial support for even the smallest initiatives in this plan.

The Engaged Neighborhood (EN) is eligible for a range of public and/or tax-supported financing structures, especially for development projects, as well as private funding.

The first step is to begin to identify potential sources for that funding, working with City officials, local philanthropies, potential backers, and lending institutions.



Progress is often best shown with new construction.

CREATE A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INSTITUTION (CDFI)

<p>What:</p> <p>Create a Springfield fund. Have existing regional CDFI manage or create non-profit to manage fund; should pursue certification within a few years</p>
<p>Why:</p> <p>The EN needs a funding partner that can help existing CDCs in financing catalytic projects</p>
<p>Who:</p> <p>Springfield financial institutions</p>
<p>When:</p> <p>Within the first year of plan adoption</p>
<p>Where:</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>How:</p> <p>Recruit financing commitments from local lenders; Connect with existing CDFIs for advice on fund creation and management</p>

Building a high-functioning CDFI is critical for the community to drive its ambitions forward.

A multivarious financing tool which has been employed to great success by other communities is the establishment of a Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI).

A CDFI is a non-profit, private financial entity which is entirely focused on providing capital (both loans and grants) to underserved communities for housing, small businesses, and community-driven projects. CDFI's should be profitable but should also put the needs of the community first before maximizing profits.

CDFIs tackle traditionally risky projects by combining loan funds, leveraging public financing, and utilizing tax credits. They often provide patient capital and gap financing for projects deemed too risky by more conventional lenders. The nature of such financing allows them to apply flexible underwriting standards.

A local CDFI can provide a variety of different tools to existing



A project under construction funded through Cincinnati's CDFI, the Cincinnati Development Fund.

homeowners, rehabbers, and other small-scale developers such as:

- Assist with gap financing for owner-occupied renovations,
- Support low down payments for new homeowners,
- Offer predevelopment funds
- Provide construction financing for development projects.

Depending on how constituted, a CDFI may be able to make grants as well as loans.

For example, the Cincinnati Development Fund (CDF) can function in this way. According to a recent report from the Cincinnati Business Courier, CDF has secured \$50 million in commitments for an Affordable Housing Fund. CDF President Joe Huber said in a statement, "The basic math of affordable housing means there are funding gaps to fill on every project. Blending capital from diverse sources into a coordinated suite of lending products that can supplement or be an alternative to existing funding programs is essential to accelerating production of affordable housing in the region."

Local CDFIs can be both partner and negotiator with the City, helping to leverage and maximize the potential of tax abatements, Community Development Block Grants, Tax Credit funding, Heritage

Funds, and Department of Transportation allocations among others.

With low-cost gap financing from a CDFI, those who might not be willing to invest could be incentivized to assume greater risk. A local CDFI could fund high-impact projects including residential, commercial, and mixed-use developments, as well as a business incubator and public gathering spaces.

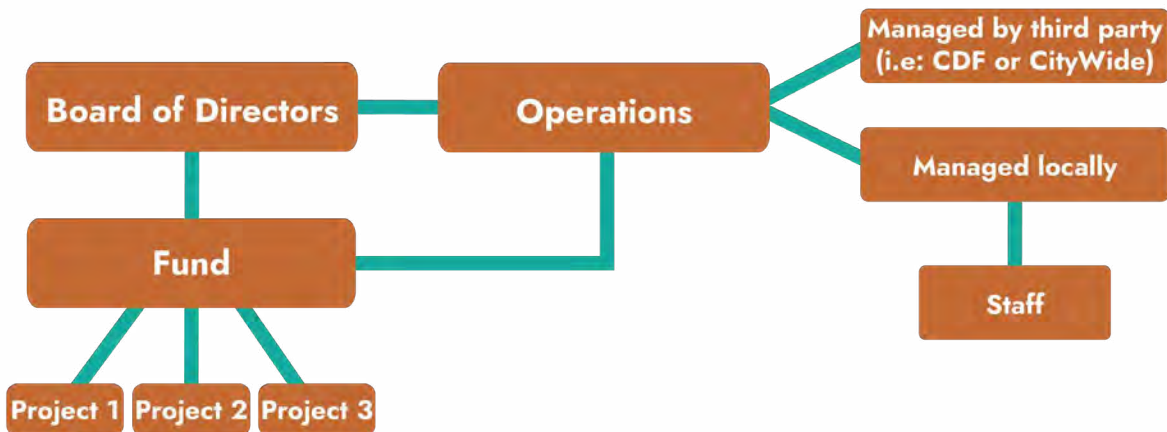
To begin, **Springfield's financial institutions should pool resources into an initial fund of \$5 million.** Creation of a fund for the southside of Springfield is critical. Money from the initial \$5 million fund can be used in both the Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas and ideally would be committed not later than the end of 2022.

This local fund could be managed by an existing CDFI, or a new entity created locally. The City of Springfield is currently in the process of becoming a CDFI Friendly Community. This status may allow Springfield development projects to be marketed to CDFIs across the country for investment.

Please see Appendix pages 95 - 98 for more information on how to create a CDFI.

Additional resources also can be found here: <https://www.cdfifund.gov/>

STRUCTURE OF A CDFI



CASE STUDY: THE NORTHERN KENTUCKY CATALYTIC DEVELOPMENT FUND

Covington, Kentucky

Purpose

In 2005, Northern Kentucky's regional economic development plan, Vision 2015, identified a need for investment in the 5 urban communities of Covington, Newport, Bellevue, Ludlow, and Dayton which faced poverty and economic distress at levels higher than the region overall.

In 2008 the Catalytic Fund was created to provide low-cost, gap financing and public subsidies that would, in turn, incentivize developers to invest in these communities.

Investors

Between 2009 and 2012, the Catalytic Fund capitalized an initial \$10,000,000 Investor Fund through commitments received from ten banks, corporations, and foundations.

- PNC Bank
- Bank of Kentucky
- Central Bank
- First Financial Bank
- Fifth Third Bank
- US Bank
- Corporex
- Duke Energy Foundation
- Carol Ann & Ralph V. Haile Jr./US Bank Foundation
- Greater Cincinnati Foundation

The Catalytic Fund was certified as a CDFI in 2015 and became a Community Development Entity (CDE) in 2016. Since then, the company has added five new investors and received several CDFI Financial Assistance grants.

Today, the Catalytic Fund has a \$14,500,000 Investor Fund and a \$1,300,000 Flexible



Capital Pool to invest in high-impact real estate development projects.

The fifteen investors provided capital in the form of long-term, low-interest loans. Investors participate in each Catalytic Fund transaction on a pro-rata basis. As Catalytic Fund investments are repaid, the principal is returned to the Investor Fund and recycled for future transactions. There is no limit on the size of the Investor Fund and new participants are welcomed. *

Impact

Since capitalization in 2013, the Catalytic Fund has deployed \$10,700,000 in the form of loans, grants, and equity investments and provided development services to advance some 50 projects.

These projects represent \$286,000,000 in total investment, multiplying Catalytic Fund dollars by 26 times. *

Thus far, the Catalytic fund has delivered:

- 703 new residential units
- 639,000 square feet of tenant-ready commercial space
- Preservation of 39 historic buildings

*From www.thecatalyticfund.org

EMPOWER COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS (CDCs) TO LEAD

<p>What: Build capacity for CDCs to accomplish mission</p>	<p>High-functioning Community Development Corporations (CDC) often are at the heart of development momentum.</p> <p>A CDC can convene community conversations around development, activating sites, placemaking, and other essential community goals. It can then take action to move toward agreed initiatives.</p>
<p>Why: CDCs can enact change based on neighborhood vision</p>	<p>The Planning Team and community stakeholders identified an effective and inclusive CDC as a critical EN component in Phase 1. It is no less essential for Phase 2.</p> <p>The chart on page 35 identifies some of the overarching objectives of a CDC. One of the most useful is the capacity to acquire land and hold it in the interest of the community. Improving transit access, jump-starting affordable housing development, and other real estate-based initiatives are generally more achievable when the community already has site control of key parcels.</p>
<p>Who: 1159 South South Fountain Preservation</p>	<p>Capacity and resources vary. Some organizations have formed funding partnerships. Others have brought in development entities, recruited businesses, and fostered growth in a range of ways.</p>
<p>When: Ongoing</p>	<p>But it is rare for a community to achieve long-term success without a CDC or similar strong, narrowly focused development entity.</p>
<p>Where: Within the Engaged Neighborhood</p>	<p>Within the Engaged Neighborhood (EN) there currently are at least two nonprofit community development groups operating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• South Fountain Preservation Association<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Works primarily along South Fountain Avenue and surrounding blocks• 1159 South<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Works in the neighborhoods that share South Yellow Springs Street
<p>How: Financing, staffing, ongoing community support and engagement</p>	<p>Collaboration between these two, deeply invested organizations, would benefit both sides of the EN, especially if a shared vision could be developed and implemented.</p>

CDCs working in the EN might take on some or all the following activities:

- Develop real estate, acquire land, obtain financing/incur debt, hire designers, engineers, architects, and general contractors to construct buildings and gathering spaces
- Recruit real estate developers to undertake projects
- Own and manage property for public and private use including commercial and mixed-use buildings, public plazas, parks, and parking among other initiatives
- Program public places with events, live music, food trucks, and community events
- Act as conduit for funding
- Make things happen. Work with City, county, state, regional, and federal lenders/funders; promote the area through partners and emissaries such as Chamber of Commerce, Visit Springfield, and others as well as through social media



The unveiling of 1159 South's Inspiration Garden Park on October 9, 2021. The park includes a Youth Walk of Fame honoring the excellence of seven south Springfield youth.



1159 South: A Timeline

2019

September

- Incorporated by Lawrence Beavers and Lori Searcy on August 9, 2019.
- CultureFest Meet - shares suggestions to improve South Springfield.



2020

March

Announces acquisition of 4 vacant lots from landbank.

August

- Grand Harmony and Innisfallen Inspiration Garden groundbreaking.
- Grand Harmony chosen as 2020 AARP Community Challenge grant recipient.

December

Receives grant from Springfield Foundation for Innisfallen Inspiration Garden.

2021

January

Receives grant from NiSource/Columbia Gas of Ohio to create a Youth Walk of Fame.

March

Receives a \$5,000 grant from Crabill Family Foundation for Grand Harmony and Innisfallen Inspiration Garden.

May

Crabill Family Foundation funds Rebuilding Blocks Housing Improvement Program.

October

Innisfallen Inspiration Garden unveiling.

November

- Receives grant from Community Health Foundation to be used with Crabill funds for housing rehab project.
- Becomes part of SBA Community Navigator Pilot Program through the SBDC.

December

Advertises for hiring Housing Rehabilitation Coordinator.

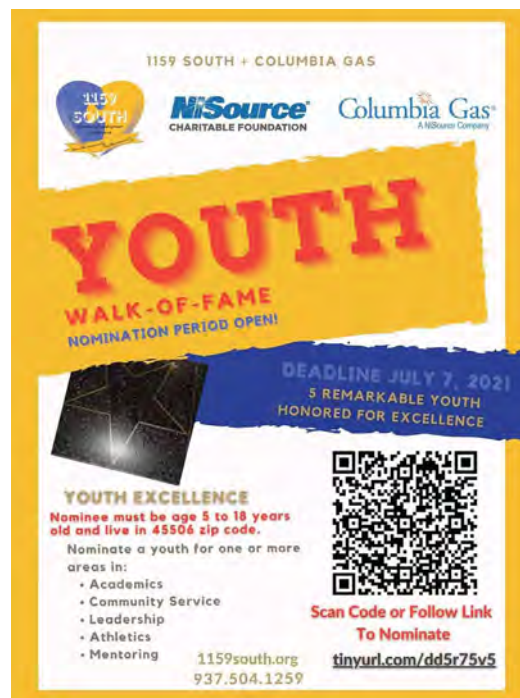


Photo Credit: 1159 South Facebook

REESTABLISH AN INCLUSIVE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

<p>What:</p> <p>Create an organization of neighborhood residents and businesses which can act as a neighborhood forum</p>	<p>CDCs often work in coordination with Neighborhood Associations. These are action-oriented groups run by volunteers from the area, usually membership-based. Regular formal meetings, officers, and a committee structure are usual elements. Such an organization can be a go-to community body, more accessible to residents, and consistently attuned to their concerns.</p>
<p>Why:</p> <p>Establish a collective voice, help build community and pride, and take action</p>	<p>Residents may feel their concerns are unique or even unwarranted whereas, in reality, those concerns may be held by many, even most, of their neighbors. If one person feels it, chances are others do as well. A Neighborhood Association can gather those issues and knit them into a far-reaching and accepted solution.</p>
<p>Who:</p> <p>Southside residents</p>	<p>People within the Engaged Neighborhood (EN) are very disconnected at present. Even for those who would like to be more involved, or simply to know more, there are few meaningful opportunities or information sources. The EN used to have a neighborhood association, but it ceased operating years ago. A neighborhood association should be reestablished now to capitalize on momentum created by the EN planning process and to help guide the local CDCs, government agencies, and other interested influential partners through the next several, critical years.</p>
<p>When:</p> <p>Within the first six months of plan adoption</p>	<p>The value of connection is demonstrable. Residents who know each other are more likely to also care about one another. They are more invested in their local businesses, City, and region. Residents who work together are more powerful; they have influence at City Hall, with businesses, and with property owners. They are better patrons and employees of local businesses because they feel pride of ownership.</p>
<p>Where:</p> <p>Within the Engaged Neighborhood</p>	<p>A Neighborhood Association could meet regularly to discuss crime and safety issues, provide input on zoning variance requests by developers, and request funds from public or private sources. It could initiate neighborhood clean-up days, festivals, and events for kids.</p>
<p>How:</p> <p>Organize a meeting of neighbors at a community space or virtually</p>	<p>A Neighborhood Association for the EN also could receive regular updates from organizations such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Police• City services• Faith-based institutions

- Library
- School system and the Dome
- National Trails
- Gammon House

Please see Appendix pages 100 - 116 for more information on how to create a Neighborhood Association.

Perhaps the most important benefit of a Neighborhood Association is simply to be a forum in which to meet and discuss issues with others working toward a positive outcome for the area.

NA's may charge a small fee to cover basic operations, events, and other initiatives they may undertake. At as low as perhaps \$10.00 a year, 100 members would yield \$1000.00, likely adequate as startup monies. The City also supports NAs with small reimbursable grants.

The ideas put forth in this plan will not implement themselves. They need tenacious stewards to drive change forward. A strong, inclusive neighborhood association can be a key component of future success.

What Does a Neighborhood Association Do?

- Discuss crime and safety
- Provide input on zoning issues
- Request funds from public or private sources
- Plan neighborhood events
- Recieve updates from local organizations



A neighborhood association meeting in the Cincinnati neighborhood of Walnut Hills.

Photo Credit: Walnut Hills Area Council

THE INITIATIVES: REBUILD A NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS DISTRICT

5. Create a Small Business Incubator

**6. Strengthen the Neighborhood
Business District**

CREATE A COMMUNITY BUSINESS CENTER

What:

Develop a campus for creation and growth of small local business and trades

Why:

To spur commercial jobs along South Yellow Springs Street, create jobs, grow community and generational wealth

Who:

Young Black Professionals and Businesses, 1159 South Small Business Development Center, City of Springfield, Concious Connect

When:

Within the first year of plan adoption

Where:

Proximate to South Yellow Springs Street

How:

Resource + Capacity + Land/Building

Stakeholders from Workshops 1 and 2 overwhelmingly expressed the need for greater economic opportunity. This sentiment was especially strong on behalf of those who want to own a business in order to control their future, establish economic independence, and/or seed generational wealth.

Stakeholders noted that some residents already run home-based businesses and others wish to. Many however need financial and technical assistance to grow, potentially moving out of their homes and into the wider marketplace.

Establishment of a thriving small business is difficult. Many have ambitions but limited access to space and training. **A neighborhood center with small business incubator space, located in Springfield's southside and developed to support the professional ambitions of area residents, would give practical support to entrepreneurial ambitions.**

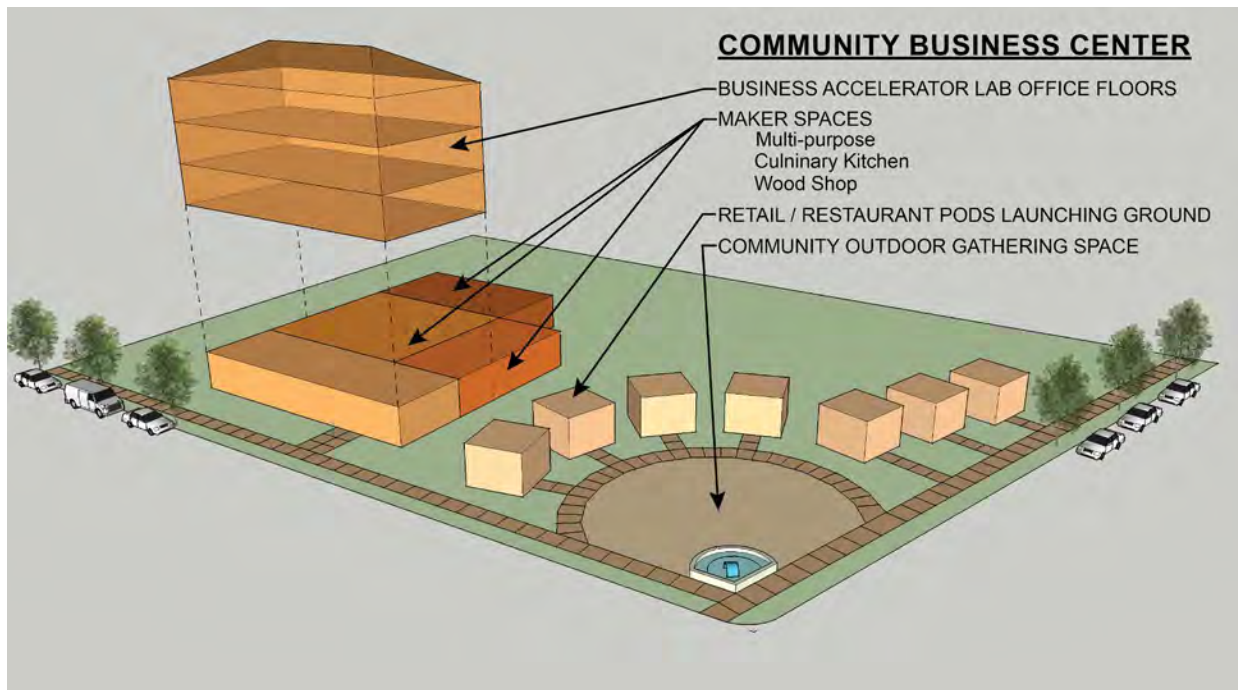
This will not be a community center in the traditional sense. Rather than a space to host boy scout meetings and basketball games, this center will be home to entrepreneurs learning to start or grow their small businesses.

Such an incubator could nurture and develop existing businesses. It also could create an inviting, proximate community space where Southside residents might learn trades, crafts, and other skills. Such a hive of collaborative activity could not only give each nascent business owner the best chance for success but also help serve as a neighborhood gathering place.

A new Community Business Center could provide the catalyst for a resurgent Neighborhood Business District on South Yellow Springs Street. Business districts are ecosystems of retailers, restaurants, services, and other consumer-facing enterprises. Some of the best weave together a sense of place and experience through architecture, street design, branding, and layout.

The Community Business Center should include a variety of components, potentially including:

- » **Business Training and Accelerator Lab**
- » **Makerspaces**
- » **Retail and Restaurant Launching Ground**
- » **Community Gathering Space**



To create, enhance or recreate their business district, the community should invest in initiatives to seed and nurture entrepreneurs within the community now and those who might discover it later and contribute to future prosperity.

Business Training and Accelerator Lab

This would be a series of classroom-style seminars, scheduled at times convenient to budding entrepreneurs and designed to introduce, coach, and



Example of a co-working space.
Photo Credit: Invictus Office Center

prepare participants for success.

Classes could include developing and refining a business plan, proposal writing, using accounting software, leasing premises, marketing, employment practices, fundamental contract law, and other business training.

The Accelerator Lab could also have co-working space. Usually, this includes open and sometimes closed offices with desks, wired and wireless internet connections, and video-conference capabilities. Print centers are a key amenity and operations might include sign-making capability as well.

Guest speakers and classes, either in-person or virtual, would provide a wide range of coaching expertise. Scheduling of all forms of assistance, including office hours, needs to recognize that working people often need to pursue their growth ambitions outside banker's hours.

Even in an early, bare-bones stage, an Accelerator Lab needs a director focused on daily management and operations. These tasks include ensuring the facility is well maintained, that seminars are programmed, participants recruited and member activities productive and supportive.

Such a director would be a paid employee, which means funding must be secured from the beginning. But ongoing fundraising would then become a part of their job.

There also needs to be continuing focus on outcomes and benchmarking. The goal is to create a program and environment which, while welcoming, is consistently objective-oriented. That goal, in simplest form, is to provide resources to small business owners so that they can stabilize and grow their businesses.

Anything which does not contribute to that is non-essential.

Makerspaces

Springfield needs businesses for people who work with their hands. A flexible space containing equipment to build things, a Makerspace can be an invaluable resource for those working in, or hoping to learn about, construction, electronics, and/or handcraft industries.

One of the most common elements is a woodworking shop with table saws, routing tables, drill press, sander, and other tools. Such shops often require introductory classes to train in safely handling professional grade equipment.

Other Makerspace uses might include ceramics/pottery studios, sewing and upholstery, hacker-



A pottery studio could be part of a maker's space.

Photo Credit: Belger Arts Center



Culinary kitchen for entrepreneurs.

spaces devoted to circuit and electronics crafting, and 3D printing.

By providing equipment which may be beyond the reach for a startup or small entrepreneur, Makerspaces offer access to capabilities which otherwise may be beyond the reach of a small entrepreneur.

The Makerspace could also include a culinary kitchen.

This installation would require substantial forward planning but could transform food offerings in the Engaged Neighborhood (EN) and throughout Springfield.

Typically, these spaces include stoves with vented hoods and professional-grade fire protection systems as well as three-phase electrical and gas. Culinary kitchens can include a variety of additional options including cold rooms, storage, walk-in freezers, and fridge as well as prep space.

Such enterprises work well in business incubators where small operators share space with similar startups. Food entrepreneurs can cross-pollinate ideas for cuisine, restaurant space, marketing, and other business-related aspects.

Participants might include those hoping to open a restaurant, bakers, caterers, and packaged food producers among others.

Retail and Restaurant Launching Ground

The goal always is to graduate budding entrepreneurs from the incubator programs but sometimes the question is ‘graduate them to what?’.

A natural outgrowth of the culinary and business development programs, **The Launching Ground would be a collection of small retail and restaurant spaces, between 200 to 400 square feet each, which retailers and restaurateurs could use to work on proof of concept and scale operations prior to moving into a full bricks-and-mortar location.**

Research has shown that frequently, even with strong Incubator support, entrepreneurs (especially those food-based) need time and bridging assistance to make the big and expensive leap into their own restaurant or storefront. For these, the Launching Ground can be an essential interim step.

For the wider community, it is an exciting place in which to discover, assist and celebrate operators on the way up.

The Launching Ground should have space for outdoor dining in season, good access, and high visibility as it is likely to become a destination for community residents and visitors. Ideally there also would be easy access to the Little Miami Scenic Trail as another potential source of patrons.



Retail with outside seating and dining space.



A community gathering space can include amenities that bring people together.



A community gathering space can be used to host festivals and events for the neighborhood.

Community Gathering Space

The Community Gathering Space, also mentioned later, would provide an outdoor park or plaza where the community can see the businesses from the Business Incubator come alive. The gathering space could be used for weekly events such as weekend sales, live music lunches, or small festivals. These events, and the space itself, would promote the Business Incubator and make it more approachable.

CASE STUDY: THE FOUNDRY

Buffalo, NY

A former commercial laundry in Buffalo, New York is now home to a thriving business incubator and makerspace for entrepreneurs, students, and creators. What began in 2012 as Megan McNally locating her woodworking business in an otherwise empty building has grown into **35 tenants, 4 makerspaces, and a host of classes and programs.**

Business Incubation

An average of 30 maker businesses occupies The Foundry every year. Space is available starting at \$75/month. Spaces range from 75 to 500 square feet for one-year leases with the option to renew.

In addition to premises, business owners have access to connections, mentoring, local support services, business classes and workshops, and access to The Foundry's four well equipped makerspaces.



“What we specialize in is the entrepreneur who... isn't quite ready to be on their own completely.”

- Megan McNally, Executive Director of The Foundry

McNally says “We get people asking all the time - Oh I don't have any skills...is that okay? That's the target person we are looking for. Somebody who's never done something before and has always wanted to try it.”



The Foundry has four makerspaces available for public use.

Photo Credit: The Foundry

Makerspaces

In 2016, the Foundry merged with a tech makerspace and opened its woodshop, metal shop, and textile lab. Foundry tenants have access to these spaces at an additional fee. Today the space is made available regularly as a community resource on a pay-as-you-can donation model.

Education, Empowerment, and Employment

The Foundry offers technical classes for adults including woodshop, sewing, laser cutting, metal shop, and 3D printing. Tuition ranges from \$40-\$80 per class. Students also can take part in afterschool programs focused on entrepreneurship, technology, art, and manufacturing. Job training partnerships, part time employment and job shadowing opportunities are available to interested students.

Find out more about The Foundry at www.thefoundrybuffalo.org

CASE STUDY: NASHVILLE ARTS AND INVENTION GALLERY & IDEA HATCHERY

Nashville, TN

In 2000, entrepreneurs Meg and Bret MacFadyen moved their design/build company, focusing on scenery and staging film, television and videos, to a warehouse in East Nashville. In the new location a front gallery space, highlighting works by local, regional and national artists was added and business quickly grew.

In 2004, the MacFaydens launched an Arts Festival and in 2007 partnered to create the I Dream of Weenie hotdog stand, which operated out of a small bus near the warehouse.

In 2011, the couple opened the Idea Hatchery, a business incubator adjacent to the original warehouse. **The project offered 8 small 'hatches', retail spaces for lease at below-market prices. The modular structures, arranged as pods, ranged from 168 to 320 square feet.** They were designed to be moveable should the site ever be cleared for redevelopment.



"The Hatchery is a perfect spot to test out concepts and gain sea legs before opting for ...an expanded footprint....a great go-between from online/out of the house to stand alone brick and mortar."

- Yelp Reviewer

Quirky and with a very loose design concept, the Idea Hatchery was immediately popular. Low rents allowed small independent businesses to flourish by plugging into nearby neighborhood attractions and some of the most popular small-scale operated at the site for years. Tenants over time included a framery, vintage store, leather goods and other unique merchandise.

In May of 2019, the anticipated redevelopment opportunity emerged and the couple, seeking to retire, sold the property to a larger coworking campus in the neighborhood. Under the new owner the space has become somewhat more refined but continues offering space for small startup retailers and entrepreneurs, carrying on the legacy of the MacFaydens.

Under the new owner the space has become somewhat more refined but continues offering space for small startup retailers and entrepreneurs, carrying on the legacy of the MacFaydens.

CASE STUDY: FINDLAY KITCHEN

Cincinnati, OH

Founded in 2016, this kitchen incubator focuses on cultivating women, immigrant, and minority-owned food businesses. Located adjacent to Ohio's oldest continuously operating public market, Findlay Market, the Kitchen has more than forty members with another thirty graduates. Several of those alumni are now full bricks and mortar restaurants.

Findlay Kitchen is a membership-based organization which offers **eight different kitchens within its 8,400 square feet. There are four hot and 3 cold prep stations, two full sized kitchens, and walk-in freezer and refrigerator space.** The kitchen is well stocked with a range of professional grade equipment, allowing entrepreneurs to discover the best and most professional way to prepare product.

A Membership organization, fees start at \$150 a year and are tailored to the specific member's needs. Some use a dedicated space but most rotate into any available work area at scheduled hours. As businesses grow and needs change, Findlay Kitchen staff work to ensure transition to larger spaces in the incubator.

The incubator is run by a staff of three, a grounds and equipment manager, a facilities coordinator, and a business and services advisor. Kitchen staff strive to offer full support to members including coaching on professional skills, product development, business skills and strategy, marketing, packaging and design among other areas.

Since inception the Kitchen has worked to establish a base number of food tenants and continuously adjusted that mix to focus on supporting BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and women owned businesses. Demand for space within the incubator is strong and staff regularly turn down applicants which are not mission aligned. The site is landlocked between two buildings and does not have room to expand.

One of the biggest unintended benefits of the operation has been the number of successful collaborations resulting from the sharing of kitchen space. Several of these have led to new products, and, in some cases, new partnerships.

Findlay Kitchen is also an increasingly important contributor to the Cincinnati food scene as members and alums move out into the wider community with concepts they developed and strengthened at the Kitchen.

Learn more about Findlay Kitchen at www.findlaykitchen.org



Isis Arrieta-Dennis had an idea for a product but not much more when she began exploring opening a business in 2016. A native of Colombia, she wanted to cook and sell arepas, a cornmeal bread that can be stuffed like a sandwich.

“I didn’t have any knowledge of the restaurant business, cooking equipment, licenses ... no experience whatsoever,” she said.

She was able to use the shared kitchen...and tap into the experience and contacts of the Findlay Market network. She began with a pop-up shop... and has recently opened a restaurant, the Arepa Place, at Findlay Market.

“They provided me with the knowledge and expertise to take the Arepa Place to the next level.”

- Isis Arrieta Dennis, Owner of The Arepa Place



Photo Credit: Breanna Molloy



Photo Credit: Cincinnati Business Courier

Potential Locations

The Community Business Center should be centrally located in the Engaged Neighborhood.

Ideally, the Community Business Center would place all components together creating a hive of activity and providing the nucleus of a thriving neighborhood business district. Establishing the business incubator with all 4 components together gives it the best chance of its success.

Fledgling businesses can conveniently use the spaces while the Retail and Restaurant Launching Ground, Makerspaces, Business Training and Accelerator Lab, and Community Gathering Space provide collaborative synergies. Restaurateurs, carpenters, and others need business training and might feed from each other's creativity.

Carpenters could build restaurant tables and sewers can make chef aprons.

Meanwhile, everybody has to eat. However, sometimes it's necessary, even for an Incubator, to incubate. A step-by-step approach that makes the project feasible is better than waiting for the perfect site and the aggregation of all necessary funding.

Or, simply, action is better than inaction. Start ASAP. Growth will follow.

The site does however need to be large enough to provide parking, loading and unloading, and, ideally, room for expansion. Also important to note, maker spaces and commercial kitchens are difficult to move once built because they have equipment and custom build-out requirements.





CASE STUDY: LEARNING SKILLS OF VARIOUS TRADES

Springfield Township, OH

Springfield Township, Ohio has a fully outfitted wood shop, pottery studio, and other multi-purpose rooms where trade skills such as welding, sewing, picture-framing, stained glass creation, and even tannery (working with leather) can be learned. These are all elements of the Township Arts Connect program.

These studios allow people to learn craft skills and use large, expensive tools they may not be able to afford personally. Some users take organized, regular classes while others simply work during open studio hours.

Due to increasing demand, the wood shop was recently renovated and enlarged. **It now includes over 20 floor-mounted and table-mounted tools including a planer, joiner, rail-arm saw, drill press, jig saw, miter saw, and lathe. The wood shop also has a dust ventilation system** for health, safety and ease of maintenance. The equipment for the wood shop cost under \$20,000.

Anyone using the facilities must complete an orientation and safety course. Fees, which



range from \$5 to \$150, can be paid by the day, month, or year. Class pricing is variable and set by the facility.

Housed in the Township's arts center building, the facility also includes arts activities for children and seniors. It is run by the township, with a board of directors and full-time staff.

Leadership has had to remain flexible and attentive to user response. In addition to growing demand for the wood shop and pottery studio, other classes and trades not originally anticipated to be in demand are now part of its year-round operations.

While the Township created this program to encourage the arts to flourish and as an enrichment program for citizens, it also offers an opportunity to begin to perfect skills that may support entrepreneurial ambitions. **The equipped craft studios, multi-purpose rooms, classes and activities have become a highly valued part of the community which now draws people from 58 different zip codes.**

Learn more about the Springfield Township Arts Connect program at www.springfieldtpw.org/309/ArtsConnect



The Arts Connect facility includes a woodshop and flexible classroom spaces.

CASE STUDY: MORTAR

Cincinnati, OH

MORTAR was founded in 2014 by Allen Woods, Derrick Braziel and William Thomas II with the mission to enable historically marginalized entrepreneurs' access to a range of resources needed to start and run successful businesses. **Over 300 entrepreneurs have completed the MORTAR program since inception and 20% have bricks and mortar locations open today.**

Of MORTAR's participants, 87% are entrepreneurs of color, 67% are black women, and 25% have experienced a significant hardship.

Entrepreneurship Academy

The MORTAR Entrepreneurship Academy offers a 15-week course for those starting or growing a business. This consists of weekly 3-hour classes and includes on-site legal support provided by the University of Cincinnati Law School as well as mentorship opportunities.

An alumni program is offered to graduates of the Entrepreneurship Academy, providing continued support and education for 18 months. During this period interested alums are provided with business consulting, personal coaching, industry workshops, training, and access to capital.

The cost of the program is \$295 including both the 15-week course and the 18-month alumni program.

Brick OTR Pop-Up Shops

Operating as an extension of MORTAR, Brick OTR is a pop-up shop in Cincinnati's historic Over-the-Rhine neighborhood. The shop is available by application to any entrepreneur,



MORTAR founders, Allen Woods, Derrick Braziel, and William Thomas II.

Photo Credit: MORTAR

including MORTAR participants. As available, it can be reserved for a partial week, weekend, full week, or entire month with pricing ranging from \$100 for one weekday to \$1,500 for a full month.

MORTAR is available to assist vendors with a marketing plan and staffing.

Growth

MORTAR now operates in 7 cities throughout the Midwest: Cincinnati, Akron, Covington, Indianapolis, Tulsa, Kansas City, and Milwaukee. Their goal is to expand to 15 new cities within the next five years.

In fall 2021, MORTAR was selected as one of 18 organizations in the country to receive funding from Jordan Brand's Black Community Commitment Grant Program.

Learn more about MORTAR at www.wearemortar.com

CASE STUDY: DAYTON POWERHOUSE

Dayton, OH

An example of successful small business incubator can be found in Springfield's neighboring city of Dayton. Launched by local resident Tae Winston in 2019, the Dayton Powerhouse has since grown to three locations in Dayton's downtown neighborhoods.

Entrepreneur Marketplace

The Marketplace started as a series of pop-up events organized by Winston in grass fields and banquet halls where local vendors could sell their products in a shared space. Winston opened the Entrepreneur Marketplace, a permanent pop-up, in December of 2019.

The 700 square-foot Marketplace sold goods from 3-8 different small businesses each week. Individual vendors were the volunteer staff. Over time, the store sold products from over 100 small businesses in the area. Food trucks parked outside on a rotating basis.

In November 2021 the Marketplace closed, and the vendors transitioned to the Shoppe.

Entrepreneur Shoppe

Limited by the small footprint of the Marketplace but eager to accommodate additional vendors, Winston expanded the concept to a second location in May 2020. The Entrepreneur Shoppe, located around the corner from the Marketplace, is a retail store that houses 22 small businesses, all of which are Black-owned. The Shoppe is staffed by a manager, but vendors are strongly encouraged to spend time on site each week to connect with customers. There is no time frame for how long a business can stay in the Shoppe. When a vendor transitions out, to a brick-and-mortar location or for other reasons, there is a waiting list of replacement vendors.

Entrepreneur Connection

Winston's newest location, the Entrepreneur Connection, is the first to focus on entrepreneur education for those looking to start or expand their business.

"My goal is to be a starting hub for people to get their names out there, get their fan base up and then feel comfortable enough to step out and do it for themselves."

- Tae Winston, Creator of Dayton Powerhouse

The Connection occupies 1,300 square feet and has accommodations for up to 20 people, including a small café area and podcasting room. This spot also has a small retail area. Entrepreneur workshops offer classes across a range of business topics. Most workshops take place in the evening and registration fees average \$15 per class. Business owners from the Marketplace, Shoppe, and Connection are welcome to join but most attendees are community members not affiliated with the Entrepreneur retail stores. There is a small bar in the Connection for hosting evening events.

The Dayton Powerhouse is a local example of how a small concept can grow and adapt to fit the needs of the community. What started as a group of business vendors gathering in a banquet hall to sell goods has transformed into permanent retail shops and education center for entrepreneurs.

Learn more about Dayton Powerhouse at www.daytonpowerhouse.com

STRENGTHEN THE NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS DISTRICT

What:

Create the physical presence of a business district on South Yellow Springs Street

Why:

Rebuild central spine of neighborhood, create jobs and opportunities for existing and new residents

Who:

City of Springfield
1159 South
Small Business Development
Center

When:

Starting within six months of
plan adoption

Where:

South Yellow Springs Street

How:

Acquisition of land and construction of new mixed-use buildings; streetscape, zoning reform, development of incubator and capital investment

During Workshops 1 and 2, the Planning Team heard many fond memories of the neighborhood. Nearly all included the business district along South Yellow Springs Street. While it would be easy to chalk these up to nostalgia, it also would be a mistake.

The Engaged Neighborhood (EN) had, by all accounts, a thriving commercial center in past times. Now residents both need and want it to return.

Neighborhood business districts are often the heart and soul of a community. The advent of car ownership, which gave rise to shopping malls and auto-oriented strip centers was bad for mom-and-pop shopping areas. But as urban interest rises again, so does a recognition of their importance.

Neighborhood business districts, especially those that are pedestrian-friendly, are the places where people connect to shop, transact business, and socialize. Whether a planned



The current view of South Yellow Springs Street.



The business district example that Workshop 1 participants envisioned for South Yellow Springs Street.



A map of the former business district along South Yellow Springs Street. View at full size in Appendix page 99.

Bringing back that thriving center of commerce will require support in several areas.

The Incubator can provide technical support and a nucleus of activity from which other businesses can benefit.

Some form of financial assistance must also be available, perhaps on a competitive basis. But starting a business or moving into fixed premises is expensive. Most small entrepreneurs have limited access to capital and conventional lenders are risk-averse about such operations.

Neighborhood business districts provide fertile ground for small, local businesses and the innovators who create them. This is because small businesses have their greatest chance for success when they locate close together in pockets of places where they can feed off of each other's presence. A confluence of complimentary business types gives each a power and reach it wouldn't have on its own.

Vibrant neighborhood business districts usually have certain things in common:

- A main street where vehicular traffic is calm but plentiful
- High-quality streetscape which includes wide sidewalks, street trees, streetlights, clear wayfinding, and well-curated street architecture such as bike racks, benches, and art
- A manageably-sized district in which pedestrians can walk from end-to-end in less than about 10 minutes (~ 3 blocks)
- Zoning which requires storefront buildings and fosters the right mix of offerings
- Zoning which prohibits incompatible uses and street facing surface parking lots
- Small, thoughtfully designed, public gathering spaces in key locations
- Surrounding residential density to supply potential patrons
- Convenient, plentiful parking provided on-street and/or in rear lots nearby

meeting for a cup of coffee or chance encounter on the sidewalk, it's here friendships are established and affirmed, daily needs are met, jobs created, and small businesses thrive.

In America, small businesses have accounted for 65.1% of net job creation since 2000 [1]. Arguably, these local enterprises care more about their communities than large corporations headquartered elsewhere.

Perhaps most important, business ownership often provides the best chance for local residents to gain financial independence. Reestablishment of a business district enables at least some of these entrepreneurs to build wealth close to home.

The stakeholders of the EN were clear: they envision a pedestrian-friendly district where they can gather, patronize local businesses, and re-establish the sense of comfort and belonging that fuels pride in their neighborhood.

[1] US Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy; Frequently Asked Questions, October 2020

Rebuilding a neighborhood business district in the EN will take resource, focus, and tenacity by several key partners. But it's a worthwhile and important objective.

Location

The Planning Team studied several potential locations. The intersection of South Yellow Springs Street and Dibert ranked highest. Though even this site is not without challenges.

The west side of South Yellow Springs Street, north of Dibert, hosts Fulton Elementary School, set back from South Yellow Springs about 450 feet. Because of this, new commercial and mixed-use buildings can be placed only on the east side of the street.

Two-sided districts are preferred as a double-faced corridor creates more vibrancy.

In an ideal world, the northwest corner of South Yellow Springs and Dibert would be acquired from Springfield Public Schools, allowing businesses at all four corners of this key intersection.

A resurgent Neighborhood Business District may ultimately require newly constructed buildings. Nothing reflects progress and vitality like new construction.

New commercial and mixed-use buildings along South Yellow Springs Street should be located reasonably close to the sidewalk (no front parking lots). Storefront glass should be prevalent.



LOCATING A PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY BUSINESS DISTRICT



A Business District Between Dibert and Innisfallen



A Business District Between Fair and W. Liberty

New buildings ideally should be no more than 3 - 4 stories tall. While a fully built-out business district will take many years, the community should aspire to build a district where businesses seek to locate in a collective whole which becomes greater than the sum of its parts. The district should have its own market gravity.

The renderings on pages 56 and 57 show (using only lots which are currently vacant) over 50,000 square feet of first floor commercial space could be built between Innisfallen and Fair. The upper stories of those buildings could contain over 90,000 square feet, enough to hold from 60 to 100 new residential units or plentiful office space.

From this location, the business district could grow north and south. There are several vacant lots nearby that could be acquired by community-minded entities such as 1159 South. Over the next few years new mixed-use buildings, and small gathering spaces, could be built and new local businesses thoughtfully curated as tenants to provide the most beneficial mix of commerce and attraction.

Corridor improvements might include but not be limited to:

- If new fencing is to be installed it should be new iron, painted steel or aluminum picket fencing and not chain link with barbed or razor wire
- Thoughtfully designed and well-maintained vegetation along the streets
- Signage appropriate for a proud pedestrian-oriented area
- Lighting which doesn't unattractively flood the area
- Removal of the raised concrete slab and building foundation

Zoning

Zoning of the Business District area should be updated to encourage a healthy mix of uses. A slate of zoning recommendations for the entire neighborhood follows later herein.

Thus, the list here applies specifically to Business District recommendations:

- **Permitted uses should be limited to restaurant, retail, personal service, of fice, educational / library, post office or similar**
- Uses above the first floor should only include: all above plus residential
- Drive-thru restaurants, gas stations, auto repair facilities, car washes, auto sales or storage, contractor storage yards, manufacturing (other than small educational), or similar uses are incompatible with a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood business district
- Minimum building height = two - four stories maximum
- Maximum front setback no farther than 12' from the front property line
- 50% of first story facing South Yellow Springs Street to be storefront glass
- Building entry to first floor use(s) required to be on South Yellow Springs Street facade
- 25% window/glass throughout all stories of any façade facing a street
- No surface parking within 50' of South Yellow Springs Street
- Pedestrian-scaled, building-mounted signage of appropriate size



Gathering spaces with seating are an important aspect of a Neighborhood Business District.

Parking

Off-street parking should be provided in strategically located public lots. Parking should NOT be required building - by - building. Such a requirement can drive up the cost of development, making it unsustainable.

Lots could be managed by a Community Development Corporation, in conjunction with the City of Springfield. Revenue from parking could support the CDC.

On-street parking should be provided on South Yellow Springs Street in the blocks defined as the Business District. This should be paid via individual meters, centralized pay box, or mobile App to motivate time-limited parking, which should be monitored and ticketed.

Such a limitation is very important to businesses such as restaurants, personal services, and retail stores. They need turnover to support customer visits.

On-street parking will also provide street friction which slows vehicular traffic, creating a safer place for pedestrians.

Streetscape and Gathering Places

South Yellow Springs and West Pleasant Streets are the commercial corridors of the EN and its most heavily traveled streets. Crucially, they are also the appearance gateway of the neighborhood.

Improving these corridors will be an important sign of momentum in the area.

The first of those improvements is automotive speed management.

Speed limits should be set at not more than 25 MPH and well signed. Periodic speed checks and ticketing will help discipline drivers and reset speed expectations.



Zebra-striped crosswalk.



Raised crosswalk.



Bike racks.



Street lighting and banners.



Street trees, benches and trash cans.

But for a pedestrian-friendly business district to succeed continuously, drivers on South Yellow Springs Street also need a series of tacit cues to slow down. Streetscape elements, such as lighting, trees and plantings, and wayfinding signage should be installed for several blocks to the north and south. These will signal drivers to decelerate and begin to denote a special place ahead.

Then, higher intensity elements should be installed within the blocks directly comprising the business district. These should include:

- New sidewalks 5 to 6 feet wide
- New brick or colored concrete collector strips between the sidewalk and curb
- Street architecture within the collector strip such as:
 - » Poles for flags and banners (which might cross the street)
 - » String lights
 - » Bicycle racks
 - » Benches
 - » Trash cans
 - » Mailboxes
 - » Artwork
 - » Special signage/information kiosks
- Zebra-striped crosswalks with textured concrete at key intersections
- A fully signalized intersection Dibert and South Yellow Springs Street
 - » Pedestrians must be protected
- On-street parallel parking

Neighborhood stakeholders, with support from the City, could design, build, manage and program small gathering spaces in the business district, initially perhaps just one. Ultimately however the corridor could host several pocket parks and distinctive gathering spaces.

More than merely gathering spaces, these also are activity centers and yet another quiet signal that this is a thriving area.

Street Lighting: The introduction of human -scaled, post-top light fixtures would provide greater visibility and comfort for pedestrians. It would signal welcome in the evenings. Uniform post-top poles, even if simple in design, contribute to the feeling of a significant street.

It is recommended that the City and community select street fixtures together. Ideally, light poles would be fitted with banner attachments to facilitate seasonal advertisements, sponsorship event promotions, honors for individuals, and historic events.

At intersections, two streetlights on diagonally opposite corners should be installed. Throughout the corridors, lights should be spaced close enough to ensure a low level of lighting along all sidewalks. Excessive lighting creates a subconscious feeling that brightness is needed to scare away problems.

Street Trees: Currently West Pleasant has very few street trees. South Yellow Springs has more, especially around Fulton School and sporadically elsewhere. Plantings in greater quantity would offer myriad benefits.

Aesthetically, a uniform species and regular spacing creates the look of a cared for district. Trees also help with stormwater management and reduce the heat island effect so common in urban areas. They also create a safer pedestrian environment, as they provide visual diversity which helps slow traffic while acting as a buffer between pedestrians and cars.

Very pleasant shade and shelter for pedestrians and adjacent properties are other obvious benefits. Overall, trees are an asset and proven to enhance property values in the surrounding area.

Street Signage and Wayfinding: This community contains prized businesses, recreational assets, and heritage sites. Streetscape improvements should include wayfinding signage which recognizes and points residents and visitors to all that.

Assets to promote include the commercial district, Gammon Square, Little Miami Scenic Trail, Davey Moore Park, and the future Small Business Incubator, among others.

Such signage also will help both drivers and pedestrians navigate and discover. Well-designed notice implicitly suggests that if there's no time to stop now, a return visit would be worthwhile.

Trash Cans: Trash cans may not be the most interesting element of a streetscape, but they really matter. They should be on every block of the corridors, on both sides of the street, and at corners.

They must be emptied regularly by the City. Overflowing cans have an instant negative effect on the appeal of any neighborhood and discourage use, potentially increasing litter.

Conclusion

As budgets allow, the improvements outlined above should be extended throughout the EN.

The perception of this entire area should reflect a place not only useful but also delightful and worthy of pride.

Quality should not be something residents have to seek elsewhere.

THE INITIATIVES: REDEVELOP VACANT LOTS

7. Redevelop Small Vacant Lots Throughout the Neighborhood

8. Redevelop Larger Lots

REDEVELOP SMALL VACANT LOTS THROUGHOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD

What:

Reactivate small lots around community need

Why:

Remove blight and provide place, pride, amenities, and potential new housing

Who:

Private developers
Neighborhood Association
1159 South

When:

Within the first two years of plan adoption

Where:

Throughout the neighborhood

How:

Organize, plan and raise funds for intended projects

34% of the land in the Engaged Neighborhood (EN) is vacant or hosting deteriorated structures. This is largely concentrated on scattered small lots.

Residential and commercial streets full of missing teeth make an area feel incomplete and uncared for. **Vacancy also is detrimental to surrounding home values, resident pride, and community safety.** During public input, vacancy was continually raised as a major concern.



Small vacant lots throughout the EN.

It is recommended that these empty lots be redeveloped into some or all of the following uses based on size and location:

Single/Duplex Family Houses

Of all the options presented to stakeholders for small lot redevelopment, single-family homes were most popular and identified as an urgent need. Developing such homes could fill in crucial gaps, making streets more cohesive and people more connected. It also could bring new homeowners, potentially young families, into the area.

New single-family houses and duplexes could be a variety of sizes in order to provide a range of affordability and living arrangements. It is important that construction costs be controlled so that homes are priced for working families, but newly built



homes are convincing evidence of momentum and investment.

Duplexes also may offer an opportunity for wealth building, with owners occupying one half and renting the other or using it to care for seniors. This format is gaining popularity nationwide as it offers greater flexibility for families and/or income potential.

Residents stressed that development of new housing needs to be done in conjunction with rehabilitation of existing stock also urgently needed. Read more about home improvement recommendations on page 85 herein.

Townhouses

Townhouses offer another single-family option while permitting greater density on a single lot.



They often can be a more affordable option, again potentially opening homeownership to a wider range of residents.

Playgrounds

Playgrounds can easily fit onto small lots and provide families throughout the neighborhood with accessible recreation spaces close to home.

They might incorporate traditional equipment or more innovative installations for all ages. Accessible design, musical play equipment, kinetic energy, and educational equipment are only a few of the possibilities.

Unique environments might be more interesting for repeat users and can create opportunities for sponsorship.



Such spaces, in whatever configuration, encourage groups to play, learn, and exercise together, breaking down social and physical barriers.

Activation

Not all vacant lots can be developed immediately no matter how popular the proposed use.

For community pride and a sense of momentum, however, these should not remain blighted. Most can be activated as community spaces with a modicum of preparation and relatively minimal materials.



Mowing the grass (then keeping it cut...) and adding a few benches and tables can quickly create a casual place for neighbors to gather.

Larger sites might host food trucks or live music at monthly events programmed by the Neighborhood Association, a Community Development Corporation, or other groups. Read more about Neighborhood Associations on page 37 and Community Development Corporations on page 34.

Most activations are designed to be short-term. In some cases, however, temporary programming can demonstrate feasibility for a later permanent use. But equally, permanence could be both the start and end point, scattering small nodes of pleasantness and activity throughout the community and offering a continuing variety of engagement opportunities.

Murals and Public Art

Art is a powerful tool for bringing attention to an overlooked space.

The Gammon House, Hartman Rock Garden, and Johnny Lytle Avenue all offer inspiration for art installations and murals. This might also be an opportunity for property owners or community groups to bring in partners such as Project Jericho, to help make new projects a reality.

A project team that involved young artists, perhaps in a summer work program, would both engage area teens and foster local pride in these upcoming citizens.

Dog Parks

Just as residents want a place to gather, so do the four-legged members of the community.

Vacant lots are well-suited for small dog parks, as all these canine family members really need is an empty piece of land to explore. Fencing, trash cans, and a dog-secure entry quickly create a space likely to be heavily used by pet owners. As with any park, ongoing maintenance is crucial to success and to acceptance by nearby residents.

Dog parks foster conversations between dog owners leading to friendship, shared experience, and neighborhood pride.



Basketball Courts

Portable basketball hoops set up in the streets of Springfield's south side are commonplace. During input sessions, residents explained that these allow neighborhood children to play while still in sight of home.

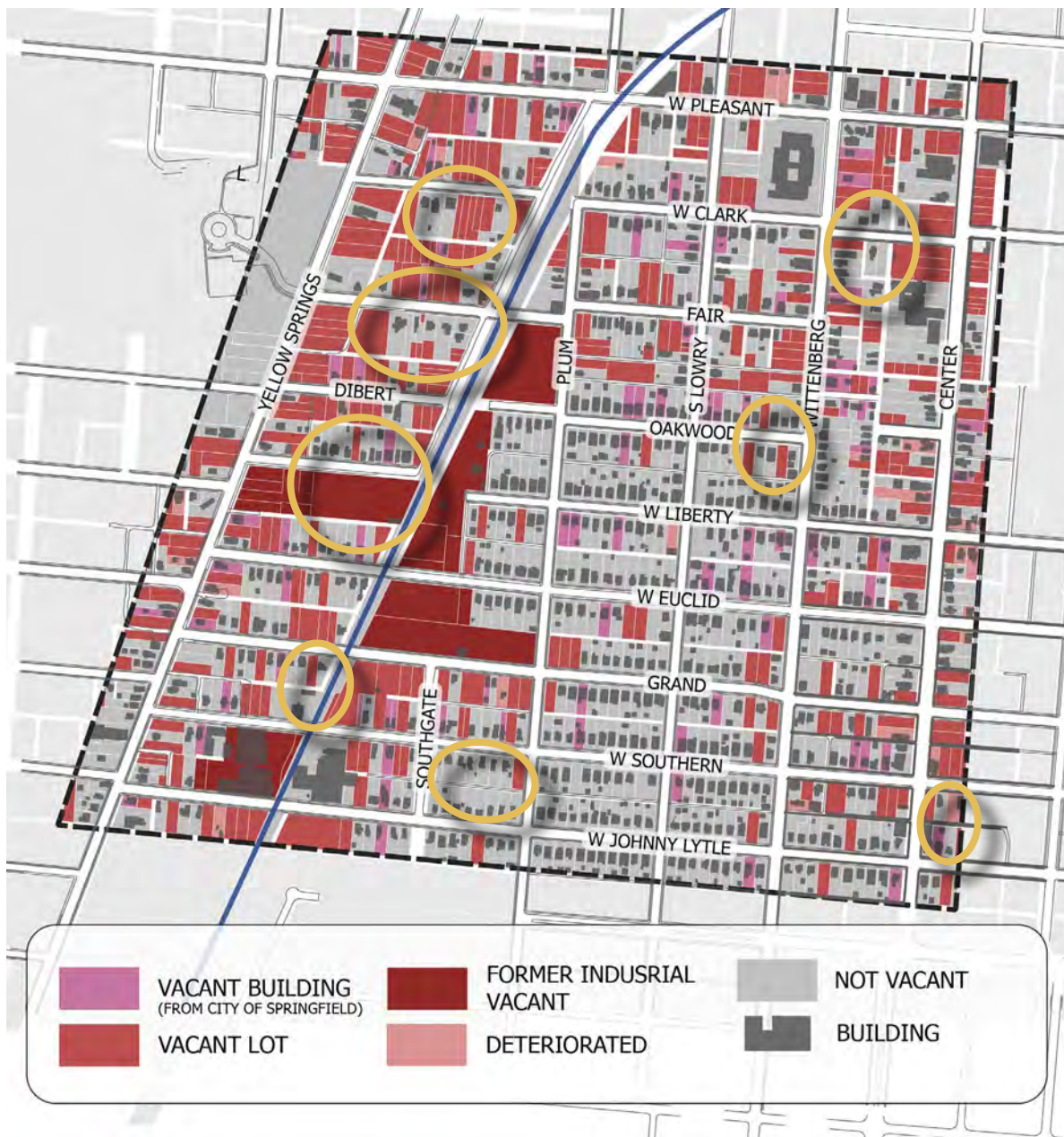
Building half or full courts on vacant lots could offer this same peace of mind while also getting players away from the hazard of cars.

Even small lots might have space for a half-court and gradually these could be scattered throughout the community.

Assembly of Multiple Lots

There are areas where adjacent parcels could be combined to provide opportunities for larger developments.

Often larger pieces of land are necessary for economy of scale. Site assemblage of adjacent parcels may allow construction of a wider variety of housing projects. Single-family homes (with or without bonus units), townhouses, multi-family, duplexes, and fourplexes, all could be suitably designed to suit the context of the neighborhood.



CASE STUDY: MONTGOMERY COUNTY TWIGS TO TREES

Dayton, OH

Susan Crabill, of the Montgomery County Land Bank, needed to figure out what to do with some of the vacant lots they owned – and she thought trees were the answer.

Using mostly volunteers, the Land Bank reforested vacant lots inexpensively by planting “bare-root” trees. These are very small – one person can carry 500 of them. They’re good to use because they only cost \$1 to \$7 per tree, are dormant, and have all their roots (larger, more expensive trees which come with roots balled in burlap can lose many roots in the balling process). Bare root trees, however, are only available for about six weeks per year, from mid-March through April.

The Land Bank planted trees about 7 feet apart in a pattern which allows a 6’ mower to efficiently run through and make U-turns at the end of each row. At one site, adult volunteers turned up dirt, then marked spots on the ground so elementary school kids could do the planting the next day. **The planting was done in less than 4 hours.**



Photo Credit: Montgomery County Land Re-utilization Corp.



A Twigs to Trees log planted with saplings.
Photo Credit: Montgomery County Land Re-utilization Corp.

The Land Bank installed the trees with small plastic tree tubes to protect the little guys during the early growth stage. As it turned out, the tubes were the most expensive element of the project at about \$7 each.

Even when paid landscapers were hired, each lot cost less than \$1,000 to fully plant. The Land Bank, which owns each site, mows the lots for the first few years. Eventually none will be required, just as no mowing is necessary in a forest once low ground cover takes over.

Several tree species were studied with mostly Hackberry, Sycamore, and Hawthorne trees as the eventual choices. These are what Ms. Crabill calls the “bulldogs” of the tree family – sturdy, resilient and happy to grow just about anywhere. Prettier species were placed along front property lines and thornier ones to the rear.

Even though the Land Bank expected to lose about half of the trees, over 70% have survived for more than three years and become well established.

REDEVELOP LARGER LOTS

What:

Convert blight into active beneficial places of highest and best use, generating catalytic impact on the entire neighborhood.

Why:

Re-populate the neighborhood with viable business and inclusive residents; to show signs of pride and momentum and to enhance the neighborhood as a destination

Who:

Private developers
1159 South
Clark County Land Bank

When:

Perform site assessments immediately; create development timelines for each site immediately

Where:

Former industrial sites along the Little Miami Scenic Trail

How:

Secure sites, prepare as best as possible for development, develop

In addition to the variety of smaller lots, there are at least four sites of considerable size in the Engaged Neighborhood (EN). These offer an opportunity to place multiple uses on one site. Several conceptual plans are illustrated herein and contain components which can be paired in a variety of ways.

The four key sites are:

1. Oakwood, Plum, and Fair
2. Liberty
3. W. Euclid
4. Grand to Euclid



Housing

Multi-Family: While multi-family is sometimes disparaged, too frequently represented by a concentration of aging buildings, poor management, and/or bad tenancing policies, it is an important component of modern urban life.

Most young people begin independent adult lives in an apartment. It's what they can afford and what suits them at the time. Many seniors also find apartment living pleasant. They're relieved of the burden of home maintenance and can find a place sized to their current needs.

For the younger generation, apartment living is where they

begin to discover and put down roots in a community. For elders it allows them to stay where those roots now run deep.

Any multi-family project on a larger lot should respect the surrounding architectural context. Height should be scaled to nearby buildings, generally not more than 3 or 4 stories with massing broken up to make a more pleasant façade, sensitive to its setting.

If environmental contamination is present, dwellings units may be restricted to the second and third floors of the building, with only parking and common spaces below.

Also, important to note here that the neighborhood, and the wider City of Springfield, need affordable housing. “Affordable” is generally regarded as housing which costs a resident no more than 30% of their income.

Multi-family projects in at least some locations ideally should include affordable housing.



Stakeholders explained that many who have lived in the neighborhood for decades no longer want the cost and effort of maintaining their homes, but as noted above, want to stay in the area. New senior housing would allow these community members to repair and modernize those homes, hopefully with help from Home Repair programs as discussed further herein and

possibly even tradespeople from the Small Business Incubator. They could then sell to younger families, knowing that they have a future home readily and affordably available nearby.

Such a progression would provide a natural, sustainable evolution of homeownership.

Single-Family: As noted elsewhere, the EN is more than 35% vacant. To help with repopulation, new housing should be built. Such construction offers an unmistakable sign of momentum and increasing value. Be-





sides, **while there are many houses prime for rehabbing, not everyone wants an old house – even a renovated one.**

New residential projects throughout the neighborhood should accommodate a wide range of incomes and living situations.

Single-family and duplex housing development, noted earlier, can be configured in multiple ways but, when possible, should incorporate the alley system which is an integral part of neighborhood context. Those alleys allow vehicles to park in areas and garages to the rear. Front-facing driveways and garages are a suburban model which would degrade the intrinsic charm of the neighborhood.

Zoning ideally would be revised to allow models of housing which are contextually appropriate for the neighborhood. Zoning in this area which allows for single-family houses and duplexes on modest-sized lots (50' wide maximum) would be helpful. A full description of recommended re-zoning can be found on pages 88 through 91.

Each house should be permitted one accessory dwelling unit (ADU) to be used either by family members or, when the owner occupies the primary residence, as rental property.

This can allow homeowners to additional income to defray costs and thus make home purchase more achievable. Home + ADU properties should be prohibited as rental only with absentee landlords. Onsite owner + rental will help ensure each property benefits from the pride of an owner-occupant.

New build houses in this area would be best between 800 and 1600 square feet across two stories. A substantial number of windows and a building entry facing the main street will be both pleasing design and a positive contributors to neighborhood safety. Eyes on the street are always helpful watchers.

It also is strongly recommended that all houses have a roofed front porch of at least 55 square feet with no dimension (width or depth) smaller than 6 feet.

Assistive: The COVID-19 pandemic created a surge of un-housed people in Springfield.

Those who have been displaced by the economic effects of the pandemic mostly have not previously been chronically homeless. Rather, they lost their homes due to a global event beyond their control.

Springfield has addressed temporary housing needs but now needs a permanent solution. Preferably, this will be provided in a way which helps with wealth creation such as small single-family homes which can be acquired by tenants in a rent-to-own scenario. Some of this housing can be in the EN.





Recreation

Several of the larger sites could accommodate one, two, or several of the lifestyle amenities repeatedly requested by the community. The Planning Team's assessment of the lot running from Euclid to Oakwood is that its highest and best use is a public park. This is due to the shape of the property, its location centered in the neighborhood, and its long adjacency to the Little Miami Scenic Trail.

Dog Park: There are two dog parks in Springfield, but neither is on the south side of the City. Stakeholders expressed concern about people who allow dogs off leash on sidewalks or along the Trail. As discussed elsewhere, creating a dog park would create a safe place for off-leash activity and creates an informal community gathering place.

Water Recreation: Stakeholders expressed frustration with the lack of water recreation on the south side of Springfield. **Such a facility was one of the most requested improvements.**

While water facilities can be costly to build and maintain, they're worth it. COVID-19 has reminded everyone that public spaces, including those designed for children, are an essential asset. It is the parks and recreation facilities throughout a community that bring people together, give them healthy recreation outlets and create a sense of being valued within the neighborhood.

Pools are among the most expensive and difficult of these facilities to build and manage. Swimmers require constant supervision especially as skill levels vary. Spraygrounds, however, have become popular, not least because they don't require developed swimming ability. Cooling, highly visual, and playful, they appeal to children of all ages.

A water recreation facility should be within walking distance of as many homes as possible. The centrally located Euclid-to-Oakwood lot, for example, has ample room to host such a use.



Community Gathering Space: An open lawn would provide the neighborhood with an outdoor space of significant size for community gatherings and events.

Amenities such as seating, and restrooms would add to appeal and help drive usage. If located in an area near or across from the bike trail, events also could be visible and enticing to trail users.

Basketball Courts: Mentioned elsewhere as a possible insertion throughout the area, basketball courts easily could be included on one or more of these lots.

Children use these facilities but so do adults. Twilight pickup games after work and high noon on-court battles are staples of neighborhood living going back generations.

Incorporating this popular activity into a central



location would demonstrate another initiative which is truly responsive to the wishes of the people living in this community.

Parking: While parking is not the most exciting aspect of any plan, it is necessary for the uses proposed elsewhere. The trailhead and dog park,

for example, need to be accessible for both those in the neighborhood who can walk to the site, but also for those who will drive.

Well located and multiple parking lots of various sizes, proximate to area amenities also minimize the need for street parking and help protect on-street spots for adjacent homes.

CASE STUDY: GREATER CINCINNATI OUTDOOR GYM

Cincinnati, OH

A free outdoor gym is available in the Cincinnati neighborhood of Roselawn. This project, funded in part by the City's Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP), was completed in 2015. It contains weatherproof exercise machines, weightlifting equipment, a quarter-mile walking and running path, and an exercise platform with stretching and group exercise areas.

In addition to NEP support, the \$150,000 project was funded by grants, including from Interact for Health and Mercy Health Foundation. Mercy Health's contribution was specifically designed as a dollar-for-dollar match to drive involvement by other organizations. The remainder was raised by the Cincinnati Recreation Foundation and area businesses.

Fitness entrepreneur Kurt Bilyups was prime

mover on the project. He brought his personal connection with Mercy Health and a developed expertise in the fitness industry as important assets.

"We are living now in an age where chronic and preventable illness is destroying communities especially in neighborhoods predominantly filled with racial and ethnic minorities. One of the biggest reasons is lack of education. This raises awareness. Because it's a free park, it helps with the issue of having access to these sorts of services and spaces."

- Kurt Bilyups, Founder of YEP! Fitness



Teenagers use the elliptical machine at the Greater Cincinnati Outdoor Gym.

Photo Credit: Cincinnati Enquirer



A local trainer, Leland Devaughn uses the outdoor gym equipment.

Photo Credit: Cincinnati Enquirer

Conclusion

The redevelopment of large vacant lots along the trail and throughout the neighborhood could have

a transformative effect for the community and its residents.



THE INITIATIVES: STRENGTHEN CONNECTION BETWEEN RECREATION ASSETS

9. Improve the Little Miami Scenic Trail

**10. Strengthen Connections to Davey
Moore Park**

IMPROVE THE LITTLE MIAMI SCENIC TRAIL

What:

Make enhancements to the trail that improve visibility, safety and connectivity to the neighborhood

Why:

To encourage greater use of the trail and encourage users to come off the trail to explore the EN's business district

Who:

City of Springfield
National Trails
Neighborhood Association

When:

Begin immediately

Where:

Primarily along the trail, north of Fair Street

How:

Assemble volunteer teams to clear underbrush, paint murals, work on connectivity issues

Trail/Trailhead

The Little Miami Scenic Trail runs through the neighborhood, providing both a recreational asset and a transportation connector. Creating additional recreational opportunities along the Trail would enhance this corridor for residents as well as visitors.

The addition of a trailhead could be an important element of that.

A trailhead is where people who enjoy the Trail can easily enter. Users can park a car, unload bikes, and ride or walk along the Trail, returning at leisure. It's also handy as a resting place.

Trail users who enter and leave at this trailhead also might visit neighborhood businesses, leveraging the proximity of the Trail to the community.



A trail head can spur additional development in the surrounding area.

Initially, it can be as simple as parking spaces, bike racks, a bike repair station, and a few tables. Eventually, restrooms, playground equipment, and other amenities can be added.

But as a first step to leveraging the value of the trail, the City and community need to ensure that it feels like - and actually is - a safe corridor for both cyclists and pedestrians.

Discussions with community residents revealed a strong negative perception at the moment. Poor lighting, overgrown vegetation, and lack of signage contribute to a sense of unease.

Creating a heightened sense of safety can begin with relatively simple steps:

- » Prune
- » Install wayfinding and signage
- » Make the trail visible and celebrate a new connection
- » Fix the tunnel - use art
- » Add lighting

Prune

Forested sections of trails are fundamentally inviting as the trees provide shade and interesting scenery. Overgrown vegetation, however, limits visibility, appears unkempt, and creates worrying areas of shadow and isolation.

The City, National Trails, or appropriate authority should remove all low vegetation along the Trail throughout the Engaged Neighborhood (EN), also limbing up trees where needed. This will foster a feeling of safety and encourage greater usage while preserving the natural charm of larger trees.

If and when funding allows, other interventions can be considered. Are there areas where flowering seasonal plantings can be inserted? Would a bench or two be welcomed by walkers? What else would increase delight while protecting the slightly wild nature of the area?

Install Wayfinding and Signage

The Trail spans five counties and 78 miles with thousands of users passing along at least a portion annually. It is a major driver of tourism, potentially introducing users to an area of which they are presently unaware.

Springfield needs to pull some of those folks into its businesses. Well-designed signage which directs users to commercial districts such as the one proposed elsewhere in this plan for South



The current Trail looking north from Fair Street.



An example of a bike trail (Big Woods Regional Trail) with low vegetation removed.

Photo Credit: Three Rivers Park District

Yellow Springs Street, Springfield's Downtown, and Gammon Square is key to that objective.

The Planning Team recommends that wayfinding, branding, and cohesive theming be developed for the entire Trail, both within and outside the EN. Such signage should be prominent, interesting, and coordinated to create an appealing directional plan throughout the EN and into greater Springfield. It also should point the way clearly to other assets such as Davey Moore Park.



Wayfinding signage can point trail users to amenities and the business district.

Fix the Tunnel - Use Art

The tunnel under Pleasant can be a particularly uncomfortable section of the Trail for users. Vegetation on either side creates an isolating effect, worsened by low to no interior light.

That inside could be painted, either with murals or interesting colors and lighting added. This would provide a perception of investment and care, creating greater comfort. It also would, with minimal investment, turn it into a more distinctive feature

for the neighborhood, and build connection to local artists whose work would be showcased.

Art can be an important element elsewhere as well. Trail riders should continuously know they're moving through Springfield. Artwork, small and large, can illustrate and celebrate City and area history. Nods to the Gammon House, Johnny Lytle, or the Hartman Rock Garden would highlight much-deserved pride and make this urban portion of the scenic trail a unique destination.



A current view of the tunnel that runs under Pleasant Street.



An example of artwork on a tunnel on the Hank Aaron Trail.
Photo Credit: Friends of the Hank Aaron State Trail



An example of bioluminescent lighting on a bike trail.
Photo Credit: ABC News (Starry Night Trail)

Make the Trail Visible and Celebrate a New Connection

Currently, the Trail cannot be seen or accessed from Pleasant Street. This disconnection contributes to the perceived lack of safety and so undermines benefit to the area.

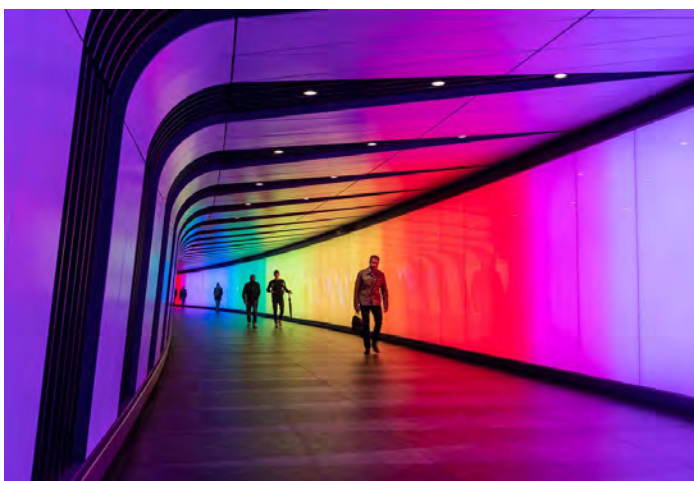
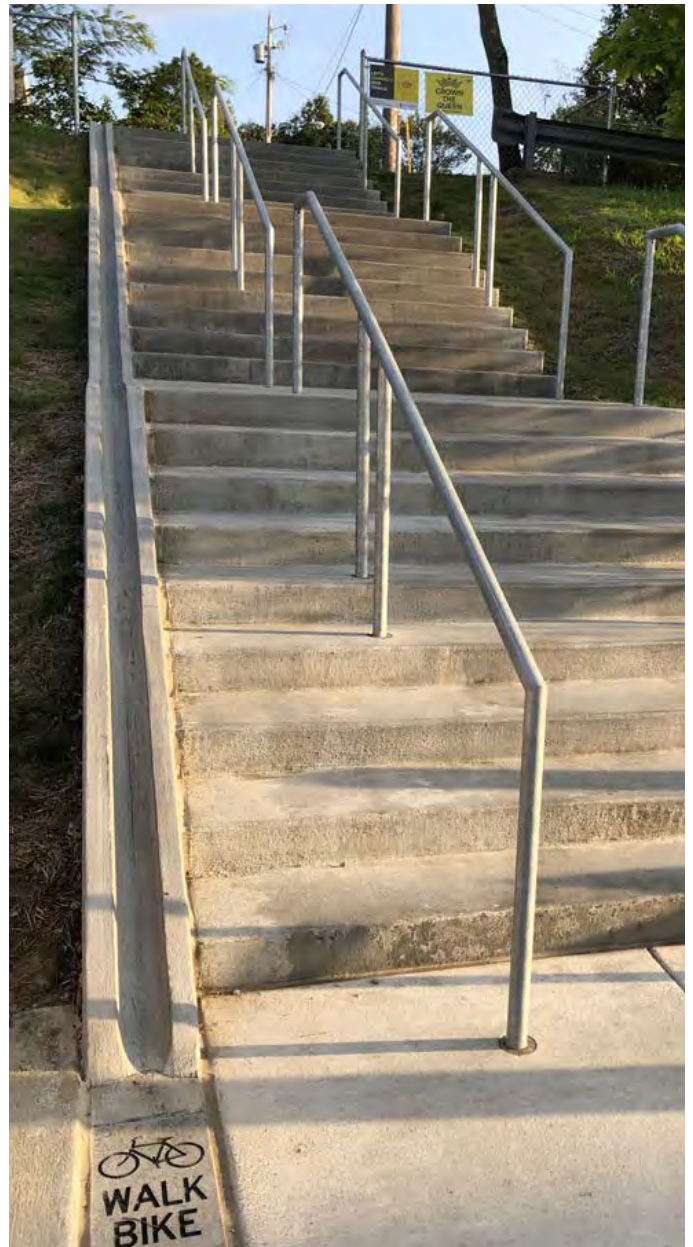
In addition to cutting down low-growth vegetation along the Trail itself, severe pruning would be advantageous where it meets Pleasant Street.

Add Lighting

Increased lighting in the tunnel and along the Trail would add to the sense of security, particularly at dawn and dusk.

Lighting options range from conventional fixtures such as historic luminaries to more artistic alternatives shown above.

Bioluminescent lighting also is an interesting possibility although costly, and perhaps offering only weak illumination.

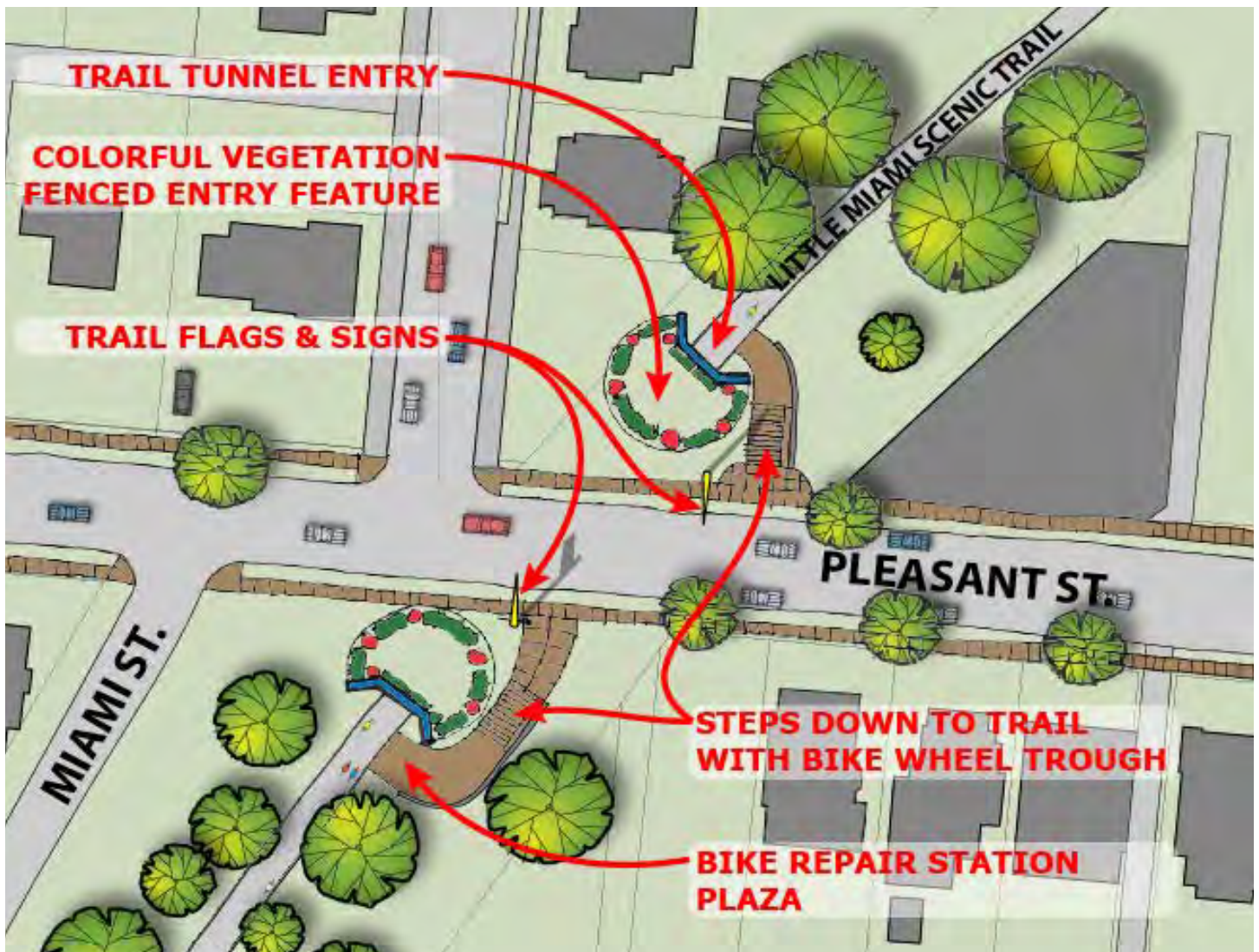


An example of lighting inside a tunnel.
Photo Credit: Kings Cross Tunnel

Ornamental iron fencing and seasonal flowers could also be installed to celebrate the intersection. Gateway signage or colorful banners announcing the entrance to the Trail could be constructed.

Newly more visible, the Trail then needs to be re-connected to the street grid. Small concrete plazas

with bike repair and tire inflation stations on one or both sides of Pleasant Street would help. Stairs of at least 15' (so they won't be narrowed by vegetation over time), with bike-wheel troughs from the Pleasant Street plazas would further encourage connection.



A new Trail entrance at Pleasant Street.

STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS TO DAVEY MOORE PARK

What:

Work on building connection points from the park to South Yellow Springs Street and the trail

Why:

To promote the connection between the park, south side residents, and beyond

Who:

City of Springfield
National Trails

When:

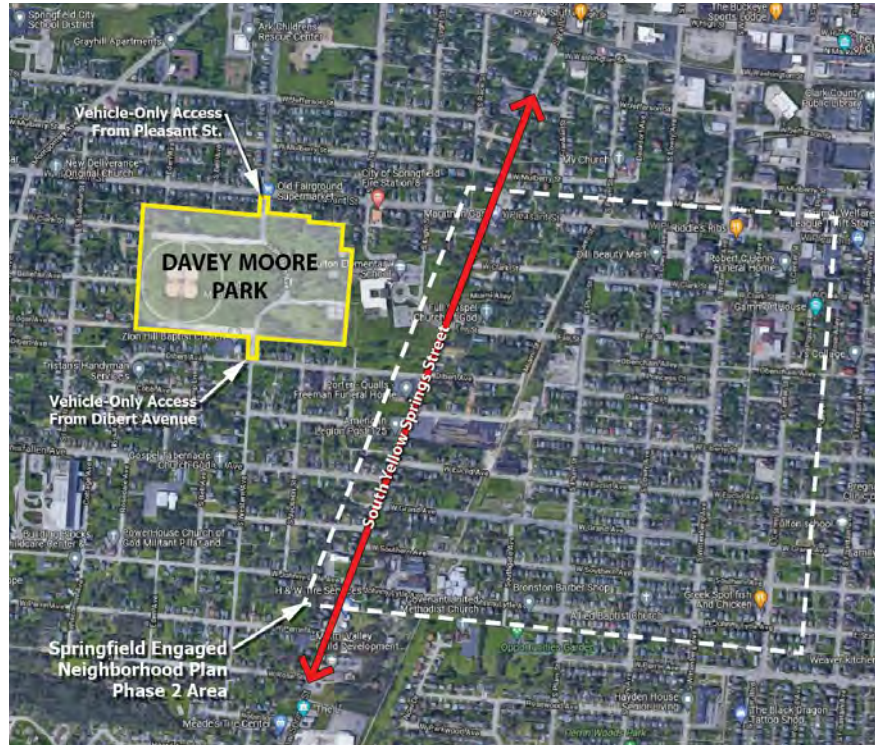
Within the first year of plan adoption

Where:

Along Dibert Street to the park entrance

How:

Coordinate to develop a master plan for the site, raise funds for implementation with an eye towards continuing operations within National Trails capacity



Davey Moore Park has been a community fixture for decades. Its 49 acres offer a playground, baseball fields, areas for youth football games, basketball courts, shelters, and other facilities heavily utilized, though, in recent times, not necessarily by residents of the Engaged Neighborhood (EN).

Neighborhood stakeholders repeatedly expressed a feeling of disconnection from Davey Moore, also noting that its facilities are tired. In recent years, though its athletic fields may have been filled, other parts of the park have been underused. The basketball courts, for example, are rundown and mostly ignored even as makeshift games pop up throughout the neighborhood.



Basketball courts at Davey Moore Park.
Photo Credit: National Trail Parks & Recreation District

Engagement sessions uncovered strong sentiment that the park was more accessible and better used prior to 2003, the year Fulton School was rebuilt. This construction cut off direct access from South Yellow Springs Street. Making entry harder for pedestrians and farther for all, seriously diminishing overall appeal.

Fixing that is important to reestablishing some of the park's earlier popularity.

Davey Moore can be entered from both West Pleasant and Dibert Streets. Currently, however, there is NO signage announcing the entry from either side. This lack tacitly discourages visitation.

Further, the road which runs into the park, South Western Avenue, has no sidewalks, signaling the priority of drivers over pedestrians. New sidewalks should be constructed along this primary path into the park as well as along Dibert.

New sidewalks and a new pedestrian entrance from South Shaffer Street also will help repair disconnection, encouraging nearby residents and those without cars to visit. The pedestrian entrance should be a significant gateway, using signage or an architectural feature at South Yellow Springs Street.

The entire pathway needs to be well-maintained and well-lit for appearance and safety.

A bike lane could also be included as part of this new entrance, connecting to the Little Miami Trail.

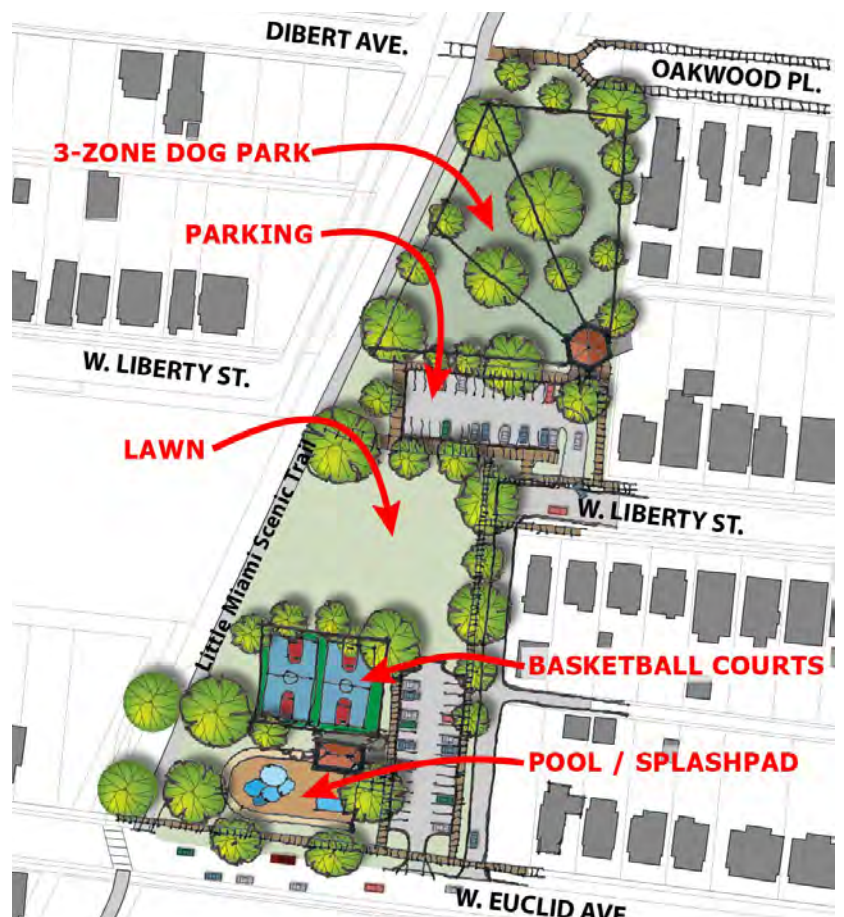
Lastly, new connections to Davey Moore Park from South Yellow Springs should be designed to accommodate future buildings in the business district.

Like others in the region, Springfield's National Trail Parks and Recreation District has limited funding for new park

creation and maintenance. Thus, ambitions for an additional facility need to be scaled to fiscal realities. But that doesn't mean they should be abandoned.

Rather than propose the construction of new resources such as ball fields which replicate what is offered at Davey Moore, the Planning Team recommends that the focus shift toward and emphasize those facilities which support activities such as athletic league play. This reflects the reality of current park usage.

Meanwhile, another facility could provide a wider range of neighborhood amenities. A well-designed, properly located second neighborhood park would complement rather than compete with Davey Moore. The vacant land between W. Euclid Ave. and Oakwood Pl., which is located along the Little Miami Scenic Trail, would make an excellent park containing a trail head, dog park, and spray-ground as shown below and described elsewhere in this plan.



THE INITIATIVES: ESTABLISH POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

11. Home Improvement Program

12. Objective-Based Zoning Reform

HOME IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

What:

Develop programs to help existing homeowners and rehabilitate vacant buildings for occupancy

Why:

To help long-time homeowners stay in their homes

Who:

Neighborhood Housing Partnership
1159 South
City of Springfield
Neighborhood Association

When:

Within the first six months of plan adoption

Where:

Focused on the Engaged Neighborhood

How:

Identify partner & funding, program parameters and open office in the EN

Home rehab was identified as a major need throughout the Engaged Neighborhood (EN).

A housing improvement program, led by a neighborhood located non-profit, would offer the best opportunities to accomplish community goals including:

- Preserve long-term homeownership
- Promote energy sustainability
- Stabilize property values

This is another instance where nothing can happen without money. However, flexibility in administering and raising funds for the program is also essential. Ideally, the process would allow for a diversity of applicants with clear guidance on the way forward to meet program requirements for funding.

What Does A Home Improvement Program Look Like?

- » A fund specifically for use in the EN
- » An office located in this neighborhood
- » A two-pronged program
 - Retain long-time home owners
 - Incentivize sustainability retrofits

Retain Long-Time Owners

The EN is home to folks who have stayed in their houses even as the neighborhood changed.

Now, many wish to age in place, following a developing national trend. A 2018 AARP survey tells that 76% of respondents over age 50 want to remain in their homes for as long as possible, and 77% said they want at least to stay in their communities [1].

Unfortunately, deferred maintenance such as chipped paint, broken hand railings, deficient HVAC systems and water heaters, drafty windows, and aging roofs is common. Often, this

[1] AARP; 2018 Home and Community Preferences: A National Survey of Adults Ages 18-Plus, July 2019, www.aarp.org/research/topics/community/info-2018/2018-home-community-preference.html

deferral leads to further deterioration, rising home heating and cooling bills, and unsafe conditions. It also creates a circumstance in which some residents struggle to retain ownership which contributes to declining value of nearby properties.

A fund that would finance home improvement and restoration is a primary need. Monies available should be used not only to pay for materials but also the cost of labor as **many homeowners are not adept at self-performed repairs. Such a labor force should come, when possible, from area tradesmen and potentially even young helpers looking to learn skills for adult life.** These tradesmen may indeed come from the Small Business Incubator.

Moreover, aging residents often require modifications and improvements to facilitate continued occupancy. These can include handicap ramps, widened doorways, wheelchair-accessible interiors, and even stairlifts or elevators. A Home Improvement Program could fund some of these needs as well.

Incentivize Sustainability Retrofits

There are two tiers of energy-related repairs needed within the EN. One would address the current of housing stock noted in the previous section.

The second tier, when resource allows, should focus on projects such as installing residential solar panels, geothermal heating, grey-water cisterns, and other elements which are additive to home value and increases overall efficiency.

This may seem like a non-essential undertaking but it will be relatively ordinary soon.

There is potential funding already available from various sources. One originates with government, at the federal, state, or local level. Most are administered through the City's Community Development Office or a non-profit intermediary though some state funds are administered directly at that level.

Other potential sources of money are non-profits, individual donors, and foundations.

The chart on page 87 shows several programs in the Springfield area.

While specific programs vary and often are competitive, many support home improvement objectives.

Navigating the process, however, can often be time-consuming, confusing and frustrating. A simple workaround would be to establish a one-stop-shop which can act as a facilitator and guide for potential applicants.

While funding might come from a variety of sources, there would be a single point of contact for applicants. In instances elsewhere, this often is an administrator, ideally an accountable entity such as the City or housing organization or, possibly, a CDC such as 1159 South.

The managing organization should establish an office inside the EN, becoming known to neighborhood residents who will then more clearly see that these programs are for them. Only in that way will some feel comfortable applying for assistance.

A neighborhood-based office also can educate on the range of possibilities, build relationships with funders as well as residents and expedite service as needed.



Existing Springfield Assistance Programs

Program	Eligibility	Assistance	Terms	Property Type	Location
NHP/ ODSA State	50% AMI	\$6,375	Grant	Owner-occupied single family	Springfield and Clark County
NHP/NSP3 Federal	0-50% AMI 51-80% AMI 81-120% AMI	\$7,500 (up to \$8,500 for roof projects) multiple urgent items allowed	0%-4% Loan/10 year maximum	Owner-occupied single family	Springfield and Clark County
City/CDBG Federal	80% AMI	\$5,000 single item - urgent	0% Loan/5 year max	Owner-occupied single family	Springfield city limits
City/Home Funds	80% AMI	\$20,000 Comprehensive/whole house rehab	Combination 0% Loan and Deferred	Owner-occupied single family	Springfield city limits
Weatherization	Income eligibility based on poverty guidelines	Insulation and furnace and/or water heater	Free, property may receive assistance one time	Owner-occupied and rentals with landlord approval	Springfield city limits
Habitat for Humanity	Greater Blessings program, eligibility on a case-by-case basis	Elderly and handicapped/disabled	Owner pays for materials, habitat provides labor	Owner-occupied single family or duplex	Springfield and Clark County
United Senior Services	60+ (55+ if disabled)	Utility assistance (Maximum \$175)	Handicap-accessability issues or lawn mowing	Owner-occupied and rentals with landlord approval	Springfield and Clark County
Clark County DJFS	PRC Program, must have dependent child	Case-by-case: car repairs, appliances, deposits	Voucher assistance	Owner-occupied and rentals	Springfield and Clark County
Veterans Office	Veterans only	Case-by-case/needs based	Various forms of assistance	Owner-occupied and rentals	Springfield and Clark County

For current Area Median Income information, check www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html.

OBJECTIVE-BASED ZONING REFORM

What:

Revise land development regulations to encourage community needs and desires

Why:

Lowers barriers, uncertainty for desired development

Who:

City of Springfield

When:

Within the first six months of plan adoption

Where:

Neighborhood business district along South Yellow Springs Street

How:

Initiate zoning and map change process where identified in plan

The City’s zoning code was last revised in 2001. In the more than 20 years since, many things have changed in Springfield, particularly in the EN.

It’s well past time for an update.

Below are some key recommendations:

Rezone South Yellow Springs Street to Facilitate Change

Currently, the South Yellow Springs Street Corridor has multiple zoning designations:

Zone	Name	Permitted Uses
CC-2	Community Commercial District -2	Permits retail that is set back from the street and automobile oriented development
RS-8	Medium Density Single-Family Residence District	Permits single-family and two-family residential buildings
G	Green Space, Park, and School District	Permits educational and park uses
CO-1	Commercial Office District -1	Permits a mix of commercial buildings and offices
M-1	General Manufacturing District	Permits lower intensity industrial uses

Throughout the first and second workshops conducted, stakeholders consistently chose two business district images that show wide sidewalks, on-street parking, and buildings close to the front lot line. Current zoning prohibits that form of development in the corridor.



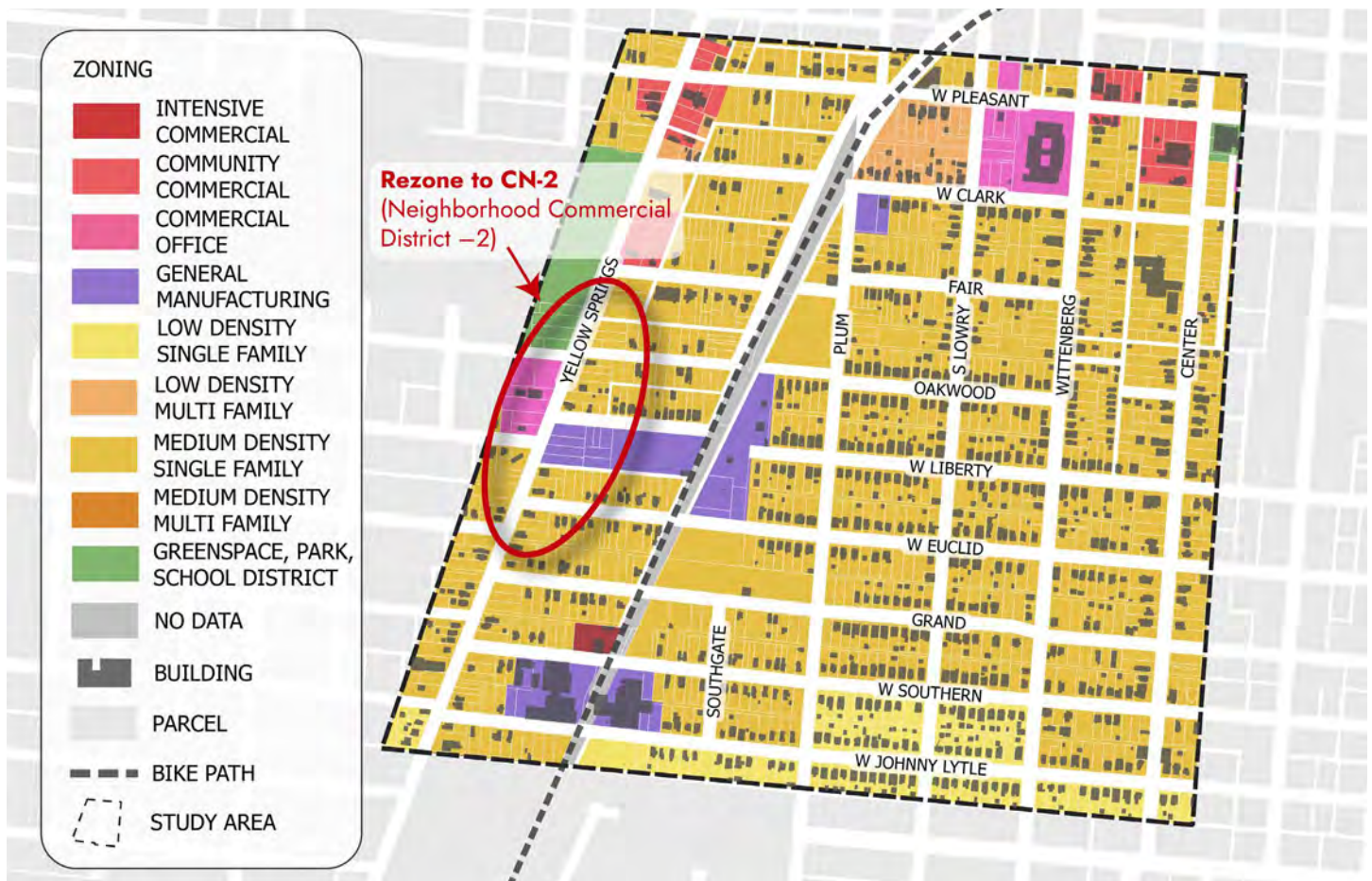
The neighborhood business district photo most popular in community engagement sessions.

This would permit neighborhood-scale commercial storefronts and grandfather houses currently zoned residential to maintain continuation of that use. Current zoning allows manufacturing uses along the corridor, though these are out of sync with desired character. The City can change this going forward through the zoning change process.

The City also can put an Urban Commercial Overlay District (UCOD) in place to ensure new construction meets the street and conforms to community desire for a pedestrian-friendly district. Such a district is already in effect elsewhere in the City.

As a further step, a broader zoning revision process which reviews how well districts are aligned with overall City goals in the 2020's and beyond should be considered.

It is therefore recommended that the commercial and industrial zones here be rezoned to CN-2 (Neighborhood Commercial District –2).



In revisions of district requirements, special attention should be paid to the following:

- **Desired building footprint**
 - » Include setback minimums and maximums
- **Desired uses**
 - » Mixed-Use and Retail with design focus on commercial frontage
 - Clear glazing requirements
 - » Front entrances
- **Parking configuration**
 - » Require parking in rear
 - » Allow for reductions based on:
 - Mix of uses
 - On-street availability
 - Adjacent and nearby lots
 - » OR: Eliminate minimums
 - » Allow shared parking or use of nearby public spaces
- **Signage Standards**
 - » Awning/Projecting
 - » Sandwich boards
 - » Other types such as flags and temporary constructions
- **Allow Accessory Commercial Units (ACU's)**

Interior Neighborhood Zoning Recommendations

The neighborhood outside of the Pleasant and South Yellow Springs Streets corridors have the following zoning designations:

Zone	Location	Permitted Uses
RM-12	Adjacent to Pleasant	Permits low-rise multi-family
CC-2	Pleasant	Permits retail that is set back from the street and automobile oriented development
RS-8	General Area	Permits single-family homes, townhomes and duplexes generally
G	Southeast Center and Pleasant	Permits greenspace and schools
CO-1	Inside Out	Permits a mix of commercial buildings and offices
RS-5	Johnny Lytle	Permits single-family homes and allows accessory dwellings
M-1	Industrial Sites	Permits lower intensity industrial uses

What is an Accessory Commercial Unit (ACU)?

- » A business located on the same property as a residence
- » Can be internal, attached, or detached





An example of a three-unit building that fits into a single family neighborhood

Modify Zoning to Allow Diversity of Housing Types

Only a few areas in the EN currently allow townhomes, duplexes, or multi-family dwellings. Yet, as noted elsewhere, these can enhance affordability and increase ownership opportunities. Traditional multi-family dwellings can range in size, shape, and orientation. In the EN it is recommended that buildings be constructed to face the primary street and of a size consonant with surrounding context.

Parking ideally would be located to the rear of the building or property. The EN has a substantial network of functioning alleys, which make rear-loaded parking an easy and attractive option, reducing the number of curb cuts and garage doors along the front of the street.

In general, zoning in this area should allow for townhomes, two, three, and four family buildings. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU), colloquially known as Granny Flats, should be permitted to allow multi-generational housing opportunities. These units also provide an opportunity for rental income through either long or short-term tenancies, again increasing potential homeownership by sharing cost burden.

The City should specify reasonable conditions for these use typologies.

RM-12 zoning, which currently runs adjacent to W. Pleasant Street also should be amended to permit a greater variety of multi-family in the 2 to the 8-unit range. This includes cottage-court style development where multiple houses are built on a single parcel and around a common lawn. RM-12 contains the phrase “low-rise multi-family” which is ambiguous and should be removed, replaced with more specific numerical height requirements.

Consider Comprehensive Zoning Reform

City leaders should consider longer-term zoning reform.

While this report focuses on analysis to drive revitalization within the EN, recommendations herein also may apply to the City overall. Moreover, there are larger macro trends to address, including challenges of climate change, growing housing inequality, increasing remote work, and e-commerce.

A comprehensive review and revision of the City’s zoning code would help over the long term.



An accessory dwelling unit behind a single-family home.

IMPLEMENTATION

PLAN SECTION	INITIATIVE	1ST YEAR GOALS	ACTIONS	PRIMARY RESPONSIBLE PARTY	SECONDARY PARTNER(S) / COMMITTEE	TIME FRAME	ESTIMATED COST
Build Capacity	Identify Resource - Progress Takes Money	Develop a database of potential funding sources, grants, and programs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consolidate existing information 2. Develop knowledge and relationships 	1159 South	City of Springfield, Springfield Foundation	First Draft by 9/30/2022; ongoing thereafter by 10/31/2022 by 10/31/2022 by 10/31/2022	\$
	Create a Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI)	Create a Springfield fund, have existing regional CDFI manage or create non-profit to manage fund	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write Code of Regulations and By-Laws 2. Establish IRS Status (e.g. -501(c)(3) and file paperwork 3. File incorporation papers with State of Ohio 4. Seat Board members & elect officers 5. Determine strategy of staffing for first few years (i.e. partner with another organization such as Cincinnati Development Fund or acquire an executive "on-loan, etc.) 6. Identify and obtain commitments from at least 5 charter institutions to contribute \$1 million each 	JR. Springfield Foundation	Springfield Financial Institutions (Park National Bank, Huntington Bank, Key Bank, 5th 3rd Bank, PNC Bank)	by 2/28/2023 by 4/30/2023 by 10/31/2023 by 1/31/2023 by 4/30/2023 by 9/30/2023	\$\$\$\$
	Empower CDCs to Lead	Build capacity for CDCs to accomplish mission	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create 10-year strategic plan 2. Acquire operating funds for 2 years 3. Hire parttime or fulltime staff 4. Establish physical storefront / office 	1159 South	South Fountain Preservation	by 9/30/2022 by 10/31/2022	\$\$
	Reestablish an Inclusive Neighborhood Association	Create an organization of neighborhood residents and businesses which can act as a neighborhood forum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify small, core group of volunteers and meet 2. Identify calendar of meetings and events for first year 3. Establish outward communications (e.g. newsletter, flyers, website, etc.) 4. Write by-laws, hold elections, and become recognized city neighborhood 	Southside residents	Southside churches and key businesses	by 10/31/2022	\$
	Create a Small Business Incubator	Identify location for incubator, determine entity to manage operations, identify partners	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Select or create entity to manage operations 2. Identify sources of capital and operational funding 3. Arrange for site acquisition funds 4. Apply for capital funds 5. Identify and acquire site 	1159 South	Young Black Professionals and Businesses; Small Business Development Center; City of Springfield	by 9/30/2022 by 11/30/2022 by 3/31/2023 by 6/30/2023 by 8/31/2023	\$\$\$
	Strengthen the Neighborhood Business District	Zoning reform, acquisition of land for new mixed-use development, streetscape improvements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Study and make changes to zoning districts, create new districts if needed 2. Identify and acquire key properties 3. Select and design streetscape improvements for South Yellow Springs Street 4. Identify and allocate / apply for funding 	City of Springfield	1159 South; Small Business Development Center; Clark County Land Bank	by 6/30/2023 by 8/31/2023 by 6/30/2023 by 8/31/2023	\$
Redevelop Vacant Lots	Redevelop Small Vacant Lots Throughout the Neighborhood	Reactivate small lots around community need	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine preferred use for every small, vacant lot in neighborhood 2. Acquire first round of lots (key lots most easily acquired) 3. For public use lots - determine management 4. For development lots, create and issue RFP(s) for development 	1159 South	Neighborhood Association; Clark County Land Bank; Private developers;	by 9/30/2022 by 3/31/2023 by 3/31/2022 by 6/30/2023	\$\$
	Redevelop Larger Lots	Convert blight into active beneficial places of highest and best use	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct environmental assessments 2. Acquire land 3. Remediate environmental contaminants 4. Issue RFP for developers 	1159 South	Clark County Land Bank Private developers	by 3/31/2023 by 6/30/2023 by 8/31/2023 by 8/31/2023	\$\$\$
Strengthen Connection Between Recreation Assets	Improve the Little Miami Scenic Trail	Make enhancements to the trail that improve visibility, safety and connectivity to the neighborhood	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assemble volunteer teams to clear underbrush, paint murals 2. Identify and acquire funds for wayfinding, trail head parking, and lighting 3. Install trail head parking, wayfinding, and lighting 4. Design connection of trail to Pleasant Street 	City of Springfield	National Trails Neighborhood Association	by 9/30/2022 by 11/30/2022 by 10/31/2023 by 8/31/2023	\$\$
	Strengthen Connections to Davy Moore Park	Build connection points from the park to South Yellow Springs Street and the trail	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare 10-year use strategy for athletic / league fields 2. Design physical connections (e.g. sidewalks and bike paths) and signage 3. Acquire funding for physical connections and signage 	City of Springfield	National Trails	by 8/31/2022 by 11/31/2022 by 5/31/2023	\$\$
Establish Policies and Programs	Home Improvement Program	Develop programs to help existing homeowners and rehabilitate vacant buildings for occupancy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify partner and funding sources 2. Determine program parameters 3. Determine program administrator 	Stakeholder group to identify neighborhood partner organization	1159 South City of Springfield Neighborhood Association	by 10/31/2022 by 10/31/2023 by 3/31/2023	\$
	Objective-Based Zoning Reform	Revise land development regulations to encourage community needs and desires	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initiate zoning and map change process where identified in plan 2. Develop Zoning Code Diagnostic 3. Evaluate degree of zoning code reform 	City of Springfield		by 8/31/2022 by 6/30/2023 by 6/30/2024	\$\$

APPENDIX



DID YOU KNOW THAT THE CDFI FUND IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR COMMUNITY?

SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REQUIRES COMMUNITY-BASED DECISION MAKING.

That's why the CDFI Fund invests in Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) to maximize impact in our nation's low-income areas. Through unique programs and tailored resources that leverage federal dollars with private capital, the CDFI Fund supports creating jobs, building businesses, and revitalizing neighborhoods.

BANK ENTERPRISE AWARD PROGRAM

The Bank Enterprise Award Program incentivizes FDIC-insured depository institutions for increasing investments in the most distressed communities throughout the country.

HEALTHY FOOD FINANCING INITIATIVE

The Healthy Food Financing Initiative offers assistance to CDFIs that invest in activities that increase healthy food options.



CDFI PROGRAM

The CDFI Program invests in and builds the capacity of CDFIs, empowering them to grow, be sustainable, and contribute to the revitalization of their communities.

CAPITAL MAGNET FUND

The Capital Magnet Fund invests in CDFIs and nonprofit housing organizations to finance affordable housing activities.



NATIVE INITIATIVES

Native Initiatives support the creation and expansion of CDFIs serving Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities.

NEW MARKETS TAX CREDIT PROGRAM

The New Markets Tax Credit Program helps economically distressed communities attract private capital by providing investors with federal tax credits.

CDFI BOND GUARANTEE PROGRAM

The CDFI Bond Guarantee Program makes long-term capital from the U.S. Department of the Treasury available to our nation's most distressed communities.



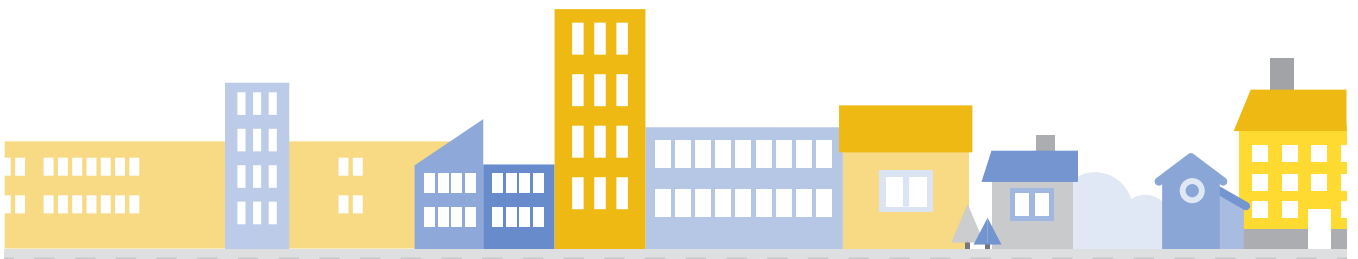
Now this looks like a community that you can be proud to be a part of.

VISIT CDFIFUND.GOV TO LEARN MORE



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (CDFIS) SHARE A COMMON GOAL OF EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY IN LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES BY PROVIDING ACCESS TO FINANCIAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES. WHETHER IT'S THE CREDIT UNION DOWN THE STREET OR A NEARBY SMALL BUSINESS LOAN FUND, YOUR COMMUNITY MAY BE HOME TO AN ORGANIZATION KNOWN AS A CDFI.

WHAT ARE CDFIs?



CDFIs can be banks, credit unions, loan funds, microloan funds, or venture capital providers. CDFIs are helping families finance their first homes, supporting community residents starting businesses, and investing in local health centers, schools, or community centers. CDFIs strive to foster economic opportunity and revitalize neighborhoods.

FOR A COMMUNITY TO THRIVE ECONOMICALLY IT REQUIRES ACCESS TO BASIC FINANCIAL SERVICES, AFFORDABLE CREDIT, AND INVESTMENT CAPITAL. YET HISTORICALLY, FOR LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES AND INDIVIDUALS, THAT ACCESS HAS OFTEN BEEN LIMITED.

HOW DID CDFIs BEGIN?



Beginning in the 1880s when the first minority-owned banks focused on low-income areas, community organizations have developed to provide needed financial services. From the creation of credit unions in the 1930s and 1940s and community development corporations beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, to the more recent emergence of non-profit loan funds in the 1980s, the predecessors to CDFIs sought to better the conditions in these economically underserved markets.

To support the emerging community development financial institutions, the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund, or CDFI Fund, was established by the Riegle Community Development and Regulatory Improvement Act of 1994. The CDFI Fund's purpose is to promote economic revitalization and community development in low-income communities through investment in and assistance to CDFIs.

FROM GRASSROOTS BEGINNINGS, CDFIS NOW FORM A ROBUST SECTOR WITHIN THE LARGER FINANCIAL SERVICES INDUSTRY.

WHAT DO CDFIs LOOK LIKE TODAY?

There are 1,000 CDFIs operating nationwide. They are a collaborative force that brings together diverse private and public sector investors to create economic opportunity in low-income communities. CDFIs continue to grow in size and impact, and to support community transformation.



DOES THIS SOUND LIKE YOUR ORGANIZATION?

If so, you may be eligible to become certified as a CDFI. Certification is the first step in entering our nationwide network of CDFIs. View our eligibility requirements and learn how to become certified as a CDFI ([CDFIFund.gov](https://www.cdfifund.gov)).

WANT TO ENHANCE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CAPACITY TO HELP YOUR COMMUNITY?

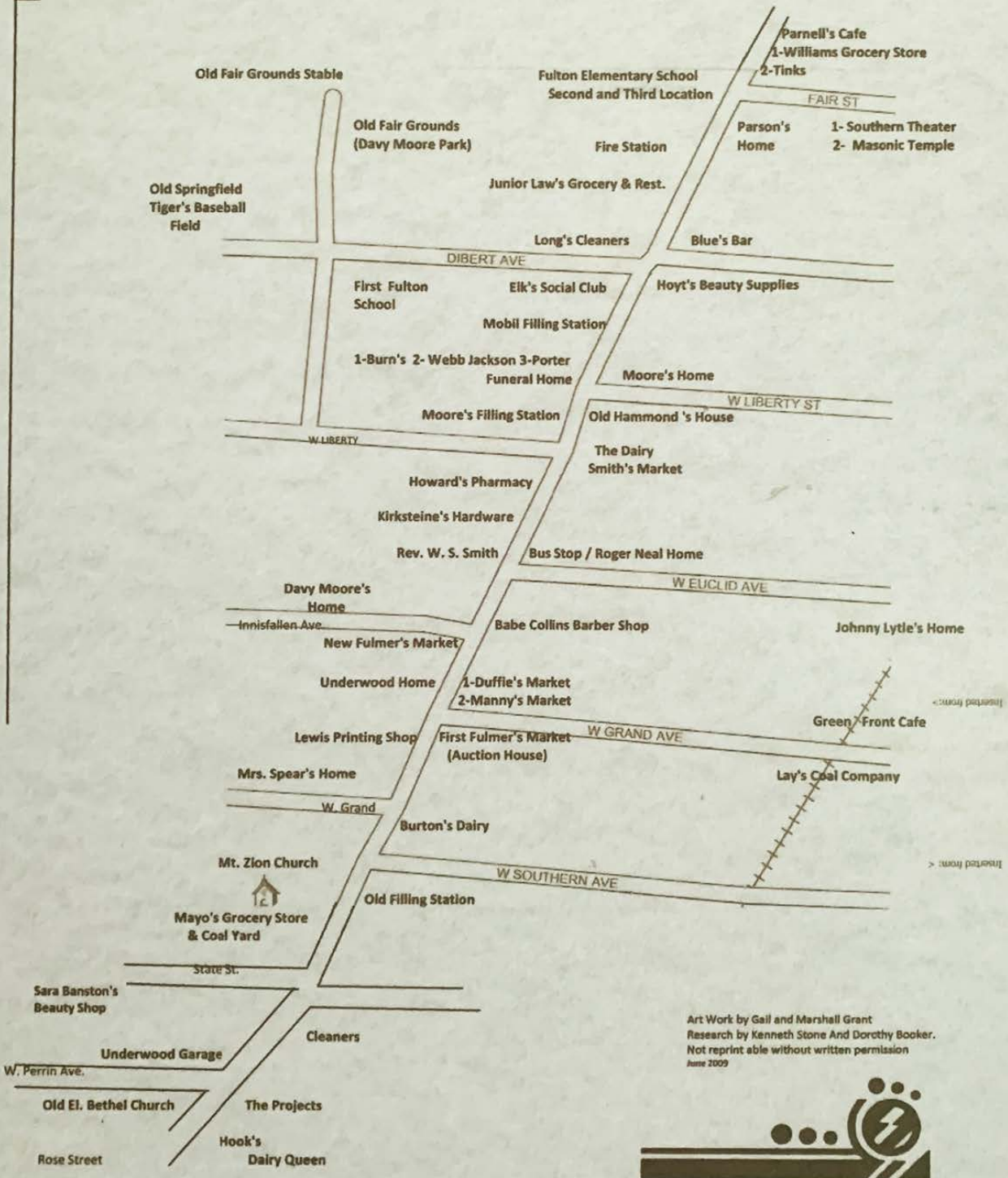
Learn how Certified CDFIs can participate in the CDFI Fund's competitive award programs ([CDFIFund.gov](https://www.cdfifund.gov)).



Yellow Springs Street Business

1950 Circa

Springfield, Ohio



A Guide for Starting a Successful Neighborhood Association

Adapted from a publication of the same name produced by the City of Fayetteville, Arkansas*

Block by Block

Congratulations on taking the first steps in starting a neighborhood association. A neighborhood association is a group of homeowners, renters, apartment dwellers, and representatives from neighborhood businesses, churches, and schools who organize to improve conditions in the neighborhood. When you start a neighborhood association, the people in your neighborhood get a chance to decide what needs to be done and work together to make it happen. A group that represents the community will have the stability, credibility, and political clout to be an effective force for a better neighborhood.

This **Neighborhood Association Toolbox** is a guide to assist you in starting a neighborhood association. It is by no means a complete set of rules that must be followed. It is merely a starting point with helpful hints and proven methods to effectively organize your group.

Organizing a neighborhood association is a big job. The material in this kit breaks down the job into clear steps so that it will be less overwhelming. While it may seem difficult at first, developing your association will be enormously exciting as people come together to address common concerns and learn to work together as a group. Keep in mind some important guidelines as you begin to organize:

1. Building an organization is a process. It can't be done overnight. Be patient. Identify your priorities and build them step-by-step.
2. Set realistic goals. Start small and build upward. As your organizational capacity grows, start setting your goals higher.
3. How you treat people is crucial to your success. By treating people with respect and honesty, people will be more likely to get involved in the organization.
4. Adapt the ideas and strategies outlined in this kit to the specific needs and circumstances of your community and your organization.
5. People join neighborhood groups for a variety of reasons. One of them is to get to know their neighbors better and to feel a sense of community. So, as you build your organization, be sure to have fun.

Neighborhood Projects

One of the best ways to attract attention and form group unity is to focus on an important issue in your neighborhood. Neighbors do not attend meetings or become interested in your association unless you are doing worthwhile projects for their benefit or the benefit of their area. It's important that you determine the needs of your neighborhood and focus on those needs until you demonstrate success.

Determine the needs of your neighborhood through meetings and personal discussions with neighbors during a walk-through. After you construct a list of possible needs, discuss them in reasonable depth to

identify the issues. When you have identified the issues, discuss each one and agree on the priority of each issue. Sort the issues into short-term or long-term projects and begin to evaluate how your association would like to approach each issue.

In developing your neighborhood projects, focus on a specific issue that will demonstrate action and results and that will be visible in the neighborhood. Get the whole community behind the project by promoting the issue as much as possible. This will provide lots of participation for you to establish a large membership base. If you are successful in achieving your goals or effecting change on a single issue, it demonstrates that your association is an effective group. This establishes the credibility and worthiness of your association, characteristics which are important to long-term survival. Unfortunately, one problem with concentrating on a single issue is that when that problem is solved, everyone leaves. Therefore, it is important to introduce other issues at the same time and get people to work on them in addition to the main issue. As each issue is resolved, focus on new, short- and long-term projects.

In planning projects, keep the ball rolling with a list of projects and activities that will maintain participation and interest. This requires a lot of anticipation and organization by association members. The best approach is to plan around a calendar. Do not suffocate your members with more projects than time will allow. Choose a pace and stay consistent. Slow progress is often better than no progress at all, but keep in mind that one large gap in activity could cost you the participation of a large majority of your membership because of lack of interest. Be careful how you plan and coordinate all projects. Keep people involved in all levels and give people specific jobs (with specific time frames) to do. Everyone is willing to contribute a little bit of time. Do not give too much responsibility to one person when it can be easily delegated to several.

Project Ideas

The following is a list of possible short- and long-term projects:

- Neighborhood Clean-up
- Community Garden, tree planting, flower planting
- Back-to-school party and school supply drive
- Murals or neighborhood art project
- Neighborhood scrapbook or video
- Crime watch program
- Scholarship exchange (Example: Ex-boxer in the neighborhood sets up an afternoon boxing program for neighborhood kids. The kids mow and care for his yard).
- Block party or festival
- Neighborhood entrance signs
- Security lighting
- Tool lending libraries
- Tutoring program for youth
- Home tours
- Neighborhood cook-out, picnic, or potluck
- National night out celebration
- Holiday celebration
- Neighborhood t-shirts
- Yard of the month award
- Neighborhood newsletter, web site, directory, or telephone/email tree
- Paint up/fix up projects

- Paint swap
- Speakers on topics of interest to the neighborhood
- Representative to attend city council, school board, and planning commission meetings
- Philanthropic projects, such as "adopting" a family who needs help with Christmas dinner

Keeping Interest in the Association

Once you have tackled a few projects, how do you keep people interested? This by far is the biggest challenge for any neighborhood association. In general, members will participate if following are present:

- Business and social events in which to participate.
- Issues of importance to discuss
- Clean and visible accomplishments
- Organized, competent leaders
- Events to recognize participants

Effective Meetings

The way that meetings are run will affect how members become and stay involved in the association. If meetings rarely start on time or are dominated by a few people, members will become frustrated and will stop coming to meetings. When meetings are well run, people's opinions are respected, and the agenda is followed, members will feel more willing to participate in other activities of the association.

Meeting Arrangements

The best arrangement for a community meeting is a circle of chairs. People sitting in a circle can communicate better. Tables often form barriers and are easy to hide behind. Avoid using tables unless they are needed for maps or handouts. Choose a neutral room that will just barely accommodate everyone. This will allow the energy of the group to stay within the group and add to your feelings of enthusiasm. Meeting locations could include a neighborhood church or community center, a member's home, or a favorite local restaurant.

Agendas

Every meeting must have an agenda or purpose. Spend time before the meeting deciding not only what to discuss, but also how long and in what order you will discuss the items. It is sometimes useful to put emotional or controversial issues at the end of the agenda. This will allow you to take care of small, but necessary decisions early in the meeting. When listing agenda items, it's always good to list a time limit. It's possible that you'll go over or under the limit on some items, but will tend to keep the meeting on track. Do not overload the agenda. Try to stay within 1 – 1.5 hours and allow some time for refreshments and mingling.

Running a Meeting

Start the meeting on time. Don't penalize those on time by making them wait for latecomers. Go ahead and start the meeting with less important agenda items. By doing this, you will reinforce the behavior of those who arrive on time without excluding those who are late.

Make sure someone takes the minutes and records the meeting so that those who were unable to attend can still keep up with the activities of the association. If you do not have a secretary, rotate this task.

Dealing with Difficult People

When a point is being discussed too long:

- Summarize; or
- Suggest tabling the question for a later time.

When two members get into a heated discussion:

- Summarize points made by each and turn the discussion back to the group and/or
- Invite the two to stay after the meeting when the three of you can talk it over.

When coping with the "one-man" show:

- Interrupt with a statement giving the speaker credit for his contribution but politely asking him to hold his other points until later; and/or
- Interrupt with "You have brought up many points that will keep us busy for a long time. Would anyone like to take up one of these points?"

When a speaker drifts from the subject:

- Interrupt, give her credit for her idea but explain that she is departing from the main point; or
- Propose to the group the question of whether it wants to stray from the outline or follow it; or
- Bring the discussion back to the topic by using the related idea as the transition.

When a member has difficulty expressing herself:

- Build up her confidence by expressing appreciation for what she has said and then rephrase her material with a preface such as "is this what you mean, Ms. Jones?"

Participation

Set realistic expectations about attendance. You may not need large attendance at every meeting. Do not focus on what you consider poor attendance. Concentrate on coming up with techniques to increase attendance. Set a tone at meetings where everyone's ideas are welcome and respected and no one is put down. Consider establishing a Membership Committee to focus on recruiting new members. Be realistic about what people can do given their other responsibilities. Respect all contributions, no matter how small.

Ending the Meeting

It is surprising how many meetings are allowed to just fizzle out. Meetings should end with a plan of action. Ask committees to research an issue and report back to the group. Summarize what has been decided. Then, decide on the date, time and place of the next meeting before members leave.

And, most importantly, in addition to addressing concerns in the neighborhood, plan enjoyable neighborhood activities that will bring the neighborhood together, such as a block party, neighborhood garden, or card club. If those in the neighborhood see the exciting activities happening around them, they will be more likely to want to participate in your neighborhood association.

Communications

The establishment of a good communications and publicity network is absolutely essential to any group. Whether it is a simple flyer, newspaper announcement advertising a meeting, a short telephone call, or an email, groups must take advantage of all media (including word of mouth) to make people aware of activities.

One of the most effective ways to establish a manageable and affordable network is using the following forms of communication:

Flyers - Any activity, project, or goal of the group can be announced in a flyer. When designing a flyer, be sure the wording is bold enough to be read from a distance of 10 feet. Use colorful paper. If possible, arrange for the use of a church or school copying machine. Or better still, have them quickly copied as a donation by a local print shop. Contact the Community Affairs Department if you need help designing and/or copying flyers. Post flyers in markets, laundromats, schools, beauty shops, and other places frequented by the people you want to reach.

Newspaper announcements - The Northwest Arkansas Times, the Morning News and the Free Weekly have announcement sections and allow neighborhood associations to advertise their local meetings at no charge.

Neighborhood walk-through - This is one of the most effective ways to begin a relationship with your neighbors and get them interested in your association. Organize a group of at least four to six people to cover a specific region of your neighborhood. Assign pairs to go door-to-door and introduce the association and its goals. Ask them about their concerns and respond with how your association can help them effect a change in their situation. Ask them to attend the next meeting to voice their concerns. Also, ask them to bring some of their neighbors. Be sure to leave a flyer with the information about the next meeting. If no one is home, leave a flyer in a visible, but secure location (do not place flyers in mailboxes as it is against federal law).

Surveys - Surveys are a key way to bring new members into the association. Use a survey when you are just getting started. At your first general meeting, distribute a survey to residents to find out what issues are important to them and what direction they want the group to take. When developing a survey, keep in mind the information you want to get from community residents:

- What are the most important issues in the neighborhood?
- What are the issues people are willing to work on?
- What kinds of skills do people have?
- What are the best meeting times and locations?
- What are people's work schedules?
- What is the age, racial, and economic make-up of the neighborhood?

These are just suggested questions. Brainstorm and come up with questions that fit your neighborhood.

Telephone tree/email list - Individuals who want to contribute but have little time may volunteer to be on a telephone tree or email list. Give each person at least six people to contact by phone with a short message. Or, place a neighborhood member in charge of setting up an email database. Information may then be sent out as the need arises. These are easy ways to establish a communication network that is fast and very effective.

Block representatives - Establish one or two individuals from each side of a street or block to serve as a liaison with your association. They can inform neighbors about what your association is doing and how to get involved. They can also recruit neighbors to support your association and communicate with them by word-of-mouth or telephone. This is a big help when your neighborhood association covers a large area.

Newsletters - A monthly or quarterly newsletter can be an effective tool in communicating with your members. Short, informative articles that are of interest to the entire neighborhood will keep neighbors

up-to-date. Newsletters can be paid for through association dues or by advertising dollars and can be produced fairly inexpensively.

A good newsletter might contain the following information:

- Notices of important meeting dates and group events.
- Information about city services
- Recent accomplishments of your group
- Notification of special events
- Recognition of volunteers
- Information about the schools in the neighborhood
- Profiles of neighbors
- Crime/safety information
- Birth/death announcements
- Graduation announcements
- Anniversaries
- A welcome to new neighbors
- Articles of community interest
- Advertising

The newsletter editor will write articles, review articles submitted by others and set deadlines. The newsletter committee should assist with typing, soliciting advertising, and arranging for printing. Decisions will need to be made regarding the title of the newsletter, the number of pages, paper stock, and the arrangement of copy. Consider asking a local printer to donate printing services. Decide how to distribute the newsletter. Newsletters can be sent home with students. Also, consider utilizing boy or girl scout troops or block captains to deliver the newsletters. If you decide to mail the newsletter, call the US Post Office regarding a bulk mail permit.

Website

There are a number of free web site and listserv resources available for non-profit groups like neighborhood organizations.

- Among the most popular free listerv services, Yahoo Groups (<http://groups.yahoo.com/>) and Google Groups (<http://groups.google.com/>) offer services like message archives, shared photo storage, group calendars, polls, and links storage.
- Designed specifically as a neighborhood organization resource, Neighborhood Link (www.neighborhoodlink.com) is an Internet-based community network that enables every neighborhood in participating metropolitan areas to create their own free, interactive Web sites.
- Several neighborhood organizations in Athens-Clarke County have opted to develop their own independent web sites with the purchase of a domain name through commercial web-hosting companies. While this option incurs annual costs, the rates are often affordable and frequently covered by neighborhood membership dues. Greater storage capacity for online resources and documents is among the advantages of an independent site.

Incorporation and Nonprofit Status

Steps for Filing Articles of Incorporation

If your neighborhood association plans to apply for nonprofit status, you must first file Articles of Incorporation with the Secretary of State. Here are the steps to consider when incorporating:

- Call the Secretary of State Corporations Division at 404-656-2817 to check on the availability of your corporate name. The state does not allow duplication of corporate names, and your proposed name may already be in use.
- Write your Articles of Incorporation. If possible, have an attorney check your Articles of Incorporation before submitting them to the State.
- The forms must be notarized. All the officers of the corporation must sign two copies of the Articles of Incorporation in front of a Notary Public.
- For more information about the incorporation process, visit the Secretary of State's Web site at <http://www.sos.state.ga.us/corporations/>.

Applying for Nonprofit Status

Articles of Incorporation do not make an association a nonprofit organization. Nonprofit status is given by the Internal Revenue Service. The decision to apply for nonprofit or 501(c)3 status with the IRS is a big step for a neighborhood association and should be considered carefully. Applying for and maintaining nonprofit status requires a great deal of paperwork and record keeping.

The following are benefits of nonprofit status:

- Enables your neighborhood association to accept tax-deductible donations.
- Allows you to avoid paying sales tax on your purchases.
- Allows you to avoid paying income tax on interest earned in the association's bank account and on qualified non-profit income.

A neighborhood association is eligible for nonprofit status if:

- It is incorporated by the state as a non-profit corporation.
- It is organized solely for charitable purposes.

To apply for non-profit status, you must file IRS Form 1023 seeking tax-exempt status and charitable organization status. IRS Publication 557 explains how to complete Form 1023. The IRS requires the submittal of a filing fee along with Form 1023. To determine the appropriate filing fee for your organization, complete Form 8718 User Fee for Exempt Organization Determination Letter Request. Many organizations find that professional assistance in filing these forms is necessary.

Volunteers

Recruit people to events and activities—not to business meetings. Sign-in sheets, nametags, and follow-up recruitment calls should be standard procedure in your organization. Give new members a chance to participate through activities such as passing out information at meetings, working on a neighborhood project, delivering the newsletter, stuffing envelopes, or contacting their friends to come to the next event. These activities should make the volunteer feel useful and productive. When recruiting to an activity, try to consider the volunteer's needs. Try to provide child care, transportation, or a mentor if the volunteer needs it.

When recruiting volunteers, enthusiasm is important. Show confidence by knowing what you would like the volunteer to do and be enthusiastic about the task at hand. Practice explaining your request in a concise, up-beat fashion. In just a few sentences, you should be able to convey the essence of the organization, the purpose of the task, and how the task will enhance the organization and the neighborhood. Here are the six steps to successful recruitment.

1. *Be prepared*

Have in mind a mini-strategy consisting of how you will explain your goal and what you want the person to do. Review what you know about the person, such as interests, experience, and family. Look and listen for clues as to what interests this person.

2. *Legitimize yourself*

You need to gain quick credibility. Find a common background or a mutual friend. Explain that you have the same problem that they do. Mention people that they might know. Explain why the person's participation will make a difference.

3. *Listen, listen, listen*

Draw people out. Listening is more important than just not talking. It is asking good questions, providing encouraging remarks, and using body language that says you are interested. Be sure to listen to for special skills, useful contacts, and organizational networks that can be useful to your organization.

4. *Challenge*

Encourage people to produce change. Challenge people to care about the organization's goals.

5. *Get a commitment*

Never leave a conversation open-ended. Get a commitment with a firm deadline. Write it down, make a note for follow-up and clarify exactly what should happen next.

6. *Follow-up*

There is nothing worse than making a big fuss over people while recruiting them and then ignoring them once they show up. Have greeters or a welcoming committee at meetings, introduce new people to experienced volunteers, and keep the lines of communication between you and your volunteers open at all times.

Keeping volunteers is just as important as recruiting them. Recruitment has to be backed up by an organizational plan with clear goals and expectations of what volunteers will do. Have a committee or program designed especially for volunteer and membership issues. This program should include training, supervision, recognition, and leadership development. Always explain the organizational importance of each task and assign tasks to fit the time that the volunteer is able to give. Recognize volunteers and make them feel a part of the team.

Recruiting and keeping volunteers is something that is learned through practice and experience. Have fact sheets for each recruiter addressing such things as how to overcome objections to volunteering, the purpose of the task they are recruiting for, organizational information, and a brief description of the task. Growing, thriving organizations must train leaders on how to recruit others and build recruitment strategies into their on-going program work.

Political Action at the Local Level

Staff

Administrative support to executive branches of government, (i.e., agency personnel, committee staff, etc.) is a source of information, advice, and opinion. They can make small decisions within the scope of their procedures. As a rule, they have no authority for policy changes.

Elected Officials

Elected officials are a source of information, advocates for policy changes, intermediaries for citizen groups or citizens.

Committee

Standing, ad hoc, citizens, or subcommittees are typically advisors of government. Recommendations are prepared for higher levels of government. This is where the work leading up to decisions is conducted. They are characterized by greater informality, more candid and detailed staff reviews, airing of positions of all interested parties, and possibly brokering and negotiating of trade-offs between interest groups.

Councils/Boards/Commissions

These are the final action, decision-making levels for cities, counties, districts, and other planning bodies. They are characterized by more formal procedures and presentations. In many cases, decisions ratify committee recommendations. However, the policy body may weigh a recommendation against other priorities and override the recommendation or request additional information before making a decision. Likelihood of action without prior committee recommendation or referral is remote. This is the most visible arena of the policy making process. Therefore, conflict resolution is difficult and the PR value of confrontation is highest at this stage. Compromises are better worked out ahead of time.

Voters

Voters have direct access to legislative power through the initiative/referendum process. This applies to legislative action only (contrast: administrative or quasi-judicial) in state, home rule county, or city with appropriate charter provisions. It can either propose grass roots legislation or challenge a decision by policy makers in referring their action to popular vote.

Media

Mass media is relevant to any discussion of the political process, although in itself not a bona fide category of political action. Letters to the editor, feature stories, radio talk shows on current events, and editorial board support are desirable, no-cost strategies for influencing public officials and contributing to the public debate.

How to Influence Decision-Making

Action Check List

- Learn the decision-making process.
- Meet your elected officials as early as possible.
- Let your elected officials know about you.
- Concentrate and coordinate your efforts.
- Inform yourself--research the issue.
- Inform the members and the public of the issues.
- Attend meetings.
- Assist your elected officials.
- Know and support your allies.
- Always provide completely accurate information to elected officials; never deliberately provide misleading or false information.

- Focus on the preliminary stages of policy making.
- Never threaten elected officials.
- Form coalitions.
- Identify "swing votes."
- Be discreet.
- Be realistic. You may not win every fight, and at times, compromises will have to be made.
- Thank elected officials for their help.
- Inform your members about which officials helped and supported your cause.
- Evaluate your efforts.
- Monitor the implementation of decisions.
- Involve as many members as possible in different roles.

Tradition

"We always do it this way." Examine the traditional framework in your community. Does your project fit comfortably? Does it make minor changes? Or is it radically different? A project that differs a great deal from the way "we always do it" will require more explanation to the community before it will be accepted.

Power Clusters

Organizations and individuals who are all interested in the same thing form power clusters. For example, the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, and the state Fish and Game Commission might all focus on wildlife issues. When these groups join efforts, they form a power cluster, sometimes called a coalition.

Networks that may relate to neighborhood associations include the Federation of Neighborhoods and other individual neighborhood associations, city-county committees primarily made up of citizens, and other volunteer organizations with similar interests.

Working With Local Government

Since a large part of a neighborhood association's time may be spent advocating for change at the local level, it is important to know how to work with local government. The next few sections give ideas for how groups like neighborhood associations can effectively work with local government to influence decision making. These sections deal with general principles, such as how to choose the best channel to go through, how to give public testimony, and how to be politically effective as a group.

Set Your Goals

What is most important for your neighborhood association to accomplish in order to maintain livability? If you have a neighborhood plan, some goals have likely been set. If not, set aside some time for your Board to set its direction. Prepare needs statements for the City budget process and prioritize issues for Board involvement.

Know Your Issues

Do your homework. Find out who is affected, to what degree, and the consequences of no action. On a long-range issue, document your process, dates of events, who was involved, and correspondence. Determine which issues will need to be addressed by a local government agency and which will need to be addressed by the neighborhood itself. Only neighbors working together and along with government can solve short- and long-term neighborhood problems.

Know the Structure and Purpose of City Government

Contact the City Clerk's Office at 575-8323 or access the website for information regarding City of Fayetteville Departments and structure.

Become Acquainted with Procedure

Visit a few meetings of your public officials (e.g., City Council, boards, commissions, etc.). Understand how they operate, discover the guidelines they have to follow, and realize the pressures they are under. Have someone explain to you the procedure if it isn't otherwise clear.

Work Personally

Allow your officials to get to know you. The best form of contact is on the personal level: (1) personal appearance, (2) phone call, (3) letter, (4) e-mail. See www.accessfayetteville.org on ways to contact city officials.

Keep Your Public Officials Informed

Do not surprise your officials with unexpected actions. Bring written copies of your concern when meeting with them, and follow up your concern and action with letters. (Keep copies of everything you do!) Make reference to things you have sent. Keep up an ongoing relationship. Show your appreciation as well as dissatisfaction. Send carbon copies to other individuals or agencies involved (citizens, City staff, others).

Work on all Levels

Try the chain of command first by going to the person most directly responsible for your concern. Then work on all levels by going to your appointed and elected officials. If you don't know whom to talk to, do not hesitate to go to the top. Be sure to keep your City Councilors informed. If necessary, address the Council as a whole to be sure you are heard.

Make it Clear if You Represent a Group

Identify the name of your group and its purpose. Use appointed contact persons to establish continuity and identity. Document attendance at general meetings and votes taken. Ensure that you have the group's approval/authorization before acting.

Get Solid Answers

Don't be satisfied with vague answers. Talk to informed people and solicit answers you can rely on. Ask for and remind your officials of specific information--dates, places, times, etc.

Be Open to Suggestions

Take the suggestions of your officials seriously and follow up on them. Progress occurs when everyone pushes in the same direction.

Follow Up

Follow up on a discussion with a memo summarizing the discussion and its outcome. Check back to see if whatever has been agreed to is being done or to see if decisions are being made. After the decision has been made, check back with the appropriate staff or government official to be certain it is carried out.

Keep the Neighborhood Informed

Use your neighborhood association's meetings and annual newsletter to keep the neighborhood informed. Talk with neighbors and businesses about what is happening. Contact the neighbors and friends about what is happening. Contact the newspapers to let them know your concerns. You may wish to issue a press release. Make your written information interesting.

Increasing Your Group's Effectiveness

The following are a collection of ideas to make your citizen's group more effective. Pick and choose, selecting those that are most appropriate for your situation.

Analysis

- Develop an independent understanding of the causes of social problems.
- Discuss social problems and their political and economic roots.
- Understand national trends (especially those which concern many people) and show your program's relationship to them.
- Identify and challenge decision-makers' assumptions about problems.
- Identify who else is concerned with the issue. Talk with them, form an alliance, share information, work together.
- Understand concerns, viewpoints, and priorities of your opponents and allies.

Vision

- Define your ideas, your vision of a society where problems which concern you have been resolved.

Structure

- Assign one citizen group member to each relevant decision-maker to lobby, to research (voting record, interest, etc.)
- Develop new ways of solving a problem which by-passes uncooperative decision-makers.

Image

- Get listed or featured in other groups' newsletters.
- Start or improve your own newsletter and send it to as many influential people as possible.
- Become better known (a "household word").
- Launch a public education campaign.
- Get radio and TV stations to help you develop your own public service announcements.
- Use CAT (Cable Access Television).
- Raise the consciousness of the general public on what it means to be an active, effective citizen.

Strategies and forms of involvement

- Neighborhood
 - Choose "win-able" issues.
 - Set up a demonstration project which shows how a problem should be dealt with; form partnerships; get funding if needed.
 - Canvass neighborhoods to gather opinions and build support.
 - Support community issues and concerns.

- Celebrate community events (holidays, local history, successes).
- Hold block parties.
- Resources and Assistance
 - Assess organizational history and strengths; they are among your most important resources.
 - Make a budget for your citizen involvement activities and get funding without strings.
 - Use community resources such as school buildings for space.
 - Draw on technical experts for advice and testimony.
 - Enlist the support of people with clout.
 - Use process consultants and facilitators when appropriate.
 - Seek in-kind services (free printing, auditing, legal assistance, etc.)
- Organizational Development
 - Set long-range goals and allocate time in accordance with them.
 - Initiate plans and policies rather than reacting to those of some government agency or other organization.
 - Manage time carefully and realistically (within a single meeting and during implementation of plans).
 - Develop leadership and membership skills. Make training an on-going part of your activities.
 - Evaluate your progress regularly.

How to Give Public Testimony

Giving public testimony before Boards and Commissions can be frightening if you have never done it before. There are several things you can do to make your thoughts and presentation clear and successful. You may not always have the time to follow the outline listed below. However, whenever you can, it is beneficial to spend as much time as possible preparing your testimony. Carefully prepared testimony may influence action. Also, testimony becomes part of the public record and may be referred to later on.

How to Prepare Public Testimony

- Know your time frame

Find out when, where, and before whom (Mayor & Commission, Planning Commission, Hearings Board, etc.) the issue will appear. This will let you know how much time you have to prepare--there is a big difference between having one day and one month to prepare.

- Know your issue

Support opinions with as many facts as possible. Do your homework: information is power. Read newspapers, magazines, etc., to find out about the issue. Talk to local government officials, when possible, and other citizens. Be knowledgeable of the opposition's arguments and be prepared to counter those arguments. Also, draw on your own knowledge and experience.

- Start writing down main points

Construct a rough outline from scattered thoughts, research, plus any additional brainstorming. Begin thinking about any extra visual aids that might be important (posters, charts, fact sheets, flyers, cartoons, brochures, etc.).

- Know how much time is allowed for the testimony

Typical time limits range between three and ten minutes. However, effective testimony can generally be held to three minutes. If your ideas are well-organized, three minutes should be ample time to make your point effectively.

- Write a draft statement and include the following when possible:
 - Address the governmental body (example: "Mr./Ms. Mayor, Members of the Council"). State your name and address for the record.

- Say if you are testifying for yourself or a group, and give a brief description of why you or your group is testifying on the issue.
- Explain how support for your testimony was solicited from your group (by petitions, vote at meeting, surveys, letters, etc.).
- Bring with you documentation of that support (copies of petitions, surveys, minutes of meetings, etc.) whenever possible.
- Be specific about how many people were involved in making the decision. State whether this is a majority or minority opinion.
- Keep the statement as short as possible (two pages is about right). State the problem, the reasons why you or your group support or oppose, and then summarize.
- Get others to read and make comments on the draft. If you need the approval of a group, use the rough draft so people will feel comfortable making corrections or suggestions on the copy.
- Let the statement sit for a day or so, if you have the time, and then go back and read it again and revise if necessary.
- Write up final copy. Type and double space the final copy, if possible (easier to read, looks neater, etc.). Be careful to check spelling.
- Start anticipating questions from the commission, board, etc.
- Practice giving testimony before friends and get hints on improving the presentation.

How to Give the Testimony

- Be Familiar with the Group's Process— Attend one or more meetings of the group before you testify to get an idea of the room layout and the procedures used.
- Know Your Audience— Try to stress what you have in common with and that you respect the differences of the people you are talking to. The more you can find out about their biases and sympathies, the more chance you have to relate to them.
- Be aware of how you present yourself when you make a statement to the decision-making body. Think about what image you want to project. Most of what we communicate is nonverbal. Be aware of your body language.
- Try to keep your feelings in check while you are testifying. It is all right to have strong feelings on the subject, but you do not want them to overshadow the content and reason of your message.
- Use notes rather than written manuscript so you can develop good eye contact.
- Define What You Want— Make it perfectly clear what action you want the group to take.
- Summarize your written message to emphasize the important points.
- Provide copies of your written testimony for each member of the body, appropriate staff, and the media.
- If you are testifying for a group, make sure different people cover different topics so the testimony is not repetitious.

* http://accessfayetteville.org/neighborhood_resources/neighborhood_associations/a_guide_for_starting_a_successful_neighborhood_association.html

How to Start a Neighborhood Association

Of course, neighborhood associations are nothing new. But the current moment is a unique time to begin one.

By Katherine Cusumano

June 6, 2020

So you're thinking about creating a neighborhood association. Shared crises have frequently galvanized community action, in formal and informal ways, and perhaps you'd like to corral that energy into organizing within your own area. These days, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, mutual aid networks have been incubated on Slack and ad hoc associations cultivated on the neighborhood social network Nextdoor — which also has the benefit of helping abate isolation.

Of course, neighborhood associations are nothing new. As one of the countless examples: Between 1911 and 1912, the teacher and organizer Ora Brown Stokes established the Richmond Neighborhood Association, in Richmond, Va., partly in response to the dearth of social services available to black working mothers in her community. At its inception, it had 13 members and they met in her home; by 1921, membership had ballooned to more than 1,400. But it's important to note that, at the same time, neighborhood-level organizing has also been weaponized to reinforce existing power structures: In 1922, white residents of Brooklyn's Bed-Stuy and Clinton Hill neighborhoods created the Gates Avenue Association to oppose black people moving into their neighborhood.

“For a lot of communities, these issues that arise — whether it's the pandemic, whether it's fighting for racial justice — these are not sudden issues,” said Arif Ullah, the director of projects for the Citizens Committee for New York City, which helps facilitate neighborhood associations in underserved communities. He has noticed a prevalence of neighborhood associations in areas with less access to municipal resources: “people banding together to assert their rights, to work toward justice,” he said.

Here is some framework for cultivating an inclusive, deliberate association aimed at empowering residents and improving your neighborhood for everyone.

Determine the parameters of your neighborhood, and your neighborhood association.

The first step is to figure out if your area — be it your block, set of streets or larger region within a town or city — already has something going. Bed-Stuy, for example, is dotted with block associations. If one doesn't already exist, it's time to define the geographic parameters of your neighborhood — ensuring that area represents a socioeconomically and racially diverse cross-section of your community.

Reach out to neighbors.

When Keith Kahn-Harris, a writer and sociologist, observed the impending lockdown because of the coronavirus in his London neighborhood, he started to slip letters through the letter boxes of some 30 or 40 neighbors on his road. His text laid out a list of suggestions for how residents might be able to help each other out by exchanging valuable resources and checking in on older residents should workplaces, businesses and schools be forced to close.

The letter, which has since been widely shared via Google docs (under the polite name “A Neighborly Invitation Regarding Coronavirus”), presents a good template for community outreach, especially in this time of social distancing. “We weren't really rooted in this particular road, despite having lived here a long time,” Mr. Kahn-Harris said, but “in the lockdown, we would come to value hyperlocal sources of support.”

According to Mr. Ullah, getting in touch with neighbors — going door to door, setting up a table or meeting people on your or their stoop — is the most crucial initial step in making a neighborhood association. “Basically, what you're doing is expressing that you have a commitment to your block, to your neighborhood,” he said. But it's not just about manifesting your own concerns and rallying people around your ideas; it's about opening up a dialogue and assessing what members of the wider neighborhood are thinking about. Generating these relationships is fundamental to any successful community organization.

Create a central planning group and get planning.

Your initial outreach should also give you a good sense of who's most excited about getting involved in the community — and who has the time. (After all, neighborhood organizers are largely volunteers, making it happen in time carved out from day jobs and family duties.) Those people are your new planning committee, with whom you'll make priorities for your agenda — just one or two items, to start.

Some neighborhood associations muster around particular issues, like cleaning up Superfund sites, food security, housing, education or over-policing. Others handle more general community concerns, like development and beautification. Mutual aid and community emergency response are also frequently built into neighborhood associations. Whatever the issue, this work has been done *somewhere* before; devising a neighborhood association is, in part, a matter of shaping an existing blueprint (for example, the organizing guide published by the Citizens Committee) to your needs.

Establish modes of communication.

When considering how members of your neighborhood association will stay in touch, it's helpful to look to networks that already exist. Communication lines that have been built up in response to the pandemic — Slack hubs or WhatsApp threads offering mutual aid, for example — likely have robust presences. Bed-Stuy Strong, a mutual aid group founded in March with upward of 3,500 members, recently published tips for creating a neighborhood-wide Slack (search for “How To Make A Slack Neighborhood Hub During COVID-19”). “When I pictured a WhatsApp group with a few thousand people on it, it just seemed so unbearably noisy. People’s needs might get lost,” said Sarah Thankam Mathews, the group’s organizer. Slack is easy to use and allows members to organize separate channels around specific issues or locations. “Bed-Stuy is a really big neighborhood; it’s allowed for a little bit of segmentation,” Ms. Mathews said.

But some members of your network might not have access to or be fluent in email or text; for that reason, having multiple methods of keeping in touch, and enacting a plan for who will keep everyone in the loop and how, can be helpful. “How do you reach the elderly and the homebound?” said Healy Chait, one of the organizers of the mutual aid group Invisible Hands. “It’s important not to forget you’re dealing with real people on the other end.”

You might consider clearly outlining purposes, boundaries and etiquette for your group chats — since ListServes sometimes go awry and the Best of Nextdoor Twitter account has become notorious.

Solicit additional feedback from your community.

Now that you’ve whittled down your agenda to a few shared priorities, it’s time to take it back out to the community to solicit additional feedback, which ensures people’s concerns are addressed and keeps the process transparent. While social distancing is in place, this can take the form of flyers and emails, or even safely going door-to-door. And, as recommended by the Idaho-based nonprofit PocatelloWorks, you might also consider how your neighborhood association fits into its wider region or into a network of other neighborhood associations. In Bed-Stuy, for example, the Bed-Stuy Works Alliance is a coalition of block associations throughout the neighborhood; in Red Hook, Brooklyn, the nonprofit Resilient Red Hook works with other organizations in the community to advocate for emergency and climate change preparedness.

After amassing contact information for the lower half of his road, Mr. Kahn-Harris consolidated his WhatsApp group with that of the upper half of the road, making a street-wide chat. Then, someone else set up a WhatsApp group with representatives from each of a cluster of such street groups. “It built up pretty organically,” he said.

Make a plan for how you’ll accomplish goals, and dole out roles accordingly.

The Citizens Committee has recommended “as little structure as possible — just enough to get the work done”; too much deliberating about structure can detract from actually accomplishing anything. Whatever it looks like, be deliberate about your leadership structure instead of allowing people to simply fall into roles. Otherwise, Mr. Ullah explained, the neighborhood association risks unintentionally replicating external power structures it intends to avoid.

Inevitably, there will be turnover — which can ultimately strengthen your neighborhood association. “In all sorts of communities, volunteer communities in particular, they’re often dependent on a small number of people with enormous energy, and people burn out,” Mr. Kahn-Harris said, adding it’s crucial to maintain a balance of new and veteran organizers.

Plan regular meetings — and make time for social things, too.

Since meeting spaces should be accessible to the majority of your members, it’s best to seek out public locations — especially community-oriented spots like parks, libraries or, if they permit it, local businesses. Regular calls and email communications help keep members connected remotely, too — especially while, as is the case right now, in-person meetings aren’t possible.

These meetings should also be matched with action, and even a bit of fun. “Successful and effective neighborhood associations share appreciation for the folks who are doing the work, and allow time for social gatherings,” Mr. Ullah said. “It’s not just meeting, it’s not just the work — there is an opportunity for people to socialize, to celebrate.”

Finally: Make it official.

Neighborhood associations themselves can be formal, registered nonprofits, or informal organizations. You may also request that members pay dues. Though not essential, there are certain advantages to formalizing a neighborhood association, like through 501(c)(3) status or incorporation, which impose some structure and establish legitimacy.

“It’s easier, in some ways, to establish yourself as a group that is there for the long haul, a group that has a vested interest in a neighborhood or certain policies that impact that neighborhood,” said Lara Birnback, the executive director of the Brooklyn Heights Association, New York City’s oldest neighborhood association. Whether or not you seek official status, she added, it’s important to “gain relationships with elected officials and city agencies and others with whom you need to interact in order to get the work done and make your case.” The Brooklyn Heights Association, for example, has held candidate forums and invited elected officials to town halls and the organization’s annual meeting.

Whatever it looks like, “don’t talk yourself out of doing the thing before you’ve even done it,” said Simone Policano, another organizer for Invisible Hands. “Don’t feel like you have to hold yourself to the way it’s been done before. We’re in an unprecedented time.”

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