2015 MID-YEAR REPORT

September 2015

Prepared by:
Community Building Institute

A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN XAVIER UNIVERSITY United Way
This 2015 Mid-Year report includes highlights from 2,070 social capital and 642 outside perception surveys, partner and stakeholder focus groups and interviews with lead organizations, and activities completed in the first half of 2015.

Communication and engagement have emerged as key themes this year. The success of leads depends on their ability to communicate a consistent message to residents and partners, to understand where shared values with partners can be leveraged, to recognize how residents can be engaged as the community changes, and to define the story that gets told about the community to outsiders.

Another consistent theme that is magnified as leads experience success is the tension between being comprehensive and being focused. Place Matters recognizes that leads cannot be the “lead” for all efforts but that they can achieve comprehensive outcomes by partnering with organizations that are experts in areas that are outside of their focus. The success of these partnerships depends on lead organizations ensuring needed lead staff capacity to participate in partnerships and partner organizations understanding and placing a value in the collaboration.

This recommendation is carried over from 2014. As leads increase the scope of their work and the number and depth of partnerships, turning volunteers and engaged residents into leaders becomes increasingly important. Events are one example where leads are increasingly looking to resident leaders to be involved in planning and administering work that otherwise would be carried out by leads. By engaging resident leadership in events, the event is more likely to reflect the communities unique qualities, and it is more likely to have buy-in from long-time, often hard to engage residents. Leads should identify other areas in their work plans where residents can become more involved in implementing neighborhood improvements.

During the focus groups, partners regularly reported being unsure of a leads’ focus or all of the work that they were involved in, and were unable to identify outcomes of the work that they did know about. At the initiative and community level, Place Matters needs to better convey the benefits of comprehensive community development. All too often, partners familiar with physical redevelopment don’t understand the benefits of engagement. Leads, and Place Matters, can extend their reach in different arenas by communicating a clear, consistent, comprehensive message to existing partners, who can then extend the reach of leads.

In 2014, we recommended that leads “share the story with branding and marketing.” This year, we emphasize the power of not just sharing the story but defining the story. Neighborhood transformation, especially when it includes physical development, takes a long time. Defining a brand can help maintain momentum and define the character and users of physical redevelopment once it is complete. Covington and Walnut Hills will launch new brands in September. Place Matters should watch these two examples for how establishing a brand can help define the story.
# Recommendations

## Overall

- Develop partners into ambassadors for comprehensive community development, Place Matters, and the work of lead organizations.

- Identify resident leadership development training opportunities and areas where residents could play an increased role, and connect residents with opportunities.

- Develop a brand to define the community image to residents and outsiders.

## Avondale

- Maintain and develop new partnerships to expand ACDC’s housing development capacity while maintaining a focus on the Town Center district.

- Convene health partners to identify existing programs, opportunities for collaboration, and strategies to improve health outcomes.

- Provide organizational development for board and staff, resulting in a clearly defined mission and priorities for ACDC and increased effectiveness and efficiency to achieve its strategic goals.

## Covington

- Evaluate impact of all activities and staff capacity; consider cutting or delaying activities that aren’t high-impact in achieving CGN’s mission.

- Use launch of brand to re-connect with partners to share CGN’s role and priorities and ask partners to be CGN brand-ambassadors.

## Madisonville

- Ensure residents and neighborhood stakeholders are engaged throughout the development process.

- Provide an update to the community on all that has been accomplished from the 2012 Quality-of-Life Plan, and use the update as a way to engage new residents and partners.

- Identify resident leadership development training opportunities and connect residents.

## Price Hill

- Connect program clients with information on community events and plan implementation to increase community connectedness.

- Drive plan implementation through staff support of implementation teams and leadership development of team members.

## Walnut Hills

- Define relationship with Frederick Douglas Elementary and how the school can be an engagement vehicle for the WHRF.

- Use the creative placemaking platform to increase community connections and inclusion of existing residents that have been hard to reach, including low-income and minority residents.

- Pursue opportunities for developing resident leadership, especially as a part of creative placemaking and in the business district.
Social Capital Surveys

In 2015, Place Matters lead organizations collected 2,070 social capital surveys. This was the second consistent time questions were asked, allowing a comparison between 2013 and 2015. The following graphics compare perceptions of how survey respondents’ streets and neighborhoods have changed over the past year. Detailed survey findings will be included in the Place Matters 2015 Year-End Report.

Number of surveys collected by community: Avondale = 387, Covington = 646, Madisonville = 319, Price Hill = 494, Walnut Hills = 224

Outside Perceptions

Surveys of outsiders (those who do not live or work in Place Matters communities) were conducted for the first time in 2015. The survey was initiated to help understand whether events have a positive impact on the perceptions of outsiders. The survey measured overall impressions of the neighborhood, quality of life, safety, events, and expectations for improvement.

Number of surveys collected by community: Avondale = 344, Covington = 66, Madisonville = 73, Price Hill = 117, Walnut Hills = 42

(Children’s Hospital Medical Center sent the survey to employees, accounting for the high number of surveys in Avondale and higher number in Price Hill.)
Major Findings
The Avondale Comprehensive Development Corporation (ACDC) is the Place Matters lead organization in Avondale. The following summarizes major findings from social capital surveys, the mid-year focus group, and activities in the first half of 2015:

- Top 5 priorities from survey: Jobs and Employment, Safety, Housing, Neighborhood Business District, and Appearance
- From 2013 to 2015, significantly more survey respondents report that their street and Avondale are getting worse
- The outside perception of Avondale, mainly expressed by Children’s Hospital Medical Center employees, is negative (75%)
- Avondale is focused on internal resident perceptions and less focused on improving outside perceptions of the neighborhood
- Improved communication to community partners of ACDC’s focus is needed
- ACDC needs to clearly define its mission, priorities, and importance of work to partners, and then work with partners to identify increased ways to collaboratively achieve its mission and priorities

focusing on Town Center
ACDC has a single-family focus on Bogart Avenue in the Town Center District. One house has been completed by ACDC (in 2014), with one other near completion. Existing homeowners can benefit from a forgivable loan for exterior repairs (administered by Uptown Consortium, funded by Children’s Hospital Medical Center). ACDC is working with the Port Authority to acquire property and with commercial and residential developers to market the neighborhood. Renovation continues on The Community Builders multi-family buildings. New market-rate townhomes are near completion on Northern Avenue off Burnett.

engaging with youth
More than 500 Avondale youth were connected with enrichment activities, most through Avondale Moves Safe Play Days. ACDC works with Rockdale Academy and Children’s Hospital to host monthly parent focus groups. ACDC is partnering to provide college access and preparatory workshops to prepare Avondale teens for college. Youth activities help ensure that Avondale youth are prepared to succeed in school and life.

Maintain and develop new partnerships to expand ACDC’s housing development capacity while maintaining a focus on the Town Center district.
ACDC has helped to form new active tenant associations in four apartment buildings and is working with The Community Builders to form three more. ACDC’s communication tools include a weekly newsletter, the Hood Report, website, social media, and video (new).

ACDC excels at getting residents involved. More than 1,260 residents attended an event or participated in a club or activity in the first six months of 2015. 45 leaders were trained in the first half of 2015. With so much emphasis placed on community engagement, the challenge for ACDC is to demonstrate how engagement leads to broader community benefits: how can these engaged residents be leveraged by ACDC to move the needle on neighborhood priorities and improve neighborhood image?

Most partners attending the focus group could not articulate the mission and priorities of ACDC. This same lack of clarity was also expressed during a recent ACDC Board strategic planning session.

**Connecting residents with work**

ACDC continues to connect residents to workforce development opportunities. ACDC is viewed by residents and providers as a trusted community partner. More work needs to be done with partners in order to track Avondale residents in Urban League programs and more clearly define outcomes and measures related to workforce engagement.

**Facilitating connections to health**

According to the latest Health Status Survey in 2013, the number of Avondale adults reporting excellent or very good health is increasing (from 31% in 2010 to 44% in 2013). While this is great progress, it still falls well short of the Bold Goal of 70%. ACDC continues to support a number of healthy eating and active living activities including the Avondale Garden Collaborative, Gabriel’s Place Share-a-Meal and Farmers Market, corner stores providing fresh produce through the Center for Closing the Health Gap’s Corner Store initiative, the Avondale Community Council’s Fresh Produce program, the Choice Health Committee, and neighborhood health fairs.

The collaboration between these initiatives is unclear. To further improve health results, ACDC should encourage health partners to work together towards common goals.

**Leveraging resident and partner engagement**

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Major Findings

The Center for Great Neighborhoods of Covington (CGN) is the Place Matters lead organization in Covington. The following summarizes major findings from social capital surveys, the mid-year focus group, and activities in the first half of 2015:

- Top 5 priorities from survey: Safety, Appearance, Jobs and Employment, Housing, and Engaged Citizens
- From 2013 to 2015, slightly more survey respondents report that Covington is getting better but the negative perception at the street and neighborhood level increased slightly
- Half of those responding to the outside perception survey had a positive impression of Covington
- CGN’s role in physical transformation continues to expand. There are 7 properties currently in predevelopment or under construction in their traditional buy/rehab/sell initiative and Homes for Makers. With Homes for Makers, CGN will acquire vacant homes and sell at very low cost to artists/makers that are interested in rehabbing them for homeownership and/or artist live/work space. Additional properties (7) are being acquired through the new Covington Community Developers’ Initiative (CCDI) which allows the city to foreclose on code enforcement liens on vacant/blighted parcels when there is a committed developer. CGN has recruited neighbors and developers to participate in the program and is working with smaller developers to acquire/rehab 5 properties. The Creative Facades program is improving 6 facades on 12th/MLK Blvd.
- Communication is a primary theme for Covington: CGN has an opportunity to improve communication of its wide ranging activities to residents and partners with its new brand launch
- Partners need to better understand the activities and focus of CGN so they can be mobilized as ambassadors for CGN
- CGN should assess activities for impact and focus on those that will have the greatest outcomes

expanding physical improvements, linking with creative placemaking

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The groundbreaking at CGN’s Hellmann Creative Center is scheduled for mid-September. The $2.4 million project is being developed as CGN’s new headquarters, makers’ space (job creation for artists/makers), and will include community gathering spaces.

As CGN continues to expand, it should evaluate all of its activities for effectiveness and efficiency in achieving impact and consider cutting or delaying those activities that aren’t having as great an impact as others. CGN should also work with partners to more clearly demonstrate the connection between physical development and community engagement activities.
**connecting parents and schools**

CGN continues to focus on parent involvement at schools through collaborations with the Family Resource Center and the Community Learning Center Coordinator. Targeted invitations and outreach by the school to parents who had not previously attended events accounted for an increase in parent engagement at Glenn O. Swing Elementary. CGN is also working to connect schools and youth with activities and places in neighborhoods. For example, CGN has connected schools to residents working at Orchard Park and Goebel Park near John G. Carlisle Elementary. The BLOCK program teaches social and emotional skills while creating stronger connections between youth and their communities.

**continuing financial education**

CGN 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 in 2016, CGN will partner with the Life Learning Center to provide individual financial coaching. CGN continues to pursue opportunities for expansion of the financial education programs at Holmes H.S. and Gateway and is exploring how to transition to financial coaching.

**focusing on healthy eating**

CGN is part of the Kenton County Plan4Health Coalition (KCP4H) which received a grant from the Centers for Disease Control via the American Planning Association. KCP4H will increase access to nutritious food. CGN will manage a small grants program to focus on increasing healthy food options at local corner and convenience stores. CGN continues to support Grow the Cov, an urban gardens project. While CGN’s health focus has shifted to access to healthy food, they continue to support efforts to increase physical activity and biking/walking connections.

**increasing connection opportunities**

Creative Community grants have been added at CGN to support artists in the Westside in partnering with residents and community groups to create transformational change. The grants are supported by the Kresge Foundation and build on the long-term success of CGN’s mini-grant program. Small grants to residents help build resident capacity to initiate projects that lead to an improved quality of life and improved resident-to-resident connections.

CGN is launching new organizational branding in mid-September. CGN should use this opportunity to re-engage with partners on its role, purpose, and impact and recruit partners to be ambassadors for the new brand.
Madisonville: Mid-Year Findings

Major Findings
The Madisonville Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation (MCURC) is the Place Matters lead organization in Madisonville. The following summarizes major findings from social capital surveys, the mid-year focus group, and activities in the first half of 2015:

- Top 5 priorities from survey: Neighborhood Business District, Safety, Appearance, Engaged Citizens, and Jobs and Employment
- From 2013 to 2015, more survey respondents report that their street and Madisonville are getting better (52% said Madisonville was getting better, the highest of any Place Matters community)
- More than half of those responding to the outside perception survey had a positive impression of Madisonville (55%, the highest of any Place Matters community)
- Professional staff at MCURC plays a connecting role with City, partners, funders that was previously missing in Madisonville
- Momentum continues to build in Madisonville; there is a need to link back progress to Quality-of-Life Plan, continue building involvement, and support resident leadership development
- With such a small staff, partnerships and clearly defined roles for MCURC continue to be important

attracting residents and businesses
The housing market in Madisonville is increasingly strong. Houses are selling quickly at or above list price. MCURC and Copper Creek Homes have partnered on a new build on Adelphi Street.

A developer was selected in September of 2014 for redevelopment of a project in the heart of Madisonville at Madison and Whetsel. A development agreement with the City has still not been reached and additional properties need to be acquired for the development. Once the development agreement is signed, MCURC will work to engage residents and businesses in planning and placemaking efforts.

New businesses are increasingly looking to Madisonville when considering expansion. Mazunte will be opening a bakery, Red Sesame Korean BBQ has purchased a property and plans to rehab the building and open a restaurant, and a new dessert restaurant will be opening in the old Post Office this fall.

supporting youth
Madisonville’s education efforts are focused on advocating for more preschool slots and increasing enrollment at John P. Parker School (JPP). A new marketing committee was formed with Cincinnati Public Schools, JPP, and MCURC to coordinate messaging around the school. JPP and MCURC staff went door-to-door doing recruitment for the school.
While the Quality-of-Life Plan adopted in 2012 had tremendous community support, the challenge for MCURC is to update the community on all of the progress that has been made over the last few years and to keep the momentum going. Madisonville has demonstrated success on driving Plan recommendations in several areas: established Madisonville Pipeline, Madison/Whetsel developer selected, and 500 Gardens to name just a few. The Plan also provides a common ground for decision-making for both MCURC and the Madisonville Community Council.

MCURC now has a dedicated community organizer staff position, which should allow it to increase connections and impact of partnership and identify and grow resident leadership in initiatives connected to the Quality-of-Life Plan.

Madisonville’s health initiatives received a boost this year from new sponsorships, a partnership with the American Heart Association, and a training program for the 5K, new goVibrant walking routes, expanded 500 Gardens and 500 Chickens, Tuesdays at the Park, Family Fitness Fridays, and a garden market at Lighthouse Community School. These activities are not only connecting Madisonville residents to healthy eating and active lifestyles, but they are connecting residents with one another.

MCURC, Madisonville community residents, businesses, and organizations worked with Partners for a Competitive Workforce (facilitated by CBI) to develop a strategy to build on the unique assets of the neighborhood to help residents get a job, build skills, and move up the career ladder in target sectors. The resulting strategy was to develop a resource directory and a common brand and messaging for Madisonville centered around workforce development. Some interest was also expressed by local employers in connecting students at Shroder High School with early employment opportunities.

Additional workforce entrepreneurship connections are also coming to Madisonville. The Hand Up Initiative will target the neighborhood, which will allow for more workforce connections at the Madisonville Educational Assistance Center (MEAC). MCURC is partnering with Square 1 to bring entrepreneurial training to Madisonville.

The Madisonville Youth Council continues to connect youth with information on career pathways and community events.

**connecting around workforce**

Provide an update to the community on all that has been accomplished from the 2012 Quality-of-Life Plan, and use the update as a way to engage new residents and partners.

Identify resident leadership development training opportunities and connect residents.

**boosting health**

**building momentum**
**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 social capital surveys, the mid-year focus group, and activities in the first half of 2015:

- Top 5 priorities from survey: Safety, Jobs and Employment, Housing, Neighborhood Business District, and Engaged Citizens
- From 2013 to 2015, more survey respondents report that their street and Price Hill are getting better, but the most popular response is “staying the same”
- The outside perception of Price Hill, is more negative (50%) than positive (38%)
- Funders increasingly look to Price Hill as a place to implement programs, which stretches the capacity of PHW and SM and forces work in silos according to grant dollars (making comprehensive community development difficult)
- With such a large neighborhood, scaling the impact of programs is limited, and opportunities and challenges are diverse across the three neighborhoods of East, West, and Lower Price Hill

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**expanding physical improvements**

PHW continues to pursue its single-family buy-improve-sell program while expanding its activities to the business district. PHW completed 4 single family townhomes and one detached single family home. A Wells Fargo grant will provide funding for 8 - 10 home rehabs in Cedar Grove. PHW has partnered with a private developer to acquire 18 blighted rental units that will be converted to market rate rental.

PHW partnered with the East Price Hill Business Association to win a City Neighborhood Business District Improvement Program (NBDIP) award of $122,00 to renovate the Olden Tot Lot in the Warsaw Business District. This project was identified as a high priority by the 2014 East Price Hill Neighborhood Enhancement Project and the Price Hill Plan. PHW is working with partners to secure a $3 million streetscape improvement on Price Avenue in the Incline District.

PHW and SM are working with partners to develop a homesteading program which would provide homes to owners at a low cost with the expectation that they would perform renovations to make them code compliant.

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**preparing kids**

Promoting our Preschoolers (POP) continues to ensure appropriate social, emotional, cognitive, and language development in children. Nearly all of POP parents have been connected with outside resources. Children in the Price Hill Family Child Care Network continue to show developmental improvements
PHW continues to engage residents through events, neighborhood improvement activities, and formal implementation teams. PHW supported the engagement of several hundred residents in a collective vision for the neighborhood: the Price Hill Plan. The plan was completed in early 2015 and implementation teams are now staffing up to carry out plan recommendations.

The International Welcome Center (IWC) is linking participants to various services and programs including wellness, GED, housing, home childcare, and summer camps. IWC hosted the first Spanish-language 8-week accelerated Greater Cincinnati Microenterprise Initiative (GCMI) business course. The 13 graduates learned about business models, finance, and accounting. This is a model of a Community Action Agency program meeting the community where they are and working with local partners to better deliver services and programs.

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.

A creative placemaking grant to PHW from LISC will provide a platform for increased engagement with local artists and residents.
# Walnut Hills: Mid-Year Findings

## Major Findings

The Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation (WHRF) is the Place Matters lead organization in Walnut Hills. The following summarizes major findings from social capital surveys, the mid-year focus group, and activities in the first half of 2015:

- Top 5 priorities from survey: Jobs and Employment, Housing, Safety, Neighborhood Business District, and Education
- From 2013 to 2015, more survey respondents report that Walnut Hills is getting better, while slightly fewer report that their street is getting better
- Nearly half of those responding to the outside perception survey had a positive impression of Walnut Hills
- The WHRF has successfully introduced a renewed sense of urban possibility; it has developed a recognizable brand ahead of physical transformation
- WHRF has increased its partnerships to expand its reach beyond physical redevelopment and events
- WHRF is successful in linking a range of efforts (business development, jobs, youth ambassadors, placemaking) to the geographic focus of the McMillan corridor

### continuing large scale redevelopment

Focused redevelopment of the McMillan corridor continues, with Trevarren flats (including market-rate rental and commercial spaces) under construction with an expected completion this winter. The WHRF is also under contract or in pre-development with the Paramount Building at Peebles Corner, Firehouse Row Phase III (green space on McMillan)/Dairy Mart (McMillan and Park Ave.), and Trevarren Flats Phase II. The facade program continues to provide assistance for improvements in the business district and the THRIVE grant is helping new businesses locate in Walnut Hills.

The WHRF will undertake a housing reinvestment plan to understand the market for new housing investment throughout Walnut Hills. The WHRF is working with the Port Authority to implement the REACH program in the Southwest quadrant.

### engaging youth in community

The Youth Ambassador Program expanded to 20 youth in 2015. Youth are placed at local work sites, receive weekly personal professional development, and assist with neighborhood projects.

The WHRF is also working to build relationships with the new administration at Frederick Douglas Elementary that lead to improved educational and engagement outcomes.

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**Define relationship with Frederick Douglas Elementary and how the school can be an engagement vehicle for the WHRF.**
HHRF continues to host a range of events geared toward local residents and changing the perceptions of those outside of the neighborhood. WHRF continues to host the Five Points Alley Biergarten during the summer months and has added Music off McMillan, a weekly event featuring local musicians positioned at and between neighborhood destinations. A creative placemaking grant to the WHRF from LISC will provide a platform for increased engagement with local artists and residents.

A Working Group with representatives from the WHRF, community council, and business group has been formed. This is a good first step in deepening relationships and defining the roles of each group.

As the WHRF works with partner organizations in the community, it should look for opportunities to develop volunteers into neighborhood leaders.

The WHRF has partnered with Mercy Neighborhood Ministries, the Model Group, and Jobs Ohio to place residents in neighborhood redevelopment construction jobs. While the program has matched less than 10 residents with jobs to date, plans for expansion of the jobs bank to 100+ residents is planned for 2016. The program currently matches residents that are ready to find work and have an aptitude for construction with jobs in the neighborhood. With the program expansion, WHRF will also work with local employers to understand their needs and match residents with job opportunities. The jobs bank program pairs a critical need in the community - employment - with emerging opportunities.

The WHRF will also be partnering with Mortar to assist residents with starting or growing a business.

WHRF has formed a Health Collaborative, bringing together seven different organizations and community volunteers. An Interact for Health Thriving Community grant supports the collaborative and health related activities in the neighborhood, including Health and Wellness Wednesdays. The number of active community gardens has grown to eight, including a new educational school garden being developed adjacent to Frederick Douglas Elementary where children in the school will help develop the plan for the garden. WHRF is also working with Dohn Community High School to develop a garden near the school.

Use the creative placemaking platform to increase community connections and inclusion of existing residents that have been hard to reach, including low-income and minority residents.

Pursue opportunities for developing resident leadership, especially as a part of creative placemaking and in the business district.

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