

Q|u|a|L|I|T|Y

OF LIFE PLAN

CREATING OUR FUTURE NEAR WESTSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD



WHAT IS A QUALITY-OF-LIFE-PLAN?

The 2008 quality-of-life plan for the Near Westside is the result of many great ideas and hours of hard work. It is meant to capture the energy that this neighborhood has for making this a better place to live, work, and play. It presents a vision of all the things the neighborhood seeks to accomplish in the coming years, and specifies who, what, when, and where these accomplishments will take place. The planning process — from community building through visioning and action teams — is also captured in this document so that others may replicate our successes. Most importantly this plan is a living guide for neighborhood progress. It will not sit on a shelf, but instead regularly inform the strategic decisions of neighborhood leaders.

About

GINI:

The Great Indy Neighborhoods Initiatives (GINI) traces its roots to 2004, when city and community development leaders convened the first-ever

Indianapolis Community Development Summit. More than 400 neighborhood leaders attended to discuss strategies for creating healthy neighborhoods, current neighborhood issues, and a vision for the future. It was clear that the participants wanted a comprehensive approach to community development that addressed not only housing, but also education, safety, health, and many other issues. As

a result of the summit, the GINI Steering Committee, a diverse group of civic leaders, explored key community development concepts in the interest of formulating strategies to bring a coordinated, comprehensive community development effort to Indianapolis.

With this research and strategic thinking in place, the next step was to put a plan into action. GINI was developed and introduced to Indianapolis neighborhood leaders in October of 2005. Its goal is to help support Indianapolis neighborhoods by encouraging neighbors to work together across traditional boundaries. The program helps neighborhood residents, businesses, and community organizations get organized and involved in the neighborhood, decide on neighborhood priorities, and act on their plans to drive meaningful change.



Near WESTSIDE

The Near Westside is an area just west of downtown Indianapolis that is rich with culture and history. Its many community assets lay the foundation for a quality-of-life plan that shows why the Near Westside is the up-and-coming place to live, work, and be in the city.

The Near Westside is home to a wealth of assets, including 19 parks and recreational areas, 41 churches of various denominations, 14 licensed child-care programs, six public schools and a private Catholic high school, two community centers, the Westside Health Center, a senior apartment complex, the Center for Working Families, several banks, a new library branch, the West District Police Department, the Westside Community Development Corporation, Goodwill Industries, many newly established restaurants and businesses, and a wide offering of social service programs. In addition, the Near Westside is surrounded by major state and national attractions, such as the White River State Park with its museums and the Indianapolis Zoo along its eastern edge. To the west are the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and the Indianapolis International Airport. IUPUI, a major urban university with its nationally recognized medical complex, has multiple campus locations throughout the area.

According to the 2000 Census, Near Westside is home to 14,517 residents living in five distinct neighborhoods — the Westside, We Care, Hawthorne, Haughville, and Stringtown. The Near Westside — defined by 21st Street on the north, Tibbs Street on the west, the White River on the east and a small wedge of homes between West Washington Street and the railroad tracks on the south — has a long been a racially diverse community, with Hispanic residents comprising the newest wave of immigrants.





“We are a well-kept secret – a unique community with a homey feel, but only 10 minutes from downtown, 15 minutes from the airport, and seven minutes from one of the best universities and research hospitals in the nation.”

Phyllis Usher, longtime Near Westside resident and business owner.

OUR VISION:

The Near Westside envisions a clean, tree-lined, front-porch community with affordable family homes – either newly constructed to complement this older neighborhood or restored to preserve the natural wood floors, leaded-glass windows, and other amenities of 100-year-old dwellings. Residents see the Near Westside as the ideal safe, urban area where people live, work, and raise a family in close proximity to downtown.

Residents want the Near Westside to be a destination and place to live – not a drive-through to the many city, state, and national attractions on its borders. They want to see greenways with pedestrian and bicycle paths that connect their streets from Central Greens to the White River Park. They envision commercial corridors from east to west including West Washington Street (the National Road), bustling with ethnic restaurants and other retail/service businesses. They want to welcome visitors with gateway signs and street banners hung from attractive streetlights – inviting people to stay and partake of unique shopping opportunities, historical venues, and diverse culinary experiences of the Near Westside.

HOW WE MADE OUR PLAN

The Near Westside began its process by hiring a community organizer to coordinate outreach and implementation for three years and a facilitator to help develop the written quality-of-life plan. The staff and community also accessed GINI early-action grants to promote collaborative activities and energize residents while planning for their future.

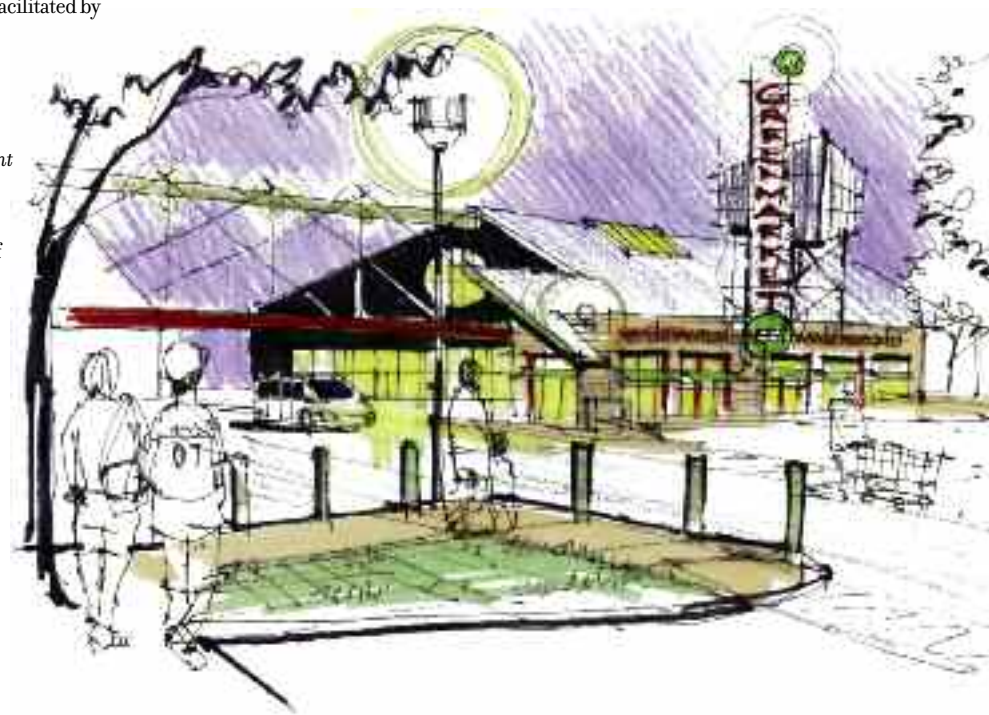
The third big step in the Near Westside GINI process was to identify priority issues for further study. Following two community-wide visioning sessions, the Near Westside formed seven task force groups, facilitated by resident leaders to address the following issues:

- *Housing*
- *Public Safety*
- *Beautification/Clean Up*
- *Business/Economic Development*
- *Health*
- *Education*
- *Civic/Youth Engagement*

Maps and other information provided by the City of Indianapolis grounded the planning work in data and kept the discussion focused on common concerns among the five neighborhoods. Over a four-month period, the task force groups met for a total of 490 man-hours of deliberation and discussions by 130 residents. Four community-wide meetings followed vision sessions to help inform residents of the planning progress. Ideas that emerged as notes and draft plans during each task force group meeting contributed to the community’s finished quality-of-life plan.

WHO’S LEADING THE WAY?

Nine key Near Westside groups will play a critical role in implementing the plan and sustaining these efforts: Christamore House, the Neighborhood Associations’ Presidents Council, George Washington Community Center, IUPUI Office of Neighborhood Partnerships, Near Westside Public Safety Committee, Near Westside GINI Steering Committee, Westside Community Development Corporation, and the Westside Education Task Force.



OUR

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

HIGHLIGHTED PROJECTS

One Block At A Time

Linked to the Central Greens residential development on the old Central State Hospital grounds, this project will rehabilitate long-neglected houses and bring new construction to empty lots as the neighborhood blossoms “One Block at a Time.” The first phase will help current homeowners fix up their houses. The second will bring first-time homeowners into fixed-up houses. And the third phase will involve new, infill housing construction that completes the picture.

Mozel Sanders Park

With its elevated location above the White River, the Rev. Mozel Sanders Park offers a striking view of downtown as well as a unique opportunity for a dynamic public green space in an urban setting. Located next to a newly built elementary school, the park also makes a fine community core and gathering place – offering the opportunity for athletic fields and outdoor-recreation areas for children, families, and adults. The neighborhood is working in conjunction with Indy Parks to make the 25-acre site into a fully functional, recreation-based park that will make these ideas a reality.

HOUSING GOAL:

Increase the number of renovated and new affordable homes.

Strategies:

- Survey the neighborhoods to identify the condition and occupancy status of residential properties.
- Prioritize locations for future home-rehabilitation funding.
- Provide community support for homes that need minor repair.
- Decrease the number of vacant housing units each year.

Lead partners: Westside Community Development Corporation, Hawthorne Community Center, Housing Task Force, Central Green.

PUBLIC SAFETY GOAL:

Residents feel safe in the Near Westside.

Strategies:

- Engage 50 more residents across all five neighborhoods in networking and communication to improve public safety.
- Use current technology to increase surveillance and reporting of criminal activities.

Lead partners: Hawthorne Center, Christamore House, Indianapolis Fire Department, GINI Steering Committee, Public Safety Committee.

BEAUTIFICATION GOAL:

The streets, alleys and business corridors are clean and aesthetically pleasing.

Strategies:

- Engage the neighborhood associations and their residents in keeping private properties clean.
- Clean up public parks and corridors.
- Clean up vacant, commercial “eye-sore” properties.

Lead partners: WCDC, Neighborhood Association, Hawthorne Center, The Westside Education Task Force, Presidents Council, Youth Council, GINI Steering Committee.

BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL:

Expand and diversify the economy of the Near Westside.

Strategies:

- Encourage business and retail expansion along the main street corridors on the Near Westside.
- Market the Near Westside with attractive streetscape and signage.
- Adjacent neighborhoods support the Central Greens development project on the old Central State property.
- Form a business association to market the business corridors and to support new business owners.
- Provide information and classes for consumers and business owners.

Lead partners: Center for Working Families, banks, Business Association, Business Task Force, Hawthorne Center, GINI Steering Committee, local artists, WCDC.

WESTSIDE EDUCATION TASK FORCE (WETF) EDUCATION GOAL:

Improve the educational attainment of K-12 students.

Strategies:

- Provide instructional resources and additional supplies to support newly opened School No. 63.
- Assist school leadership in developing sustainable full community partnerships to promote academic excellence.
- Expand the vision of excellence for community schools in education to all Near Westside schools.

Lead partners: WETF.

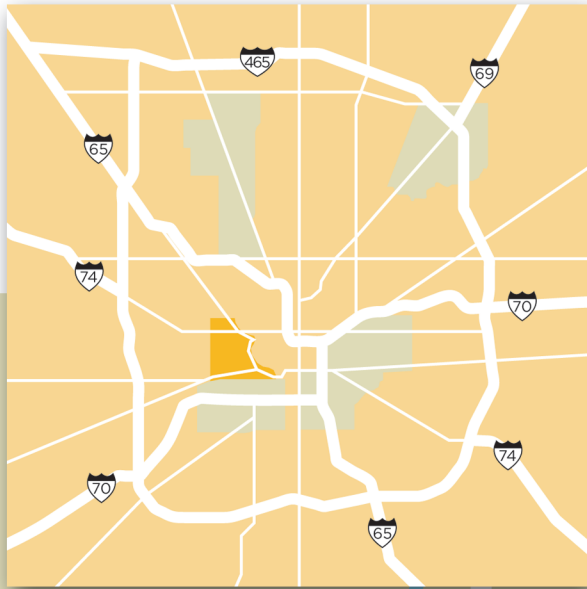
COMMUNITY OUTREACH PARTNERSHIP CENTER (COPC) HEALTH GOAL:

Improve the level of individual and environmental health.

Strategies:

- Support broad community use of the Fit for Life Wellness Center at GWCS for personal health.
- Expand elder care services.
- Conduct a Youth Leadership Summit to develop the Youth Council and ensure youth leadership has a voice in the Near Westside.
- Form a leadership structure to expand community engagement and sustain GINI work plan activities in all five Near Westside neighborhoods.

Lead partners: Hawthorne Center, INRC, Youth Leadership Task Force, Youth Council, Westside Health Clinic, GWCS, IUPUI Office of Neighborhood Partnership, Christamore House.



CURRENT & PLANNED INITIATIVES

Q u a L I T Y
O F L I F E P L A N

 **Economic Development**


 **Education**

 **Health**

 **Workforce Development**

 **Gateways**

 **Beautification**

 **Westside Business Association** Washington, Michigan, 10th and 16th Streets

Area-wide Initiatives

- Increase the number of new and affordable homes
- Implement neighborhood-based cleanup using the KIB adopt-a-block model
- Increase crime watch groups
- Community-police partnerships strengthened





 
W.D. Phillips School 63
Mozel Sanders Park
completed


Christamore House
Health Disparities Project


Central Greens
Retail and Housing
Development


Hawthorne Center for
Working Families

 
George Washington
Community School
Remodel complete
Fit for Life
Wellness Center

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OF LIFE PLAN

OUR SPONSORS:

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Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust
State Farm
Old National Bank Foundation
The Indianapolis Foundation, a CICF Affiliate

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