Safe, Clean, Friendly

A Comprehensive Safety Plan for the Northside Neighborhood

prepared January 2008
by
participants of the Northside Summit
Summary

Purpose
The purpose of this safety plan is to promote and encourage individuals and organizations to collaborate in improving neighborhood safety and livability.

We all want to live in an environment that is safe, clean, and friendly as well as progressive in its response to crime and quality of life issues. The following document is intended as a vision of possibilities and a starting point. Specific programs, plans and goals will evolve over time.

Neighbors caring about neighbors is one of the outstanding characteristics of Northside. As one of the foundations of our neighborhood, it provides the basis from which we will move forward and continue to grow.

History
Between August and December 2007, participants at the Northside Summit, a gathering of residents, business representatives, churches, social service agencies and other neighborhood-based organizations, undertook an initiative to create a vision and an action plan for a safe neighborhood.

The goal was to identify what safety-related programming and activities currently are being conducted and by whom, determine what activities are being duplicated and those that could be initiated to more efficiently focus energies within the community and lead to a greater overall sense of safety.

Fundamental to the plan is an awareness that regular evaluation and measurable objectives of all efforts is essential to maintain momentum and assure an effective synergy between all entities involved.

As the process evolved, there was a stronger understanding of how promoting safety is a neighborhood enhancement undertaking. Conversely, broad-based neighborhood enhancement leads to a higher level of safety.

As a consequence, the plan incorporates elements of education, youth activities, property maintenance and restoration, beautification, as well as more traditional activities such as policing, Citizens on Patrol, CPOP, court watch and block watch.

It was recognized that information about wide-ranging activities needs to be coordinated by one organization. It was determined that the community council is best suited for that role. To best accomplish this goal, it is suggested that funding be sought for a paid position to interact with all the different organizations in Northside to collect and maintain this data and to help facilitate partnerships within that group.
The City’s Neighborhood Enhancement Program, a 90-day blitz of attention to blight, cleanliness and specific safety-related conditions concluded on December 13, 2007. The goal of this plan is to provide a framework for neighborhood interests to maintain and build upon results realized from that effort.
What Does a Safe Northside Look Like?
Participants discussed their vision of a safe neighborhood to establish parameters for the planning process. It established goals against which they could best determine what actions were appropriate.

Elements of that vision are:

- Walking, especially at night, is a pleasant experience with no fear for personal safety.
- Loitering or idleness by young persons is nonexistent or doesn’t contribute to a sense of unease.
- There is no drug use or dealing, especially in public.
- There is overall cleanliness and no incidence of graffiti.
- Homes and business are well kept with attractive facades, especially in the business district.
- Reports of crime are in the bottom 10% in the city, with calls for service at the very bottom.
- Street prostitution is eliminated.
- There are pathways throughout the neighborhood where pedestrians and bicyclists can travel without fear.
- Outsiders think highly of the neighborhood.
- Residents are educated in proper social behavior.
- The community is open, tolerant and diverse.
- Homes and businesses are owned by residents.
- Greater handicapped access in public places.
What is happening now (Fall 2007)

Participants did an assessment of activities, both positive and negative, to establish a baseline for comparison in the future and to have a clear understanding of the involvement of a broad array of organizations. What they found:

Positive
- There’s an active Citizens on Patrol team
- There’s an ongoing CPOP effort
- Courtwatch aggressively tracks major cases with broad impact for the community through the justice system and make known the community’s interest.
- Blockwatch teams have been established in a number of areas so neighbors can look out for one another
- There is a strong working relationship between the community council and the business association.
- Cincinnati Recreation Commission conducts a wide range of athletic and educational activities for both adults and young people.
- Churches operating together as Churches Active in Northside provide social services for the needy and youth programs, including a food pantry, employment assistance and housing assistance.
- The Public Library conducts programs and educational opportunities.
- Millcreek Restoration Project is cleaning up the waterway on the edge of the community and creating a safe hike/bike trail.
- The community council is actively involved in a wide range of activities concerning safety, blight and cleanliness.
- Cincinnati Police Department is very proactive in its enforcement and community outreach efforts.
- The neighborhood has an unusually high number of active, concerned residents.
- The City’s Neighborhood Enhancement Program is focusing a wide range of support and enforcement on the neighborhood.
- Working in Neighborhoods conducts home restoration programs and homeowner education.
- CNCURC is heavily involved in restoration and development, currently building two homes that will be LEED certified.
- Block parties are regularly conducted by residents throughout the neighborhood.
- YMCA has a youth development center
- Northside Greenspace active in beautification projects

Not so positive
- There is too much drug activity.
- Prostitution is highly visible, especially in the business district.
- Loitering is a problem at prominent intersection.
- Bus stops are often unsightly; Northside is a major exchange location for Metro.
- There’s a high level of substandard housing because of absentee landowners.
- There’s too much trash and graffiti.
• There are not enough activities to engage youth and divert them from troublesome behavior.
• Not enough residents are concerned or engaged in the well being of the community.
• Too much of the population is transient or short term.
• There’s not enough cross-cultural participation.
• Incidence of burglary is too high.
• There’s an unacceptable level of violence, especially gun violence.
What are the desired results of a coordinated effort?

Participants addressed conditions that need attention with the outcomes they felt are necessary:

- Neighbors need to know each other much better.
- There will be more people outside, on the streets, especially in the business district and at night.
- There will be an array of positive and diverse options to engage youth.
- Residents will have a much better awareness of crime reporting options and a greater willingness to be involved.
- There will be decreases in:
  1. burglaries
  2. drug activity
  3. assaults
  4. gun activity
  5. domestic violence
  6. street robberies
  7. prostitution
- Police officers will be encouraged and want to live in the neighborhood.
- A broad range of educational opportunities will be available to residents, including:
  1. Financial management
  2. GED
  3. Crime reporting options
  4. Health and wellness
  5. Conflict resolution
  6. Diversity appreciation
  7. Interpersonal relations
  8. Improved relationships between children and police and fire agencies
- Increase owner occupied homes and businesses
These change indicators will tell when conditions have been met

- Continuous reduction in crime statistics
- less visible loitering; fewer complaints received
- completion of perception surveys
- noticeable increase in ‘positive’ foot traffic
- noticeable increase in positive perceptions by nonresidents - anecdotal
- Continuous reduction in blight index
- Attraction of new businesses and retention of existing
- Resident ownership rate increases
- Continuous reduction in orders from Buildings & Inspections, Health and Fire and
  an increase in compliance
- Rising academic school ratings and graduation rates
Necessary action steps

The following activities were determined important to achieving the goals of the plan:

- **Neighbors need to know each other better**
  - The community council should promote block parties, block clubs and block watch groups.
  - Surveys of perception of the Northside community will be conducted with both residents and nonresidents.
  - Litter control efforts must continue and expand: continue recruiting volunteers for Great American Cleanup and Make a Difference Day, use of parolees for regular cleanup details.

- **There will be more people outside, on the streets, especially in the Business District**
  - Program must be instituted for business recruitment, development and retention.

- **There will be an array of positive and diverse options to engage youth**
  - After school study opportunities should be established.
  - Recreation programs, especially tailored for children, should be continued and expanded.
  - Must raise performance levels in Cincinnati Public Schools, increase volunteerism in the schools (e.g. crossing guards), have COP teams in school areas.
  - Regular seminars should be conducted on topics such as diversity, financial management, home repairs, health and wellness, infant care, use of seatbelts and bike safety
  - A mentoring program and tutoring initiative should be established
  - Job fairs for youth should be conducted
  - Employment preparation opportunities will be developed and made available to teens

- **Residents will have a much better awareness of crime reporting options and a greater willingness to be involved**
  - A “Who to Call” list will be developed.
  - Continued, possibly improved, participation of police, COP, CPOP and Courtwatch.
  - The neighborhood should mount a public awareness campaign to promote the use of the 765-1212 police call number.

- **There will be a decrease in crime including prostitution, street robberies etc.**
- Continued, possibly improved, participation of police, COP, CPOP and Courtwatch.
- Police patrols, especially those with high visibility such as walking or bike, should be increased.
- Public awareness campaign to promote the use of the 765-1212 police call number.
- Litter control efforts must continue and expand: continue recruiting volunteers for Great American Cleanup and Make a Difference Day, use of parolees for regular cleanup details.

- **A broad range of educational opportunities will be available to residents**, including: Financial management, GED, Crime reporting options, Health and wellness, Conflict resolution, Diversity appreciation, Interpersonal relations, Improved relationships between children and Police and Fire Department
  - Regular seminars should be conducted on topics such as diversity, financial management, home repairs, health and wellness, infant care, use of seatbelts and bike safety

- **Reduction in numbers of orders from Buildings & Inspections, Health and Fire Departments.**
  - Demolitions and renovation of substandard buildings must be pursued to reduce blight.
**Resources available**

Planning steps included identifying available resources and who could be counted on (or should be encouraged) to do what:

- **Community Council:** act as the clearing house, organize block activities, coordinate cleanups, coordinate with CPS.
- **Northside Business Association:** business development activities, fund-raising, renovations and beautification.
- **Public Library:** youth education programs, after-school study programs.
- **Police:** educational outreach, increase bike patrols, conduct trainings for dealing with chronic nuisances, landlords, first-time home buying, personal safety, etc.
- **MRDD:** provide space for meetings and otherwise, provide volunteers
- **CAIN/churches:** training for job placement, after-school programs, summary of church events, indigent programs.
- **Recreation Department:** sports leagues, after-school events, senior programs, senior mentoring, safety training (including CPR), leadership by the bike co-op.
- **Mill Creek Restoration Project:** make area more inviting
- **Village Green bike co-op.:** bike safety training
- **CNCURC:** redevelopment of underused, blighted properties.
- **Schools:** safety training, after-school activities
- **WIN/CUFA:** educational programming, home-ownership education.
- **Fire Department - inspections, smoke detectors, fire safety awareness**
- **YMCA:** Youth programming
- **Northside Greenspace:** making area more inviting thru beautification and planting
Key allies to engage
Every endeavor of a neighborhood scale requires outside support for success. Participants listed the following organizations who can be counted on to assist:

- Keep Cincinnati Beautiful
- Northside Fund
- Invest in Neighborhoods
- Cincinnati Neighborhood Business Districts United
- Community Police Partnering Center
- City of Cincinnati
- Health Department
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters

Those whose support is not assured be desired:

- Greater Cincinnati Foundation
- Community foundations
- South Cumminsville Community Council
- Banks (PNC, US Bank, 5/3)
- Cincinnati State/UC/Xavier University
- Agencies doing job programs
- Urban League
Objections to overcome
A number of objections may be raised to this plan. They include:
  • Resistance to change
  • This is just another pipe dream
  • No new ideas to address ‘pet’ issues
  • Who is going to do it?
  • What will it cost? Where will the money come from?
  • This plan isn’t ‘realistic’
  • Not culturally/class sensitive

Basis for support
There are a number of reasons this plan deserves support. They include:
  • This is clear picture of how people can work together for common cause
  • It will improve OUR neighborhood
  • It improves personal & perceived safety, impression of neighborhood, desirability, real estate values, leverage for funding, attractive appearance, community spirit and involvement
  • It sustains the Neighborhood Enhancement Program

Steps to sustain the plan
Regular attention to evolving circumstances and evaluation of projects is necessary to sustain the plan. These steps are critical for success:
  • Determine who does what
  • Solicit commitment from all interested and concerned parties
  • Regularly evaluate programs’ successes and failures
  • Fund an organizer (full or part time; college intern as assistant)
  • Secure funding on a regular basis
  • Consistently communicate with stakeholders and present an honest evaluation of their performance as well as yours.
  • Constantly work for greater diversity
  • Don’t over reach
**Six Month Time Line**
Activities for the first six months of 2008 were determined. Further planning should be conducted in the Spring of 2008 for the second half of the year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Late December 2007:</td>
<td>Draft of plan circulated to all parties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early January 2008:</td>
<td>Meeting for community input</td>
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<td>January 2008:</td>
<td>Resolutions of commitment from community council, Northside Business Assoc., CAIN</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 1, 2008:</td>
<td>Final draft completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 2008:</td>
<td>Job description for coordinator; initial action steps identified; survey started</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2008:</td>
<td>Funding requests submitted</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 30, 2008:</td>
<td>Coordinator hired</td>
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