This 2016 Mid-Year report includes highlights from partner and stakeholder focus groups, interviews with lead organizations, and activities completed in the first half of 2016.

Focus groups for each community brought together 10 - 15 people and included residents, business owners, program participants, partner institutions and organizations. We asked each group for their take on what role the lead organizations play in the community, how they are perceived and how they communicate their work, what they do well and not so well, how they have changed, and what impact they have had on the trajectory of the community. Finally, we asked the focus groups how the lead organizations could increase the impact of their work.

The Place Matters communities of Avondale, Covington, Madisonville, Price Hill, and Walnut Hills are seeing more physical change and are attracting more residents now than they have in the past 10 years. While these communities are generating a lot of excitement and attracting new residents, they still face challenges. About two-thirds of families with young children under 5 years old living in Walnut Hills and Price Hill are living in poverty.

Place-based Approaches to Poverty

While we should celebrate the achievement of attracting new families, we must also be mindful of intentionally acting to improve the lives of our most vulnerable families. Sometimes that can be achieved by the leads themselves, but more often that will likely be achieved in collaboration with partners. Santa Maria’s Block by Block program is one example of how a place-based, super-local approach undertaken by a lead organization is making a difference to disconnected families by linking them with the services and resources they need to help them raise healthy children. In Madisonville, MCURC works with partners through the Madisonville Pipeline. The Pipeline brings together partners to increase the quality of early childhood educational opportunities and promotes opportunities at John P. Parker Elementary School.

Housing

Housing strategies have largely been focused on stimulating market-rate housing. As our leads are achieving success here, we also need to move to a comprehensive affordable housing strategy. Lead organizations have rehabbed single-family market-rate units, creating favorable comparables to stimulate local housing markets. As private investment begins to enter the communities at the middle- and upper-end of the housing market, lead organizations should consider strategies to ensure rental and owner-occupied affordable housing.

In each Place Matters community, single-family units make up at least 20% of the housing composition. In Covington, Madisonville, and Price Hill, single-family units make up more than 50% of the housing composition. In Madisonville,

Recommendation

Work with partners to develop shared outcomes that reduce poverty by improving education, health, and income. Partners and leads should develop measures and outline responsibilities of each partner in meeting those measures. Consider focusing work at a super-local geography, such as a neighborhood school.
the housing market is strengthening, demonstrated by renewed interest and investment in housing stock, but only in certain parts of the neighborhood. According to MCURC, a subsidy is needed to make single-family rehab work in areas that need it most. The lead organizations have the opportunity to complement private investment at the upper-end of the market by providing quality housing targeted to low- to moderate-income households. This approach can help ensure that the communities are improving the condition of housing and opportunity for homeownership for low- to moderate-income households while the private market takes care of the higher end of the stock. The quality of affordable rental units also continues to be a concern in Place Matters communities. Leads must have strategies to preserve existing affordable housing, increase quality units, and keep people in their homes.

**Business Districts**

Businesses are starting to move back to Place Matters communities. Business district revitalization is important in providing services and retail opportunities for existing residents, as well as providing the energy and excitement that can help to attract new residents. As new businesses start up, it is important to establish systems to support their success over the long-term. The success or failure of these businesses can have a huge impact on the image and vitality of the entire neighborhood.

Each of the Place Matters communities has one or more business groups or organizations. These business groups are often connected with local neighborhood community councils and are volunteer-led. According to Vibrant Streets, a program helping communities revitalize neighborhoods by creating thriving retail business districts, a vibrant retail street must be managed. This could mean that an active business group oversees activity in the retail district. At the very least, this group should establish annual goals and work together to achieve them. With few exceptions, the experience of most business groups located in Place Matters communities is one of limited successes. Just as community development needs professional support to be successful, so do the efforts to maintain a vibrant business district. Place Matters must work to find ways to support active, accountable business groups that contribute to the vibrancy of business districts.

**Engagement**

The Phase I evaluation of Place Matters (2007 - 2009) outlined five levers of change: community engagement, cohesion (alignment), best practices, sustainable structures, and policy change. The need for community engagement and continued relevancy of lead organizations holds true, but the way people are being engaged has shifted over the past decade. Most of the leads indicated they struggle with how to engage low-income residents. Maybe the time has come to let those residents lead. Creative placemaking has allowed residents to lead small efforts aimed at achieving big results by using a creative solutions-based lens. While traditional engagement can mean a long-term time commitment with few visible successes along the way, lead organizations are using the principles of creative placemaking to put the power in the hands of residents to find creative solutions for things they care most about and can happen in a matter of weeks, not years. People can be part of a solution in the near term, not just engaged in an important issue for the long haul.
The Center for Great Neighborhoods has shown how to support resident-driven efforts that lead to small projects with huge impacts. They define an issue, and then turn the power over to residents to come up with creative solutions. Perhaps this approach is one way of easing the tension that Place Matters has always faced of being comprehensive in the set of issues it cares about, yet focused in implementation. Using this new approach to engagement, lead organizations can define a comprehensive set of issues, and then look to residents and partners to create focused solutions. In this model, residents are empowered to develop solutions that they are passionate about and lead organizations provide support to residents but are not the direct link between them and an issue. Community engagement training and leadership development for residents could be helpful in this model.

Organizational Planning

The opportunities and challenges facing the Place Matters communities continue to evolve. As they experience success, more and more demands present themselves. All of the lead organizations should have updated strategic plans that give them the guidance and direction to make difficult decisions such as whether to take advantage of unexpected opportunities, and how to face their most difficult challenges.

Recommendation

Re-evaluate the way community engagement is done, and provide necessary support and training for resident-led solutions.

Recommendation

Support lead-organization strategic planning efforts.

Overall Recommendations

- Work with partners to develop shared outcomes that reduce poverty by improving education, health, and income. Partners and leads should develop measures and outline responsibilities of each partner in meeting those measures. Consider focusing work at a super-local geography, such as a neighborhood school.
- Re-evaluate community housing strategies, especially around ensuring quality, affordable housing.
- Provide technical capacity and support to volunteer-based business groups.
- Re-evaluate the way community engagement is done, and provide necessary support and training for resident-led solutions.
- Support lead-organization strategic planning efforts.
# Community Recommendations

## Avondale
- Define ACDC’s role in Avondale’s housing strategy, and then identify the capacity and support needed to fulfill that role.
- Invest in staff development and training and create focused work plans for staff to achieve work plan outcome measures.

## Price Hill
- Assess how the immigrant community can contribute to economic vitality and social cohesion.
- Explore cooking classes to connect food production to healthy eating.
- Integrate a creative placemaking approach to work outside of creative placemaking projects.
- PHW and SM should use a strategic planning framework to evaluate and respond to opportunities.

## Covington
- Explore giving community tours to teachers and staff at schools.
- Explore the potential that the Hellmann Building offers in expanding the reach of the Center in Covington.

## Walnut Hills
- Develop place-based interventions focused on the families of Frederick Douglass Elementary in the areas of education, income, and health.
- Re-evaluate Job Bank program to better respond to more diverse employer needs as the business district grows.
- Explore a plan for social development, to complement the WHRF’s plan for physical reinvestment.

## Madisonville
- Ensure broad participation and inclusion in decision-making around the business district and housing.
- Work with partners and their programs to reach a broader, more diverse audience to communicate MCURC’s value, activities, and plans.

## Covington
- Find ways to unify communications across platforms to reach more people more consistently.
- Promote the Center’s growing national reputation locally and regionally.

## Madisonville
- Provide support to resident- and business-led efforts like the ambassador program and business committee.
- Promote and celebrate MCURC and the growth and momentum that MCURC has catalyzed.
Major Findings

The Avondale Comprehensive Development Corporation (ACDC) is the Place Matters lead organization in Avondale. The following summarizes major findings from the mid-year focus group and activities in the first half of 2016:

- ACDC continues to be focused primarily on internal resident perceptions and improving the quality-of-life of Avondale residents. Improving perceptions of those that don’t live in Avondale and attracting new residents is not a primary objective of the organization’s work.

- ACDC needs to invest in its staff to improve capacity and deliver on outcomes. Staffing challenges have caused several outcomes not to be met, especially in the areas of education and housing. ACDC provides the connecting link between organizations and residents. Without ACDC staff providing the consistent link, initiatives do not get off the ground. Staffing consistency is also important in maintaining the community’s trust of ACDC.

- Communicating ACDC’s positive impact continues to be a challenge. A Communications Bootcamp and resulting unified marketing and branding strategy should help ACDC and its partners to tell its story.

- Avondale’s housing strategy and ACDC’s role in that strategy are not clear.

Top 3 Accomplishments

As reported by the ACDC:

1. Growth in our communications platform and pending beginning of our radio internet programming. We are getting great comments on our Hood Report newsletter and increases in viewership of our website, Facebook, and youtube stations. 53% of referrals to our website come from searches meaning people have been looking us up.

2. Most proud of the successes at Rockdale Academy in the education work. From having three valedictorians to over 95% of youth passing the third grade reading guarantee, we believe that our emphasis on education is beginning to have a positive impact.

3. Working with The Community Builders and Powernet to secure Community Wi-Fi.

Top 3 Challenges

As reported by the ACDC:

1. Staff shortage has still been a challenge, causing a slowing in some of our programming (Avondale Promise Clubs, Café, Avondale Garden Collaborative).

2. Participation by CHOICE residents remains a concern. While overall participation is growing, CHOICE residents remain a challenge.

3. Funding for housing development.
Summary of Findings and Mid-Year Recommendations

This section highlights activities and accomplishments in the first half of 2016, as reported in ACDC’s Mid-Year Work Plan update, a meeting with ACDC staff, and in the mid-year evaluation focus group. This section also includes recommendations for improvement, which should be undertaken in 2017. Summaries of outcomes developed by leads in 2016 Work Plans are italicized.

Increasing Homeownership Options

_in the area of housing, ACDC wants to see increased real estate activity to provide workforce, market rate, and affordable housing options. These options are supported by activity that adds value to economic development by developing relationships with small and minority developers and other partners._

ACDC continues to concentrate planned housing investment in the Town Center District, but its efforts have been hampered by staffing challenges. There has been no progress in increasing homeownership this year. ACDC’s goal is to increase workforce homeownership options at a lower price point. The Uptown Consortium plays a complimentary role in developing higher-end market rate housing in the Avenue District and along Harvey Avenue. ACDC continues to partner with the Port of Greater Cincinnati Development Authority, The Community Builders, Habitat for Humanity, and other housing partners to address physical quality-of-life concerns in the neighborhood.

Recommendation

**Define ACDC’s role in Avondale’s housing strategy, and then identify the capacity and support needed to fulfill that role.**

Focusing on High School Youth

_in the area of education, ACDC supports a community with an active “Cradle to Career” education program which ensures kindergarten readiness, 3rd grade reading, and provides resources to prepare high school students for college or career._

ACDC has been most effective working at the high school level to ensure that Avondale students have access to ACT/SAT test prep. They also connect with the Avondale Youth Council through quarterly mailings. The Avondale Education Roundtable did not meet in the first half of the year due to ACDC staffing challenges, but several of the members have been active in the Preschool Promise initiative. Only 2 Rockdale students did not pass the 3rd grade State reading test.

Recommendation

**Reconvene the Education Roundtable; set benchmarks for progress for 2017 and clearly define the role ACDC plays in supporting kindergarten and 3rd grade reading outcomes.**

Connecting Residents with Work

_in the area of income, ACDC envisions a community that benefits from startups and accelerated businesses that are ready to hire from a pool of trained and work-ready residents; with resident-owned businesses supported._

ACDC recruited 2 minority businesses to the neighborhood, close to their goal of 3. ACDC also connected residents to social services through Pitching
In the area of health, ACDC supports residents having excellent or very good health as a result of health-related activities being coordinated, and residents knowing the major health disparities and addressing them.

The number of residents participating in health related activities increased from 620 in 2014 to 913 in the first half of 2016, well above their goal of 650. The number of people attending meetings or workshops on health disparities was 84 in the first half of the year, on pace to meet their annual goal of 150.

ACDC has made some progress on improving health partnerships by connecting through specific programs and initiatives like Gabriel’s Place Share-a-Meal and the Million Step Challenge. Their partnership with Gabriel’s Place has strengthened. ACDC is promoting Gabriel’s Place programs and events which has led to an increase in participation at Gabriel’s Place Share-a-Meal and Farmer’s Market. ACDC and Gabriel’s Place are looking for additional ways to partner with workshops and trainings. ACDC is working with Avondale partners to connect residents to fitness and health opportunities through the platform of goVibrant’s Million Step Challenge.

In the area of community, ACDC uses its communication platform to connect Avondale residents and stakeholders, and ensures that they understand the importance of community engagement in health and wellness, education, safety, building code enforcement, landlord compliance, and tenant’s rights.

The Avondale Community Engagement Committee continues to help ACDC collaborate with Avondale’s anchor institutions. The committee meets monthly and has developed a charter agreement to assist ACDC in collecting data towards meeting goals in the 2016 Place Matters work plan.

ASOLDIER program provides help to children through support for fathers. ACDC is also focused on promoting neighborhood connections with a Know Your Neighbor program to build community support networks. ACDC has held 7 Know Your Neighbor training meetings to connect street liaisons and CHOICE residents to resources in health and wellness, education and safety. 12 new block clubs were initiated in the first half of 2016 (2016 goal of 20). 1,005 residents engaged in community engagement activities, twice their goal of 500.

A Communications Bootcamp has given ACDC staff new ideas for how to unify their communications and branding into a cohesive strategy.

**Recommendation**

Invest in staff development and training and create focused work plans for staff to achieve work plan outcome measures.
Major Findings

The Center for Great Neighborhoods of Covington (the Center) is the Place Matters lead organization in Covington. The following summarizes major findings from the mid-year focus group and activities in the first half of 2016:

- The Center approaches its work with an openness and humility that leads to creative, inclusive, resident-driven solutions.
- The Center “incubates creativity.” It provides support and technical capacity to increase the effectiveness and impact of resident and neighborhood groups that are engaged in bringing creativity and energy to projects and efforts that make their communities better. It also helps to bring attention and legitimacy to the work of neighborhood groups while empowering individuals.
- With the instability of City staff, the Center has assumed the role of doer and has become a key contact when it comes to housing institutional knowledge.
- The Center has high expectations for their move to the Hellmann Center. They expect it to be a center of creativity and a welcoming community space. They are open to the opportunities it presents.
- The Center will undergo long-range strategic planning in 2016/2017 to be proactive and plan for the work of the future.

Top 3 Accomplishments

As reported by the Center:

1. We have been more aggressive about fundraising including: 1) FreshLo grant for Health work; 2) Grant from R.C. Durr for Hellmann Creative Center; 3) grants from LITC, NEA, and applications to Impact 100, Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation program and BB&T Bank.
2. Creative Placemaking has seen much success in Covington. Invited to bring our Nano grants program to Falmouth/Pendleton Co, Dayton (KY), and Florence; also garnering national attention in the field (site visits from Kresge, ArtPlace, LISC Creative Placemaking Director, Springboard for the Arts); and Hellmann near completion.
3. More effective marketing, using our new brand: RCN podcasts; articles in Soapbox, CityBeat, etc.; 40th anniversary video, interviews, planned event coming; article in Preservation magazine about Shotgun Row/Westside.

Top 3 Challenges

As reported by the Center:

1. High turnover/loss of key staff in leadership positions at the City of Covington threatens our ability (as well as neighborhoods’) to get improvements done efficiently.
2. The good news is that we have many opportunities on which to capitalize, but reduced resources and limited staff make it a challenge to fully take advantage of these opportunities.
3. Housing development is still slower than we planned. City subsidies are non-existent during a time when it is increasingly important to be able to address housing equity and affordability issues in the community.
Summary of Findings and Mid-Year Recommendations

This section highlights activities and accomplishments in the first half of 2016, as reported in the Center’s Mid-Year Work Plan update, a meeting with the Center staff, and in the mid-year evaluation focus group. This section also includes recommendations for improvement, which should be undertaken in 2017. Summaries of outcomes developed by leads in 2016 Work Plans are italicized.

focused, intentional physical development

In the area of housing, the Center wants to support equitable neighborhood revitalization that is fostered through residential and commercial development, blight removal, and real estate focused creative placemaking.

The Center is on track to meet their goal of 13 homeownership units, and they met their goal of 45 buildings razed. They are continuing their partnerships to maintain the Homes for Makers program in which properties are purchased/rehabbed/resold. The Center is beginning to move towards commercial development in Covington, with 14,000 square feet of renovated commercial space under construction.

engaging youth in the community

In the area of education, the Center encourages adult lifelong learning and student involvement in project-based learning in their neighborhood.

Creative placemaking is being linked to improved outcomes for youth. Community members used a creative community grant to implement an early summer program for youth that focused on the importance of healthy eating, physical activity, mindfulness, and creative placemaking. The new Hellman Center will also provide opportunities for youth involvement.

Efforts were made to involve resident groups into the school system, with neighborhood associations giving community tours to students and community members being involved in the BLOCK program. They have also expanded the curriculum of their youth leadership program.

helping families become stable

In the area of income, the Center focuses on helping low- to- moderate income residents acquire the financial knowledge and skills they need to become more financially stable.

The Center continues to work with Holmes H.S. and Gateway Community and Technical College students and Life Learning Center participants to increase financial knowledge and skills through goal setting and budgeting workshops. Beginning this year, the Center enhanced its services at the Life Learning Center by better coordinating with life coaches to ensure that financial coaching services are helping members achieve milestones. The Center has added a taxpayer advocacy program, including a Spanish-speaking attorney, to help residents if they have tax problems and have been unable to resolve them with the Internal Revenue Service.
promoting resident health

In the area of health, the Center wants to enhance a growing health-promoting culture in Covington that encourages and supports residents efforts to make behavior changes that lead to better health. They are supporting change through both policy and action.

The Center is co-chairing the LiveWell collective action pilot in Covington and a nutrition action team. The Center continues to work with corner stores recruited for Plan4Health initiative, participates in Tobacco Free NKY, and chairs the Regional Food Policy Council Food Access team. The Center helped to expand the Riddle Yates community garden, supported Braille menu and cooking, and received a $75,000 FreshLo planning grant from Kresge to engage the community in a creative, food-mapping process in the Westside that will lead to implementation strategies.

increasing connection opportunities

In the area of community, the Center sees residents and partners as the change-makers that lead creative, inclusive projects that can improve the community.

The Center works directly with residents throughout Covington and in other key areas of Northern Kentucky. Authentic engagement is the foundation that makes the Center so successful in building connections with residents and helping them engage successfully with others. Their creative placemaking initiative and collaboration with law enforcement are recognized as ‘best in class.’ They have helped residents implement community-driven, place-based approaches to address housing, education, health, and income disparity (Bold Goals).

In the first half of 2016, 68 community improvement projects were implemented and 5,080 Covington residents participated in community events that help build social capital, instill community pride, and spark volunteerism.

The Hellmann Center, opening in September 2016, will provide another creative avenue and physical connection point between the Covington community and the Center to further expand the potential for resident-driven impact.
Major Findings

The Madisonville Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation (MCURC) is the Place Matters lead organization in Madisonville. The following summarizes major findings from the mid-year focus group and activities in the first half of 2016:

- Professional staff at MCURC plays a connecting role with City, partners, funders. They work hand-in-hand with the community council.
- Madisonville has attracted 10 new businesses this year, ahead of large-scale new construction at Madison and Whetsel. This demonstrates increasing market demand in the community. The housing market is becoming stronger in many parts of the community.
- As momentum continues to build in Madisonville, there is a need to ensure that communication reaches everyone, with a special effort made to ensure that communication and events reach a diverse audience.
- With the loss of the Community Engagement Coordinator, engagement work is focused on events. A Public Ally will assume many of the roles of community organizer, including building and maintaining relationships with partners.
- With such a small staff, partnerships and clearly defined roles for MCURC continue to be important.

Top 3 Accomplishments

As reported by MCURC:

1. The completion of the Bank Building at 5900 Madison Road.
2. Adding a new position and a highly qualified and competent new staff member in the role of Community Development Program Manager.
3. Progressing with the Ackermann Group on our MOU and the Development Agreement with the City.

Top 3 Challenges

As reported by MCURC:

1. In the area of owner occupied housing, we would like to do more targeted single-family rehabs and have had opportunities to do so, but without a single-family subsidy available, the numbers simply don’t work in parts of the neighborhood that need it most.
2. In the area of engagement, we started the year thinking that we would create a robust Ambassador program (complete with trained resident leaders and Madisonville gear for their participation). With the departure of our Community Engagement Coordinator, we realized we needed more help with business development and activation so a new position was created.
3. In the area of branding/perception, improving the perception of the neighborhood and developing a brand is a challenge. However, we are hopeful that with a new grant opportunity from LISC, we will be able to turn the corner on this yet this year.
Summary of Findings and Mid-Year Recommendations

This section highlights activities and accomplishments in the first half of 2016, as reported in MCURC’s Mid-Year Work Plan update, a meeting with MCURC staff, and in the mid-year evaluation focus group. This section also includes recommendations for improvement, which should be undertaken in 2017. Summaries of outcomes developed by leads in 2016 Work Plans are italicized.

strengthening housing and commercial markets

In the area of housing, MCURC wants to make Madisonville a great location to invest as a homeowner, business owner, investor, or developer.

MCURC’s role is to advance the development of Madison and Whetsel, to recruit new businesses and to support existing businesses, and to look for new opportunities to develop new housing.

As the Madison and Whetsel development progresses, MCURC will work to engage residents and businesses in planning and placemaking efforts.

New businesses are increasingly looking to Madisonville when considering expansion. 10 new businesses have opened this year, well beyond the 3 anticipated. MCURC is organizing the start-up of a business committee that will be led by a business owner.

The housing market in Madisonville continues to be strong, with houses selling quickly at or above list price. As a result, MCURC has fewer opportunities to rehab homes.

supporting youth and education

In the area of education, MCURC advocates for a connection and shared goals between partners and the neighborhood elementary school, John P. Parker School.

MCURC continues to convene the Madisonville Pipeline on a monthly basis, promotes good work taking place at John P. Parker Elementary School, and connects John P. Parker with additional resources, partners, and volunteers. John P. Parker has taken on the role of lead convener of the Pipeline.

A new CPS Montessori preschool class will be added to John P. Parker this fall, adding 20 new preschool seats. Enrollment at John P. Parker rose from 338 in November of 2015 to 358 in May of 2016. John P. Parker received a grant from the United Way to support the new Nurturing Naomi project, which connects older women as mentors with young moms.
**connecting around workforce**

*In the area of income, MCURC connects residents with job readiness workshops and employment opportunities.*

MCURC promotes the job readiness and employment counseling services now available through Cincinnati Works as part of the City’s Hand Up Initiative at MEAC. Job readiness completion and employment data provided by Cincinnati Works was not available at the time of this report.

**boosting health**

*In the area of health, MCURC supports improving resident health by pursuing deliberative policies and implementing healthy programming choices.*

An expanded Braxton Cann Center and a new school-based health center at Children’s Home could expand access to health care in the neighborhood. MCURC continues to increase health and wellness promotion through events, including the Madisonville 5K Run/Walk and training program. MCURC has also been involved in promotional efforts for projects such as the Little Duck Creek Trail cleanup and supports 500 Gardens.

**building momentum through events**

*In the area of community, MCURC supports multiple opportunities to socialize through events and community-building activities and supports resident volunteer leadership positions.*

MCURC leads the community engagement efforts in partnership with the Madisonville Community Council and the new Madisonville Cares group. Attendance at community council meetings continues to increase (averaging 64 people at each meeting). Residents have taken leadership in the Jazz & BBQ Festival Committee and the 5k planning committee. Progress on resident leader training halted with the departure of the Community Engagement Coordinator. There are several engagement and ambassador groups like Madisonville Cares, Nurturing Naomi, Hello Home, and Parent Champions. There might be an opportunity to strengthen these programs through consolidation or shared resources between programs.

**Recommendation**

Work with partners and their programs to reach a broader, more diverse audience to communicate MCURC’s value, activities, and plans.

Provide support to resident- and business-led efforts like the ambassador program and business committee.

Promote and celebrate MCURC and the growth and momentum that MCURC has catalyzed.
Major Findings

Price Hill Will (PHW) and Santa Maria Community Services (SM) are the Place Matters lead organizations in Price Hill. The following summarizes major findings from the mid-year focus group and activities in the first half of 2016:

- For programs that have proven their success such as MYCincinnati and Block by Block, PHW and SM must confront questions of scale and sustainability.
- SM’s recent strategic plan is providing guidance on how SM should respond to opportunities. PHW should consider undertaking a strategic plan assessing direction and staff capacity so that they have a foundation for decision making when it comes to current and future projects.
- Creative placemaking, especially through MYCincinnati is having a profound impact on youth and families. As one parent said, the program is breaking the cycle of poverty (by expanding the experiences of kids).
- Residents and partners are starting to see change in the community: there is more public and private investment, more events and community involvement, and vacant lots are being turned into gardens.
- The immigrant population is being viewed as an asset that can deepen the culture of Price Hill and increase community vitality.

Top 3 Accomplishments

As reported by PHW and SM:

1. Creative Placemaking. Creation of a program which has engaged hundreds of residents through unique events like the Posadas, Las Alfombras and cello playing at Kroger and carried out public space improvements on Warsaw Ave like the completion of the mosaic wall and the painting of a mural. Mosaic wall completion builds on a project SM youth development staff led in the 1990s.

2. Real Estate Development. Five homes have been sold so far in 2016 with 5 under construction and 6 in pre-development. St. Lawrence Square completed; Olden Tot Lot completed; Waterfields project completed; 8th/Overlook buildings razed; homesteading project piloted with 2 homes; Masonic project started; and $2 million awarded from the city for a new mixed use development in WPH.

3. Outcomes at Santa Maria. Securing the funds needed to hire full time marketing staff, the cap and gown graduation ceremony at Elder HS for the 45 people who earned their GED in the past year, and the continued expansion and recognition of Healthy Homes. Block by Block is proving to be a promising grassroots approach to community engagement and resource delivery to homes with young children.

Top 3 Challenges

As reported by PHW and SM:

1. Capacity at PHW. We continue to do an enormous amount/variety of programs to benefit the community. We are often understaffed in our efforts. The more success we have, the more expectations exist to take on additional projects.

2. Finding time for PHW to take on the systems work that is required for a well run organization. We are often too focused on the work or simply don’t have the time to look at issues like branding, policy updates, organization structure, etc.

3. A significant challenge for SM was securing funding for the expanded capacity of our back-office operations and creating a plan for sustainability of those efforts into the future. This type of funding is very difficult to secure. A second and still unresolved major challenge is the need for a common database for all SM programs that can also link us with other partners doing this work.
Summary of Findings and Mid-Year Recommendations

This section highlights activities and accomplishments in the first half of 2016, as reported in PHW’s and SM’s Mid-Year Work Plan update, a meeting with PHW and SM staff, and in the mid-year evaluation focus group. This section also includes recommendations for improvement, which should be undertaken in 2017. Summaries of outcomes developed by leads in 2016 Work Plans are italicized.

### expanding physical improvements

In the area of housing, PHW and SM support stronger property values that attract investment and redevelopment.

PHW continues to support single-family housing with its Buy-Improve-Sell program (completed 7 homes, sold 5 rehabbed homes in first half of 2016, with one pre-sold, 5 other homes under construction). PHW and SM, working with partners, have launched a homesteading program which provides homes to owners at a low cost with the expectation that they would perform renovations to make them code compliant. They are seeking more inventory for the program.

In mid-2016, PHW was in the process of purchasing the Oberhelman Building with 27 apartments and 8 commercial spaces. PHW was also in predevelopment of 6 row homes.

PHW has organized two entrepreneurial education series during 2016, with 18 graduates. Partnerships are being developed to provide affordable space in the neighborhood to graduates.

### supporting children and families

In the area of education, PHW and SM help ensure that Price Hill children are kindergarten-ready and youth have supports to continue their education.

Promoting our Preschoolers (POP) continues to ensure appropriate social, emotional, cognitive, and language development in children, with 75 children graduating into kindergarten this summer. Funding levels allow SM to serve only 10 - 15% of kids in Price Hill.

16 individuals received their GED in the first half of 2016, up from just 15 in 2014. 93 MYCincinnati youth and their families were engaged in the high-quality music program in a supportive environment for two hours every day. It has also connected youth with tutoring and ACT/SAT prep.

### connecting residents to coaching and employment

In the area of income, SM and PHW help families attain economic health through job and housing stability and successfully integrating into the community.

The Financial Opportunity Center continues to provide bundled services. In the first six months of 2016, 55 individuals were connected with employment, 24 increased net income, and 11 increased credit scores.

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Recommendation

Assess how the immigrant community can contribute to economic vitality and social cohesion.

Recommendation

Integrate a creative placemaking approach to work outside of creative placemaking projects.
PHW and SM lead the collaborative EITC/VITA site with PHW staff serving as the site coordinator and SM staff leading the scheduling and participating as preparers. The program is in its 10th year.

**connecting residents to gardens and preventative health services**

In the area of health, PHW and SM help ensure Price Hill families have access to health services and health foods that improve the overall health of the community.

The Block by Block program expanded to 18 blocks, exceeding the goal of 15. SM recruits, hires, and trains Block Captains. Block Captains connect families with a pregnant mom or young child with resources that promote health and kindergarten readiness.

Production at all 5 garden sites is at its highest ever, allowing PHW to share with local neighbors and food pantries. PHW is working with Turner Farms to develop more resident leaders at the People’s garden.

The SM Wellness program helped 51% (36 of 71) adults bring their chronic diseases under control. Their goal is to successfully help 85% (85 of 100) bring chronic conditions under control. They continue to offer cooking classes, workshops to help people with ongoing medical conditions to manage symptoms and live healthier lives, and on-site health screenings by community health workers. 216 individuals were screened for high risk diseases and 218 have a usual place to go for medical care.

**implementing change and expanding partnerships**

In the area of community, PHW and SM envision a Price Hill that fully embraces its urban and culturally unique community and comes together as one while still celebrating its diversity.

Working with arts council and local community councils, positive media has nearly doubled. A shift in PHW staffing and priorities has dramatically increased PHW’s events and capacity activity. Realignment of events, messaging, and social-media capacity has generated much of the positive media attention.

Some plan objectives from the Price Hill Plan have already been accomplished, with work continuing on others being driven by residents in partnership with PHW and SM staff. SM will serve on the Plan Steering Committee. The Plan Implementation Teams have met the goal of beginning to move from discussion to implementation on at least 3 objectives, while other objectives are moving more slowly without strong leadership.

Because of their success in delivering outcomes, PHW and SM are sought-after partners for a number of programs and grant opportunities. As the lead organizations, this connection role is appropriate, but challenges staff capacity to keep up with requests. Strategic plans could help direct the organizations on how to respond to opportunities.
Major Findings

The Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation (WHRF) is the Place Matters lead organization in Walnut Hills. The following summarizes major findings from the mid-year focus group and activities in the first half of 2016:

- Walnut Hills continues to lead the way with large-scale mixed use projects. WHRF’s first large project, Trevarren Flats, was completed and the residential units were leased up quickly.
- The Neighborhood Reinvestment Plan will give more focus and direction for decision making to the Walnut Hills Working Group. It will be helpful to the WHRF as a developer, giving them a roadmap and a way to measure accountability of themselves and partners.
- While physical development has direction from the Reinvestment Plan, planning for social development focused on residents has not been addressed. The WHRF excels at physical redevelopment planning and execution, but faces challenges when it comes to addressing social needs and connecting the dots needed to move families forward.
- The WHRF has encountered challenges pursuing education and health outcomes. They have had trouble engaging the school and residents around these issues, but hope a new community coordinator on staff will change this.

Top 3 Accomplishments

As reported by the WHRF:
1. Trevarren Flats opened and was rented up in record time.
2. We were awarded State Historic Tax Credits on Paramount Square, providing the leverage needed to move that project forward, and funds from the city and Duke Energy to move the Durner Building to the next phase.
3. The response to our work on the Neighborhood Reinvestment Plan has been very positive and rewarding.

Top 3 Challenges

As reported by the WHRF:
1. Disappointment/discouragement when grants are not awarded, or when LIHTC applications are not funded, which pushes back the time line on needed projects to connect our work in the community.
2. Discord within important community organizations in our neighborhood, which inhibits progress toward common goals.
3. Reaching the hard to reach segment of our population, especially as it relates to health, has been extremely difficult. We did a survey, revised our programming, papered the neighborhood with flyers, posted on social media, and still have trouble getting any one to come to the Farmstand, and can barely get 10 people to our cooking classes.
In the area of housing, the WHRF wants Walnut Hills to be a place where people of all income levels have quality, affordable housing options.

One of the WHRF goals for 2016 was to develop policies to help existing residents stay in their neighborhood as new market-rate housing is developed. The Neighborhood Reinvestment Plan, undertaken in 2016, will provide an outline for housing rehabilitation and reinvestment over the next 5-10 years, while protecting low income and long term residents.

In partnership with the Port of Greater Cincinnati Development Authority, the WHRF has identified 10 parcels for development as part of the Port’s REACH program.

WHRF has completed the Trevarren Flats rehab project, bringing 30 new market-rate apartments online in the business district. Pre-development of Paramount Square is in progress, with tax credits awarded.

In the area of education, the WHRF continues to have as its primary goal the formation of an active working group.

This Education Working Group has not formed yet, and the WHRF’s goals of creating a mission statement and agreeing on goals for the group have not been accomplished.

This fall, the WHRF, along with representatives from Frederick Douglass Elementary School, the Cincinnati Art Museum, and others are part of a series of creative placemaking workshops facilitated by Design Impact. The WHRF hopes that these workshops will improve their relationship with the school and lead to new initiatives to improve the educational experience at Douglass and connect with parents.

In the area of income, the WHRF envisions residents that are employed with sustainable, career pathway jobs.

The WHRF continues to focus on their Job Bank program as a way to provide opportunities for residents to be employed locally, and continues to partner with Mercy Neighborhood Ministries to provide assessments of job seekers.

Last year there were three employers connected to the Job Bank program, but the WHRF is working to reach out and recruit more. They report some
In the area of health, the WHRF is focused on making sure residents have access to healthy food and activities, and understand how to live happier and healthier lives.

WHRF met their goal of expanding the number of health partners to 10, an increase from 7 in 2015. These partners include Children’s Hospital, the Civic Garden Center, and goVibrant, among others. Elevate Walnut Hills is also hosting a 5K race in the neighborhood.

Resident participation remains a challenge, and the goal of increasing participation by 15% has not yet been met. A survey of residents was completed to determine what residents want most. The WHRF is hopeful that the survey results, such as a desire for more fresh fruit options, will improve their ability to serve residents.

A school garden was created by an active neighborhood resident, and the WHRF is hoping to help connect the school curriculum to this garden.

In 2016, WHRF would like to develop an Equity Tool Kit, and to improve its transparency and communication with the neighborhood. The Neighborhood Reinvestment Plan process is the primary means by which they have been working to reach these goals.

In 2016, WHRF has hosted a series of engagement sessions in order to gather input from residents and connect them to the Neighborhood Reinvestment Plan. They also formed an Advisory Committee that includes residents from all focus areas in the neighborhood.

The WHRF partnership with Design Impact concluded that using flyers and word-of-mouth were the best methods of communication, and modified engagement on the Reinvestment Plan accordingly.

Recommendation

Explore a plan for social development, to complement the WHRF’s plan for physical reinvestment.