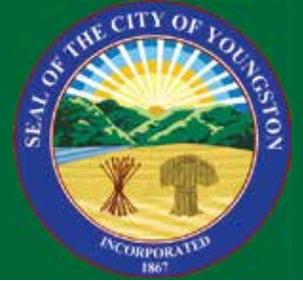


# neighborhood revitalization STRATEGY REPORT



YOUNGSTOWN  
**NEIGHBORHOOD**  
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION



# acknowledgements



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**REVITALIZE**  

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**YOUNGSTOWN, OH**

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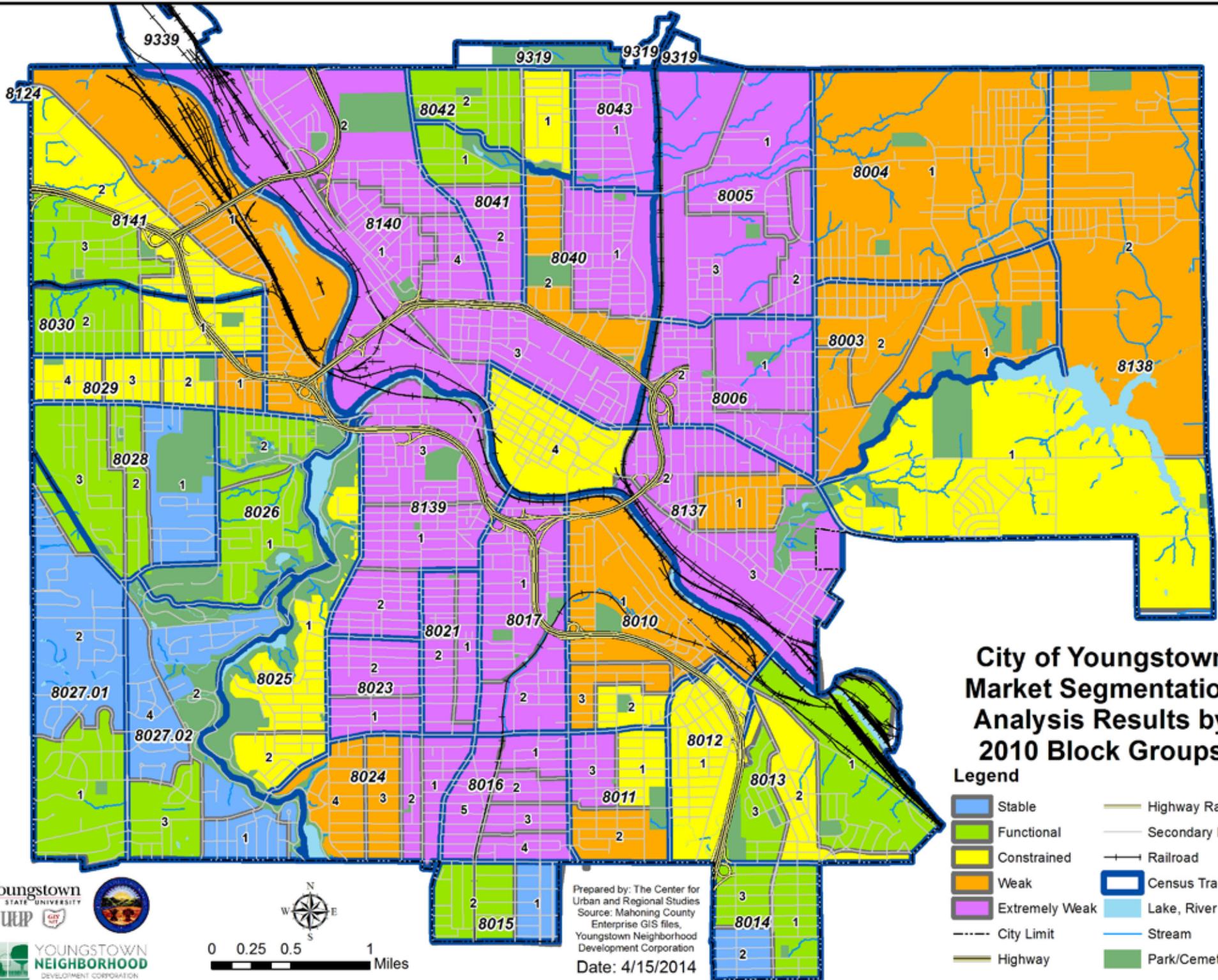
# introduction

In 2013, the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation and the City of Youngstown undertook a neighborhood planning process to improve conditions throughout the city. During the first phase of the planning process, data related to the conditions of each neighborhood was compiled and analyzed in the *Neighborhood Conditions Report*, published in February, 2014. Relevant data included population, socio-economic, and housing characteristics, as well as an analysis of existing transportation networks, health statistics, and the physical environment. Part 1 of the report looked at the city as a whole, whereas Part 2 contained an individual analysis of each of the city's neighborhoods. A key component of the report was the housing market segmentation analysis, which classified the city's neighborhoods into five categories based on market strength: stable; functional; constrained; weak; and extremely weak. Variables used to create this model included vacancy rates, housing turnover rates, mortgage originations, median sales prices, homeownership rates, crime rates, poverty rates, tax delinquency, and population loss. The model is meant to be used as a decision-making tool to guide the strategic allocation of limited resources given the realities of each neighborhood's housing market. The market segmentation map is displayed on the following page.

The next phase of the effort was a robust public engagement process, which involved 13 neighborhood meetings, as well as more than 60 stakeholder interviews with leaders of local agencies, institutions, and organizations. At the neighborhood planning meetings, residents were asked to identify the primary assets and challenges in their communities. Results were compiled and four main priorities were established: 1) housing and property issues; 2) infrastructure repair and maintenance;

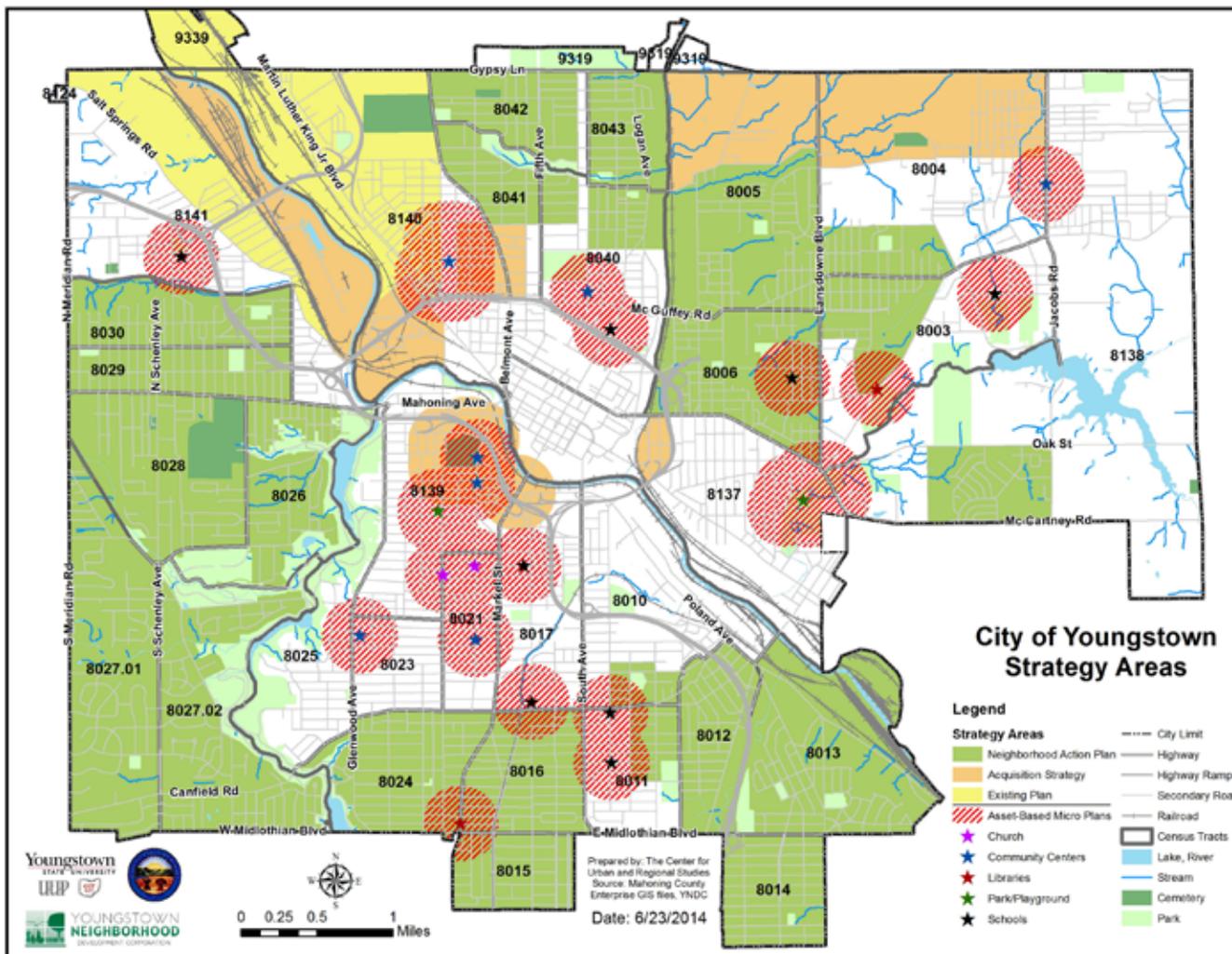
3) crime and safety concerns; and 4) encouraging economic development. The citywide recommendations outlined in this document are directly related to addressing these four priorities.

The housing market segmentation analysis revealed varying market conditions, indicating a need for different planning approaches, depending on neighborhood context. Part 1 of this document outlines four planning strategy areas: 1) neighborhood action plan areas; 2) acquisition strategy areas; 3) asset-based micro plan areas; and 4) existing plan areas. In neighborhood action plan areas, detailed strategies will be developed to address residents' top priorities. In acquisition strategy areas, land will be acquired and assembled for economic development or conservation as open space. Asset-based micro plan areas include institutions, such as churches and schools, and will address property and infrastructure issues in the adjacent blocks. Existing plan areas already have detailed neighborhood plans and the City and its partners will work to further implement these plans.



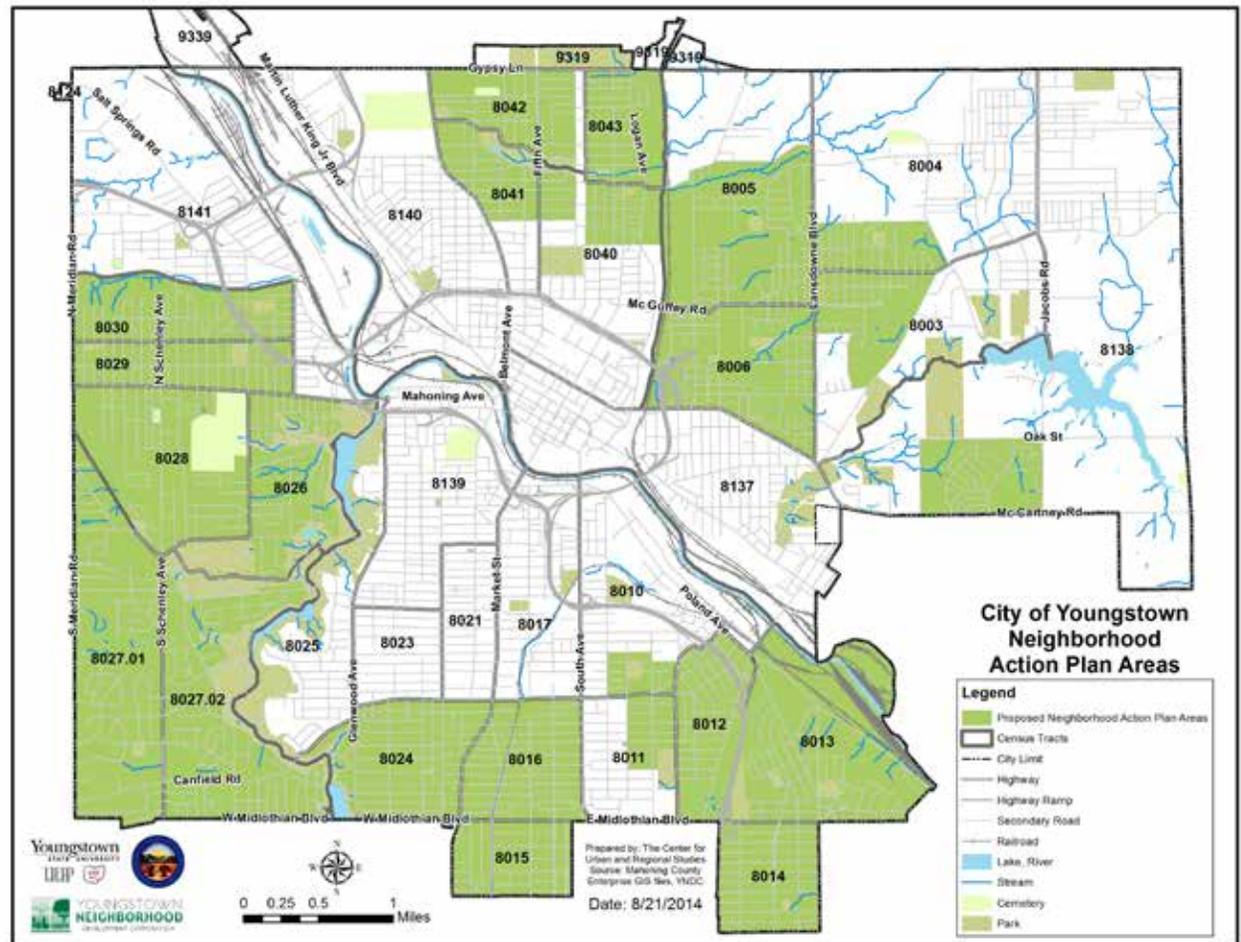
# Neighborhood Planning Strategy Areas

Youngstown contains a variety of neighborhoods, each with a unique set of assets, challenges, and trajectories that require different sets of strategies to address the issues they face. Using the market segmentation model as a guide, and understanding the current capacity and resources within the City, four neighborhood planning strategy areas are proposed: 1) existing plan areas, 2) neighborhood action plan areas, 3) acquisition strategy areas, and 4) asset-based micro plan areas.



Neighborhood stabilization plans already exist for the US 422 Corridor and Idora Neighborhood. The US 422 Corridor Redevelopment Plan is a comprehensive area plan that aims to increase economic development along US 422 and stabilize the surrounding neighborhoods, including Brier Hill and Steelton. While the 422 Plan was recently completed in 2014, the Idora Neighborhood Plan was adopted in 2008 and many elements have been implemented due to the ongoing efforts of the City of Youngstown, the Idora Neighborhood Association, the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC), and other community partners. These partnerships will continue to guide the neighborhood revitalization efforts. Implementation efforts for the US 422 Plan will involve a variety of regional partners, led by the Youngstown-Warren Regional Chamber of Commerce, Trumbull County, the City of Youngstown, and YNDC.

In areas of the city where there are no existing neighborhood plans, YNDC and the City of Youngstown propose three distinct strategies: Neighborhood Action Plan areas, Acquisition Strategy areas, and Asset-Based Micro Plan areas. In the Neighborhood Action Plan areas, YNDC will create detailed strategy-based and action-oriented plans to address the top three priorities of neighborhood residents, as obtained during the 2014 neighborhood planning meetings: 1) housing and property issues, such as a need for code enforcement, demolition, housing repairs, or debris cleanup; 2) infrastructure issues, such as a need for street resurfacing, or the repair of non-functioning street lights; and 3) safety concerns, such as sites of recent criminal activity. Economic development and other neighborhood-wide strategies relevant to each neighborhood will be proposed. Neighborhood Action Plans will be tailored to each individual neighborhood's specific needs. Some areas with a weaker housing market, such as Cottage Grove, Newport, the Lower East Side, and the Lower North Side, will require comprehensive blight-elimination strategies focused on demolition, whereas other neighborhoods with a stronger housing market, such as Cornersburg and Brownlee Woods, will require highly targeted code enforcement. In addition, the plans will be used to qualify specific neighborhoods as Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas, a Department of Housing and Urban Development designation that allows greater flexibility in using CDBG and HOME funding.



## Neighborhood Action Plan Areas

The Neighborhood Action Plans will include a brief introduction with a history of the neighborhood, demographic information, description of community assets and amenities, a summary of public input obtained during the neighborhood planning meetings, and an assessment of economic development conditions and opportunities. Next, a detailed

survey of housing and property issues, including code violations, vacant properties, unregistered rental units, and unmaintained lots, is used to inform strategies for every property and issue in the neighborhood. Strategies may include code enforcement, demolition, property registration, rehabilitation, or community cleanups. Additional neighborhood-wide strategies will also be presented to encourage homeownership, improve housing market conditions, engage

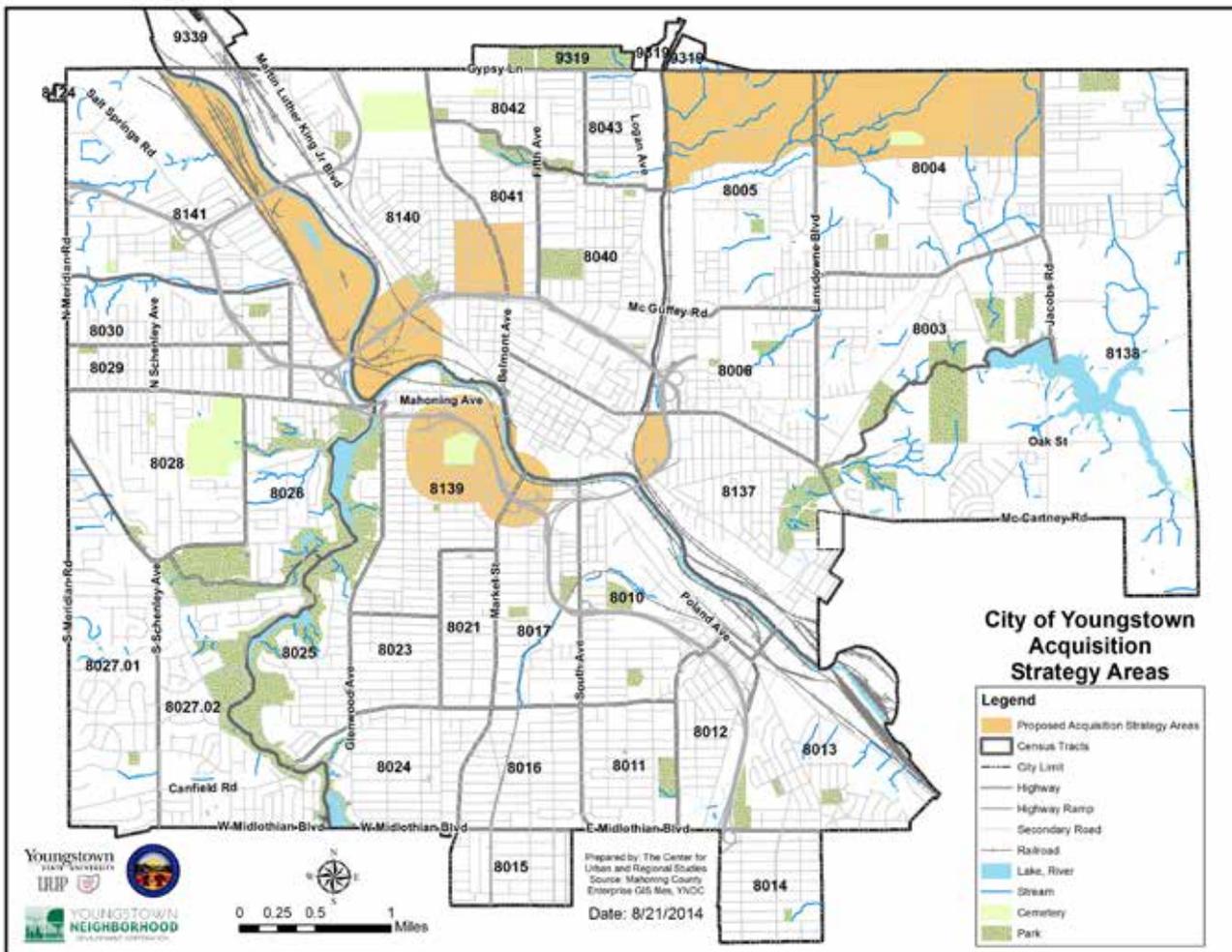
anchor institutions and the business community, build community capacity, and encourage economic development. A survey of all infrastructure issues, including street and sidewalk conditions, non-functioning street lights, and dead street trees in the public right-of-way, establishes needed improvements and a prioritized strategy of repair and maintenance is recommended. Calls for service to the Youngstown Police Department (YPD) are analyzed to identify crime hot spots—both individual problem properties and clusters of heightened criminal activity—to be addressed through door-to-door community policing efforts and targeted, systematic code enforcement sweeps sustained over an ongoing period.

In these areas of the city, Neighborhood Action Committees will be formed to guide the implementation of Neighborhood Action Plans. The committees will be comprised of YNDC, the Mahoning County Land Bank, City of Youngstown Code Enforcement, City of Youngstown Litter Control, City of Youngstown Economic Development, the City Councilperson, the community police officer, neighborhood leaders, neighborhood residents, and other relevant organizations, stakeholders, and community partners. The Neighborhood Action Plans will identify priority properties that are having a detrimental effect on the entire neighborhood or threaten the stability of otherwise stable blocks, and strategies to deal with these properties are proposed as initial implementation steps. The priority properties list will be determined by property condition, location near community assets, clusters of problem properties, or proximity to crime hotspots. Each committee member will be assigned tasks to fulfill in accordance with the goals set forth in the plan. The priority properties list will be broken up into short lists by strategy in the Action Plan for each appropriate committee member. In particular, the City and

the Mahoning County Land Bank work to address the priority properties, primarily through the code enforcement process or demolition. Monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly committee meetings will be held to discuss the status of priority properties. If a property status changes, the strategy can be altered and it can be reassigned to another committee member. The committee will plan volunteer workdays and cleanups, apply for funding to complete community projects, and prioritize strategic investments in infrastructure improvements, including street resurfacing, sidewalk replacement, and street tree removal. The Neighborhood Action Plans will include benchmarks and a tracking form for measuring progress toward achieving the plan's goals and to determine if any new strategies are needed.



The Rocky Ridge Neighborhood Action Committee was formed to guide the implementation of the Rocky Ridge Neighborhood Action Plan.



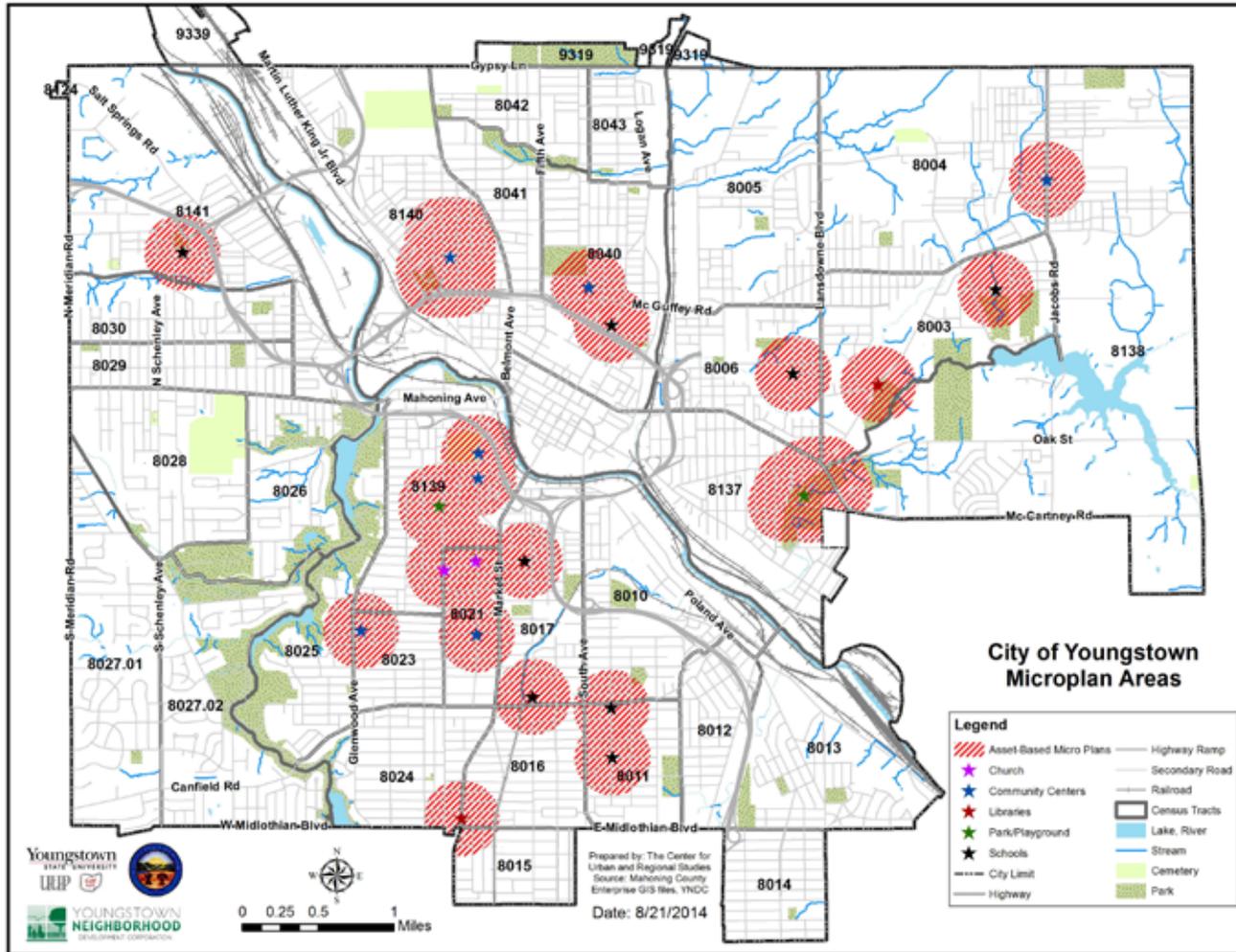
- Wirt St.-to-Ford Ave., near St. Elizabeth's and Arlington Heights
- East Side, near the Lansdowne Airport Sharon Line
- Oak Hill, near the Oak Hill Cemetery
- Market St. and Woodland Ave.
- East Side, adjacent to the Himrod Expressway

### Acquisition Strategy Areas

In neighborhoods with weaker housing markets adjacent to significant assets, YNDC and the City of Youngstown will focus on acquisition strategies for vacant, tax delinquent land near major assets to be acquired and assembled for economic development or preservation of open space. These areas may be located near major institutions or existing industrial complexes where redevelopment should be encouraged. Alternatively, land may also be acquired and held for conservation where development is not recommended, such as wetlands, woodlands, or other previously agricultural or undeveloped lands.

## Asset-based Micro Plan Areas

In neighborhoods with the most severe distress and very weak housing markets, YNDC will develop asset-based micro plans for geographies adjacent to neighborhood assets to address quality of life concerns, such as housing, property, and infrastructure issues, deteriorated sidewalks and crosswalks, missing street lights, and illegal dumping sites. Planning efforts will begin with a detailed survey of property, street, street light, sidewalk, and crosswalk conditions. Issues will be prioritized to develop appropriate strategies for addressing problem properties and infrastructure concerns. Partners will include YNDC, City of Youngstown Code Enforcement, City of Youngstown Litter Control, the City Councilperson, neighborhood leaders, representatives from the community asset, and other community partners.



# Citywide Recommendations

Throughout the spring of 2014, YNDC and the City of Youngstown conducted 13 neighborhood planning meetings across the city. Residents who attended were asked to identify their top three challenges to be addressed in their community. Residents overwhelmingly identified **housing and property issues** as the number one challenge they would like to see addressed. These issues include litter, dumping, code violations, vacancies, and abandonment. The second most frequent response involved **repairing and maintaining infrastructure**, including streets, sidewalks, and street lights. The third most common response was related to **reducing crime in the city's neighborhoods**, and the fourth most frequent response involved **encouraging economic development**, in the form of more businesses, more employment, and improving the condition of the city's corridors.

The following pages outline citywide strategies to address these 4 priorities. Each priority section contains a list of action steps, as well as best practices from other cities and organizations, funding opportunities, recommended policy changes, and improved process descriptions. These items are color coded by type, as shown below.

## Best Practice

Recommendations from other cities and organizations that should be explored for use in the city's neighborhoods.

## Funding Opportunity

Available resources from local, state, or federal sources that should be accessed by residents, neighborhood groups, the City, and local organizations.

## Policy Change

Recommended changes to the City's codified ordinances to align with the strategies outlined in this document. These should be reviewed with the appropriate department heads, the Law Department, and approved by Youngstown City Council.

## Process Improvement

Checklists and process improvement recommendations for City departments and staff.

## Neighborhood Priority #1: Housing & Property Issues

**Strategy:** Institute a strategic approach to code enforcement, property registration, and demolition: Developing a strategy that aligns with neighborhood planning will maximize the impact of the city's code enforcement efforts. Instead of a complaint-driven or scatter-shot approach, which has limited ability to effect improvement at the neighborhood scale, addressing multiple properties in one geographic area can work to stabilize an entire neighborhood, especially when used in conjunction with infrastructure enhancements, community policing efforts, housing repairs, and demolition.

**ACTION STEP 1.1:** Work in conjunction with Neighborhood Action Committees to identify and systematically bring “Top 25” priority properties into full compliance in stable, functional, and constrained market areas. A holistic approach to addressing property issues is necessary to stabilize neighborhoods as the threats to neighborhood vitality are often caused by more than one or two problem houses. Tackling the most distressed properties in a systematic way and achieving compliance in a timely manner can restore confidence in the trajectory of the community, thus improving housing market conditions, increasing property improvement and investment, and halting the exodus of residents.

**ACTION STEP 1.2:** Establish a Memorandum of Understanding between the City and YNDC or other community organizations to facilitate the initial steps in responding to complaints or initiating code

enforcement in Neighborhood Action Plan areas based on the Cleveland-CDC partnership model. In order to maximize the resources available to code enforcement, YNDC would survey property conditions in strategic areas in alignment with action plans and issue letters to property owners with code violations. Owners would have a set amount of time to address the issues, after which the matter would be turned over to the City's code enforcement process if adequate progress was not made. YNDC would also respond to complaints in strategic neighborhoods by inspecting property conditions and issuing a letter to the owner if deemed appropriate. City and YNDC staff should go through training to ensure that both have a clear understanding of the partnership and expectations, and work collaboratively to track cases and compliance.



Major housing and property issues identified by residents included vacancy and blight, as well as dumping of trash and debris.

## Best Practice

City of Cleveland Code Enforcement Partnership

The City of Cleveland has established Concentrated Inspection Areas (CIAs), which are relatively small, geographically defined areas throughout the city, chosen by the building and housing departments and local community development corporations (CDCs) by taking into consideration neighborhood typology, the Citywide Plan, model blocks, targeted funding, and foreclosure/vacancy data. CIAs are surveyed and serviced in a two-month period, and all CIAs in a given area are surveyed once during a three-year cycle. During these surveys, exterior code violations are addressed through warning letters, followed by citations from code officers and eventual penalties if compliance is not achieved.

A sample MOU is included in the appendix.

See also [http://www.clevelandfed.org/Community\\_Development/events/20130222/oleary.pdf](http://www.clevelandfed.org/Community_Development/events/20130222/oleary.pdf)

**ACTION STEP 1.3:** Utilize Spot Blight on seriously deteriorated properties in stable and/or functional market areas. Stable neighborhoods are often threatened by the presence of a few, or even one problem property that has a destabilizing effect on the surrounding community. In these extreme cases, the use of Spot Blight can compel owners to make needed repairs to avoid losing their property or place the property in the hands of a responsible owner that will make the needed repairs and transfer it to a homeowner. Use of Spot Blight should be focused on non-responsive properties with serious issues on otherwise stable blocks in stable and functional neighborhood market types in accordance with the Spot Blight checklist.



## Spot Blight Checklist

Not all vacant, blighted properties are good candidates for Spot Blight. Below is a list of certain criteria to consider when evaluating blighted properties for the use of Spot Blight. If the answers to these questions are all “yes” then Spot Blight may be an appropriate strategy.

- Is the property in a stable or functional neighborhood?
- Are nearby properties in good repair?
- Are the property taxes current?
- Is the owner unresponsive to code enforcement efforts?
- Would the property have real value if it were rehabilitated and sold?



This property, located at 2725 Normandy Drive, was vacant, blighted, and a nuisance to nearby property owners. As it was located in a stable market neighborhood and not tax delinquent, it was chosen as a candidate for Spot Blight. The Spot Blight proceedings motivated the out-of-state owner to sell the property to a local owner who renovated the home for owner-occupancy.

## Foreclosure Bond Process

In order to maximize the use of foreclosure bonds, utilize the following process:

- An inspection should be performed immediately after a bond is executed.
- The bank, as well as the current property owner, should be given notice of any existing violations.
- If the bank and/or owner do not make repairs within 90 days, a work plan should be developed to address exterior violations.
- The work plan should be put out as an RFP for a competitive bidding process.
- A contractor should be selected and the repairs completed.

**ACTION STEP 1.4:** Maximize the use of Foreclosure Bonds to address property issues on bank-owned properties as identified in Neighborhood Action Plans. The City collects a \$10,000 cash bond on vacant properties entering the foreclosure process which can be accessed to address code violations. The City should follow a systematic procedure for inspecting properties, issuing notices, and bidding out work plans. The City should move aggressively to utilize these bonds to make needed repairs to vacant structures, thus helping preserve housing market strength in stable, functional, and constrained market areas.

**ACTION STEP 1.5:** Increase the level and aesthetic quality of home boarding in functional and constrained market areas. Vacant homes attract criminal activity, become targets for arson, collect trash and illegal dumping, depress property values and hinder local business development. In order to prevent stripping of copper and other illegal

activity, all unsecure properties should be boarded and in the case of highly visible properties, the boards should be painted to look like windows and doors. Not only will this increase safety, but the appearance of vacancy and blight will be reduced, therefore improving perceptions of the neighborhood. Properties planned and funded for demolition should not be boarded, but properties where demolition funding has not yet been identified should be boarded. The YNDC AmeriCorps REVITALIZE team and other community groups can be utilized to perform boardups of vacant homes.

## Policy Change - Foreclosure Bond

Language should be added to the ordinance that states that if a bank walks away from foreclosure, it therefore forfeits the bond. Additionally, language should also be added that specifies that the bond should be collected on occupied as well as vacant structures.

## Policy Change - Board Ups

The ordinance related to securing vacant properties should be updated to include 7/16 inch OSB board and two coats of latex paint, instead of 1/2 inch plywood and two coats of oil-based paint.



Increasing the level of home boarding will prevent stripping and illegal activity, as well as making neighborhoods safe. Painting boards to look like functional windows and doors makes a house look occupied, at least from a distance.

**ACTION STEP 1.6:** Increase the effectiveness of the rental and vacant property registration program by focusing enforcement and payments on irresponsible landlords. An effective program must achieve near universal compliance. To do this, likely rental properties must be identified and the owner served a letter that explains the program and includes a registration form to be mailed back to the City. Mailings should also be sent to new owners at the time of property transfer. An online database of registered properties could be used by community groups to notify officials of unregistered properties, which would trigger a mailing. An analysis of irresponsible landlords, using delinquent tax payment records, code violations, and police calls to properties, could be used to levy increased enforcement and penalties, whereas good landlords would be rewarded. Investigative work should be completed by the City to identify any owners who do not respond to the notice and citations of \$100 per week per city ordinance should be issued in order to gain registration compliance. A complete list of registered rental and vacant properties should be available on the city's website for the public to view and to anonymously report suspected properties that are not registered. Source: Creating an Effective Rental Licensing Regime In Youngstown, by Alan Mallach. 2/17/14.

## Rental Registration Process

The rental registration process should allow for the classification of landlords based on objective criteria related to the condition of their property, including but not limited to code violations, tax delinquency, and crime reports. This data can be used to provide incentives to responsible landlords, while levying penalties on owners of problem properties.

## Estimates of Registration by Property Type and Uncaptured Revenue

Registration Type	Estimate of Total Number of Properties	Number of Units Registered	Estimated Number Unregistered	Registration Rate	Registration Fee	Uncaptured Annual Revenue
Vacant Units	3,944	368	3,576	9%	\$100	\$357,600
Rental Units	12,194	2,636	9,558	22%	\$40**	\$382,320
All units subject to registration	16,138	3,004	13,134	19%	-	\$739,920

\*Estimates of registered units from City of Youngstown data. Estimates of unregistered rental units from US Census. Estimates of unregistered vacant units from US Postal Service data.

\*\*This estimate is high, as in multi-family dwellings, only the first unit license fee is \$40; the fee for subsequent units is \$25.

Increasing the effectiveness of the rental and vacant property registration program would generate significant, self-sustaining annual revenue.

## Landlord Property Database and Incentive Program

A database should be established that tracks relevant data related to the status and condition of a property, in order to develop a system that provides incentives for responsible property owners and puts pressure on irresponsible owners. The following information should be tracked for each rental property:

- property condition, code citations, and if compliance was achieved
- resident or neighbor complaints related to code violations or nuisances
- calls for service to the property, crime reports, or arrests
- tax delinquency
- building permits pulled for significant improvements to the property

This tracking system should be used to classify landlords and properties annually. A four point system could be used, whereby owners with no issues receive a 1 (best) and multiple issues receive a 4 (worst). The scores of owners with multiple properties would be aggregated and divided by the number of properties owned. This rating system would be used to determine the following requirements and incentives:

- frequency of inspection (responsible landlords could be placed on a 3-year inspection rotation, whereas problem properties might be inspected every 6 months)
- the amount of the rental license fee (responsible landlords could be subject to the normal fee, whereas a “problem property fee” would be added to properties with multiple issues)
- eligibility for purchase of public property (responsible landlords would be able to acquire vacant property through the Mahoning County Land Bank, provided they meet program qualifications, whereas problem property owners would be barred from acquiring property)

**ACTION STEP 1.7:** Perform inspections of all properties receiving Section 8 vouchers that have code violations to ensure compliance with the City’s codified ordinances. Section 8 properties must undergo thorough inspections through the Youngstown Metropolitan Housing Authority (YMHA) in order to qualify to receive housing vouchers. Property surveys and data analysis reveal relatively few Section 8 properties with exterior code violations, but those that do have issues should be inspected immediately by YMHA.

**ACTION STEP 1.8:** Remove trash and debris from illegal dumping sites identified in Neighborhood Action Plans. Vacant, unmain-

tained properties are often targeted as dumping sites which further blight neighborhoods and attract more dumping. In order to improve the quality of life for residents and to prevent further dumping, these sites should be cleaned up and if necessary, split-rail fencing should be installed to deter repeated dumping. Property owners should be billed for the clean up and in the event of non-payment, charges should be assessed to the tax duplicate.

**ACTION STEP 1.9:** Institute a Point-of-Sale ordinance that requires an inspection of all residential properties. Blighted properties often transfer between private individuals or investors without any improvement in their condition. A

Point-of-Sale ordinance would require an inspection of all residential properties within a few days of the real estate listing date or offer to sell. The ordinance would prevent the transfer of blighted property or require the buyer to put money in escrow to cover the needed repairs. Collaboration between the City and the Mahoning County Auditor and Recorder would be required to ensure properties were not transferred without the appropriate inspection or posting of funds in escrow. The City should investigate the appropriateness, practicality, and legality of limiting the inspection requirement to sales valued under \$25,000, arms-length transactions, and/or to transfers of properties with open code enforcement cases.

## Policy Change - Point-of-Sale Ordinance

### City of Cleveland Heights Point-of-Sale Ordinance

Owners of real estate in Cleveland Heights, including single-family and two-family dwellings, duplexes, apartments, condominiums and commercial properties, are required to obtain a Certificate of Inspection (Point-of-Sale) prior to entering into an agreement to sell a property. Sellers must provide the prospective purchaser with a copy of the original Certificate of Inspection (valid for one year from the date of issuance) and Certificate of Compliance (if available) prior to the execution of a contract of sale. Cost for the Point-of-Sale Inspection is \$200.00 for the first unit and \$50.00 for each additional unit. If violations are not corrected at the time of sale, the seller must escrow not less than \$1,000 and equal to 125% of the estimated cost or repairs. Forms and policy language are included in the appendix.

See also <http://www.clevelandheights.com/index.aspx?page=435>

## Policy Change - Transfer of Ownership Ordinance

Current city ordinances prohibit the transfer of property where open code enforcement cases exist without a notarized statement from the buyer acknowledging the property's issues and accepting full responsibility for bringing the property into compliance. This ordinance could be expanded to include an escrow requirement that covers the amount of repairs, to be accessed by the city to make needed repairs in cases of non-compliance. Additionally, an inspection requirement could be added to all transfers under a \$25,000 threshold to ensure properties with significant code violations are not transferred without achieving compliance or posting funds for repair in escrow.

### Number of Inspections

Period of Time	Number of transfers over six months in 2013	Number of transfers per month	Half of monthly transfers*	Inspections per week	Inspections per day
Jan-Jun 2013	1,016	169	85	21	42

\*Under the assumption that a point-of-sale ordinance would cut the number of transfers by approximately half

### Revenue Structure

Revenue by Time Period	\$50 inspection fee	\$100 inspection fee	\$150 inspection fee	\$200 inspection fee
Revenue per week	\$1,058	\$2,117	\$3,175	\$4,233
Revenue per month	\$4,233	\$8,467	\$12,700	\$16,933
Revenue per year	\$50,800	\$101,600	\$152,400	\$203,200

A point of sale ordinance would generate a self-sustaining annual revenue stream at a variety of inspection fee rates.

**ACTION STEP 1.10:** Make decisions regarding demolition using the housing market segmentation model. Various factors should be considered when deciding if a house should be demolished, in addition to its physical condition. Taking into account the conditions of the surrounding neighborhood will help to prioritize structures for demolition. The housing market segmentation analysis, conducted by YNDC and the City of Youngstown in 2014, classified neighborhoods according to a variety of data points, including average home sale price, number of home purchase mortgages originated, calls for service to the Youngstown Police Department, and levels of owner-occupancy. These indicators measure the strength of the housing market of each neighborhood and can be used to inform decisions regarding demolition. In addition, funding should be set aside for immediate hazards, fire-damaged structures, and other circumstances requiring immediate demolition.

## Funding Opportunity

The City and YNDC should investigate the establishment of a matching fund for demolition, whereby private parties (residents, businesses, community organizations, institutions, etc.) can contribute money towards demolition in a particular area or neighborhood that will be matched by one or more local foundations.

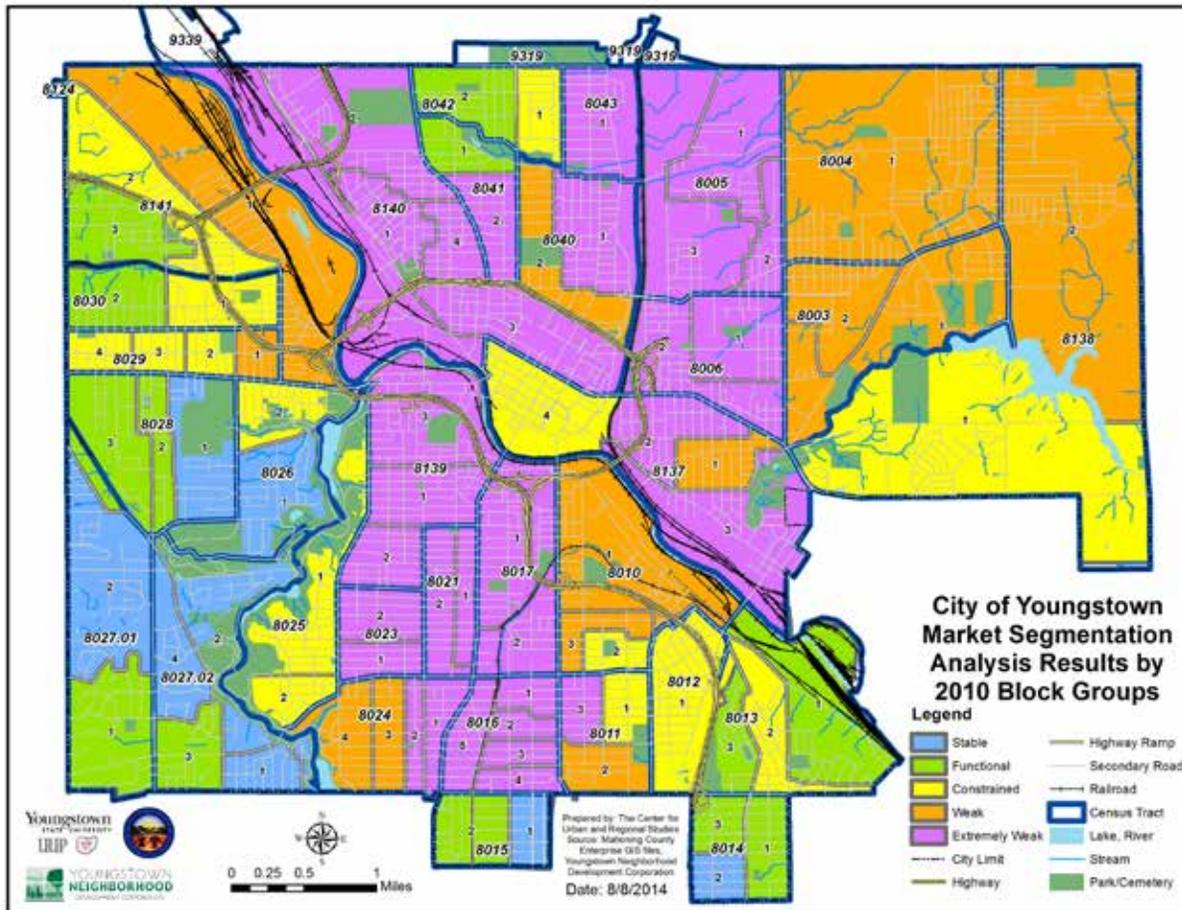
## Demolition Strategy

**Stable Market:** Demolish only severely deteriorated homes in stable neighborhoods where their elimination will have a significant impact on surrounding property values

**Functional Market:** Demolish blighted homes proactively in functional neighborhoods where no other near-term solution is available or rehabilitation is cost prohibitive, thus preserving market stability and halting disinvestment

**Constrained Market:** Demolish blighted homes aggressively in constrained market areas in order to stabilize these neighborhoods and prevent further decline or disinvestment spill-over into other more stable areas.

**Weak or Extremely Weak:** Demolish homes in weak market areas on blocks within 1/4 mile of schools, churches, and other community assets; along major corridors; and in areas prioritized for economic development or green infrastructure.



**ACTION STEP 1.11:** Improve demolition specifications to include basement removal and lot landscaping in stable and functional market areas. Demolitions in other areas slated for economic development or green infrastructure should also have improved specifications. Demolition sites are often left in a state that prevents adjacent residents from being able to appropriately care for the vacant lots. Debris and uneven grading damage lawnmowers and the lack of topsoil prevents grass from growing evenly. These unmaintained lots attract dumping and blight neighborhood streets. Improvements to demolition specifications would remedy these issues, by removing debris, grading lots, and planting grass. Basements should be removed in stable and functional market areas, or areas slated for economic development, where new development might occur in the future, as building costs would be increased if extensive site excavation was required. Additionally, in weak market areas prioritized for green infrastructure installations, basements should also be removed, in order to reduce future construction costs.

## Best Practice

### Backfill and basement removal

Three distinct materials should be used for backfill: 1) a sandy subsoil to fill the voids created from basements or other excavations to increase stormwater infiltration, especially with the removal of the basement; 2) a thin layer of compost used to amend the site soils in preparation for vegetation; 3) a sandy loam to be used as topsoil to aid in the establishment of vegetation, which further slows stormwater runoff, prevents erosion and sedimentation, and lowers runoff volumes; 4) removal of basement foundations, slabs, driveways, and other imperious surfaces prior to beginning backfill. From *On the Road to Reuse: Residential Demolition Bid Specification Development Tool*, EPA.

See also <http://www2.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2013-09/documents/road-to-reuse-residential-demolition-bid-specification-201309.pdf>

Detailed demolition specifications found in appendix. (Pages 57-59)



## Best Practice

### Mahoning County Land Bank

As a recent recipient of \$4.3 million in demolition funding, the Mahoning County Land Bank will demolish more than 150 blighted structures in the city of Youngstown over the next three years. As instructed in their funding application, the Land Bank identified several neighborhoods to target their activities in order to achieve maximum impact. Neighborhoods chosen still maintained relatively high homeownership rates, but were at risk for destabilization because of the presence of blighted homes. The Land Bank worked with YNDC to identify demolition candidates close to neighborhood assets or along major corridors, isolated blighted properties in otherwise stable areas, and clusters of properties needing demolition. Demolition specifications for these properties include basement removal, as well as lot grading, landscaping, and maintenance, so that the vacant lots do not have a similar blighting effect on the neighborhood. Vacant lots will be available for purchase by adjacent homeowners.

## Policy Change - Demolition Specifications

The City's demolition specifications should include the following changes:

- The entire structure will be removed including all walls, floors, ceilings and foundation supports of all kinds. The entire foundation will be removed unless portions are needed to support a neighbor's driveway, sidewalk or adjacent structure, or unless the Director of Public Works believes an exception is warranted and documents it in writing. If an exception is warranted, then the foundation will be removed to a grade of eighteen (18") inches below the existing ground level and, in cases where basements exist, the contractor shall break up the basement floors in such a manner as to permit the drainage of water.
- Cellars of demolished structures in which cleanup of debris has been completed will not be backfilled until a final inspection has been made and approval given by the inspector in charge of the work.
- All lots are to be filled and graded by contractor to present a neat, well-drained appearance that is acceptable to the City of Youngstown. This grade is to promote property runoff and to eliminate standing water. Any additional soil necessary for fill and grading shall be furnished by the contractor. The final grade shall be free of all rocks and debris larger than three (3) inches in diameter.
- When specified, the contractor shall seed the site at 6 lbs. of seed per 1,000 sq. ft. and provide a cover of straw. The contractor is responsible for insuring that grass is growing on site and that site can be safely mowed. For winter projects, the contractor is responsible for returning to the site when conditions allow and providing the above described site finish. A flat \$500 retainage will be held until site finish is completed.
- All work is subject to inspection and acceptance by the City as to compliance with the specifications and any non-complying work or imperfect work and/or materials that is discovered before final acceptance shall be corrected or replaced immediately on demand of the City of Youngstown staff.

## Available Resources

### Interfaith Home Maintenance Service, Inc

- Performs minor and emergency repairs for income-eligible clients, such as plumbing repairs, porch repairs, handicap access, indoor/outdoor carpentry, and other emergency repairs.

### Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation

- Performs minor exterior repairs and owner occupied rehabilitations for income eligible clients. Clients are referred through Appeals Board and direct outreach. Minor repair work is focused on roof replacement, gutters, scrape and paint, and other critical exterior repairs.
- Performs owner-occupied rehabilitations to complete all improvements necessary to bring the structure to code and abate all lead hazard conditions. These are limited to 6 to 8 projects per year.
- Provides tools for residents of the City of Youngstown to borrow at no cost. These include tools needed for basic home and lawn maintenance and home painting.

**ACTION STEP 1.12:** Expand resources for home repairs, particularly for homeowners who are low-income and/or elderly. A number of programs currently exist that provide help for homeowners, including YNDC's Paint Youngstown program, Interfaith Home Maintenance Service, Inc. and YNDC's Community Tool Shed. Additionally, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Indianapolis' Neighborhood Impact Program provides funding for home repairs up to \$7,500 per house, which YNDC expects to access in 2014. The AARP Foundation provides funding for non-profit organizations that perform housing repairs for low-income seniors. New sources should be continually identified and accessed.

## A Sweat-Equity Opportunity for Investors and Homeowners Interested in Renovating Vacant Homes

### Acquiring the House:

The house will be acquired by YNDC, the City of Youngstown or the Mahoning County Land Bank either through donation, foreclosure or low-cost purchase. If there are other potential buyers, preference will be given to owner-occupants over investors. If a potential buyer would like a particular house that is vacant but still privately owned, YNDC will attempt to acquire the property.

### Qualifications of Buyer:

The buyer will prove he/she has the capacity to bring the house into code compliance with a cash reserve or credit line of \$20,000. The buyer must have no outstanding water bills, tax delinquencies or code violations on other properties. There will be no income restrictions.

### Cost of the House:

Houses will be sold between \$4,000 and \$10,000.

### Responsibilities of Buyer:

The buyer will work with Do It Yourself Home Rehab officials to craft a repair timetable, bringing the property up to code within 6-12 months. Buyer takes on all responsibility for hiring licensed contractors, where necessary. Do It Yourself Home Rehab may take back the house if the buyer does not fulfill the agreed timetable or repairs.

### Occupancy by the Buyer:

If the property is move-in ready, the buyer is required to take possession and live in the house for five years. If the house is uninhabitable, the buyer has 6-12 months to make it habitable and then is required to live in the house for four years.

**ACTION STEP 1.13:** Incentivize a sweat-equity opportunity for those interested in renovating vacant homes. Some area residents are interested in purchasing vacant, sometimes historical, homes, and through rehabilitation, save them from future demolition. This program would enable do-it-yourselfers to buy these houses at low cost. The buyer must prove he/she has the resources to make repairs, and promise to live in the home for five years. The desired outcome is to keep architecturally important houses viable, to bring highly invested and motivated individuals into older sections of the city, to foster redevelopment that leads to greater home ownership, and to divert the costs of demolition. This is also a means for restoring homeownership to those whose credit was ruined in the housing bubble. After rehabilitation, the monthly expenses would be very low for the new owners. In addition, this program may help revitalize areas that have not been targeted for other renovation programs. Some cities include responsible investors in rehabilitation incentives. A partnership of YNDC, the City of Youngstown and Mahoning County Land Bank will administer the program.

**ACTION STEP 1.14:** Work with CDCs to increase the scale of property acquisition and rehabilitation. Through the tax foreclosure process, the County Land Bank can assist CDCs to acquire properties that can then be rehabilitated and sold to a homeowner. The City can assist through the use of Spot Blight or by providing funding, such as a loss reserve to offset losses in the property rehabilitation process. The loss reserve could also be funded through private sources. An expanded line of credit would allow CDCs to increase the scale of property acquisition and rehabilitation.



YNDC's Community Tool Shed provides tools that neighborhood residents may borrow at no cost to perform home repairs.

## Best Practice

Cleveland, OH Slavic Village Neighbors Invest in Broadway

With 1200 vacant homes, Slavic Village sought interventions to the abandonment-vacancy-decay-demolition trajectory. Engaging residents, locally based groups and other stakeholders, they created an individualized plan that includes home repair loans, small matching grants, paint rebate and other repair/rehab programs, code enforcement, foreclosure prevention and credit counseling as well as demolition. However, the rehab programs often saw up to \$90,000 of improvements, and new market prices wouldn't support resale. Slavic Village Development crafted a program that would offer low-price, foreclosed homes to buyers with the means to finance repairs. Legal documents developed for the program govern the scope of required work and timelines, an agreement that the buyer will live in the house for up to five years, and a breach clause which allows SVD to take back the home if requirements are not met. This program has been targeted toward moderate rehab projects, buyers who are Do-It-Yourselfers or "cash no credit" situations, and homes SVD can obtain from private owners, HUD, or bank REOs as a donation or very low cost. Houses are sold for \$4,000-6,000.

For more information, see <http://slavicvillage.org/movein/findahome/programsforhomeowners> and [http://www.thrivingcommunitiesinstitute.org/documents/conference2013/Re-Imagining\\_Rehab-a\\_Modest\\_Rehab\\_Program.pdf](http://www.thrivingcommunitiesinstitute.org/documents/conference2013/Re-Imagining_Rehab-a_Modest_Rehab_Program.pdf)



Before



After



**BUY IT, FIX IT, LIVE IN IT—*Neighbors Invest in Broadway***

## Best Practice

Pittsburgh, PA East Liberty Development Inc.

In the early 2000s, the East Liberty neighborhood had roughly 50 vacant homes that were discouraging investment, exacerbating crime, and lowering nearby property values. ELDI decided to purchase all of these homes, rehabilitate some internally, sell others to rehab-minded buyers willing to invest their own sweat equity, and demolish the rest. The Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development, the Urban Redevelopment Authority and the Local Initiative Support Corp. helped ELDI to secure the financing and other support that the ambitious plan required, including a grant that allowed it to leverage a flexible line of credit. The results a decade later show that median housing values climbed by 34%, the income mix of residents is more diverse, the housing stock has been improved, crime fell by 46%, and homeowners have seen a steady increase in their equity, regardless of their income level.

For more information, see <http://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2011/09/25/East-Liberty-finds-formula-for-success/stories/201109250243>

**ACTION STEP 1.15:** Develop a program that allows responsible investors to acquire vacant property through the Mahoning County Land Bank. The Land Bank can identify vacant, but still viable homes, and issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) targeted to investors interested in acquiring and rehabilitating properties. The proposal would detail the investor's plan for the property and demonstrate financial ability to carry out the plan. The Land Bank would retain the right to choose the most viable proposal with the most desirable outcome for the property and neighborhood, instead of merely selling to the highest bidder. Perspective buyers would be vetted by an investigation of other properties they own to identify any tax delinquencies or code violations that would indicate an irresponsible investor.

## Funding Opportunity

Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) - Neighborhood Stabilization Initiative (NSI)

The NSI seeks to stabilize neighborhoods that have been hardest hit by the housing crisis. The program includes two distinct pre-foreclosure strategies and three distinct post-foreclosure strategies, all of which are intended to assist homeowners who are behind on their mortgages, help neighborhoods recover, and reduce the inventory of real estate owned (REO) properties held by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Initial piloting of the program took place in Detroit, Michigan. Program strategies include loan modification, non-performing loan sale or donation, and a quick-look opportunity for non-profits to acquire certain REO properties.

For information, see <http://www.fhfa.gov/mobile/Pages/public-affairs-detail.aspx?PageName=Fact-Sheet-Neighborhood-Stabilization-Initiative.aspx>

## Neighborhood Priority #2: Infrastructure Repair and Maintenance

**Strategy:** Prioritize infrastructure investment in neighborhood action plan areas, encourage walkability, as well as transit and bicycle access, and utilize a minimalist approach to green infrastructure improvements that capture, clean, and manage stormwater runoff. The impact of infrastructure investment will be greatest when used in conjunction with other intensive efforts to stabilize and revitalize the city's neighborhoods. As resources are limited, infrastructure investments should be prioritized in stable, functional, and constrained market areas, as well as near schools, parks, playgrounds, and other community assets. Green infrastructure improvements should be installed to lessen the effects of combined-sewer overflow.

**ACTION STEP 2.1:** Utilize infrastructure condition surveys in Neighborhood Action Plans to create a prioritized replacement schedule for all street and sidewalks in poor conditions, missing street lights, and dead street trees. Sidewalks leading to neighborhood assets, such as schools and parks, should be fully functional. In addition, sidewalks in commercial areas, or close to transit stops along main streets, should also be prioritized for replacement if in poor condition. Streets in fair or poor condition that serve as entryways to neighborhoods, or that carry moderate-to-heavy amounts of traffic should be prioritized for resurfacing.



Volunteers clear sidewalks of debris and overgrowth at a community workday in the Powerstown neighborhood.



The City's R.U.B.Y. trailer provides tools for community groups to conduct neighborhood cleanups. The trailer may be reserved online, free of charge.

**ACTION STEP 2.2:** Collaborate with neighborhood groups, community anchors, and major employers to address infrastructure issues, such as overgrown sidewalks, at community workdays, and to report non-functioning street lights to First Energy through their online issue reporting system. Neighborhood groups are able to reserve Green Youngstown's tool trailer, called R.U.B.Y. (Revitalization and Urban Beautification of Youngstown) to clean up vacant lots, reclaim overgrown sidewalks, and other community projects. The United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley has leveraged hundreds of volunteers to assist with community cleanup efforts. In addition, community groups can report non-functioning street lights here: <https://www.firstenergycorp.com/content/customer/service-requests/report-lighting-problem.html>

**ACTION STEP 2.3:** Ensure crosswalks are functional, demarcated, and safe in all commercial districts and around schools. Pedestrian safety, especially for school-age children, should be a high priority, which can be elevated through striping of all crosswalks near schools and commercial districts. Crosswalk signage and caution signs should be installed on streets with moderate-to-heavy traffic near schools, parks, and playgrounds. In addition, all signalized pedestrian crossings should be fully functional.

**ACTION STEP 2.4:** Promote bicycling through the installation of dedicated bike lanes near YSU, and connecting downtown to YSU, Wick Park, Mill Creek Park, and adjacent neighborhoods. Safe cycling routes encourage healthy, active lifestyles and reduce the number of motorized vehicles on the city's roadways,



Clearly delineated bike routes are proposed along Midlothian Blvd west of Market St (above) and Glenwood Ave (below) to connect with the bikeway in Mill Creek Park.



as well as providing alternative means of transportation for populations without cars. Connecting YSU with downtown and residential areas with large numbers of students and faculty around Wick and Crandall Parks via dedicated bike lanes will encourage the use of bicycles for short trips and increase safety for those who use bicycles for transportation. Dedicated, fully painted lanes along Mahoning Avenue or Marshall Street, as well as Glenwood Avenue, would provide safe and easy access to Mill Creek Park for recreational cycling.

**ACTION STEP 2.5:** Establish cross-town bicycle routes with clear signage and demarcation. Neighborhood residents often ride their bikes to nearby parks, playgrounds, and schools, and therefore, safe routes should be established with signage that alert motorists to the presence of bicycles. Providing safe spaces for cycling for neighborhood youth to reach parks and playgrounds will encourage more active lifestyles, helping to address health issues in the City's neighborhoods, such as childhood obesity. These bicycle routes should be created in neighborhoods with a high density of residents and should connect the community assets, such as schools, playgrounds, and shopping centers. Suggested initial routes are listed below:

- Falls Ave.-Market St. – to connect Mill Creek Park entrance, Hillman Park, Youngstown Community School, and Downtown
- Midlothian Blvd. – to connect Lake Newport bike lane to Midlothian via Glenwood & Kiwatha
- Ford Ave.-Redondo Rd. – to connect Wick Park, Crandall Park, North Side Pool, Union Square Plaza at Gypsy and Belmont
- Garden District – to connect Mahoning Ave. and Mill Creek Park via Milton Ave.
- Hazelwood Ave.-McCullum Rd.– to connect Wick Recreation Area, The Lily Pond at Mill Creek Park, Chaney High School, and Mahoning Ave.



The “window-paning” method of mowing vacant lots involves more frequent mowings of the tree lawn and a strip along the sidewalk and less frequent mowings of the interior of the lot. The interior may be left to naturalize into woodland. Above is an example of window-paning at the intersection of Hillman St. and Warren Ave.

**ACTION STEP 2.6:** Institute a “window-paning” method of mowing vacant lots not adjacent to occupied homes, letting the remainder return to nature. The City's street department expends significant resources on maintaining vacant lots throughout the city during the summer months. Mowing vacant lots uses resources that could be redirected toward preserving existing infrastructure, such as sealing cracks in pavement to prevent the premature development of potholes. The “window-paning” method of grass cutting consists of mowing a strip several feet wide along the sidewalk and perimeter of the property, and letting the rest of the lot return to a naturalized state. The maintained strip along the sidewalk could be cut more regularly, thus preventing the encroachment of weeds onto the sidewalk. Source: Alan Mallach.

# Funding Opportunity

Eastgate Metropolitan Planning Organization

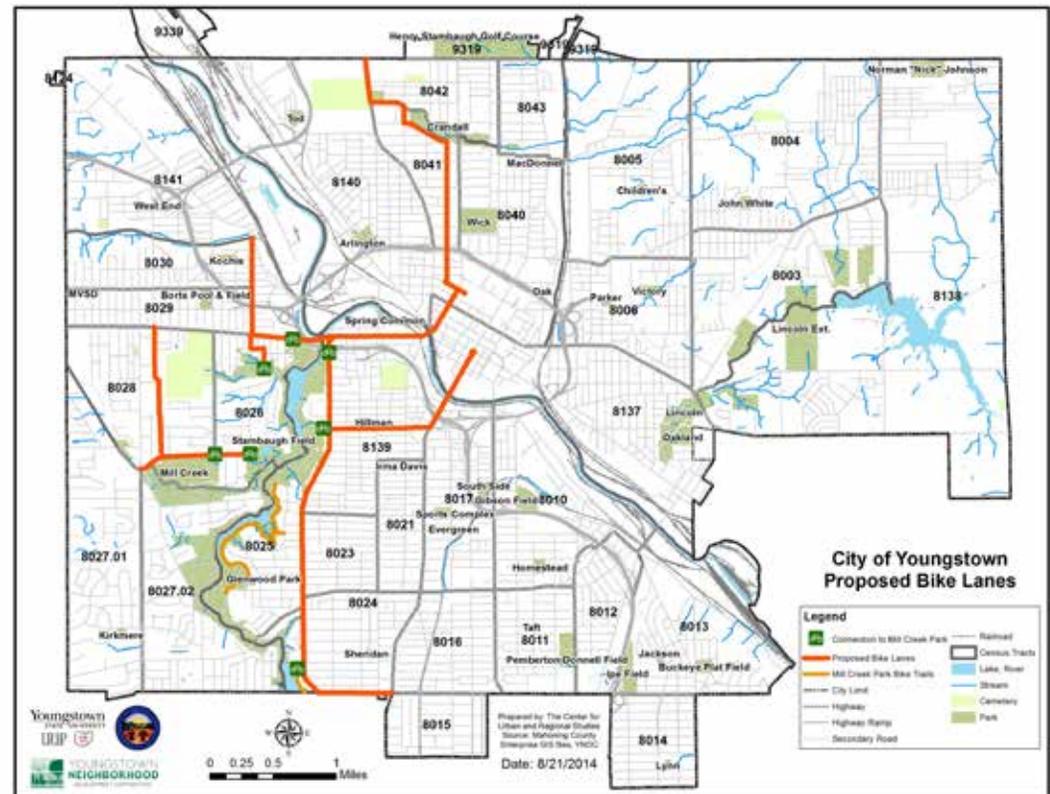
Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding through Eastgate could be used to create a network of bicycle lanes throughout the City of Youngstown. For these projects, approximately 20% in local match is required. In addition, bike lanes could be added to future projects in Eastgate's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) without increasing the amount of local match required, as long as the lanes are within the right-of-way and sufficient time is allowed to gain approval of engineering and design.



Large swaths of vacant land adjacent to the Metro Parks along Parkview Avenue has been returned to a natural state.

**ACTION STEP 2.7:** Return large swaths of vacant land back to their natural state or transfer them to the MetroParks. Clusters of vacant parcels that are adjacent to existing parks and natural areas, and not adjacent to occupied homes should not be mowed, but rather allowed to return to meadows and woodlands. These meadows and woodlands would absorb and filter stormwater, thus lessening the burden on the city's sewer system during heavy rain events. A strip of grass would still be cut along the sidewalk using the "window-paning" method. In areas where water naturally pools, weeping willows can be planted to take up excess water.

**ACTION STEP 2.8:** The City's park system should be right-sized to focus investment on parks with the highest usage in densely populated neighborhoods. This will ensure the most-used parks continue to become even stronger community assets. A study of the parks system by the YSU Center for Urban and Regional Studies recommended the closure of several underutilized parks. In addition, the City's Parks Department should increase funding through grant writing and solicitation of private resources for park improvements and programming.



**ACTION STEP 2.9:** Perform outreach to homeowners adjacent to vacant lots to encourage them to maintain and legally acquire the lot. All City-owned lots adjacent to owner-occupied homes in Neighborhood Action Plan areas should be marketed as side lots to the adjacent homeowner. The homeowner would agree to maintain and legally acquire the lot. This would reduce the burden of lot maintenance on the street department and allow resources to be redirected. The Mahoning County Land Bank will be proactively marketing lots acquired through its demolition program to adjacent homeowners.

**ACTION STEP 2.10:** Install minimalist green streets infrastructure improvements to capture, clean, and manage stormwater runoff. Plants and trees in swales, planters, and infiltration basins can clean and manage stormwater runoff onsite, reducing pollution and combined sewer overflow. Breaks in the curb can allow stormwater to enter a bioretention area in the planting strip between the street and sidewalk. Here water is cleaned and managed through appropriate slope design and mix of trees and native plants.



City-owned land adjacent to occupied homes should be marketed to homeowners to maintain as side lots

## Funding Opportunities

### Green Infrastructure Technical Assistance Program

The US EPA offers technical assistance to communities implementing green infrastructure projects. The City should apply for this opportunity, which is offered on a competitive basis. The program assists communities to 1) overcome the most significant barriers to green infrastructure, and 2) develop innovative approaches to implementation that meet multiple environmental, social, and economic goals. The assistance can support multiple project types, including the evaluation of opportunities to use green infrastructure to address multiple wet weather requirements, such as combined sewer overflow, within an integrated planning framework. Note that assistance is provided through an EPA contract, not a grant.

For information on the 2014 round of applications, see <http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/greeninfrastructure/upload/RLI-2014-Version-4.pdf>

## Funding Opportunities

### Wean Foundation Neighborhood SUCCESS Grants

The Neighborhood SUCCESS and Leadership Program awards grants of \$500 to \$5,000 to develop and implement resident-driven projects.

For information, see <https://www.rjweanfdn.org/neighborhood-success-and-leadership-program/engaging-residents/neighborhood-success-1-0-engaging-residents/>

## Funding Opportunity

Alliance for Community Trees (ACTrees)

Alliance for Community Trees offers grants to its member organizations to support local tree planting projects. ACTrees and grantees work with local groups, sponsors, and other partners to coordinate and execute volunteer tree planting events. ACTrees grants fund the purchase and installation of trees.

For information, see <http://actrees.org/what-we-do/grants-and-awards/planting-trees/>

## Funding Opportunity

United States Department of Agriculture

USDA Forest Service's National Urban and Community Forestry Challenge provides funding for communities that will help enhance urban forest stewardship, support new employment opportunities, and help build resilience in the face of a changing climate.

For information, see <http://www.fs.fed.us/ucf/nucfac.shtml>

## Best Practice

East Liberty Development Inc—Pittsburgh, PA

East Liberty's Green Vision Plan identifies various opportunities to build green infrastructure for the 21st Century. In order to alleviate Combined Sewer Overflows in the city of Pittsburgh, a series of green infrastructure improvements are proposed to minimize stormwater runoff at its source. Improvements include a reduction impervious surface area, use of porous pavements, bio-retention areas, tree plantings, infiltration beds, cisterns and rain barrels, rain gardens, green roofs, and enlarged tree planting strips.

For information, see <http://www.eastliberty.org/sites/default/files/study/files/ELGV%20Master%20Plan%20Final%20Report.pdf>

**ACTION STEP 2.11:** Enhance the city's existing urban tree canopy by planting appropriate street trees in locations unlikely to interfere with utility lines and sidewalks. Trees have aesthetic as well as ecological value, as they assist with mitigating stormwater runoff. Trees conserve energy by cooling homes in the summer and blocking cold winds during the winter. Additionally, trees also reduce noise pollution by absorbing sounds.



Green infrastructure treatments in the public right-of-way (left) and on empty lots (right) in Portland, OR clean and manage stormwater on site using native plantings and appropriate slope design. Source: <http://sf.streetsblog.org/2009/11/13/portlands-greenstreets-program-a-sterling-best-practice-model/>

## Neighborhood Priority #3: Crime and Safety Concerns

**Strategy:** Utilize a proactive, data-drive approach to tackling problem properties and specific blocks with multiple crime hotspots using a combined strategy of resident engagement, door-to-door community policing, and code enforcement sweeps. In addition to responding to calls for service, the Youngstown Police Department (YPD) should utilize its newly-hired community police officers to work along with neighborhood planning efforts to develop a holistic approach to dealing with crime and quality of life issues in the city's neighborhood.

**ACTION STEP 3.1:** Utilize crime hotspot maps in the Neighborhood Action Plans to proactively address problem houses through door-to-door community policing efforts, along with targeted code enforcement sweeps. Properties that are threats to neighborhood stability often have multiple issues that require a coordinated response. For example, a disruptive house with numerous calls for service to the YPD may be owned by an irresponsible property owner who has allowed the property to fall into disrepair and has stopped paying property taxes. The community police officers can address criminal activity at the property and code enforcement officials can hold the owner accountable to make needed repairs. Reducing the levels of disturbance created by the property and improving its appearance will increase confidence in the neighborhood's trajectory, instead of the property being a cause for pushing nearby residents away.

**ACTION STEP 3.2:** Proactively board and clean up vacant homes in crime hotspots areas. Structures that are vacant and wide-open attract criminal activity and are a safety hazard to the community. Boarding up these structures will help to reduce crime and arson in the surrounding area. It also improves perceptions of the surrounding area, instead of presenting an image of disorder and unkemptness.

**ACTION STEP 3.3:** Engage neighborhood leaders in discussing crime hotspots, with the goal of increasing awareness and "eyes on the street." The YPD Community Police Officers should attend Neighborhood Action Committee and block watch meetings to identify problem houses and specific blocks with multiple crime and safety issues. Community Police Officers should report back to the Committees and block watch groups regarding steps taken to address issues and outcomes from these efforts.

**ACTION STEP 3.4:** Track improvement in neighborhood safety over time by measuring calls for service and soliciting feedback from

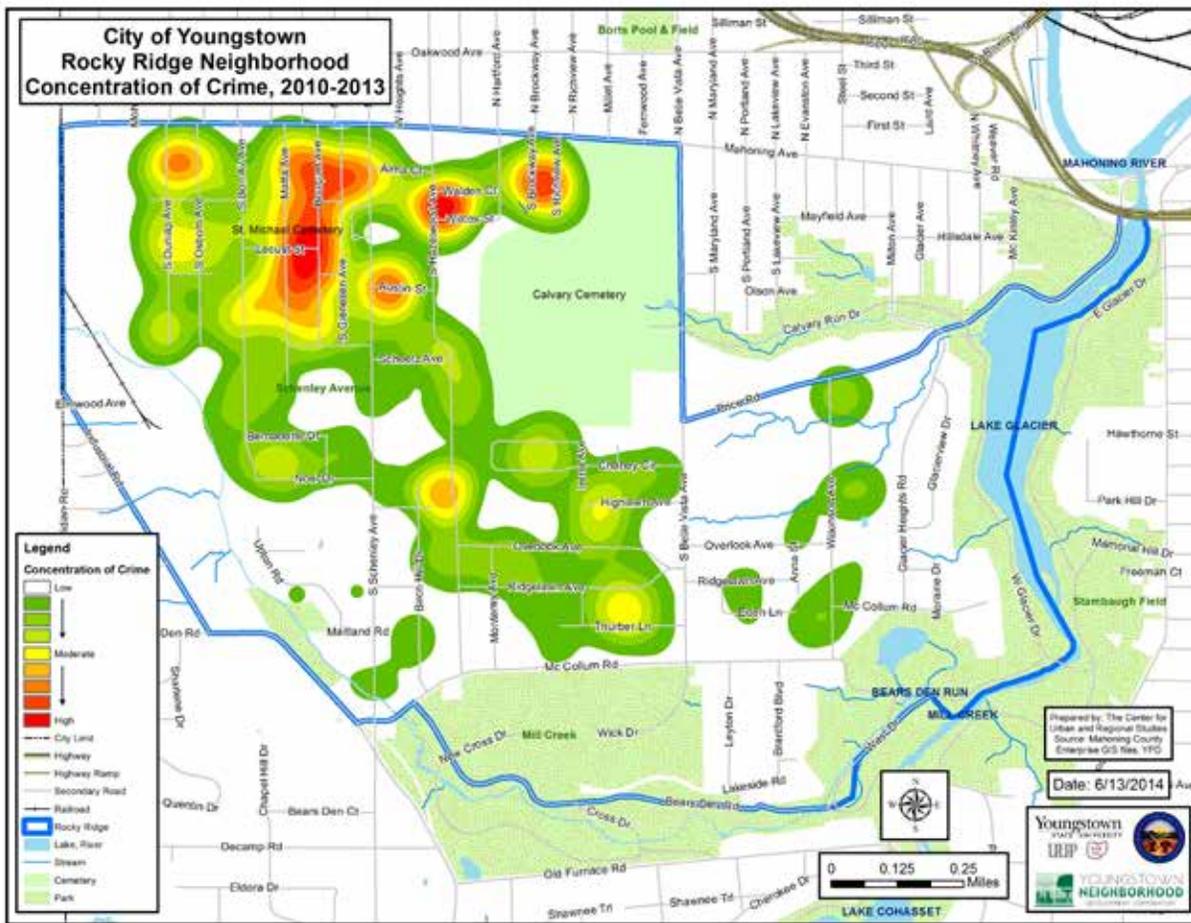
neighborhood residents. Calls for service in identified neighborhood crime hotspot areas should be monitored and tracked to determine if community policing and code enforcement efforts are having an impact or if additional strategies are needed to address these properties. In addition, residents can inform Neighborhood Action Committees of whether the problems associated with particular properties have been dealt with satisfactorily or if ongoing efforts are needed to continue addressing the issues.

**ACTION STEP 3.5:** Develop a re-entry program to assist residents returning from prison to adjust to life in their communities. This program should include multiple agencies and community groups, such as the Youngstown Police Department, the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV), probation officers, social services agencies, and faith-based organizations to assist re-entering citizens to utilize a case management style approach and provide returning citizens with all the tools and resources to be successful immediately upon re-entry.

# Best Practice

Boston, MA Police Department—Community Partnerships

The BPD developed the “Boston Re-Entry Initiative” in partnership with faith-based, community, and criminal justice agencies to help former prisoners adjust to life in their communities. Research has shown that the first 24-hours after release is critical to offenders leaving the system. The Initiative includes an emphasis on mentoring, addiction, and employment opportunities for inmates after release. This program begins while offenders are still incarcerated. As early as the first few months of incarceration, a panel, comprised of the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the District Attorney’s Office, parole, probation, community agencies and faith-based organizations, meets with offenders and discusses issues that may affect a successful transition back into the community. The department also participated in a collaborative effort between clergy and law enforcement that made unofficial visits to the homes of troubled youth.



**ACTION STEP 3.6:** Create a youth development program to provide opportunities for after-school and summer activities throughout the city. A structured program for youth at parks and community centers throughout the city would provide positive experiences, skill-building activities, and long-term positive, healthy relationships. Individuals and organizations would work together to encourage engagement and support of youth through collaboration, linking resources, sharing expertise, and connecting people.

Crime hotspots identified in the Rocky Ridge neighborhood should be addressed through a targeted strategy of door-to-door community policing efforts and code enforcement sweeps.

## Funding Opportunity

### Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program

The Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation (BCJI) Program is part of the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative (NRI), which provides neighborhoods with coordinated federal support in the implementation of place-based strategies as part of larger comprehensive neighborhood revitalization efforts. NRI includes programs within agencies such as the Departments of Education, Justice, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Treasury.

Given the significant needs and limited resources of some of these communities, local and tribal leaders need tools and information about crime trends in their jurisdiction and assistance in assessing, planning, and implementing the most effective use of criminal justice resources to address these issues. Research suggests that crime clustered in small areas, or “crime hot spots,” accounts for a disproportionate amount of crime and disorder in many communities. As a result, the criminal justice field has been creating new evidence-based strategies designed to prevent and deter future crime in hot spots. Many communities need assistance to implement data-driven problem solving strategies that target crime and safety concerns.

For information, see: <https://www.bja.gov/Funding/14BCJIsol.pdf>

## Neighborhood Priority #4: Encourage Economic Development

**Strategy:** Target economic development incentives, infrastructure investment, and aesthetic improvements to neighborhood retail and business nodes identified in Neighborhood Action Plans. Utilize the City's Land Bank to acquire and assemble land in Acquisition Strategy Areas and pursue funding for the assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment of sites with underground storage tanks. Concentrating investment on key nodes of activity along major corridors can spur private investment and create more vibrant commercial districts. These investments may include incentives, such as the City's façade grant program, loans to small businesses and entrepreneurs, infrastructure improvements, aesthetic enhancements, and assessment and cleanup of underground storage tank sites. Outside of commercial nodes, land may be acquired and assembled in strategic areas either for economic development or preservation of open space.

**ACTION STEP 4.1:** Target city incentive programs to neighborhood retail nodes identified in Neighborhood Action Plans and seek private funding to encourage retail development. As the City of Youngstown has lost population, it has an overabundance of commercial land that will likely not be redeveloped in the near future. Instead of scattering investments along the city's corridors, efforts should be made to target these investments to nodes of commercial activity identified in the Neighborhood Action Plans. Outreach should be performed to business owners in these strategic areas to identify potential candidates for incentive programs, such as the City's façade grant program and loans to small businesses and entrepreneurs. Additionally, the City should serve as a resource for businesses to reach out and share their own individual needs, with the goal of being more responsive and proactive in its support of the business community.

### Best Practice

Charter One Growing Communities Program—Cleveland, OH

Charter One launched Growing Communities in Cleveland's Ohio City neighborhood in 2010, and has since awarded more than \$500,000 in grants through the initiative. The program focused on revitalizing the Ohio City Market District from 2010 to 2012, and expanded to Akron's University Park neighborhood in 2012. Funded projects included small business grant competitions that decreased storefront vacancy, attracted new businesses and created jobs. Five small businesses and 38 jobs were created through the small business competition in Ohio City.

For more information, see [https://www.charterone.com/about-us/news/charterone/2012/06\\_07\\_12\\_competition.aspx](https://www.charterone.com/about-us/news/charterone/2012/06_07_12_competition.aspx) and [http://www.citizensbank.com/about-us/news/shared/2010/09\\_29\\_10\\_ohio\\_initiative.aspx](http://www.citizensbank.com/about-us/news/shared/2010/09_29_10_ohio_initiative.aspx)

**ACTION STEP 4.2:** Create incubator space for emerging small businesses. The barriers to entry for small businesses can be reduced through a sharing of services common in business incubators. As businesses outgrow the incubator or need to relocate to be closer to target markets, a database of available property can assist business owners in locating appropriate space. The City should support development of these small businesses through a targeted incentive that decreases the burden on start-up companies in their first few years.

**ACTION STEP 4.3:** Develop an online inventory of available space for business locations and a website with consolidated information regarding economic development assistance available in the City of Youngstown.



The Swedish Bank Building was rehabilitated by the Neighborhood Development Center and other partners using historic tax credits, to be used as a small business incubator. Source: <http://ndc-mn.org/swedishbank>

Private companies and entrepreneurs looking to expand, relocate, or create a business would benefit from an inventory of publicly–or privately-owned space that is available for lease or purchase. The inventory should include information such as square footage, ceiling heights, price, basic floor layout, entrance locations, interior condition, and owner information. The website site should contain details related to the city’s economic development incentives, as well as its partners, such as MVEDC, the Western Reserve Port Authority, the Regional Chamber, and YNDC’s micro-enterprise program. It should serve as a One-Stop Shop for business processing—a single point of contact for an entrepreneur, small business owner or a large business that wants to open or expand a business in the City, where all the necessary requirements are provided in a clear and concise format, efficiently processed, all associated fees are stated up front and time to completion is within a reasonable period. This site should also contain an inventory of available business and office space throughout the city.



Occupied storefronts line W 25th Street in Cleveland’s Ohio City, where various economic development efforts have provided incentives for businesses to move into vacant buildings. Source: <http://www.craigslist.com/article/20140803/SUB1/308039964/metrohealths-ambitious-campus-makeover-may-be-push-west-25th-street#>

## Best Practice

### opportunitySPACE

opportunitySPACE is a data hub and collaboration platform to connect private citizens with information about government-owned properties. It serves as an inventory of available properties that interested business owners and developers would otherwise be unaware of. Property information is compiled from a variety of sources and displayed visually to inform government agencies and private entities of what the government owns and what property is available. This platform creates a dialogue between government and citizens regarding ideas for underutilized and vacant properties.

For more information, see <http://www.opportunityspace.org/about-us.html>

The screenshot displays the opportunitySPACE website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'opportunitySPACE', 'Featured!', 'Locations', and 'Search' tabs. A search bar contains 'Louisville, KY'. Below the navigation bar, there are filters for 'PROPERTY FILTERS', 'CONTEXT', 'INCENTIVES', 'PLANNING', and 'ZONING'. A list of property addresses is shown on the right, each with a green location pin icon and a red 'OPPORTUNITY' banner. The list includes: 1811 LYTLE, 1113 W HILL, 3119 HALE, FINALIST: GUERRILLA PUTT PUTT (953 DIXIE), Louisville Gardens (426 Armory Place), 1324 OLIVE, and 912 S 32ND. A 'Show More' button and 'Showing 300 of 3086 in this area' text are visible at the bottom of the list. A map of Louisville, KY is shown on the left, with green location pins indicating the locations of the properties. The map includes a 'LEGEND' and 'Street Map' button.

opportunitySPACE provides an inventory of available government-owned buildings and displays the locations of each on a user-friendly map. Users can search for available property based on neighborhood, property use, owner type, size, and current zoning.

Source: <http://beta.opportunityspace.org/city/listings>

**ACTION STEP 4.4:** Target infrastructure improvements to neighborhood retail nodes to improve aesthetics and walkability. Successful urban commercial districts focus on improving the pedestrian experience through a combination of infrastructure and aesthetic enhancements that encourage walking and transit use. All sidewalks in commercial districts should be fully functional and crosswalks clearly demarcated. Public art can

enliven formerly blighted or underutilized spaces, creating interest for both pedestrians and drivers passing by. Wayfinding in strategic areas should be designed with both pedestrian and motorists in mind to direct residents and newcomers to points of interest. Well-designed wayfinding systems can also contribute to a business district's identity and sense of place, thereby encouraging more people to visit and owners to invest in their

properties and businesses. Parking should be clearly marked with painted lines and signage in order to allow passing motorists to easily stop and patronize the commercial district. Eliminating unutilized poles and planting appropriate street trees will improve aesthetics of neighborhood retail areas. Any vacant commercial structures planned for reuse should be boarded with commercial-grade boards, such as plexiglass boards.

## Best Practice

### Neighborhood Development Center

NDC works with residents, small businesses and neighborhood groups in communities to leverage their talent, energy, and ability to engage and revitalize their own communities. NDC offers the following services to help neighborhood entrepreneurs, businesses, and organizations maximize their positive impact:

- Business expansion program—provides loans and business advisory services to support business growth
- Entrepreneur training program—provides culturally sensitive entrepreneur training programs for low-income residents who do not have access to traditional sources of capital and want to learn the skills to successfully start and operate a business
- Small business lending and reba-free financing —provides access to credit for start-up and existing businesses that are unable to access traditional loans and sources of capital
- Small business incubators—engage in targeted real estate development projects to transform strategically located commercial buildings into business incubators that support small businesses while serving as catalysts for the revitalization of the surrounding communities.

For more information, see <http://www.ndc-mn.org/programs-services>

### Minneapolis, MN Neighborhood Development Center Business Incubators

The six business incubators throughout Minneapolis are distinct and tailored to the individual buildings and challenges of those neighborhoods. For example, the Frogtown Square building was in an area that had transitioned from a vital hub of railroad and transportation industry workers to adult theaters and strip clubs. NDC partnered with three other non-profits to rehabilitate the structure. NDC uses some of the units as a small business incubator, and other spaces include retail on the bottom floor and 50 units of permanent, affordable senior housing above, managed by Episcopal Homes. The Swedish Bank Building (1923) had fallen into deep disrepair and was rehabilitated by NDC and other partners using historic tax credits. The Cooperative Mercado Central is in a formerly blighted, high-crime Latino neighborhood. Recent immigrants, longing for familiar goods and services and a wish to own their own businesses, received entrepreneur training from NDC and opened the brightly-painted, Latino-themed public market in 1991, which now generates \$1.2 million in annual sales and has inspired further investment along the corridor.

For more information, see <http://www.ndc-mn.org/incubators>

**ACTION STEP 4.5:** Partner with a CDC to apply for Community Economic Development (CED) funding. CED projects create employment opportunities that lead to increased self-sufficiency for low-income individuals through a variety of activities, such as capital expenditures for the purchase of equipment or real property, operating expenses, and loans or equity investments. This funding can be leveraged to encourage economic development through business start ups and expansion of existing businesses in key commercial nodes identified in the Neighborhood Action Plans.

**ACTION STEP 4.6:** Support the installation of public art on major corridors. Public art can have a powerful effect on people’s perceptions of neighborhoods. A mural can enliven a blank wall or empty lot and it can inspire a belief that the community is changing for the better. It is recommended that the art relate to the neighborhood—its residents, its characteristics, its history, or its future—and that residents be involved in the project in some meaningful way. Art should be installed in a highly visible location and in the case of murals, should be covered with graffiti guard to prevent vandalism.



This Better Block project in Kansas City envisioned a lively pedestrian, café area with plants and trees as a buffer between a wide, busy street. Source: <http://usa.streetsblog.org/2013/05/31/qa-with-jason-roberts-the-visionary-behind-the-better-block/>

## Best Practice

### Philadelphia, PA Philly Mural Arts

Since it began, the Mural Arts Program has produced over 3,600 murals which have become a cherished part of the civic landscape and a great source of inspiration to the millions of residents and visitors who encounter them each year. In fact, Mural Arts’ unique efforts have earned Philadelphia international praise as the “City of Murals.” But as stunning as the murals are themselves, they are, most importantly, the visual products of a powerful and collaborative grassroots process in communities. The mural-making process gives neighborhood residents a voice to tell their individual and collective stories, a way to pass on culture and tradition, and a vehicle to develop and empower local leaders. Mural Arts’ mural-making process also engages thousands of Philadelphia’s at-risk children, youth, and adults who find their artistic voice, develop their self-confidence, and discover new ambitions while creating murals through numerous programs.

See also <http://www.muralarts.org/>

## Best Practice

### The Better Block

The Better Block project started in April, 2010, in Dallas, Texas, when a group of community organizers, neighbors, and property owners gathered together to revitalize a single commercial block in an underused neighborhood corridor. The area was filled with vacant properties, wide streets, and few amenities for people who lived within walking distance. The group brought together all of the resources from the community and converted the block into a walkable, bikeable neighborhood destination for people of all ages complete with bike lanes, cafe seating, trees, plants, pop-up businesses, and lighting. The project was developed to show the city how the block could be revived and improve area safety, health, and economics if ordinances that restricted small business and multi-modal infrastructure were removed. Since that time, Better Block projects have been developed throughout the world with many of the temporary infrastructure improvements and businesses made permanent.

The following elements have been identified as elements in creating better blocks:

- Safety - Does it feel safe to cross the street? Stand on the sidewalk? Are there areas filled with debris, graffiti, or overgrown landscaping?
- Shared Access—Do pedestrians and cyclists feel welcome? Is the area easily accessible from neighborhoods? Are there signs that direct people into and out of the area?
- Stay Power—Are there food options on the block? Are there places to eat outdoors? Are there maps to guide people and amenities that encourage them to linger?
- 8-80 (ages), dog-owners—Are there amenities that create invitations for children, seniors, and dog owners on a block? These groups tend to be indicators of a healthy environment that feels welcoming and attracts people.

For more information, see <http://betterblock.org/how-to-build-a-better-block/>



Murals can add vibrancy and vitality to commercial districts.

**ACTION STEP 4.7:** Utilize the City’s Land Bank to acquire and assemble tax delinquent property in Acquisition Strategy Areas. Vacant, tax delinquent land near major institutions or in other strategic locations provides an opportunity to acquire and assemble property for future economic development. In addition, land where future development is unlikely to occur can be acquired and assembled for the preservation of open space. This open space would naturalize into meadows and woodlands that absorb and clean stormwater, preventing excess runoff from entering the city’s sewer system.

In specific neighborhoods, demolition and stormwater management strategies will be part of large-scale, coordinated efforts using innovative partnerships to demolish abandoned

houses and create sites for the use of green infrastructure projects to mitigate the damaging effects of combined-sewer-overflows during heavy rain events. These sites could include vacant lots for larger-scale remediation or minimalist green street design improvements in the tree lawn that clean and manage smaller amounts of stormwater runoff.

**ACTION STEP 4.8:** Apply for grant funding to assess, clean, and redevelop sites with underground storage tanks and other brownfields. Youngstown has hundreds of abandoned gas stations and auto repair shops where underground storage tanks likely remain after decades of disuse. These sites present numerous challenges to redevelopment given the uncertainty regarding levels of contamination and the potentially prohibitive costs of cleanup. Environmental site assessments must be performed on these sites to determine what remediation efforts are necessary. The US EPA and Ohio EPA provide funding for environmental site assessments, clean-up, and redevelopment.



Underground storage tanks were removed at the construction site of the Glenwood Community Park. The presence of USTs can significantly delay a project and add to its cost.

## Funding Opportunity

### US EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant

The US EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant provides funding for Phase I and II environmental site assessments to determine the level of contamination of brownfields sites and the necessity of remediation efforts. EPA funding should be used to assess the city's abandoned gas stations and auto repair shops in strategic areas to unlock the redevelopment potential of these sites. Funding for individual communities is limited to \$200,000 per application, whereas a coalition of eligible communities and organizations can apply for up to \$600,000 in funding.

For information on the 2014 round of applications, see <http://www.epa.gov/oswer/docs/grants/epa-oswer-oblr-13-05.pdf>

### Ohio EPA Targeted Brownfields Assessments

Ohio EPA provides in-kind services at brownfield properties for local governments. These services include Phase I and II environmental site assessments and certified asbestos inspections. Ohio EPA pays all costs directly and oversees its contractors. Grants are non-competitive and sites are funded as they come to Ohio EPA.

For more information, see <http://epa.ohio.gov/portals/30/SABR/docs/TBA%20Fact%20Brochure.pdf>



**REVITALIZE**

**youngstown, ohio**