



Old Hill Neighborhood Investment Plan 2024-2034

City of Springfield and the Old Hill Neighborhood Council, Residents, local Businesses, Organizations, and other Stakeholders

Old Hill Neighborhood Investment Plan 2024-2034



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Goal: To enhance and inform the delivery of municipal services and the investment of municipal, state, federal, and private funding, and other resources in the Old Hill neighborhood through collaborative planning and implementation between residents, including resident businesses and organizations, and other stakeholders and city departments.

Introduction

Welcome to the Old Hill Neighborhood Investment Plan 2024.

This plan begins with a brief history of how the neighborhood developed over time. We want everyone reading the plans to know that, just as your neighborhood was created by people who came before you, so too can you influence the way your neighborhood develops into the future.

In 2022, as the city and the nation emerged from the COVID 19 pandemic, the city of Springfield allocated \$746,340 of [American Rescue Plan Act](#) funds to update the city's [Neighborhood Data Atlas](#) and facilitate development of [Neighborhood Investment Plans](#) in twelve neighborhoods where residents experienced disproportionately high rates of COVID infection, hospitalization, and death, including the Old Hill neighborhood. The city engaged the [Pioneer Valley Planning Commission](#) (PVPC) to complete this work, and PVPC subsequently engaged [Way Finders Community Building and Engagement](#) team via a competitive procurement process to lead engagement focusing on residents, local businesses, and community-based organizations.

The goal of this neighborhood plan and the planning process that led to its development is to establish and agree on shared priorities for investment in the neighborhood and to strengthen the connection between the neighborhood—its residents, small businesses, institutions, and community-based organizations, along with the [Neighborhood Council](#) and the city's many departments. The city of Springfield works with residents through the city's neighborhood councils, and the city relies on them to share information with their residents. Residents who want to get involved in their neighborhoods can start with the neighborhood council. Recognizing that the city's neighborhood councils needed financial support and technical assistance, the city invested [\\$1.7 million in the form of \\$100,000 grants to each neighborhood council](#) in 2022-2024 and developed a neighborhood council handbook.

This planning process was initiated by the city [Office of Planning and Economic Development](#) (OPED) [Division of Neighborhood Services](#), and this city office is working to ensure integration and acceptance of these prioritized projects by all city departments, boards, and commissions. Through this plan, the city and the neighborhood are proclaiming their shared commitment to work collaboratively on behalf of their residents to implement these priority investments over the next ten years, through 2034.

Cover image: *Mason Square and the former Winchester Park Fire Station.*

Previous page: *Detail from Plate 11 of Atlas of the city of Springfield and the town of Longmeadow, Massachusetts (1910) by L.J. Richards & Co. Boston Public Library, Norman B. Leventhal Map Center.*

Executive Summary

The neighborhood investment planning process resulted in more than two hundred proposed investments within the Mason Square and Maple/High-Six Corners neighborhoods. This was based on recommendations from previous planning efforts, along with ideas that emerged from surveys and conversations with residents and other stakeholders. Over the course of the planning process, this list of proposed investments was narrowed down to a small number of high-priority recommendations, based on input from residents and neighborhood councils.

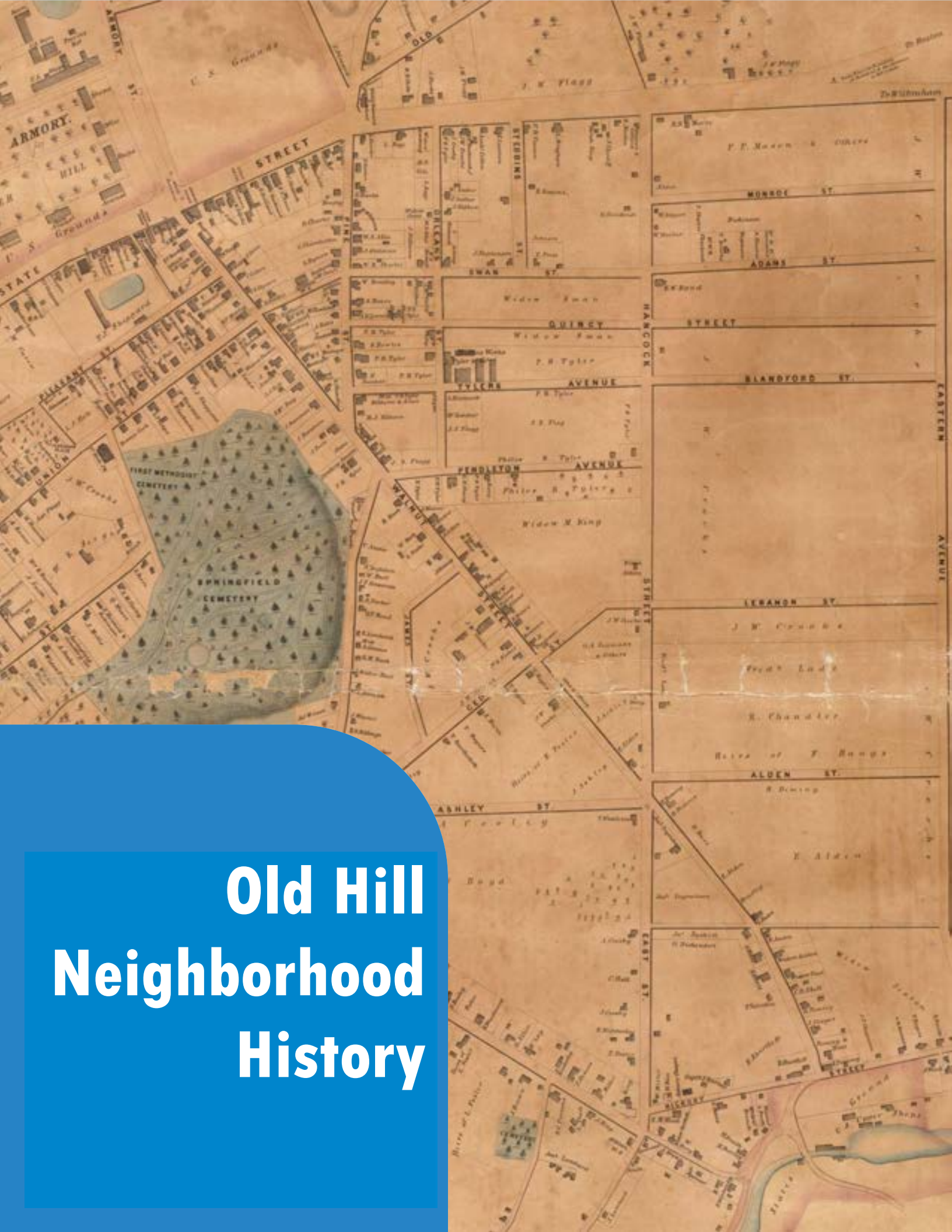
These recommendations are categorized as either neighborhood-specific recommendations, which were identified as high priorities for the Old Hill neighborhood, or as district-wide recommendations, which are projects or initiatives that have been identified as high priorities across multiple neighborhoods.

Neighborhood-Specific Recommendations

- Develop a neighborhood resource center for Old Hill and potentially for Upper Hill.
- Redevelop former MCDI site in collaboration with Old Hill and Upper Hill neighborhoods.
- Promote and support homeownership in the Old Hill neighborhood.

District-Wide Recommendations

- Work with the Springfield Redevelopment Authority and the city to create and implement an urban renewal plan that will promote concentrated economic development in and around Mason Square.
- Expand existing city programs that assist homebuyers and homeowners.
- Recruit a grocery store to expand food access in the district.
- Pilot an electronic community kiosk at the Mason Square Branch Library.
- Develop a multi-use trail that would link the Mason Square neighborhoods with other parts of the city.
- Conduct a feasibility study of the proposed Mill River Greenway.



Old Hill Neighborhood History

Population Growth

Throughout the 1600s and 1700s, Springfield had a relatively small population of colonial settlers, and there was little development to the east of Main Street. However, this began to change in the early 1800s thanks to the Armory, which drew large numbers of skilled laborers to Springfield. Many of these workers settled in what would become the Old Hill neighborhood, because of its location between the Armory's two main facilities.

To the north, just outside of the neighborhood boundaries, was the main campus of the Armory. This was primarily used for assembly and storage, but the site lacked water power, so most of the heavy, energy-intensive manufacturing occurred along the Mill River, at what became known as the Watershops. Initially these were a series of small shops at three different waterfalls, but in 1857 they were

consolidated into a single facility that still stands at 1 Allen Street, at the southern end of the neighborhood. The Watershops were a mile from the main Armory, and the facilities were linked by Walnut Street, which forms the western boundary of Old Hill.

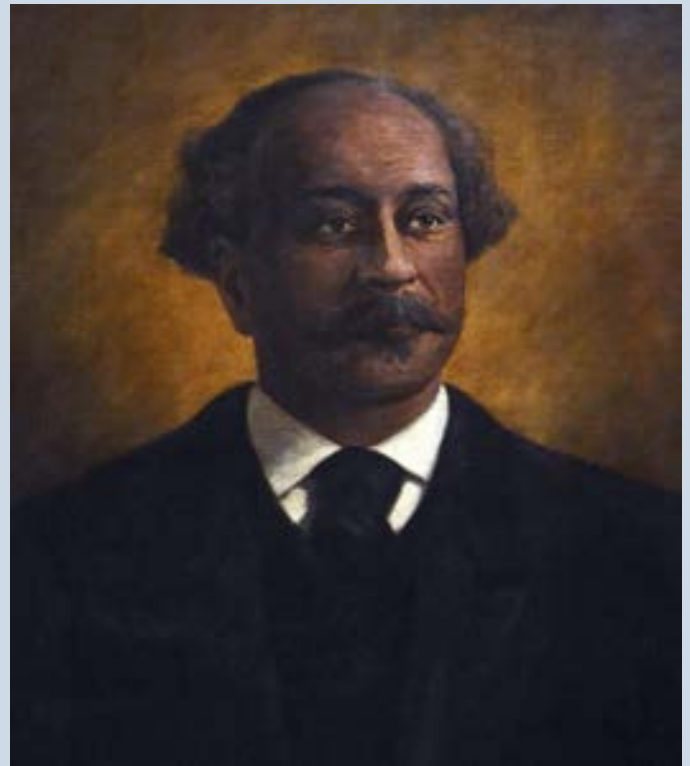
Development of an African American Community

Most of the early residential development in Old Hill was along Walnut and Hickory Streets, but by the middle of the 19th century the neighborhood had its own street grid, with rectangular blocks that were primarily lined with single-family homes. Among the early real estate investors in this area was Primus Mason, an African American businessman who lived just outside of the neighborhood on the north side of State Street. He owned a significant amount of land in the area, including the site of the present-day Mason Square, which was named in his honor.



The Armory Watershops facility, seen looking across Allen Street from Ruth Eliabeth Park

Previous page: *Detail of Map of Springfield, Massachusetts (1851) by Marcus Smith, showing the Old Hill neighborhood. Boston Public Library, Norman B. Leventhal Map Center.*



Nineteenth century portrait of Primus Mason by an unknown artist

Aside from Primus Mason, there were other African American families that lived in the Mason Square area during the 19th century. Their numbers were initially small, but by the turn of the 20th century the community saw significant growth. This was a part of the broader Great Migration, when African Americans in the segregated south began moving to northern cities for greater economic opportunity.

Community Leaders and Advocates

During this time, perhaps the most influential cultural institution in the Old Hill neighborhood was St. John's Congregational Church, which was established on Quincy Street in 1890 before moving to a new building at the corner of Hancock and Union Streets in 1911. For many years, the church was led by the Rev. William N. DeBerry. In addition to his role as a spiritual leader, he was also a strong social and political advocate for the city's African American community, including working to overcome institutional racism and other barriers to social mobility.



St. John's Congregational Church, photographed around 1938-1939. Springfield Preservation Trust.

Another notable Old Hill resident during this period was Alexander Hughes. He was born into slavery in Virginia in 1857, and as an adult he migrated to Springfield. In 1888 he began working for MassMutual, where he eventually

became the manager of the company's shipping department. He owned a house on Monson Avenue, and in 1912 Booker T. Washington had lunch there with Hughes and Rev. DeBerry during a visit to Springfield.

Another notable former resident is Roderick L. Ireland, who grew up in a house on Terrence Street. He went on to become the state's first African American justice on the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court in 1997, and from 2010 to 2014 he served as the court's chief justice.

A Neighborhood in Transition

Over the years, the Old Hill neighborhood has continued to play an important role in the city's African American community, with nearly one-third of all residents identifying as African American. The neighborhood's diverse population has also expanded to include a significant number of Hispanic residents, with over half of residents identifying as Hispanic or Latino.

In more recent years, the neighborhood has faced challenges such as poverty, low homeownership rates, and a significant number of vacant properties. Many of these issues were exacerbated by the June 1, 2011 tornado, which caused severe damage in the southern part of the neighborhood. Nonetheless, Old Hill has continued to be resilient in the face of these challenges, and the neighborhood has good opportunities for continued growth while also celebrating its long history.

One result of the 2011 tornado was the funding of a neighborhood plan in 2015, which built upon the previous 2004 neighborhood plan. Since then, many of the recommendations from these two plans have been implemented, and the unfinished recommendations are carried forward into this ten-year neighborhood investment plan.



Old Hill Zoning and Land Use

Neighborhood Boundaries

The Old Hill neighborhood is defined by State Street to the north, the former Highland Branch railroad right-of-way to the east, the Watershops Pond to the south, and Walnut Street to the west. It is 312 acres in land area, making it geographically the second-smallest neighborhood in the city.

Residential Zoning

Approximately 68% of the zoned land in Old Hill is zoned for residential use. Nearly all of this is Residence B, which allows for medium-density development, typically single-family and two-family dwellings. In addition, there are several scattered parcels of Residence C, which allows for higher-density multi-family dwellings such as apartment complexes.

Business Zoning

Business and commercial zoning comprise about 25% of Old Hill. Most of the business zoning in the neighborhood is along the periphery. To the north, State Street is primarily Business A. The properties here currently have a variety of uses, including apartment buildings, religious institutions, healthcare and childcare providers, and a mix of different types of businesses.

This area includes Mason Square, which is formed by the intersection of State Street, Wilbraham Road, and Eastern Avenue. The southern side of the square is anchored by pedestrian-oriented commercial development, and the area presents opportunities for further investments to make this area a focal point of the Mason Square neighborhoods.

Aside from State Street, most of the other business and commercial zoning is along



Residence B development on King Street



Residence C apartment complex on Eastern Avenue



Pedestrian-oriented businesses on Ben Swan Way at Mason Square

Previous page: 2021 aerial image of the Old Hill neighborhood. Source: MassGIS

Walnut and Hancock Streets. This area primarily consists of small local businesses, but there are also many parcels that are vacant or underutilized. As such, these streets could benefit from redevelopment, to strengthen the economy of the neighborhood and expand the types of goods and services that are available to residents.

One site in particular that has strong potential for future development is the area near the new roundabout at Six Corners. This intersection was recently reconstructed to improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety, so this area is a good candidate for continued investment to

attract and retain businesses that will meet the needs of residents in both the Old Hill and Maple-High/Six Corners neighborhoods.

Industrial Zoning

All of the industrial zoning in Old Hill is along the eastern and southern edges of the neighborhood, primarily along the former Highland Branch railroad. In total, it amounts to about 7% of the land in Old Hill. However, much of this land is either vacant or has been repurposed for non-industrial use. The only significant industrial site in the neighborhood is the Watershops site. There, the former Armory buildings house a variety of commercial and light industrial tenants.

Springfield College

The land use within Old Hill also includes a portion of the Springfield College campus. Although primarily located in the Upper Hill neighborhood, the campus extends into the southeastern corner of Old Hill. This proximity provides opportunities for continued partnerships between the college, the city, and the neighborhood.



A mix of (L-R) Business A, Residence B, and Commercial A zoning on Eastern Avenue



The former Armory Watershops, now used by various light industrial tenants

Summary of Old Hill Zoning Districts

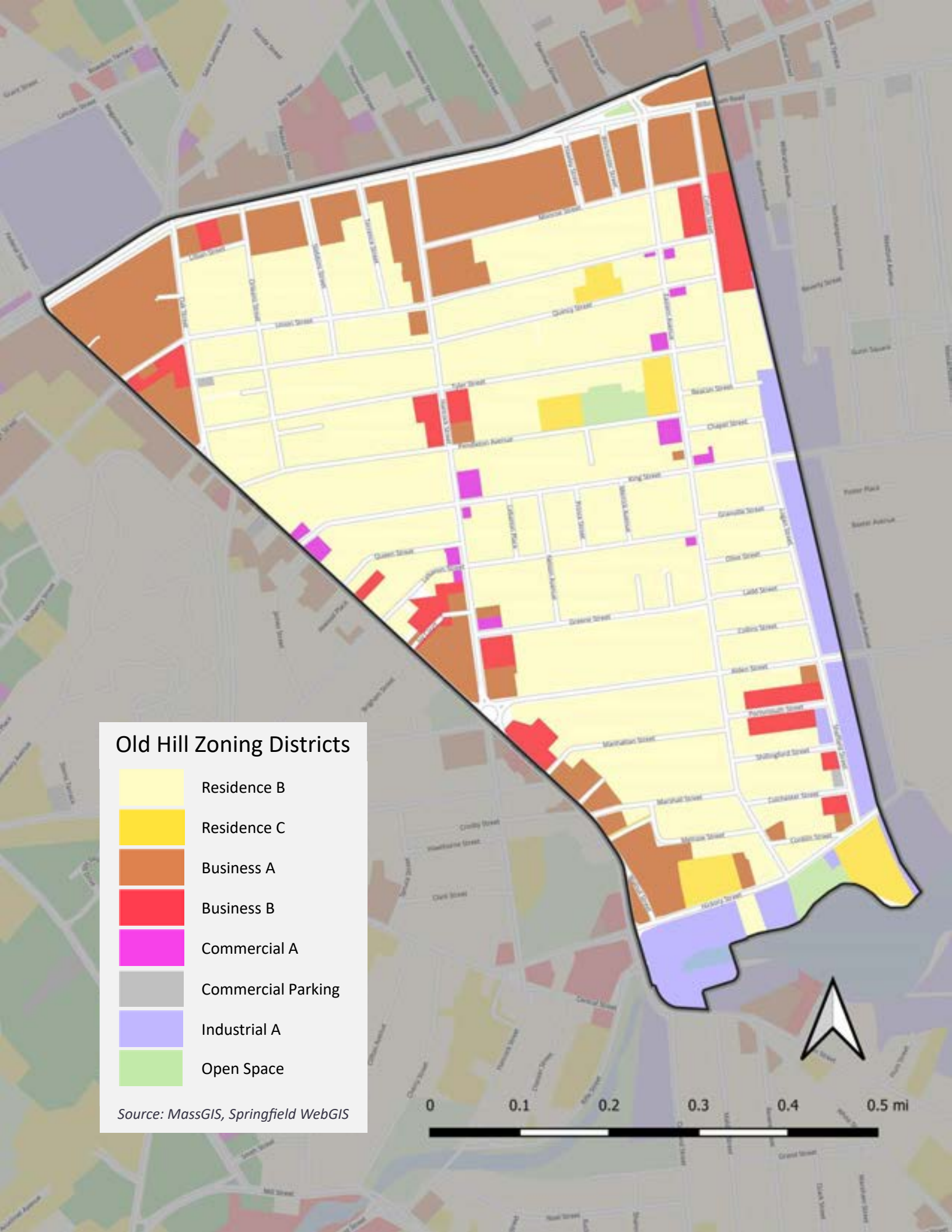
District	Description
Residence B	Medium density residential, primarily single-family and two-family
Residence C	Single-family dwellings, two-family dwellings and multi-family dwellings
Commercial A	Small scale retail and service convenience type commercial establishments.
Business A	Main Street and pedestrian oriented shopping districts with residential allowed.
Business B	Highway-oriented automotive and service business activities.
Industrial A	Full range of industrial and business uses compatible with a major urban center.

Old Hill Zoning Districts



Source: MassGIS, Springfield WebGIS

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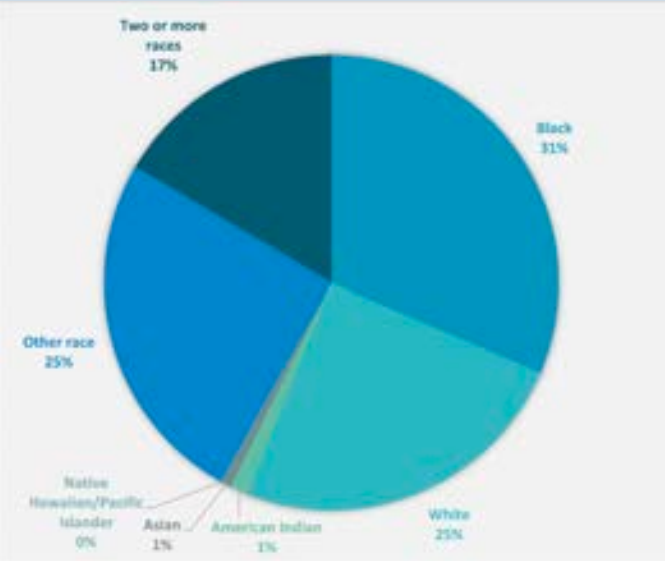




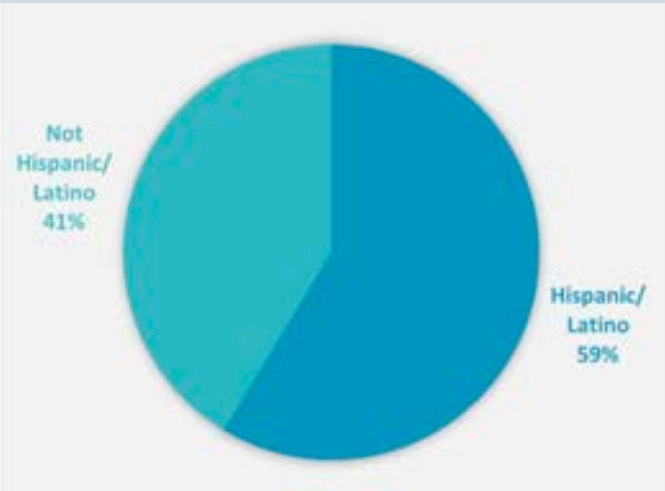
Old Hill Demographics and Housing

Demographic Overview

As of 2020, the Old Hill neighborhood had a population of 4,351 residents, or approximately three percent of the city’s population. Of this population, 31% identify as Black, 25% identify as White, and 44% identify as other races, including people of multiple races. The population is 59% Hispanic of any race. The age distribution of the population is 26% children under 18 years old, 68% people of working age, and 6% people of retirement age or older.



Racial composition of the Old Hill neighborhood, 2020 U.S. Census

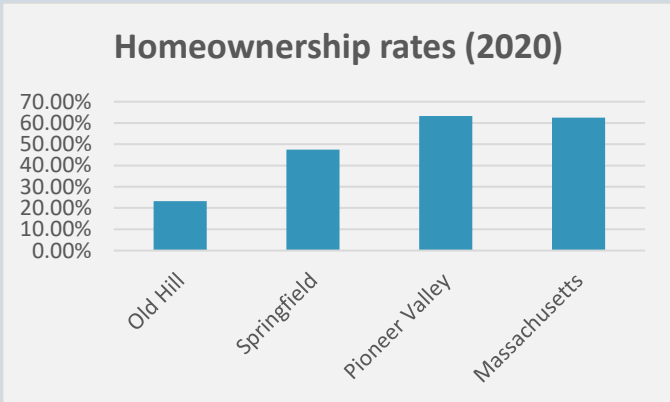
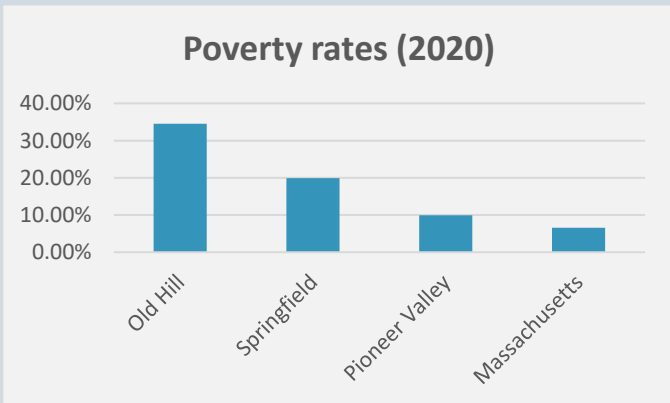
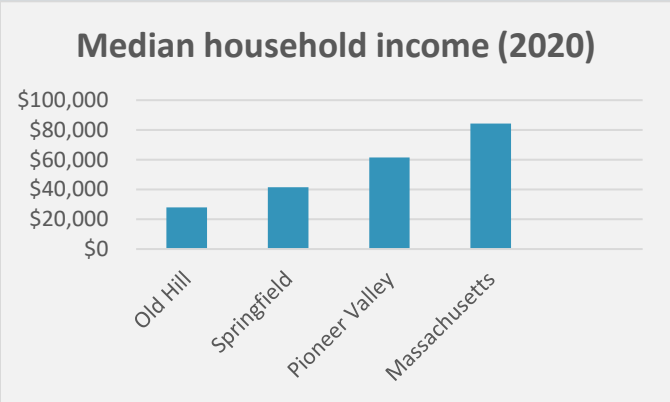


Hispanic/Latino ethnicity in Old Hill, 2020 U.S. Census

Previous page: apartments on Eastern Avenue

Economic Security

Compared to other neighborhoods in the city, Old Hill consistently ranks low in many economic factors. The median household income in is \$28,015, while the citywide median is \$41,571. Overall, 34.5% of Old Hill residents live in households with incomes below the federal poverty line, compared to the citywide rate of 19.9%.



		Old Hill	Springfield	Pioneer Valley	Massachusetts
Children and youth	Babies born with low birth weight	12.3%	10.3%	9.1%	7.6%
	Child poverty	45.5%	36.2%	20.8%	12.2%
Education	Preschool enrollment	27.5%	60.1%	53.6%	58.0%
	Attainment of higher education	14.0%	19.0%	32.6%	44.5%
Health	Premature mortality (per 1,000)	4.3	4.0	3.3	2.7
Economic security	Median household income	\$28,015	\$41,571	\$61,569	\$84,385
	Income inequality (Gini index)	0.49	0.48	0.47	0.48
	Poverty	34.5%	19.9%	9.9%	6.6%
	Elderly poverty	29.8%	13.7%	10.1%	8.9%
	Unemployment	12.9%	10.5%	6.7%	5.7%
	Labor force participation	53.9%	57.6%	61.4%	67.2%
Housing	Housing cost burden	68.9%	45.4%	34.9%	34.5%
	Homeownership rates	23.2%	47.4%	63.2%	62.5%
Transportation	Low-carbon commuters	19.7%	17.6%	14.1%	22.4%
	Average commute time (minutes)	21.1	21.1	23.1	30.0

Much more information is available in the [Springfield Data Atlas](#)

Housing

Although much of the neighborhood's housing stock consists of single-family and two-family homes, the homeownership rate is only 23.2%, which is less than half of the citywide average of 47.4%. The neighborhood also has a very limited number of subsidized housing units, with an estimated 169 out of 1,505 units in Old Hill. This is the fourth-lowest number of subsidized units in any neighborhood in the city, and the only neighborhoods with fewer (East Forest Park, East Springfield, and Boston Road) all have high rates of homeownership.

The low homeownership rate, combined with the scarcity of subsidized housing, likely contributes to the fact that, out of the 17 city neighborhoods, Old Hill has the highest percentage of residents who are burdened by housing costs. Residents are considered to be housing cost burdened if they pay more than 30% of their income towards either rent or homeownership, and 68.9% of Old Hill residents meet those criteria. These housing

costs include maintenance, which can be a large expense in neighborhoods such as Old Hill, where much of the existing housing stock dates to the 19th or early 20th centuries. Such homes tend to require more upkeep than newer ones, and often have added expenses related to health and safety hazards such as lead paint, asbestos, and outdated electrical systems.

Neighborhood Council members report hearing from long-time renters in their neighborhoods that these individuals and families are experiencing dramatically higher and more frequent rent increases as the homes they live in are sold and re-sold by absentee landlords. Renters report to their Neighborhood Councils that the landlords are not making improvements to the property but still increase the rent. With adequate support, these long-time renters might be able to purchase the homes, thereby stabilizing their own housing costs and achieving the Neighborhood Councils and the city's goal of increasing home ownership in these neighborhoods.

Residents throughout the Mason Square and Maple-High/Six Corners areas have indicated that housing is a high priority, in particular assistance for the maintenance of existing owner-occupied homes. There are currently a number of different housing programs and initiatives that are available to Springfield residents. However, because this has consistently been identified as an area of need,

the city has been examining to what extent these programs are being utilized and which neighborhoods primarily benefit from them. Part of the motivation for the city's decision to invest ARPA funds in the Targeted Neighborhood Investment planning process is to build capacity of residents and their neighborhood councils to make use of these resources.

Existing Housing Programs and Initiatives

Homeowner Emergency Repair Program

This program provides funding for income-eligible owner-occupants for a single-item emergency repair. Homeowners are eligible to apply if there is an immediate threat to the health and safety of the occupants, or to the structural integrity of the building. This can include emergency repairs to the roof, porch, electrical/mechanical systems, plumbing, and foundation, along with other urgent code-related issues. Applicants can be from any neighborhood in the city, and those who are selected for this program receive a 0% interest, deferred-payment loan. This is forgiven over the course of five years, provided that the homeowner continues to reside at the property.

City of Springfield Exterior Home Repair Program

This program is available to income-eligible homeowners in any city neighborhood. It funds up to \$40,000 in exterior repairs, such as roofs, windows, porches, siding, and painting. As with the Emergency Repair Program, the city will provide recipients with a 0% interest, deferred-payment loan that will be forgiven over five years.

City of Springfield Healthy Homes Program

This program provides funding for remediating health issues such as lead paint and asthma triggers. Eligibility is determined based on income, and also based on census tract. All of the census tracts in Old Hill are designated as Qualified Census Tracts. As with the other two city programs, funding is provided in the form of a 0% interest, deferred-payment loan that is forgiven after five years.

Heating Emergency Assistance Retrofit Tasks Weatherization Assistance Program (HEARTWAP)

HEARTWAP is coordinated by the Valley Opportunity Council (VOC) and the Office of Housing, and it provides emergency repairs and replacements of heating systems for income-eligible renters and homeowners in the city. VOC also provides heating assistance to income-eligible residents.

City of Springfield Down Payment Assistance Program

Most of these programs are only open to homeowners, but Old Hill has one of the lowest homeownership rates in the city, which means that only a small percentage of neighborhood residents are able to access these funding sources. In an effort to expand homeownership rates citywide, there are several

programs that are available to first-time homebuyers, including the City of Springfield Down Payment Assistance Program.

This is available to first-time homebuyers in Springfield who meet income eligibility and other program requirements, and it provides up to \$4,000 towards a down payment and closing costs. As with the city's other programs, homebuyers receive this as an interest-free loan, which is forgiven over the course of five years, provided that the house remains their primary residence.

Buy Springfield Now

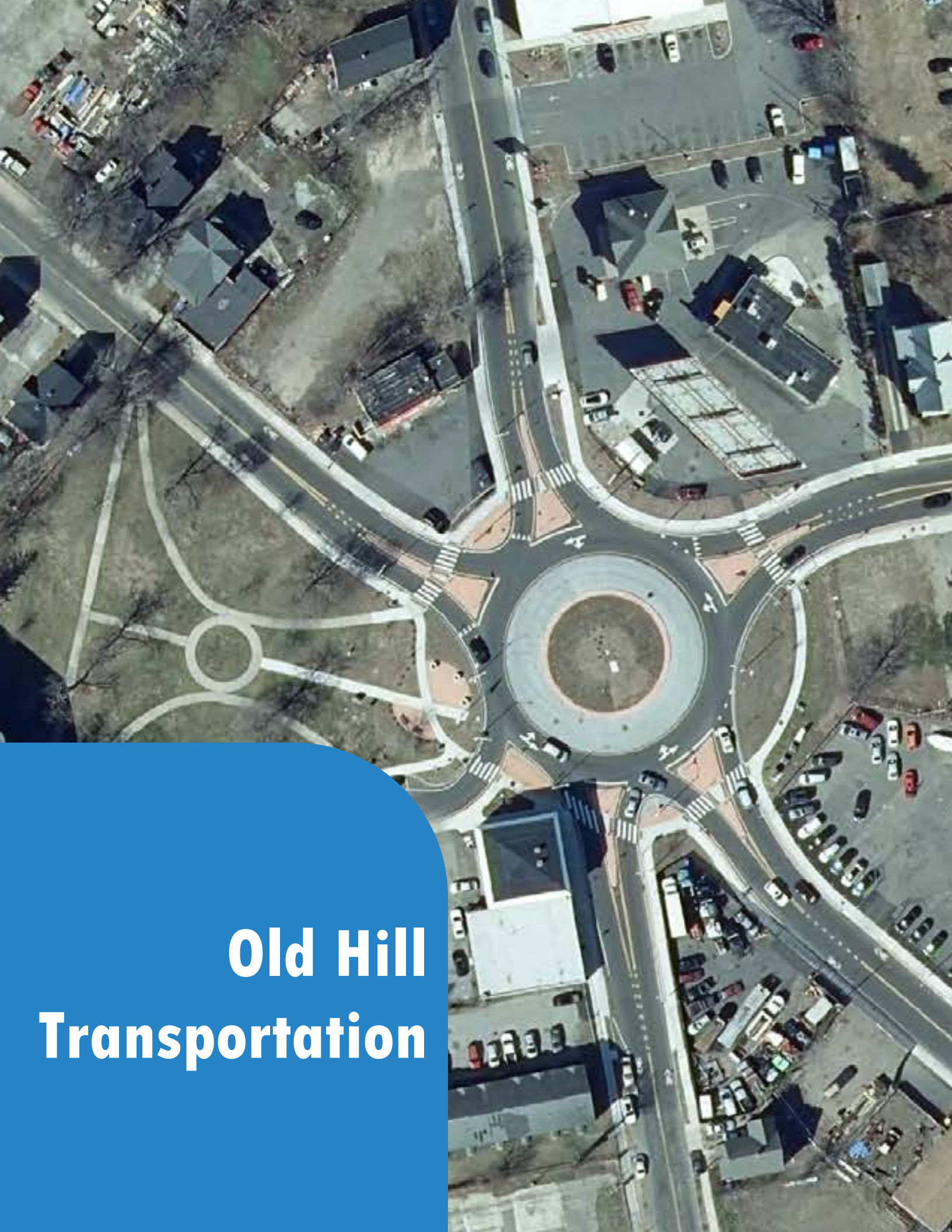
This ongoing initiative is a collaboration between the city, nonprofits, and private sector partners. Participants in this program receive discounts from lenders, realtors, attorneys, and home inspectors as part of their homebuying process.

Other Housing Partners

Aside from these city-managed programs, there are a number of community development corporations and community-based organizations that provide housing support and assistance in the Mason Square neighborhoods. These include Springfield Neighborhood Housing Services, Revitalize CDC, and Way Finders.

Energy Efficiency

In addition to the challenges of simply maintaining and rehabilitating the older homes in the Old Hill neighborhood, homeowners may also be challenged by the added cost of the need to transition away from fossil fuel-based energy sources. This is part of a broader effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as the city of Springfield and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are committed to net zero energy by 2050. The Massachusetts Clean Energy Center and the MA Department of Energy Resources, along with the federal government, recognize the importance of incentivizing homeowners to invest in energy-efficient upgrades and incorporate renewable energy sources to reduce carbon emissions. Collaboration among residents, local organizations, and city, state, and federal resources will be important as the neighborhood implements comprehensive strategies that foster a greener, more resilient Old Hill community for generations to come.



Old Hill Transportation

Street Grid

The streets in Old Hill are generally laid out on a rectangular grid with the exception of Walnut Street, which passes diagonally across this grid. The blocks are not perfectly identical in size, but most measure about 1,400 feet from east to west, and about 35 feet from north to south. This means that there are significantly more east-west streets than north-south streets. As a result, the few north-south streets (Walnut Street, Hancock Street, and Eastern Avenue) tend to see heavy traffic, with



Roundabout at Six Corners, facing northeast



Roadway improvements on Hickory Street, with the Armory Watershops on the right

Previous page: 2021 aerial view of the Six Corners roundabout. Source: MassGIS

significant commercial development, while most of the east-west streets are residential side streets.

Roadway Improvements

As mentioned earlier, the Old Hill neighborhood has come together to develop neighborhood plans, in 2004 and then again after the 2011 tornado. The plans have proven useful in identifying pressing issues and

bringing resources to the neighborhood to act on priority concerns, particularly regarding transportation.

Since the 2004 plan was published, there have been a number of transportation-related improvements in Old Hill. State Street was completely reconstructed, including new pavement, sidewalks, crosswalks, landscaping, and decorative streetlights.

On Walnut Street, the street was repaved and new sidewalks were installed, featuring brick edging and decorative lighting. Subsequent work along Walnut Street included construction of the Six Corners roundabout. This project, which was completed in 2020, replaced a complex signalized intersection that had previously ranked as a high crash location.

In the southern part of the neighborhood, Hickory Street was widened, repaved, and had a new sidewalk installed as part of a larger project in the Maple-High/Six Corners neighborhood to realign Central and Hickory Streets.

Public Transportation

The Old Hill neighborhood is well-served by public transportation. The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVRTA) provides bus service to the region, and there are several bus routes in Old Hill. The B6, B7, and B17 routes serve State Street on the northern border of the neighborhood, and the crosstown X90 serves Walnut Street on the western border. The G3 route provides service to the central part of the neighborhood, via Hancock and King Streets.

There are 38 individual bus stops in Old Hill, with two sheltered bus stops along State Street. This is an area for potential growth, as residents have expressed a desire for new shelters as well as improvements to existing ones.

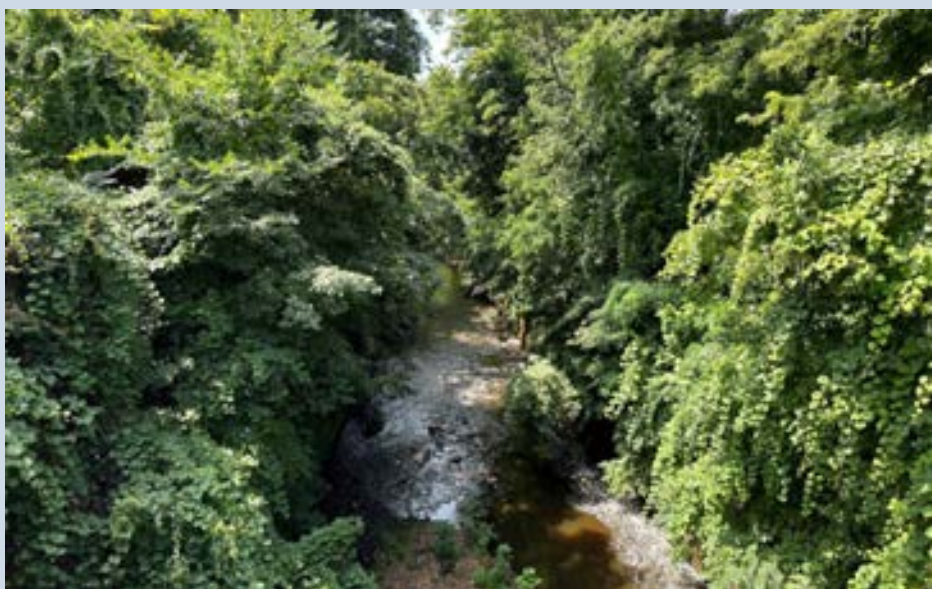
Bicycle and Pedestrian Opportunities

There is currently no bicycle infrastructure in the neighborhood, aside from a bike share station at the Mason Square library. However, there are several proposed projects that could expand cycling opportunities in Old Hill. One is the Mill River Greenway, a multi-use trail that would start in the southwestern corner of the neighborhood and follow alongside the Mill River, linking Old Hill to the Connecticut Riverwalk and Greenway.

The other is the Highland Rail Trail, which would follow the former railroad right-of-way at the eastern end of the neighborhood and link with the proposed McKnight Community Trail

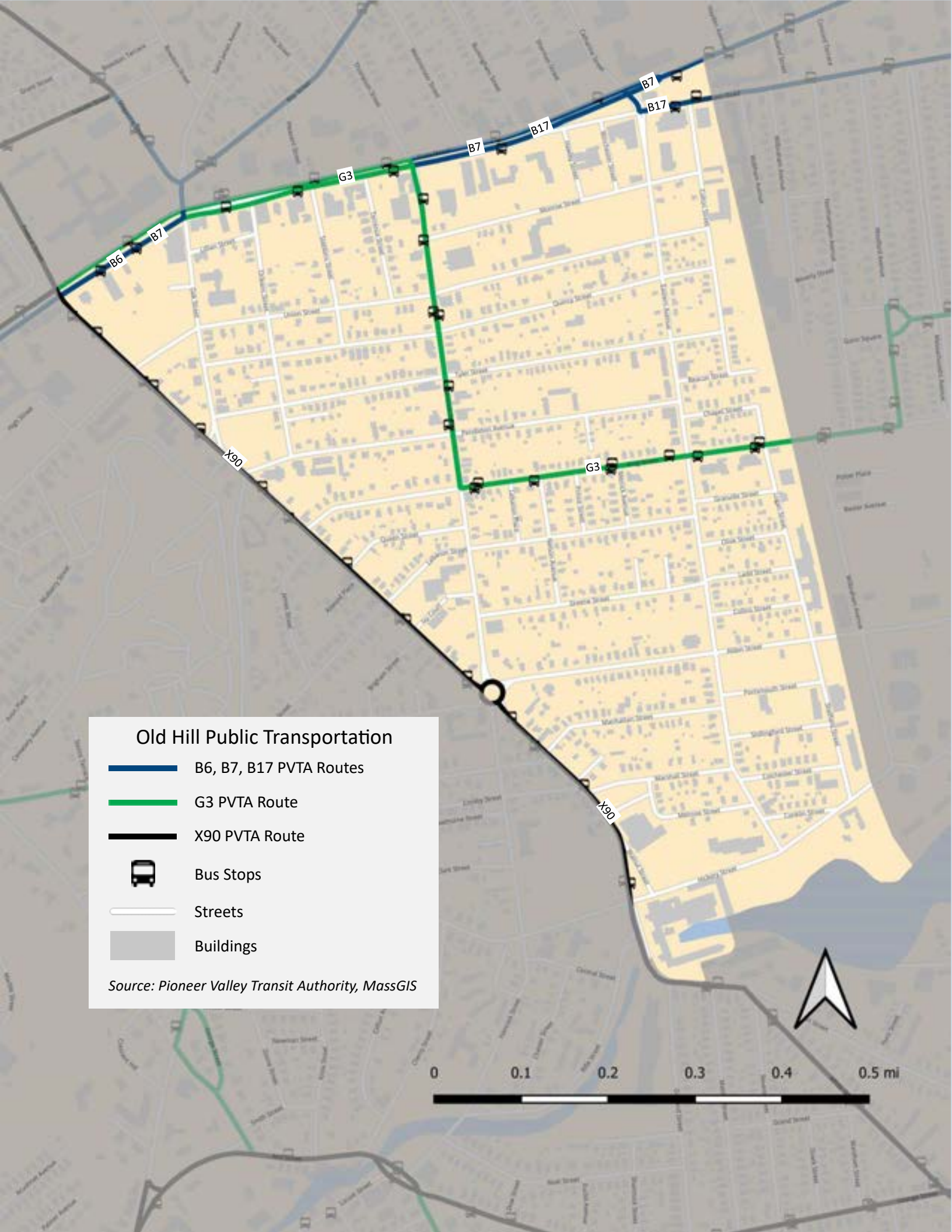


The Highland Division Railroad right-of-way, facing north from Hickory Street at the Springfield College campus.






Looking downstream along the Mill River from Allen Street at the southwestern corner of the Old Hill neighborhood

to the north. This trail would also have the potential to be extended south through the city and into East Longmeadow.

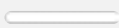


Old Hill Public Transportation

-  B6, B7, B17 PVTA Routes
-  G3 PVTA Route
-  X90 PVTA Route



Bus Stops



Streets



Buildings

Source: Pioneer Valley Transit Authority, MassGIS

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Old Hill Parks and Open Space

Neighborhood Parks

The Old Hill neighborhood has a total of 7.12 acres of public open space, which is the smallest amount for any neighborhood in the city. This is equivalent to just under 3% of the total land area of Old Hill. The open space land includes four parks with playgrounds: Barrows Park in the northwest part of the neighborhood, the DeBerry-Swan Elementary School playground in the northeast, Donna Blake Park on Pendleton Avenue, and Harriet Tubman Park at the southern end of the neighborhood on Hickory Street. Also included in the neighborhood's open space is Mason Square, which is used for passive recreation.

Other Adjacent Parks

Although the total amount of open space in the neighborhood itself is small, there are several other parks that are located just outside the neighborhood boundaries, and are within close proximity to many Old Hill residents. These include the newly-renovated 5.94-acre Ruth Elizabeth Park on Walnut Street, along with the new Samuel Bolden Park on Wilbraham Avenue.

Legacy Trail

Most of the parks in and around the Old Hill neighborhood are linked by the Legacy Trail, a 2.3-mile walking route along the neighborhood's sidewalks. Each park on the route includes interpretive signage to highlight the history of the neighborhood, including the story behind the parks and their namesakes.

Existing Conditions

Site visits, which were conducted in summer 2023 as part of this neighborhood planning



Playground equipment at Harriet Tubman Park



Ruth Elizabeth Park, which is located directly adjacent to the Old Hill neighborhood on the west side of Walnut Street.

process, noted maintenance concerns at some of these parks, including vandalism and graffiti on the playground equipment at Harriet Tubman and Barrows Parks. In addition, the playground area at Harriet Tubman Park was overgrown with grass and weeds, and there was a badly damaged section of the chain link fence between the playground and the adjacent Watershops Pond, rendering it an ineffective safety barrier for children.

Previous page: The entrance to Harriet Tubman Park on Hickory Street



Open space area at the center of Mason Square



Playground at Barrows Park, showing significant vandalism and graffiti

Environmental Justice

Based on the 2020 census, the Old Hill neighborhood is considered to be an environmental justice population, as defined by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA). The EEA defines an environmental justice population as a census block group that meets at least one of four criteria relating to median household income, minority population, and limited English proficiency. The EEA considers such

groups to be most at risk of being unaware of or unable to participate in environmental decision-making, or to benefit from environmental resources. Of the five census block groups that are located in the neighborhood, four meet the criteria based on both income and percentage of minority residents, and the fifth census block also meets the criteria based on English proficiency.


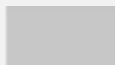

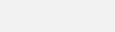
Justice40 Initiative

Because the Old Hill neighborhood is an environmental justice population, it could benefit from federal programs through the Justice40 Initiative, which seeks to support disadvantaged communities that have historically been marginalized and underserved. Under this initiative, environmental justice communities are eligible for federal funding to support investments in any of the following areas: climate change, clean energy and energy efficiency, clean transit, affordable and sustainable housing, training and workforce development, remediation and reduction of legacy pollution, and the development of critical clean water and wastewater

infrastructure. As this is a new initiative, it is important for both the Old Hill Neighborhood Council and the city to assess ways in which the neighborhood could benefit from such investments.



Old Hill Parks and Open Space

-  Parks and Open Space
-  Buildings
-  Legacy Trail
-  Proposed McKnight-Highland Rail Trail

Source: MassGIS, Springfield WebGIS

0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5 mi



Old Hill Economic Development Opportunities

Economic Development Opportunities

As part of this neighborhood investment planning process, a number of potential economic development concerns, ideas, and opportunities in Old Hill emerged through resident surveys, community engagement events, meetings with stakeholders and city staff, and review of existing neighborhood plan recommendations.

These ideas included potential economic development in several key sites throughout the neighborhood. Such development would not only support existing businesses, but would also encourage further investment in the neighborhood by attracting new locally-owned businesses that would meet the needs of residents.

Ben Swan Way

In the early 2000s, the intersection of State Street and Wilbraham Road was reconstructed as part of a project that also included changes to traffic patterns. The section of Wilbraham Road on the south side of Mason Square, which had once been used for eastbound through-traffic, was narrowed and redesigned for local business access, with on-street parking on both sides of the street. By diverting through traffic away from this block, it created a more pedestrian-friendly streetscape, and also enabled easier access to Mason Square Park. Then, in 2022, the street was named Ben Swan Way, in honor of longtime state representative and civil rights activist Ben Swan, whose district office was located on this block.

The southern side of Ben Swan Way is anchored by three adjacent one-story commercial buildings that form a row of eight storefronts between Winchester Street and



*Mason Square, with potential economic development area outlined in yellow.
Image source: MassGIS.*

Eastern Avenue. The building on the westernmost side was built in 1915, and has three storefronts. The building in the middle was constructed in 1947 and also has three storefronts, and the one furthest to the east was constructed in 1948 and has two storefronts, along with a banquet hall in the rear.

Previous page: Ben Swan Way from Eastern Avenue



Ben Swan Way and Mason Square

Given its central location at the heart of the Mason Square area, this site has strong economic development potential. The surrounding area has seen significant investment in recent years, including an expansion of the Indian Motorcycle apartment complex. This project added 60 new units to the existing 139 apartments at the facility by rehabilitating a vacant former factory building and the former Winchester Park Fire Station. Another ongoing project is the rehabilitation of the former Knox Automobile factory. When completed, this project will comprise approximately 114 new apartments. Aside from these apartment projects, other recent investments in the area include the new DeBerry-Swan Elementary School, located a block to the south of Mason Square, and the new Samuel Bolden Park, located to the southeast of Mason Square on Wilbraham Avenue.

Overall, because of the large number of new apartment units in the immediate vicinity of Mason Square, it is important to promote economic development here that will meet the needs of existing and future residents. On Ben Swan Way, this could include rehabilitating or replacing the existing one-story commercial buildings with a two- or three-story mixed-use building, which could feature stores and restaurants on the ground floor and either apartments or offices on the upper floors. This could also include new storefronts on Eastern Avenue, and if this redevelopment work was to advance it would be necessary to decide how deep the building would be, and if redevelopment would change the existing footprint.

Former MCDI Site on Wilbraham Avenue

Another location that has been identified as having potential for redevelopment is the former site of the Massachusetts Career Development Institute (MCDI) in a factory building between Wilbraham Avenue and the former railroad right-of-way. Although located in the Upper Hill neighborhood, the site is directly adjacent to Old Hill, so it could be redeveloped in a way that would serve both neighborhoods.

The MCDI building was abandoned in 2013, and in 2016 it was heavily damaged by an arson fire. The building was subsequently demolished in stages from 2020-2021, and the property is now a 2.5-acre open field directly to the north of the newly created Samuel Bolden Park.

Some existing recommendations have included proposed targeted economic development on this lot. However, based on feedback from residents and from city officials, this site does not appear to be well-suited for economic development, given its location on a side street in a residential area. Instead, this site could be considered as a potential location for a neighborhood resource center. Both Old Hill and Upper Hill residents indicated that community events and celebrations were a high priority, and a neighborhood resource center here would help to meet that need for both neighborhoods. Indeed, throughout the Mason Square area there is almost unanimous consensus on the need for more spaces for youth activities and programming. Job training and workforce development is another area of need, so a neighborhood resource center here could also be used for that purpose.



MCDI site outlined in yellow. Photo taken prior to the demolition of the facility. Image source: MassGIS

This site would be an ideal location for a neighborhood resource center, since it is on the border of the two neighborhoods and is next to a new park. It would also be adjacent to the proposed route of the Highland Rail Trail, which would follow the route of the abandoned railroad grade. However, one possible challenge is the fact that there is currently no direct access from Old Hill to this site. The land immediately to the west of the site is part of the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission



The former MCDI site, looking north from Wilbraham Avenue near Samuel Bolden Park

facility, and it is used for parking and storage. This would require pedestrians from Old Hill to make a lengthy detour either by way of Wilbraham Road or King Street in order to access the site, so any design work should include collaboration with Water and Sewer to explore possible options for enabling pedestrian access from Colton Street to Wilbraham Avenue.

One Stop Plaza Area

Another site that has strong potential for further economic development is the area around the One Stop Plaza and Armory Watershops in the vicinity of Allen, Central, and Hickory Streets. Like the MCDI site, this area is mostly outside the boundaries of the Old Hill neighborhood, but it is directly adjacent to the neighborhood and is in close proximity to many Old Hill residents. The One Stop Plaza is one of the few commercial areas in this part of the neighborhood, so it is important to continue supporting existing businesses here while also encouraging further development to expand available amenities.



One Stop Plaza area, with potential sites of economic development outlined in yellow. The site of the proposed Mill River Greenway is outlined in green. Image source: MassGIS.

The plaza consists of an L-shaped building on the west side of the property, with six storefronts on the ground floor. As of 2023, these are occupied by two restaurants, three markets or convenience stores, and a juice shop. A portion of this building also has an upper floor, which has office space. On the eastern side of the plaza, on Rifle Street, is a smaller standalone building that currently houses a restaurant. In total, the plaza occupies three separate lots, which have a combined area of about 1.4 acres. About two-thirds of this acreage is paved surface parking areas. Vehicles can access the plaza via entrances on Central Street, Hickory Street, and Rifle Street.

Adjacent to the plaza are several city-owned properties. At the corner of Central and Rifle

Streets is a small 0.11-acre parcel owned by the Springfield Redevelopment Authority. On the eastern side of the plaza, between Hickory, Allen, and Rifle Streets, is a larger 0.71-acre parcel, which is owned by the city. This had previously been the site of a long-vacant building, but it was damaged by the 2011 tornado and was subsequently demolished in 2015. Since then, the lot has remained vacant, but its location at a major intersection, adjacent to an established center, makes it an ideal site for concentrated economic development. Residents and other stakeholders have suggested that a small grocery store here could help to increase access to a wider variety of food, at prices that are more affordable than existing options in the area.



Vacant city-owned land to the east of the One Stop Plaza, with the Armory Watershops in the distance.

Other potential opportunities in this area include the Armory Watershops. This is an important historic resource, and its redevelopment would benefit Old Hill and the other adjacent neighborhoods. It had been underutilized for many years after the Armory closed, and in 1988 it was badly damaged by a chlorine fire that forced the evacuation of many area residents. It was subsequently damaged by the 2011 tornado, but in 2018 a new owner purchased the property and announced long-term plans to rehabilitate it for a mix of high-tech light manufacturing, e-commerce, storage, and office space. Because of this proximity, any economic development efforts adjacent to the One Stop Plaza should include collaboration with the Watershops owners.

Aside from the Watershops, another nearby property with redevelopment potential is 485-493 Central Street, which is across the street from One Stop Plaza. This 0.27-acre Business B parcel occupies a highly visible location at the corner of Central and Rifle Streets, but the buildings here have been vacant for many years. The property includes a historic early 19th century building that had been used as a store as early as the 1840s. Also on the property is a detached, two-vehicle garage, which is located near the Rifle Street side of the parcel. Any economic development plans here in the vicinity of One Stop Plaza should also include collaborating with the owner of this property, including a study to determine whether it would be feasible to restore the historic structure here.

Overall, this area has seen many recent investments, including improvements to Ruth Elizabeth Park, roadway improvements on Hickory and Central Streets, and the conversion of the former Elias Brookings School into apartments. Economic development here at this site would be able to further build upon those investments, and would provide a neighborhood commercial hub that would not only serve Maple-High/Six Corners, but also Old Hill and Forest Park.

Additionally, given the proximity to Springfield College, there are opportunities for collaboration with the college to attract local businesses that will meet the needs of residents as well as college students.

Economic development here in this area could also be incorporated into the proposed Mill River Greenway. There is widespread support among neighborhood residents for such a project, which would link this area to the Connecticut River. Although the exact route of this proposed greenway has not yet been determined, its eastern terminus would likely be here in the vicinity of the One Stop Plaza, although it also has the potential to be extended further east to Springfield College, where it could connect with another proposed greenway, the Highland Rail Trail.



One Stop Plaza, seen from Central Street



Vacant buildings at the corner of Central and Rifle Streets.

Six Corners

As described earlier in this plan, one of the recently completed projects in the area was the Six Corners roundabout, which is located on the border of the Old Hill and Maple-High/Six Corners neighborhoods. This roundabout idea emerged out of earlier neighborhood planning efforts, and it replaced a complex signalized intersection that had been identified as a high crash location.

With this project now completed, it creates opportunities for expanding upon this investment by encouraging concentrated economic development in the area. Most of the parcels around and near the roundabout are zoned for either Business A and Business B, but many of these are currently vacant or have car-centric uses that are not favorable to creating a walkable, pedestrian-oriented business area.

On the western side of the intersection is Gerrish Park, a 1.07-acre park that is primarily used for passive recreation. It currently has minimal amenities: paved walking paths, several historical markers/monuments, and trash/recycling receptacles. It does not currently have any benches, so this may be a possibility to explore, in order to help promote Six Corners as a focal point of the neighborhood.

Moving clockwise from Gerrish Park is a triangular area of land between Walnut and Hancock Streets. The parcel at the point of this triangle is a 0.18-acre lot that is currently the site of a restaurant.



Six Corners roundabout, with potential economic development areas outlined in yellow. Image source: MassGIS.



Facing north from the east side of the Six Corners roundabout, with Alden Street in the foreground.

The building is set back from the roundabout, with a small parking lot in front of it. Behind this restaurant are four vacant city-owned parcels that extend from Walnut to Hancock Street and comprise a total of 0.31 acres. Because of its

current Business A zoning, and its proximity to the roundabout, this site has strong potential for economic development.

The next area of land, between Hancock and Alden Streets, is currently the site of a gas station and car wash, with a chain dollar store directly to the north of it on Hancock Street. Because the existing gas station and car wash occupies a large parcel in a highly visible location on the roundabout, it may be worthwhile to explore alternatives such as pedestrian-oriented local business development that would better support the needs of neighborhood residents.

The next corner, between Alden and Walnut Streets, had once been the site of another gas station, but much of this land was taken in order to construct the roundabout. As a result, the parcel is less than half of its original size, and is currently owned by the city. It is adjacent to two other vacant city-owned parcels on Alden Street, which total about 0.24 acres. These two lots are zoned for Residence B, but one possible option could be to explore re-zoning these for Business A and redevelop for local businesses.

To the southeast of the roundabout, both sides of Walnut Street are currently used for automobile-related purposes. On the east side of the street is a used car dealership, and on the west side is a repair shop and salvage yard. Neither use is ideal for promoting pedestrian-oriented businesses in the area, so these may be potential sites to focus on for economic redevelopment.



Vacant land on the south side of Alden Street



Facing south from the Six Corners roundabout, with Walnut Street in the left and Hancock Street in the center of the scene.

The last corner of the Six Corners roundabout is in the southwest, between Hancock and Ashley Streets. This is currently the site of a mixed-use property that has four storefronts on the ground floor and two apartments on the upper floor. This site is more pedestrian-oriented than most of the other existing buildings around the roundabout. Because of this, economic development activity here could include collaborating with property owners and existing businesses to continue to encourage and support local businesses.

Neighborhood Investment Process

Community Engagement

The Community Building and Engagement team from Way Finders led the community engagement process for the Springfield Neighborhood Investment Plans. As part of the process, resident leaders who live in the targeted areas were invited to participate to support the Planning Team with strategic thinking, outreach, and engagement. The team was comprised of PVPC staff, Way Finders' staff, Way Finders' Resident Health Advocates, a representative from the Old Hill Neighborhood Council, and volunteer community advocates.

The process was divided into two phases that consisted of multiple parts. In phase one, engagement consisted of:

1. Community meetings, both in-person and on Zoom
2. Resident surveying
3. Small business and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) event

Phase 1- Community Meetings

In February, two project kick-off meetings were held, one at the Mason Square Branch Library in the Old Hill Neighborhood, and the other at the Bay Area Neighborhood Council in the Bay neighborhood. The purpose of the kickoff meeting was to introduce residents to the Springfield Neighborhood Investment Plan project, engage residents, solicit residents' thoughts on key issues for city investment, along with lifting concerns, ideas, and issues.

Each meeting was two hours. Live Spanish interpretation was available to anyone who requested it. Food was provided to participants. At the first meeting, 42 people were in attendance including the mayor, who gave a welcome address, an at-large city councilor, and a state representative for the Mason Square area. At the second meeting,

residents were joined by another at-large city councilor and community leaders.

On March 9, two Community Mapping Meetings were held, one at lunchtime on Zoom, and the other in the evening at Mason Square Branch Library. The meetings were a Wiki-mapping workshop in which residents could interface directly with the Wiki-mapping portal to identify specific locations for any issues of concern and potential solutions. The mapping activity focused on seven areas of interest: Arts and Culture, Economic Development, Energy, Food, Housing, Parks and Open Spaces, and Transportation. Using the online wiki-map designed by PVPC, residents were able to see their contributions mapped in real-time. Residents could also share their thoughts independently by accessing the portal on their own.

In April, an additional in-person Community Mapping Workshop was held in the Maple High-Six Corners neighborhood at Elias Brookings Apartments on Hancock Street. This workshop further engaged residents to identify issues, concerns, and ideas for investment in their neighborhood.

In May, students from the University of Massachusetts Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning program presented their final work and design projects at a gallery event and discussion at Mason Square Library. Many residents attended and were able to see renderings and live models for potential Mason Square development.

In total, PVPC and Way Finders engaged more than 180 people over the course of seven in-person and five Zoom meetings.

Communication/Promotion

- Press releases created and sent to local media outlets (print, radio, TV, online)
- Flyers distributed at community meetings and programs (i.e., Mason Square C3, Neighborhood Councils, Bay Area Neighborhood chair aerobics, etc.)
- Social media posts promoting meetings on Way Finders page, with public sharing available, and tags to partner pages
- Flyers with a QR code that linked to PVPC Springfield Neighborhood Plans website distributed widely
- Postcards with QR codes with a direct link to online sector-specific surveys distributed at community events
- Email invitations to community meetings sent via Constant Contact to more than 10,000 Way Finders clients
- Email invitations sent to stakeholders, community partners, businesses, community organizations, and multiple listservs
- Personal phone calls/texts made to Way Finders CBE constituents who live in target neighborhoods
- Flyer for Community Meetings distributed at 44 key locations throughout the five neighborhoods including the Dunbar Community Center, Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center, Boys and Girls Club on Acorn Street, Baystate Health Neighborhood Health Center, Mason Square Library, Mason Wright, Raymond Jordan Senior Center, St. John's Congregational Church food pantry, housing units, day care centers, barber shops, salons, bodegas, churches and other small businesses.

Surveying

Between March and August, a series of online and print surveys was offered in both Spanish and English and available for residents to complete.

In phase one, a total of 160 people participated in a general Resident Survey. PVPC and Way Finders also collected feedback on a micro survey, which was created in response to residents' request for a shortened survey version that could be taken when less time was available. A total of 122 micro surveys were collected.

In phase two, topic specific surveys were launched in June and open until August. The topics were Arts and Culture, Economic Development, Energy, Food, Housing, Parks and Open Spaces, and Transportation. This allowed residents to further narrow priorities for investment in their neighborhood based on feedback from the first round of surveys. A total of 406 topic surveys were collected.

Survey engagement occurred at a series of community events as an opportunity for residents to fill out polls about the topics. Surveys were collected at the Annual Easter Egg Hunt and Community Fair at Magazine Park (April), Springfield Neighborhood Housing Services Annual Homeownership Block Party and the Bay Neighborhood Council community event (both in June), and the Annual Hickory Street Harambee Festival and the Mason Square National Night Out (both in August). Surveys were also collected at key locations throughout the neighborhood.

In total, 688 surveys were collected.

Small business and Community Based Organization (CBO) engagement event

In May 2023, PVPC and Way Finders collaborated with Stone Soul Inc., a grassroots non-profit in Mason Square, and hosted an in-person Community Conversation and Networking Event for neighborhood small business owners and community-based organizations. Small businesses and CBOs with owners/staff in attendance included barber shop owners, restaurant owners, neighborhood auto repair shops, real estate/housing, Panache Banquet Hall, childcare owners, private medical consultants, the CREW, Stone Soul, Men of Color Health Alliance, Association of Black Business Professionals, Springfield Creative City Collective, and more.

Recognizing that creating a strong link between the community and the everyday work done by the city's many departments is essential for successful neighborhood planning, small business owners were able to provide input on a neighborhood map, take surveys, and provide ideas to the city on ways they could be better supported regarding city policies and practices.

Phase 2

During this phase, the engagement process shifted focus to prioritize draft solutions identified from the Phase One input. The prioritization process for actions to include in the Mason Square and Maple High/Six Corners plans began in June 2023 with neighborhood meetings and release of the topic-specific surveys.

During this phase, we hosted a series of four community meetings on Zoom for residents to both prioritize top recommendations and build their capacity by learning from city department heads (or delegates) about how the city works and prioritizes action in their neighborhoods and throughout the city.

After each meeting, the polls from these meetings were turned into online surveys and emailed to Neighborhood Councils and CBOs to engage more residents and community leaders in completing the prioritization process.

Zoom Meetings were:

June 21 - Housing and Energy with Gerry McCafferty, Housing Director

June 28 - Parks and Recreation/Open Spaces with Patrick Sullivan, Director of Parks, Recreation & Building Management

July 12 - Arts & Culture/Economic Development/Food Access with Timothy Sheehan, Chief Development Officer

July 19 - Transportation with Christopher Cignoli, DPW Director and Sandra Sheehan, Pioneer Valley Transit Authority Administrator.

PVPC posted recordings of Zoom meetings and presentation slides to the Springfield Neighborhood Investment Plan webpage for residents who missed the meetings.

Draft review by Neighborhood Councils, and other stakeholders

PVPC created drafts for each of the five neighborhoods during this phase. The draft plans were posted to their website, and print copies made available to each of the Neighborhood Councils.

From August to December 2023, PVPC staff engaged Neighborhood Councils directly by attending multiple meetings to review details of the drafts directly. This offered more opportunity to modify plans, if needed.

In addition, a series of one-on-one meetings were held with sector stakeholders to provide further opportunities for draft review.

Goals and Strategies

City Goals

The Springfield Neighborhood Investment Planning process is built upon years of planning efforts across the city. Over the past decade, city-wide planning efforts have engaged residents and stakeholders in planning for a more resilient and equitable future, often in direct response to crises such as the 2011 tornado and COVID-19 global pandemic. Within these many plans, goals for neighborhood-specific projects and programs have been integrated with broader city goals.

City Goal #1: Improve transparency, trust, and communication between the city and the Old Hill neighborhood.

One of the keys to fostering a strong neighborhood is to ensure that there is active and ongoing communication and collaboration between the neighborhood residents, the Neighborhood Council, and the city government. As such, it is vital to ensure that residents feel empowered to bring concerns and ideas to their local government, and also to participate in the decision-making process.

Strategies:

- City, neighborhood council, and residents collaborate to design, create, and implement an equitable and inclusive neighborhood planning process in Old Hill, ensuring consistency with city's values of climate resilience and sustainability.
- City communicates all aspects of the Targeted Neighborhood Investment Plan update process and implementation by posting all materials on the city website-or linked to it-and providing paper copies at City Hall, Neighborhood Council offices and other locations as determined by residents and NC representatives, and to people who request them, including calendar of meetings scheduled, plan template, access to the Data Atlas and expanded GIS maps website, zoning regulations, related city plans, draft products, deliverables, notes from meetings and any other draft and final work products.
- Build the capacity of residents and the city staff to understand how each other 'works' and the forces limiting, constraining, and facilitating each group's ability to act.

City Goal # 2: Identify, prioritize, and implement investments in the Old Hill neighborhood.

In creating this neighborhood plan, the goal is to not only involve residents in the process of identifying and prioritizing needs in the neighborhood, but also to ensure ongoing collaboration as the city works to implement this plan over the next ten years.

Strategies:

- City, neighborhood council, and residents identify long-term (8+ years), short-term (6 months to 3 years), and mid-term (4 to 8 years) priority projects for neighborhood stabilization, equity, sustainability, and resiliency.
- City and Neighborhood Council collaborates to conduct work on a neighborhood level that is reflective of larger city-wide planning practices, such as ReBuild Springfield, the Urban Renewal Plan, the Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP), the Complete Streets Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan, the Economic Development Plan, the Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Hazard Mitigation Plan, and any other relevant plans.

Neighborhood Goals

As part of this neighborhood investment process, a number of goals and strategies emerged for the Old Hill neighborhood. These were based on resident and stakeholder engagement, along with a review of existing neighborhood and city plans and an evaluation of current neighborhood conditions.

Neighborhood Goal #1: Maintain the quality of the neighborhood's housing stock.

On the Spring 2023 resident survey conducted as part of this neighborhood planning process, Old Hill residents overwhelmingly chose housing as a top priority out of seven major categories. The housing stock in the neighborhood is primarily single-family and two-family homes.

Many of these homes date back to when the neighborhood was developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but others were built more recently as infill construction. In addition, the neighborhood has a significant number of vacant parcels, which present opportunities for further development. Overall, the housing goals for the Old Hill neighborhood include maintaining and improving the existing housing stock, along with encouraging new residential construction.

Strategies:

- City and collaborators expand funding and/or programs to provide financial assistance for maintaining, rehabilitating, and renovating houses in the Old Hill neighborhood.
- Neighborhood Council identifies and prioritizes vacant and/or deteriorated properties for rehabilitation.
- City collaborates with Neighborhood Council to educate residents on the process for reporting and resolving code violations.
- City and Neighborhood Council explore funding sources to construct new homes for first time homebuyers on city-owned land.
- City and Neighborhood Council work with property owners to pursue infill development on vacant lots.
- City and Neighborhood Council collaborate to increase homeownership rates and support first-time homebuyers in the Old Hill.

Neighborhood Goal #2: Expand opportunities to walk, bike, and take public transportation.

The Old Hill neighborhood is well served by public transportation on the main roads, but it is important to ensure that residents on the side streets can safely access these bus stops. On the resident survey, respondents placed a high priority on both the walkability of the neighborhood and also on improving the experience of taking the bus, including installing new shelters. In general, Old Hill respondents placed less of a priority on biking, roadway improvements, and traffic calming measures.

Strategies:

- Neighborhood Council collaborates with Elias Brookings School to expand its Walking School Bus Program, and collaborates with DeBerry-Swan School to create a similar program.
- Neighborhood Council and city collaborate to identify areas with high pedestrian traffic and install benches to accommodate people with mobility difficulties.
- Neighborhood Council and city collaborate to identify high-priority areas and develop strategies to slow down cars, allow safe street crossing, and protect pedestrians and cyclists.
- Neighborhood Council identifies areas where trees and other overgrowth obstruct lines of sight at key street corners, and shares list with city to improve visibility for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists.

Neighborhood Goal #3: Build community and pride in neighborhood

Survey respondents from the Old Hill neighborhood indicated both a need for additional parks in the Mason Square area, along with a desire for more community events and celebrations. As there is a limited amount of parkland within the neighborhood, it is important to ensure that existing parks are well-utilized. This can help to establish a sense of place within the neighborhood, while also serving as a venue for expanded programming and events.

Strategies:

- City and Neighborhood Council collaborate to organize community events at Ruth Elizabeth Park.
- City and MassDOT explore the feasibility of expanding Harriet Tubman Park and connecting it to the proposed Mill River Greenway Bike Path.
- City, Neighborhood Council, and Upper Hill Residents Council explore possibility of acquiring a site for an Old Hill/Upper Hill neighborhood resource center.
- Neighborhood Council works to establish a Neighborhood Branding Program, including neighborhood logo and flag, in order to enhance feelings of pride in the neighborhood.
- Neighborhood Council promotes greater participation in the organization by publicizing its work and by holding its meetings in larger facilities.
- Neighborhood Council organizes yearly celebrations to build community spirit and connect residents with resources.
- Neighborhood Council reaches out to the three colleges in and around the neighborhood to collaborate on youth sports and other youth development programs.
- City and Neighborhood Council collaborate on developing a public outreach campaign to keep streets, sidewalks, and parking lots clean.
- Neighborhood Council identifies and collaborates with the city on removing brush, trash, and garbage from city-owned vacant lots.
- Neighborhood Council and city collaborate to identify and prioritize maintenance and safety concerns at neighborhood parks and playgrounds.

Neighborhood Goal #4: Strengthen economy of neighborhood

Given the amount of vacant or underutilized land in Old Hill, there are significant opportunities for strengthening the economy of the neighborhood. On the resident survey, respondents indicated that their preferences were to focus business development efforts on the Mason Square area, and also in the vicinity of the One Stop Plaza and the Armory Watershops. Respondents also indicated that the development of a full-line grocery store was a high priority for improving food access in the neighborhood.

Strategies:

- Office of Planning and Economic Development explores the possibility of District Improvement Financing for the Watershops area.
- City and Neighborhood Council explore the possibility of negotiating with neighborhood institutional uses to make payments in lieu of taxes.
- Office of Planning and Economic Development and Neighborhood Council reach out to local businesses to assess interest in establishing a Neighborhood Business Association.
- City and Neighborhood Council explore available funding resources, including but not limited to funds available from the Office of Neighborhood Services Neighborhood Targeted Improvement Program (NTIP) to implement low cost projects in the community.
- Office of Planning and Economic Development collaborates with property owners at 1 Allen Street to create a long-term plan for the property.
- Neighborhood Council and the city collaborate with Maple-High/Six Corners to create a plan for the redevelopment of Walnut Street.
- Neighborhood Council and city collaborate to bring a full-line grocery store to the Old Hill neighborhood.
- Targeted economic development at Ben Swan Way to create a town center setting for Old Hill and all neighborhoods of Mason Square, including considering the addition of a three-story building along Ben Swan Way with retail on the ground floor and offices/apartments on the upper floors.
- City and stakeholders collaborate to develop job training programs in the Mason Square area.

Recommendations and Prioritization

Neighborhood-Specific Recommendations

As part of this neighborhood investment process recommendations, residents of Old Hill have identified and prioritized specific areas of need for their neighborhood:

Develop a neighborhood resource center for Old Hill and potentially for Upper Hill

Neighborhood residents have consistently placed a high priority on a neighborhood resource center. The Old Hill Neighborhood Council has an existing meeting space, but it is too small for the goals of the council. One possible solution is to collaborate with the Upper Hill Citizens Council on developing a facility that would serve the residents of both neighborhoods.

As described in the Economic Development Opportunities section, one potential location for this could be the former MCDI site on Wilbraham Avenue, adjacent to the new Samuel Bolden Park. Aside from this site, another possible site that was identified by the Neighborhood Council is the former school building at the corner of Eastern Avenue and Alden Street.

Moving forward, the two neighborhood councils should collaborate with the city to determine the feasibility of utilizing either of these sites, or if necessary, identify other possible city-owned vacant properties that could be developed into a neighborhood resource center.

Redevelop former MCDI site in collaboration with Old Hill and Upper Hill neighborhoods

Although the former MCDI site would be an ideal location for a neighborhood resource center, this might not be the only potential use for this large vacant parcel. Given its location adjacent to Samuel Bolden Park, the site could be utilized for expanded recreational opportunities. It could also be redeveloped as a grocery store or other food-related use, in order to address food security concerns in the Mason Square area. As such, a feasibility study should be conducted to evaluate potential uses. Old Hill and Upper Hill residents believe that the redevelopment of this site should be a priority, and they have indicated that they want to be involved in any decision-making process involving this property. Whether or not there is a collaboration with the Upper Hill Council, this recommendation is a top priority for the Old Hill Council.

As part of any redevelopment process at the site, residents have also expressed an interest in collaborating with the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission, which owns an adjacent parcel to the west of the MCDI site and Samuel Bolden Park. This lot is primarily used by the commission for outdoor storage of vehicles, pipes, and other equipment, and residents believe that it is important to reduce the visual impact of this storage area in conjunction with any redevelopment plans.

Promote and support homeownership in the Old Hill neighborhood

Old Hill residents have indicated that housing is a high priority, especially through expanding the existing funding sources for rehabilitation and maintenance of existing homes. As described in the Housing section of this neighborhood investment plan, there are a number of existing citywide initiatives to support homeowners, but this continues to be an area of concern, especially for neighborhoods such as Old Hill that have an aging housing stock.

Aside from rehabilitation and maintenance programs, Old Hill residents have also expressed an interest in increasing the neighborhood's homeownership rate. This could include constructing new single-family homes on the many vacant parcels in the neighborhood, along with expanding existing programs to provide education and financial support for prospective first-time homebuyers.

District-Wide Recommendations

The four neighborhoods that make up the Mason Square district, combined with the adjacent Maple High/Six Corners neighborhood, identify both as individual neighborhoods and also as a district—especially for economic development purposes. These neighborhoods have a collective sense of themselves, and throughout the neighborhood investment planning process several district wide recommendations emerged. These four recommendations are all supported by the five Neighborhood Councils and by the majority of residents, stakeholders, businesses and community-based organizations that participated in the plan development process.

Work with the Springfield Redevelopment Authority and the city to create and implement an urban renewal plan that will promote concentrated economic development in and around Mason Square

Because Mason Square is a major focal point for the neighborhoods in this part of the city, this would be an ideal location for further economic development. Based on resident feedback, any such urban renewal plan should include:

- Increased support for Black- and Brown-owned businesses.
- Recruitment of sit-down restaurants and other businesses to meet basic needs of all the existing residents and the many new residents at the recently developed apartment complexes.
- Recruiting a bank to the Mason Square area to improve access to financial services for residents of the district.
- Renovations and improvements of existing storefront exteriors.
- Streetscape improvements such as an increased number of waste and recycling receptacles, more shade trees, benches, pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, shelters at bus stops and improved lighting.
- Vocational training programs that will expand employment opportunities for district residents and increase the pool of job candidates for local employers.
- Promoting the development of light manufacturing on industrial-zoned parcels, in order to expand job opportunities for district residents.

Expand existing city programs that assist homebuyers and homeowners

Throughout the neighborhood investment planning process in all five of the Mason Square area neighborhoods, residents have regularly raised the issue of housing. In particular, residents believe that increasing homeownership rates and supporting existing homeowners are high priorities for these neighborhoods. As outlined earlier in this plan, there are a number of existing city programs, but many of these are limited in terms of eligibility requirements and in terms of the total number of applicants who receive funding.

Specific actions should include:

- Increasing funding for city programs that assist homeowners in maintaining, repairing, and restoring their homes.
- Increasing funding for programs and initiatives that provide education and assistance to first-time homebuyers.
- Constructing single-family homes on vacant, city-owned parcels for first-time homebuyers.

Recruit a grocery store to expand food access in the district

Based on resident feedback, there is a need for expanded grocery options in the Mason Square area. Residents noted that the existing grocery store in the district meets some of their needs. However, they also noted that, as a relatively small grocery store serving a large population, there is no competition, and their prices seem to be higher than at full-line grocery stores outside of the district.

Resident feedback has been split between those who prefer a small, locally owned grocery store, and those who would favor a larger chain grocery store in Mason Square. Overall, though, residents are in agreement that there is a need for expanded availability of healthy food options, including fresh, affordable, culturally appropriate produce.

Pilot an electronic community kiosk at the Mason Square Branch Library

Throughout the neighborhood investment planning process, residents as well as city officials have expressed an interest in improving communication between the city and its residents. One way to accomplish is to pilot an electronic community kiosk outside of the Mason Square Branch Library, with the goal of eventually installing these in other locations throughout the city. These kiosks could be updated in real time, and could be used to display transit schedules, highlight upcoming events and other notifications, connect residents to important resources, and issue emergency alerts.

Develop a multi-use trail that would link the Mason Square neighborhoods with other parts of the city

Residents throughout the Mason Square and Maple-High/Six Corners neighborhoods have generally indicated support for a multi-use trail, which could potentially utilize portions of the abandoned railroad right-of-way where feasible. Such a trail would provide expanded opportunities for exercise, while also providing an alternative transportation route for bicyclists and pedestrians. Development of this trail should include:

- Collaboration with neighborhood councils on the route of the trail
- Collaboration with abutters to address concerns related to privacy and security.
- Creation and implementation of a safety plan to ensure that residents are able to safely utilize the trail.
- Installation of trailside signage for wayfinding and to highlight the history of the Mason Square district and its residents.

Conduct a feasibility study of the proposed Mill River Greenway

This proposed greenway was the subject of a 2010 Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning masters project by Amy C. Verel at University of Massachusetts Amherst. It would link the Old Hill and Maple-High/Six Corners neighborhoods to the Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway, and it would also have the potential to be extended to other proposed multi-use trails in the Mason Square area.

During the community engagement process of this neighborhood investment plan, residents expressed support for this proposed greenway. If this plan was to move forward, the next steps would be to:

- Identify the route of the proposed multi-use trail, with a preference for utilizing city-owned land in order to minimize land takings.
- Conduct a feasibility study to identify engineering challenges, environmental concerns, and estimated costs for constructing the greenway.

Action Plan

Primary Goals			
Goal 1: Develop a neighborhood resource center for Old Hill and Upper Hill			
Action	Lead Implementer	Collaborators	Timeline
Determine the feasibility of utilizing MCDI or former school building at Eastern Ave and Alden St. as neighborhood resource center. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Contract an organization to conduct a feasibility study 	City of Springfield	Old Hill & Upper Hill Neighborhood Councils	1-2 years
Goal 2: Redevelop former MCDI site in collaboration with Old Hill and Upper Hill			
Action	Lead Implementer	Collaborators	Timeline
Develop plan for the former MCDI site. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a feasibility study to evaluate potential uses. Host neighborhood and community meetings to discuss the needs and vision of the community Lead democratic decision-making processes to inform ultimate decision 	Old Hill Neighborhood Council	Old Hill & Upper Hill Neighborhood Councils	1-2 years
Goal 3: Promote and support homeownership in the Old Hill neighborhood			
Action	Lead Implementer	Collaborators	Timeline
Investigate best ways to increase homeownership rates: Community Land Trusts, Co-operative housing models, etc. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Work with local organizations on co-ops, land trusts, and housing issues Develop collaboration that has long-term vision, solid decision-making processes, and liaisons to build relationships between orgs Fund the efforts 	City of Springfield	City of Springfield, Wellspring Cooperative, Neighbor to Neighbor, Springfield No One Leaves, Springfield Neighborhood Housing Services, Way Finders	1-2 years
Expand rehab and maintenance programs to repair the aging housing stock.		Springfield Neighborhood Housing Services, Way Finders	1-2 years

Neighborhood Goals			
Goal: Maintain the quality of the neighborhood's housing stock			
Action	Lead Implementer	Collaborators	Timeline
Expand funding and or programs to provide financial assistance for maintaining, rehabbing, and renovating houses in the Old Hill neighborhood. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inventory current programs and assess their needs, scope, and capacity 2. Inventory level and scope of needs for housing rehab 3. Develop proposal for amount needed and scope of work for expanding assistance 	City of Springfield	Springfield Neighborhood Housing Services, Way Finders	1-2 years
Identify and prioritize vacant and or deteriorated properties for rehab. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take inventory of vacant/derelict lots 2. Develop plans for new use of lots 3. Create budget for work 4. Build neighborhood interest in project 	Old Hill Neighborhood Council	City of Springfield	1-2 years
Create a process for educating residents on the process for reporting and resolving code violations. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop code workshop or video that outlines code reporting and resolution 	Building Department	Old Hill Neighborhood Council	6 months
Explore funding sources to construct new homes for first time homebuyers on city-owned land.	City of Springfield	Springfield Neighborhood Housing Services, Neighborhood Council	1-2 years
Work with property owners to pursue infill development on vacant lots.	Office of Planning and Economic Development	Old Hill Neighborhood Council, Property owners	2-3 years
Increase homeownership rates and support first-time homebuyers in the Old Hill.	City of Springfield	Springfield Neighborhood Housing Services, Way Finders	1-2 years

Goal: Expand opportunities to walk, bike, and take public transportation

Action	Lead Implementer	Collaborators	Timeline
Expand the Walking School Bus Program. <div><div>1. Determine where expansion should occur and what barriers may be in the way</div><div>2. Encourage student-parent participation</div></div>	Elias Brookings School, DeBerry-Swan School	Old Hill Neighborhood Council	1 year
Identify areas with high pedestrian traffic and install benches to accommodate people with mobility difficulties. <div><div>1. Use UMass or similar programs to conduct an analysis</div><div>2. Implement recommendations</div></div>	Department of Public Works		1 year
Identify high-priority areas and develop strategies to slow down cars, allow safe street crossing, and protect pedestrians and cyclists. <div><div>1. Contract a thorough traffic analysis and implement the recommendations</div><div>2. Prioritize non-motorized forms of transportation in designs</div></div>			1-2 years
Improve visibility for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists: Identify areas where trees and other overgrowth obstruct lines of sight at key street corners.			

Goal: Build community and pride in the neighborhood

Action	Lead Implementer	Collaborators	Timeline
Organize community events at Ruth Elizabeth Park.	Old Hill Neighborhood Council, Maple-High/Six Corners Neighborhood Council	City of Springfield	Ongoing
Explore the feasibility of expanding Harriet Tubman Park and connecting it to the proposed Mill River Greenway Bike Path.	City of Springfield	MassDOT	

Explore the possibility of acquiring a site for an Old Hill/Upper Hill neighborhood resource center.	Old Hill Neighborhood Council	Upper Hill Residents Council, City of Springfield	2-3 years
Establish a Neighborhood Branding program, including a neighborhood logo and flag to enhance feelings of produce in the neighborhood.			1 year
Promote greater participation in the Neighborhood Council by publicizing its work and by holding its meetings in larger facilities.			1 year
Organize yearly celebrations to build community spirit and connect residents with resources.			Ongoing
Reach out to the three colleges in and around the neighborhood to collaborate on youth sports and other youth development programs.	Old Hill Neighborhood Council, Parks Department	STCC, Springfield College, American International College	1-2 years
Develop a public outreach campaign to keep streets, sidewalks, and parking lots clean.	Old Hill Neighborhood Council	City of Springfield	1 year
Identify and prioritize maintenance and safety concerns at neighborhood parks and playgrounds.	Parks Department	Old Hill Neighborhood Council	1 year
Remove brush, trash, and garbage from the city-owned vacant lots.	City of Springfield		1 year

Goal: Strengthen the economy of the neighborhood			
Action	Lead Implementer	Collaborators	Timeline
Explore the possibility of District Improvement Financing for the Watershops District.	Office of Planning and Economic Development		2-3 years
Explore the possibility of negotiating with neighborhood institutional uses to make payments in lieu of taxes.	City of Springfield	Tax-exempt institutions within Old Hill	1-2 years
Reach out to local businesses to assess interest in establishing a Neighborhood Business Association.	Office of Planning and Economic Development	Local businesses in the neighborhood	1-2 years
Explore available funding resources, including but not limited to funds available from the Office of Neighborhood Targeted Improvement Program (NTIP) to implement low-cost projects in the community.	City of Springfield Neighborhood Targeted Improvement Program (NTIP)		1-2 years
Collaborate with property owners at 1 Allen Street to create a long-term plan for the property.	Office of Planning and Economic Development	Property owners	1-2 years
Create a plan for the redevelopment of Walnut Street.		Neighborhood Council	1-2 years
Bring a full-line grocery store to the Old Hill neighborhood.		Neighborhood Council	2-3 years
Targeted economic development at Ben Swan Way to create a town center setting, including building along Ben Swan Way with mixed use.		Old Hill Neighborhood Council	3-5 years
Develop job training programs in the Mason Square area.			2-3 years

Mason Square District-Wide Recommendations			
Action	Lead Implementer	Collaborators	Timeline
Work with the Springfield Redevelopment Authority and the city to create and implement an urban renewal plan that will promote concentrated economic development in and around Mason Square	Springfield Redevelopment Authority, Office of Planning and Economic Development	All 5 neighborhood councils	2-3 years
Expand existing city programs that assist homeowners and homebuyers to support and increase the home ownership rates in the district	City of Springfield		1 year
Develop a multi-use trail that would link the Mason Square neighborhoods with other parts of the city	City DPW with MassDOT	All 5 neighborhood councils	3-5 years
Recruit a grocery store to expand food access in the district	Office of Planning and Economic Development		2-3 years
Conduct a feasibility study to advance the proposed Mill River Greenway	City Parks Department		3-5 years
Pilot test a community kiosk at the Mason Square Library as a way of improving communication between residents and city initiatives and programs	Mason Square TDI initiative, Office of Planning and Economic Development	Neighborhood councils, community-based organizations	1 year

Examples of Potential Funding Sources	
Arts & Culture	
Cultural Facilities Fund	This program provides funding for public and non-profit cultural facilities such as museums, historic sites, theaters, exhibition spaces, and classrooms. These funds can be used for planning, acquiring, designing, constructing, and rehabilitating eligible facilities.
Local Cultural Council (LCC)	The LCC provides funding for a wide range of cultural activities, including festivals, lectures, performances, and other events that have a public benefit. Eligible applicants include municipalities, organizations, and even private individuals.
Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant Program	This program provides funding for historic preservation planning, including inventorying historic properties and other cultural resources. Such inventories are valuable tools in identifying and prioritizing historic properties, while also highlighting the history of structurally disadvantaged groups whose stories are often overlooked.
Clean Energy	
Community Change Grants	This federal program is administered by the Environmental Protection Agency, and it provides grant funding to address issues relating to pollution and climate change in disadvantaged communities. The entire Old Hill neighborhood qualifies as a disadvantaged community under the program criteria. Applicants must consist of a partnership of two community-based organizations (CBO), or a partnership between a local government and either a CBO or institution of higher learning. These funds can be used for projects relating to issues such as climate resiliency, low- and zero-emission technology and infrastructure, and pollution reduction.
Community Clean Energy Resiliency Initiative (CCERI)	This state program provides funding for clean energy projects that improve municipal resilience and prevent service disruptions caused by climate change.
Green Communities Program	Municipalities in Massachusetts that are designated as Green Communities, including Springfield, are eligible to apply for competitive grants under this program. These grants can be used for projects that reduce municipal carbon footprints. In Springfield, this would not only result in energy savings, but it would also help to reduce the city's high air pollution rates.
Economic Development	
Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	CDBG funds may be used for a variety of economic development-related projects. These include commercial or industrial improvements and assistance, microenterprise assistance, and planning/capacity building projects.
Community One Stop for Growth	One Stop is a single application process that includes a number of different state grant programs relating to economic development and housing. Funding is available for a variety of projects, including community activation & placemaking; planning & zoning; site preparation; buildings; and infrastructure.

Examples of Potential Funding Sources	
Food Security	
Urban Agriculture Program	This program provides funding for the development of urban agriculture, in order to improve access to fresh, local produce in low- and moderate-income areas. Eligible applicants include municipalities, non-profit organizations, educational and public health institutions, and private individuals with commercial urban agriculture experience.
Housing & Historic Preservation	
Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	CDBG funds can be used for a wide range of housing-related initiatives. These include homeowner assistance programs, first-time homebuyer programs, housing rehabilitation, and code enforcement.
Community Preservation Act (CPA)	The CPA is funded by city taxpayers, with matching contributions by the state. These funds are administered by the city's Community Preservation Committee, and can be used to for development of affordable housing along with historic preservation.
Housing Development Incentive Program (HDIP)	The HDIP involves tax incentives for the development of market-rate housing in Gateway Cities in Massachusetts, including Springfield. Eligible projects may involve new construction or substantial rehabilitation of existing buildings, and must be within the city's designated HD Zone. However, the Old Hill neighborhood is not currently within the designated HD Zone.
Housing Stabilization Fund (HSF)	This state-funded program provides funding for acquisition and/or rehabilitation of rental properties, or construction of new properties. Eligible applicants include non-profit and for-profit developers, along with municipalities. All properties that receive HSF assistance must be occupied by low- and moderate-income residents.
Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF)	The MPPF provides funding support for preservation work on buildings that are listed on the State Register of Historic Places. Applicants include municipal governments and non-profit organizations. Within Old Hill, there are only a limited number of buildings currently listed on the State Register, but this number could likely be significantly expanded with additional historic resource surveys.
Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant Program	This program provides funding for historic preservation planning, including inventorying historic properties. Because most of the historic buildings in Old Hill have not yet been inventoried, this would be an important step in prioritizing residential properties for rehabilitation and making them eligible for additional grant opportunities.
National Housing Trust Fund Program (HTF)	Funding from this program can be used to acquire, rehabilitate, or construct new rental properties for residents with incomes at or below 50% of the median area income. Eligible applicants include non-profit developers, along with for-profit developers who are partnered with non-profits that receive support service funds.

Examples of Potential Funding Sources

Parks & Open Space

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	CDBG funds may be used for a variety of public facilities and improvements. These include projects relating to the acquisition, construction, or rehabilitation of open space-related amenities such as parks, playgrounds, public trees, sculptures, and fountains.
Community Preservation Act (CPA)	Along with affordable housing and historic preservation, CPA funds can also be used for projects relating to parks and open space areas in Springfield.
Gateway City Parks Program	This program provides funding for Gateway Cities in Massachusetts, including Springfield, to create or improve parks and other recreational spaces in the city.

Transportation

Chapter 90 Program	This state-funded program provides reimbursement for expenses relating to a wide range of eligible projects. This includes analysis, design, and construction work for roadway improvements, traffic calming measures, bike lanes, sidewalks, and other transportation-related work.
Complete Streets Funding Program	This program provides funding for Massachusetts communities, including Springfield, that have a Complete Streets policy. It provides funding for projects that are identified in the city's Prioritization Plan, which can include intersection redesigns, traffic calming measures, and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements.
MassTrails Grants	This program provides matching reimbursements for projects that involve recreational and shared-use trails. Eligible expenses include the development, design, construction, and maintenance of these trails.
Safe Routes to School Program	This program seeks to make walking and bicycling safer for students traveling to school. Such initiatives not only help to improve student health, but they also improve traffic congestion and air quality.
Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program	This program provides funding for municipalities and public transit authorities to improve safety and accessibility for all roadway users. Eligible projects include bikeshare programs, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and transit infrastructure.

Appendices

Summaries of Recent City-wide Planning Efforts

Prior to the Neighborhood Investment Planning process, the City of Springfield has included neighborhood-level planning objectives as a part of several city-wide plans, projects, and programs.

Rebuild Springfield (2012)

The Rebuild Springfield initiative was created in response to the June 1, 2011 tornado that struck the City of Springfield and produced a four-part comprehensive planning response to the natural disaster. The Rebuild Springfield plan includes a city-wide overview and three district plans for neighborhoods directly impacted by the tornado. The Citywide planning process is organized according to the six Nexus Domains of a healthy and vibrant community. These domains include the physical, cultural, social, organizational, educational, and economic components of a community while listing twenty-one total recommendations. More neighborhood-specific recommendations and strategies are outlined in the district plans: District One (Metro Center and South End), District Two (Maple High-Six Corners, Upper Hill, Old Hill, and Forest Park), and District Three (Sixteen Acres and East Forest Park).

Local Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (2023)

The City of Springfield's latest hazard mitigation plan presents a thorough summary of community features and risks posed by natural hazards. The planning document identifies and prioritizes forty-four total mitigation actions for the City to implement. While many of the included strategies are city-wide in scope, several features are identified as priorities within specific neighborhoods.

Strong, Healthy, and Just: Climate Action and Resilience Plan (2017)

Springfield's first climate action and resilience plan in name, "Strong, Healthy, and Just: Climate Action and Resilience Plan" (SHJ) was developed in 2017 to provide a path for the City of Springfield to reduce overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and to enhance urban resilience. The SHJ plan builds upon over 15 years of climate action by the City and first recommends the City to conduct an analysis of the progress that had been made on previous plans and their climate-related strategies. A second priority recommendation presented is for the City to better communicate the ongoing and planned climate action and resilience work, especially in neighborhoods with high concentrations of chronically stressed residents. Additionally, the plan expands on ten recommended Action Categories with goals and strategies to reduce GHG emissions and enhance resilience.

Springfield Complete Streets Prioritization Plan – 2020 Update

Expanding on the 2017 Springfield Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, the latest update provides an examination of more recent data and a list of projects developed through various engagement efforts. The updated plan identifies previous priority projects that have been completed both city-wide and within individual neighborhoods. emissions and enhance resilience.

Local Rapid Recovery Plan (2021)

Springfield's Local Rapid Recovery Plan was the result of the Commonwealth's Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program intended to provide every municipality in Massachusetts the opportunity to develop actionable, project-based recovery plans tailored to the unique economic challenges and COVID-19 related impacts to downtowns, town centers, and commercial areas. The LRRP focuses on Springfield's Main Street Convention Center District (MSCC) in the Metro Center neighborhood. Through the LRRP process, fifteen projects were identified as priority opportunities for investing the city's initial American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding.

Open Space and Recreation Plan (2022)

The Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) developed in 2022 outlines a comprehensive park and conservation land improvement program and establishes a framework for guiding city expenditures through Fiscal Year 2027. The plan establishes six broad goals that were developed through input from each City department involved in managing open space.

Safety Action Plan (2022)

Collaborating with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the City created the Safety Action Plan to provide information and direction on strategies and treatments most likely to improve roadway safety performance within the city. The plan addresses citywide crash patterns and trends and systemic treatments that can be used to address those trends. The content of the plan establishes a vision and goals specific to roadway safety performance and establishes a basis for informing roadway safety performance improvements over the next three to five years. Strategies for addressing roadway safety improvements are separated into "engineering" and "non-engineering" countermeasures. Specific countermeasure locations are identified for intersections, signalized and unsignalized, along with corridors throughout the city.

Capital Improvement Plan, FY 2024-2028 (2023)

The City of Springfield's annual update of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) acts as a roadmap for the acquisition, renovation, or construction of new or existing facilities and infrastructure. As part of the City of Springfield's continuing efforts to develop robust long-term strategic planning initiatives, the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for Fiscal Years 2024-2028 lists all capital improvement needs throughout the city, and the estimated cost associated with those projects. The estimated cost for all 477 projects totals \$1.3 billion, with the highest priority projects totaling \$182 million. These 18 "Grade A" projects include investments in public safety, upgrades to schools and municipal buildings, road resurfacing, city-wide systemic safety interventions and numerous projects aimed at driving economic development, while improving the safety, mobility, and the quality of life of the residents of Springfield.

Existing Neighborhood Plans

The City of Springfield has a long history of engaging its residents through neighborhood planning efforts. In the 1980s and 1990s there were dedicated and continual efforts from City planning staff to collaborate with neighborhood councils and associations to create Neighborhood Plans. Much of the progress initiated through neighborhood planning projects was halted in the early 2000s, while the city was under receivership.

While the City regained its financial autonomy in 2009, the economic impacts of the Great Recession and the devastation caused by the 2011 tornado presented opportunities to refocus neighborhood planning in the 2010s, which centered on the redevelopment of downtown neighborhoods. In early 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic forced planning efforts to pause and pivot to supporting residents and businesses most at risk. Federal funding made available through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has renewed the City's capacity and commitment to neighborhood planning.

Old Hill Neighborhood Plan (2004)

This neighborhood plan provides an overview of existing conditions and identifies key issues to prioritize: housing and homeownership, transportation and infrastructure, open space, and neighborhood edges. Recommendations to address these issues include providing greater opportunities for homeownership, partnering with institutions in and around the neighborhood, upgrading streets to improve the aesthetics and safety of the neighborhood, and identifying funding sources from the city, state, and federal levels, along with funding from private investors.

2008 Revitalization Plan

A follow-up effort to the extensive work outlined in the 2012 Rebuild Springfield Plan, the Watershops District Revitalization Plan focuses on a small area within the city-wide plan's District 2 (Maple High-Six Corners, Old Hill, Upper Hill, and Forest Park), an area bounded by the Six Corners Intersection to the north, Springfield College to the east, Johnny Appleseed Park to the south, and the intersection of Pine Street and Central Street to the west. The plan envisions a future Watershops District that includes three mixed-use commercial centers with residential infill in between; new institutional and community uses; transportation and streetscaping improvements; and new alternative transportation and open space connections. The plan recommends seven "High Priority Physical Projects," five "Medium Priority Physical Projects," and 12 "Programmatic Projects."

Old Hill Neighborhood Action Plan 2015-2020 (2015)

An update to the 2004 Neighborhood Plan, the neighborhood action plan focuses on capacity building, physical improvements, culture & community building, and public safety in Old Hill. Successes from the 2004 plan are highlighted and expanded into thirteen actions related to the four focus areas. A Framework for Action was developed to identify implementation partners, possible funding sources, proposed timeline, and evaluation criteria for each action item. Included in the Action Plan is an "Implementation Process" section describing the Old Hill Neighborhood Council's approach to achieving each action item.

A Plan for Springfield's Old Hill Neighborhood (2022)

The first planning document for the Old Hill Neighborhood since 2015, the draft plan was created by consultants Scott Hanson and Peter Gagliardi with the support of the Old Hill Neighborhood Council and community stakeholders. A “Vision” for the neighborhood was crafted, and three categories of recommendations were presented. “Low Hanging Fruit” are 13 identified initiatives that were ongoing or considered achievable within a 12-month period. Seven projects were identified as “Projects That Could Move Forward by 2026”. Three initiatives were identified as projects to be completed “In the Longer Range” sometime within the next decade, with two being long-held priorities to redevelop 1 Allen Street and develop a Community Center for Old Hill Neighborhood Council and other community groups.

Appendix B: Resident Engagement Input

During the first phase of resident engagement throughout the Mason Square area neighborhoods, residents offered perspectives on the issues and opportunities facing their community. During both in-person and virtual community meetings and regular Neighborhood Council meetings, residents shared approximately 225 unique suggestions related to seven thematic categories. The collection of resident input was then sorted according to theme and consolidated to remove duplicate suggestions. This process resulted in a final list of 204 resident suggestions that was then used in the later phase of resident engagement and the prioritization of recommendations.

An asterisk () next to a recommendation indicates that more information on this topic is available in Appendix C.*

Housing

1. Create a Mason Square Community Land Trust*
2. Hold land for Housing and Urban Ag.*
 - a. Concerns RE: Gardening The Community lands along Walnut Street.
3. Activate Springfield Land Trust*
4. Create a Community Benefits District for the MCDI land to be owned by the trust and farmed by residents.*
5. Tax Incentives/Credits for Development
6. Increase Home Ownership Rates
7. Decrease total amount of Blighted Parcels.
8. Increase Affordable/Lower Income Housing Units
9. Explore/Offer Innovative Financing/special mortgages/tax abatements for Affordable Units
10. Dedicated Housing Support for Vulnerable populations
 - a. Veterans
 - b. Seniors
 - c. Homeless/Unhoused
 - d. Young Adults
 - e. Nursing Home/Assisted Living Residents
11. Renovate Historic Housing Stock
12. City Program to provide support for maintenance costs.
13. Affordable Housing development at the former Al Baqi Mosque Site (Oak and Union)
14. Increased Funding for Renovation of Vacancies and Rehabilitation.
15. Affordable Rental Rates.
16. Simplify Accessing/Receiving City Support/Funds
17. City develops new Subsidized Units on Vacant Lots
18. Complete Housing redevelopment of Tornado-impacted properties (Hickory and Central)
19. Free Trainings for Property Owners.
20. Redevelop Vibra Hospital for Housing
21. Program to Modernize Homes

Transportation

1. Improve Traffic Lights and Timing
2. Bus Stop Shelters – heated, cooled, and well-lit
 - a. Along Wilbraham Rd near Adams Park
3. Bus Rapid Transit along State Street
4. Renovate/Expand Sidewalks
 - a. Bay Street
 - b. All Park Entrances
5. Eliminate excess commercial traffic
6. Improved/Expanded Street Lighting
7. Expanded Speed Reduction Strategies*
 - a. Speed Bumps on Bay Street & Eastern Avenue
 - b. Speed Limit Signs
 - c. Flashing lights at Crossings (esp. along Bay)
 - i. Stop Signs along Pine Street an intersection of Shattuck and College
8. Traffic study
9. Traffic Controls that Preserve Neighborhood Boundaries
 - a. Divert traffic along Albany
10. Expanded PVTa Bus Services
 - a. New routes off major roads and into Neighborhoods
 - b. Expand Accessibility (esp. for Seniors)
 - c. Increased Frequency/reliability
 - d. Additional stops for Transfers
 - e. More options (Mini-buses, Vans, Shuttles)
11. Limit Parking along Residential roads
 - a. 50 feet from corners
 - b. Along One-way Streets
12. Additional Benches/seating
 - a. At all Bus stops
 - b. Along walking trails in parks
13. Improved/Additional Crosswalks on Walnut Street
14. Additional Walking paths – all abilities, wheelchairs
15. Safe Routes to All schools (esp. Central HS)
16. Emphasize Traffic Safety along St. James Street.
17. Additional Parking (businesses along State St.)
18. Additional Electric Vehicle Charging Stations.
19. Trolley Line across Springfield
 - a. Stops at Historical sites (Underground Railroad stops; Abolitionist Tour; Others)
 - b. Stops at Museums
 - c. Connect to all Parks
20. Transit Oriented Development
21. Improved/Expanded Street Paving Program
22. Public Transit for Free
23. Community Ride Share

Economic Development

1. Expanded Bank Services – 5+ days a week
2. Renovate/Update Store fronts and aesthetics
3. More restaurants along State Street with outdoor seating/dining
4. Greater foot traffic for businesses
5. Vacant/empty lots for food trucks
6. New Pharmacy
7. More CDFI facilities/alternative lending programs
8. New Job Training Program
9. Incubation Center for small businesses
10. Commercial use at MCDI site
11. Engage/support Minority-owned Businesses
 - a. Minority Control Association
 - b. Minority Developers/Contractors
 - c. Additional Grants/Funding
12. Revitalize/Repurpose Panache Banquet Hall at Ben Swan Way
13. Food Hall/Market like Parkville Market in Hartford CT
 - a. At former MCDI site
14. Community Information Kiosks*
15. Development Along Rail line
16. New Car Wash Business
17. New Commercial Kitchen Space
18. Commonwealth Academy Property Redevelopment
19. Mixed Use Development

Energy

1. Expanded Electric Bike-share.
2. Additional EV charging stations
3. PVRTA – Electric buses
4. Distributed energy – incorporate geothermal*
5. Back-up power for power outages +
6. Rooftop Solar – on homes and schools*
7. Small Scale Wind
8. Kinetic Energy strips
9. Community Solar – Coop Power*
10. Encourage Use of Electric Snow Blowers
11. Assistance Program w/ Utility Bills
12. City purchases all utility poles from Eversource
13. City secures funding available from BIL/IRA
14. Switch to Air source Heat pumps
15. Renewables Education Campaign - Focus on Seniors and support shift
16. Electric Car Sharing
17. Encourage/Expand Participation in Mass Save Programming
18. Engage Local companies for renewable energy action

19. Pole-mounted Solar Installations
20. Publicize and Utilize Mass Clean Energy Center Programming/Funding
21. Consider new Stretch Code

Parks & Open Space

1. Develop a Mill River Greenway
2. Park Improvements
 - a. Hennessey Park – Splash Pad
 - b. Magazine Park – Peace Garden/Botanical Garden
 - c. Barrows Park – Basketball Courts; Running/Walking Track
 - d. Adams Park – New entrance along Wilbraham; Soccer/Open Field
 - e. Sam Bolden Park - Add path/track, basketball court, tennis area
 - i. Address Drainage in lawn/field
3. Complete the Highland McKnight Rail Trail
4. Expand/Improve Tree Care Program
5. Construct Skatepark at the Boys and Girls Club
6. Additional Amenities at Parks (tables, benches, gazebos, fountains)
7. Public Restrooms at All Parks (Self-cleaning options)*
8. Pocket parks on Vacant lots
9. Rename Barrows Park to Malcom X Park
10. Community Pool @ former MCDI site
11. Dog Park on Vacant Lots
12. Additional Buses to Blunt Park and Nature walks, maintain walking paths
13. Police on horses/bikes in Bay/Blunt Park
14. Ice rink in Blunt Park needs to be accessible to public.
15. New Park w/Amenities
16. Park Benches (along streets too)

Food Access

1. Expanded Farmer's Market(s)
 - a. At Blunt Park
2. Full-Line Grocery store
 - a. Centrally located for all Mason Square residents
 - b. At Ben Swan Way
 - c. At One Stop Plaza
3. Expanded Availability of culturally appropriate foods
4. Expanded/Additional Community Gardens
 - a. At the former MCDI site
 - b. At Churches/Places-of-worship with open space
 - c. Union and Oak Street
5. Mason Square Agricultural District*
6. Support more Mobile Markets
 - a. Open lot at Corner of State and Westminster
7. Free Fridge program (Philadelphia precedent)*
8. Expanded Youth-focused programming – how to grow food and manage land

9. Farm trucks – invite farms to public parks every Saturday
10. Express Grocery Store along State Street at “Imperial Super Grocery” site
11. Fruit Trees along streets (Mulberries)*
12. Leverage Sites for expanded Food Access (markets, pantries, gardens, etc.)
 - a. Carwash by Berlin St.
 - b. Aquarius Restaurant
 - c. Private Homes
 - d. St. James and Clarendon
 - e. Vacant lots & abutting properties
 - f. Pride vacant lot along State St
 - g. Former McDuffie School property
 - h. Vacant STCC Parking Lot on Worthington

Arts & Culture

1. More public trash cans and frequent removal
2. Litter campaign
3. Renovate/Address Blighted properties
4. Focus on Historic Preservation*
 - a. McKnight Homes
 - b. YMCA Building
 - c. Old Church buildings
5. Cultivate Family Friendly Mason Square with multi-generational appeal/attractions
6. Neighborhood Councils meeting house
7. Public Art
 - a. 6 Corners Rotary
 - b. Gate to Mason Square along State St
8. More resources for Adolescents and Young Adults
9. Expansion of Boys & Girls Club (Family Center)
 - a. Additional programming/partnerships with other community groups
10. New Teen Center for Middle and High School age youth
11. Expanded access to mental health services
12. Promote MLK Jr Center
13. Multi-use Community Space
 - a. Re-use old Homer School
14. Engage/Recruit People of Color when designing community features/amenities
15. New African Heritage Museum in Mason Square
16. Bring performances to already existing spaces (local library branches)
17. City-wide Open Studio Tours (PRECEDENT: New Haven, CT)
18. Create Public Pool & Greenhouses at former MCDI site
19. Re-use old Homer Street School: Multi-use Media center/facility
 - a. Artistic Afterschool Programs w/sports in gym, like a YMCA area; a place for kids
 - b. Not-for-profit Music studio and lessons to produce music
 - c. Dance Schools (afterschool hours)
20. Develop Community/City Dashboard Online & 311

- 21. Entertainment/theater/Panache Hall
- 22. Expanded Community Policing
- 23. New Sports Complex @ MCDI
- 24. Beautification campaign

For more information about the survey process and results, please contact Catherine Ratté at cratte@pupc.org

Appendix C: Informational Handouts

During the public engagement part of this neighborhood investment process, a number of commonly-asked questions emerged regarding programs and initiatives that could address some of the areas of need within the neighborhood. The following pages provide an overview of various topics, including an overview of possible solutions, funding opportunities, case studies, and resources for more information. These pages are designed to be utilized as handouts for neighborhood councils, community-based organizations, and individual residents to be better informed about these important topics.

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Agricultural Districts

What is an agricultural district?

Agricultural districts are zoning overlay districts in urban residential areas that permit agricultural uses of the land that are normally restricted in these areas. Examples of practices may include community gardens, local farms, rooftop gardens, and more innovative forms such as hydroponic gardens. Raising chickens and fish for food or honeybees for honey may also be allowed in these districts.

How does it benefit my community?

Agricultural Districts encourage greater food production within urban communities, expanding access to local produce for community members and addressing issues of food insecurity. Some of the methods to increase food access are Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), Food Hubs, and farmers markets which can also be opportunities to cultivate a local food economy. ¹ Cities and community-based organizations can also offer community programming focusing on environmental education and agricultural cultivation for youth and community members. Another environmental benefit of agriculture is increasing plant growth, helping to cut carbon emissions as plants absorb carbon dioxide. ² Agricultural districts can also promote community land management.

Why do I need to learn about it?

Agricultural districts as overlay zones can increase the production of locally grown foods to expand accessibility to residents. While agricultural districts do promote food production, they are supplemental outlets for food access, and it should be acknowledged that they do not address the root causes of food insecurity. Because specific zoning laws must be adopted for agricultural districts to be implemented, groups of residents can work with their city government and planning board to initiate the process of establishing an agricultural district.

Funding Agricultural Districts and Urban Agriculture

Apply for the Urban Agriculture Program

<https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-the-urban-agriculture-program>

Education and Technical Assistance

In cities that have established agricultural districts, in order to engage residents in urban agriculture, parks and recreation offices and the public school system have worked to educate young people and the general public about urban agriculture and how to grow produce successfully. ³

¹ “Urban Agriculture Activity Plan”, https://www.minneapolisiparks.org/_asset/15kfy0/urban_ag_activity_plan.pdf, 5 and “Urban Agriculture”, <https://doee.dc.gov/urbanag>.

² Urban Agriculture Activity Plan, https://www.minneapolisiparks.org/_asset/15kfy0/urban_ag_activity_plan.pdf, 5.

³ Urban Agriculture Activity Plan, https://www.minneapolisiparks.org/_asset/15kfy0/urban_ag_activity_plan.pdf, 4.

Case Studies

Urban Agriculture Rezoning Initiative, <https://www.bostonplans.org/planning/planning-initiatives/urban-agriculture-rezoning>

The city of Boston adopted Article 89 a zoning ordinance focused on creating opportunities for urban agriculture, in 2013, to address issues of food access in economically disadvantaged communities. This rezoning also increased economic opportunity in local food production and expanded nutrition education. By implementing community gardens, local farms, hydro- and aquaponic farming technologies, and small-scale animal farming the number of farmers markets in Boston has “increased from 13 in 2004 to over 28 markets in 2013.” ¹

Urban Agriculture Activity Plan,

https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/_asset/15kfy0/urban_ag_activity_plan.pdf

The Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board indicated that “food was not considered a priority for many local governments in the United States, and food policy was rarely found on local agendas.” ² Minneapolis implemented the Urban Agriculture Activity Plan to address four main themes 1) public awareness and education surrounding food access and insecurity 2) improve food distribution facilities 3) change policies that have previously restricted urban farming 4) promote environmental stewardship. ³ The city has invested yearly financial contributions to support the operation of these goals.

Cleveland’s Zoning for Urban Agriculture and Land Bank

<https://planning.clevelandohio.gov/oc/ag.html>,

<https://planning.clevelandohio.gov/zoning/pdf/agricultureopenspacesummary.pdf>,

https://www.clevelandohio.gov/sites/default/files/forms_publications/LandBank5SuccessStories.pdf, and <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/nov/28/cleveland-ohio-city-champions-rid-all-urban-farming-segregation>

In Cuyahoga County, which includes Cleveland, Ohio, around 400,000 people live in a food desert. The city of Cleveland established an Urban Agriculture Zone and Land Bank program to promote local farming and food access on vacant plots of land. Community-based non-profit organizations have created programs to increase food access for residents struggling with food insecurity.

¹Article 89 Made Easy: Urban Agriculture Zoning For The City of Boston, <https://www.bostonplans.org/getattachment/5579e854-b3c5-49e6-b910-fedaa2dd6306>, 35

² Urban Agriculture Activity Plan, https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/_asset/15kfy0/urban_ag_activity_plan.pdf, 1.

³ Urban Agriculture Activity Plan, https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/_asset/15kfy0/urban_ag_activity_plan.pdf, 7.

Where can I learn more?

Understanding Urban Agricultural Districts, <https://www.pvpc.org/sites/default/files/files/PVPC-Urban%20Agricultural%20Districts.pdf>

Urban Agriculture Toolkit, <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/urban-agriculture-toolkit.pdf>

Toolkit: Right to Farm Bylaw, <https://www.pvpc.org/sites/default/files/Appendix%20D%20-%20Food%20System%20Toolkit.pdf>

Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens – Equitable Development Toolkit, <https://www.policylink.org/resources-tools/urban-agriculture>

Community Information Kiosks

What are Community Information Kiosks?

Community Information Kiosks are stand-alone smart devices that provide information about a city. Cities that have adopted kiosks advertise community events and local attractions in economic centers, like downtown areas. Other effective locations to establish these kiosks are in parks or community centers, places where residents of many backgrounds may interact with the kiosks. Additionally, these kiosks can communicate important emergency announcements and public transportation and social services information.

How would this benefit my community?

Community information kiosks support neighborhood communication by providing relevant information about events, services, and other important notices. This supplements other forms of communication by being a visible and interactive public resource. Kiosks may also be able to reach more residents about community information than other formats.

Why do I need to learn about this?

Because Community Information Kiosks provide relevant community information, residents and community-based organizations have the opportunity to advertise community-based capacity-building opportunities. Additionally, residents can indicate what information would be most pertinent to make these kiosks accessible to residents. Cities that have installed kiosks have placed them in public spaces like downtown areas, cultural districts, community centers, or public parks.

Community Information Kiosk Programs around the United States

St. Louis Launched Next Wave of IKE Digital Kiosks to Drive Discovery, Mobility, and Equity in the 26th Ward

<https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/mayor/news/new-round-of-interactive-smart-city-digital-kiosks.cfm#:~:text=St.-,Louis%20Launched%20Next%20Wave%20of%20IKE%20Digital%20Kiosks%20to%20Drive,inside%20the%20historic%20Sherman%20Park>

This privately owned and sponsored kiosk program, in partnership with community organizations and governmental departments, has worked to increase access of information for communities most disproportionately impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic to, “Ensure[ing] equitable access to technology”.¹ These kiosks offer advertisements about local businesses for economic development along with public transportation, social services (food banks, shelters, job opportunities), and Covid-19 information to increase community awareness. To ensure accessibility, these kiosks are ADA-compliant and offer information in multiple languages. Interactive Kiosk Experience (IKE) Smart

¹ St. Louis Launched Next Wave of IKE Digital Kiosks to Drive Discovery, Mobility, and Equity in the 26th Ward, <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/mayor/news/new-round-of-interactive-smart-city-digital-kiosks.cfm#:~:text=St.-,Louis%20Launched%20Next%20Wave%20of%20IKE%20Digital%20Kiosks%20to%20Drive,inside%20the%20historic%20Sherman%20Park>.

City, the sponsor of the project, installed the kiosk at a well-established community center that serves a wide variety of the population.

The City of Houston gets smart with new downtown digital wayfinding kiosks

<https://houston.culturemap.com/news/innovation/02-08-22-city-of-houston-kiosks-ike-smart-city>

IKE Smart City has begun implementing 25 kiosks in Houston, similar to those in St. Louis, in phases to improve advertising of community attractions and awareness of important government communications. This project especially looks to improve the experience of pedestrians in the city to provide them with wayfinding information.

Business Directory and Community Information Kiosk Debuts in Downtown Greenfield

https://greenfield-ma.gov/news_detail_T4_R80.php

Greenfield's Community Information Kiosk specifically works to increase awareness of local businesses. Initially designed as a website, city converted the information from the website into an interactive downtown kiosk.

Where can I learn more about this?

Public Participation Guide Information Kiosks

<https://www.epa.gov/international-cooperation/public-participation-guide-information-kiosks>

IKE Smart City

<https://www.ikesmartcity.com/#main>

Community Preservation Act

What is the Community Preservation Act?

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a law of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts passed in 2000 to preserve historic resources, improve outdoor recreation spaces, and increase housing opportunities. Because participation in the CPA is voluntary, residents vote on whether to adopt the CPA for their municipality. A Community Preservation Committee (CPC) oversees the CPA process. In Springfield, the CPC consists of members of the Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Housing Authority, Park Commission, Planning Board, Springfield Preservation Trust, and three residents of Springfield who are not elected officials. Each municipality has a CPC whose role is to recommend projects to be funded by the CPA each year. These recommendations are then brought to the city council for approval. Since the CPA was adopted in Springfield, the City Council has approved 73 projects with \$10 million in funding.

How does it benefit my community?

Since its inception, the CPA has been shown to have had economic, environmental, and cultural benefits for communities that have adopted it. Statewide, CPA projects have rehabilitated or created 26,000 affordable housing units statewide. In addition, the act functions to preserve a municipality's history through historic preservation which cultivates a community's cultural sector. Improving outdoor recreational spaces also works to conserve the natural environment. The CPA additionally creates jobs as projects require construction, historic rehabilitation, and other environmentally focused work.

Why do I need to learn about it?

The built and natural environment are significant aspects of a community or municipality. The CPA functions to progress projects that will improve these components. Because these are community projects, residents have the opportunity to be involved in the CPA by recommending projects to be reviewed by the CPC at the Community Preservation Act Annual Public Hearing. In addition to this yearly meeting, there are monthly meetings that the public is welcome to attend. Residents may also send their recommendations via mail or email to the CPC.

Funding for the CPA

Statewide, funding for the CPA is acquired by increasing property taxes in the form of surcharges. In a general election, residents vote to establish the level of surcharge for their own municipality, which is between 1.5-3%. In 2016, Springfield residents voted on a 1.5% surcharge. In order to ensure that the surcharge is not a burden for those with low- and middle-income homeowners, many cities have established exemptions for those who fall below a certain threshold and are exempt from paying. In Springfield, the threshold is "low income, first \$100,000 - residential, first \$100,000 - commercial." ¹

¹ "Alphabetical List of CPA Communities," Community Preservation Coalition, https://www.communitypreservation.org/cpc-report?report_src=bbzvidkqg%3Fa%3Dq&qid=30&ifv=1.

Funding for community preservation projects also comes from the Community Preservation Trust Fund as matching funds. Funds budgeted under the Community Preservation Act can only be used for preserving historic resources, improving outdoor recreation spaces, and increasing housing opportunities — projects that fall under the categories established in the CPA.

Case Studies

2022 CPC Funded Projects

https://www.springfield-ma.gov/finance/fileadmin/community_preservation/2022/2022_CPA_Project_presentation_to_City_Council.pdf

Springfield's Community Preservation Committee funded 16 projects around many neighborhoods of Springfield which included all of the designated CPA categories; housing, recreation and open spaces, and historic preservation. In total, more than \$2 million of CPA funding was used to fund these projects. During the application process, there were 24 potential projects. To finalize their decision CPC considered, "geographic distribution, cost, urgency/timeliness, visibility, organization track record, and equity between city departments and other bodies," in the process. ¹

Where can I learn more?

Community Preservation Act,

<https://www.mass.gov/lists/community-preservation-act>

CPA: An Overview,

<https://www.communitypreservation.org/about>

Springfield Community Preservation Plan - Revised December 2022, https://www.springfield-ma.gov/finance/fileadmin/community_preservation/CPC_Plan_Revised_December_2022_2.pdf

Missed Opportunities: Funding Housing Through the Community Preservation Act,

<https://mahousingsolutions.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/grbreb-report-design-for-website-final-final.pdf>

¹ 2022 CPC Funded Projects, https://www.springfield-ma.gov/finance/fileadmin/community_preservation/2022/2022_CPA_Project_presentation_to_City_Council.pdf.

Community Solar

What is community solar?

Community, or distributed solar, is a method of making solar energy accessible to all, regardless of whether the household rents or owns their apartment or home. This method of obtaining solar energy is also beneficial for those whose roof is heavily shaded. Households can buy or lease solar panels installed at a separate location and still receive the benefits of solar energy without the financial burden of solar panel installation. Those who own solar panels receive credits on their energy bills and those who lease, or subscribe, buy solar energy from the solar panel array at a discounted price.

What is community-owned community solar?

Community-owned community solar programs are a form of community solar, however, in this model, a group of households and businesses can collectively own and utilize energy from the same solar array, or set of solar panels, at an offsite location. Mass Solar Loans exist to alleviate the upfront cost of buying a share of solar power. Owners within community-owned community solar projects co-own offsite solar arrays, but have the support of the solar energy company to maintain the system. In this model, members of the community-owned solar program pay for the maintenance of the solar panels, however, because the community collectively owns a solar array, the individual cost of ownership is divided and therefore less expensive than individual solar panel ownership.

How will this benefit my community?

As residents and communities work to decarbonize their energy sources, community solar is one method to support this goal. This model is especially beneficial as it ensures that all households who are interested in solar energy can utilize it. Community solar programs are also beneficial as they can reduce energy bills for households in the form of energy credits or discounted energy.

Why do I need to learn about this?

Decarbonizing the main electrical grid can ensure greater resilience in extreme weather by diversifying energy sources and reducing carbon emissions. Community members can participate in this decarbonization process by joining a community solar or community-owned solar program.

Funding and Finances

Because community solar programs exist in a subscription-based model, those subscribing to a community solar program do not have to pay for the installation of the solar panels. However, in the case of community-owned community solar, co-owners would be eligible for Mass Solar Loans to alleviate the upfront cost of installation. Those who participate in community solar are eligible for federal tax credits, Mass Solar Loans, and Solar Renewable Energy Certificates (SRECs).

Technical Assistance

Because the solar panel arrays for a community solar program are installed by a company at an offsite location, households do not have the responsibility to maintain the solar panels, the company does

this work. This is also the case for community-owned community solar. While the co-owners of the solar array pay for the upkeep and maintenance, the solar energy company is tasked to conduct operational work.

Case Studies

Community Solar Case Studies

<https://www.eesi.org/obf/solar/casestudies>

Cedar Falls Utilities (CFU), in Iowa, established a community solar farm to make solar available for all users of the utility. In this system, CFU customers participated in a subscriber model to obtain solar energy. To subscribe, residents could buy a solar panel for \$270 and receive \$1.30 of solar credit per unit of energy monthly for 20 years. Within 15 years, given the monthly \$1.30 credit, the \$270 would be regained by the subscriber.

Co-op Power

<https://www.cooppower.coop/>

Co-Op Power serves as a “consumer-owned sustainable energy cooperative”, which centers its work around promoting renewable energy for the use of members of the cooperative, otherwise known as owners. Owners within community-owned community solar projects co-own offsite solar arrays, but have the support of Co-Op Power to maintain the system for 20 years. Co-Op Power consists of Community Energy Co-Ops (CEC) in the Greater Boston area, Franklin County, Worcester and Providence, Hampshire County, Hampden County, and Southern Vermont. The Co-Op Power Board is composed of one representative from each of the CECs who has the ability to make decisions based on the energy needs and priorities of the community. As a cooperative, Co-Op Power disperses the ownership of resources to communities and groups of people to work toward “*energy justice*” and “*democracy*”.¹

Where can I learn more?

Community Solar Basics

<https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/community-solar-basics>

MassCEC - Community Solar

<https://goclean.masscec.com/clean-energy-solutions/community-solar/>

Community Solar 101

<https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy20osti/75982.pdf>

¹ Co-Op Power, <https://www.cooppower.coop/what-is-a-community-energy-co-op>.

Electrifying and Weatherizing to Decarbonize Homes

What does it mean to decarbonize or weatherize my home?

Weatherization and electrification are important parts of making buildings more energy-efficient and cost-effective, especially in heating and cooling seasons. Both of these concepts can be brought to residential buildings as well, in order to reduce the cost of utilities and make homes more comfortable during extreme temperatures. Examples of weatherizing and electrifying homes include insulating and air sealing, installing an air source or ground source heat pump and water heater, replacing old windows, and installing energy-efficient appliances, among other small improvements. Additional potential decarbonization measures include shifting from oil and propane heating to electric heat and investing in solar panels or community solar to power the home.

How will this benefit me?

Working to weatherize and electrify to decarbonize a home has both economic and environmental benefits. By transitioning to more energy-efficient appliances, there will be a reduction in the home's carbon emissions which, although small, is an important step in limiting climate change. Through air sealing and new windows, the home's shell will be more effective in maintaining the temperature of the home by reducing heat loss (or loss of air conditioning) through leaks. Wall and attic insulation, in conjunction with air sealing, will assist in stabilizing the desired air temperature of the home. Because appliances will be more efficient and the building shell will better maintain the temperature, energy bills will decrease. After completing air-sealing and insulation projects, energy bills (heating and cooling) may decrease by up to 20%. ¹

Why do I need to learn about this?

In order to gauge the home's needs, a homeowner can schedule a free Home Energy Assessment through MassSave or the Weatherization Assistance Program to learn more about their home's energy usage, strengths, and opportunities to improve energy efficiency. Additionally, auditors are able to offer individualized guidance and answer questions that homeowners may have about their home's function and safety. This provides homeowners with

What funding is available?

Weatherization and electrification can be expensive projects, however, there is significant funding available to assist homeowners in completing these projects. MassSave offers rebates for eligible projects such as weatherization, and energy-efficient appliances. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts also funds projects through the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) for those whose income falls below a certain threshold. As a local resource for low-income residents, the Springfield Partners for Community Action (SPCA) also completes weatherization projects.

¹ Mass Save, <https://www.masssave.com/en/residential/rebates-and-incentives/home-insulation>

The city of Springfield offers its own financial and technical support for income-qualified renters and homeowners. Heating Emergency Assistance Retrofit Tasks Weatherization Assistance Program (HEARTWAP) is a service for those whose income falls below 60% area median income. This program focuses on ensuring the function of heating systems by offering emergency repairs and yearly inspections. When replacement is required, this program covers the cost. Valley Opportunity Council, which supports the HEARTWAP program, also offers financial aid for those in need of fuel payment assistance.

Technical Assistance

To learn more about a home's energy usage, and potential opportunities to improve a home's efficiency, and cut down on energy costs, a Home Energy Assessment will explain any recommendations to achieve energy goals. In addition, an assessment will address any safety concerns such as back-drafting of water heaters, boilers, or furnaces.

Case studies

Transitioning from Oil to Ground Source Heat Pumps

https://concordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/30375/Jim-Terry-Case-Study_FINAL

Heat Pumps Provide Comfort to 60°F in Older Home

<https://concordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/31227/Slack-case-study?bidId=>

Where can I learn more about this?

MassSave

<https://www.masssave.com/en/residential>

Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/weatherization-assistance-program-wap#who-is-eligible->

Building Decarbonization Solutions for the Affordable Housing Sector - ACEEE

<https://www.aceee.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/u2204.pdf>

Weatherization Installer Job Aids and Single-Family Interactive 3D House

<https://www.energy.gov/scep/wap/weatherization-installer-job-aids-and-single-family-interactive-3d-house>

Home Energy Hub

<https://www.mncee.org/home-energy-hub?page=0>

Free Fridge Programs

What are Free Fridge programs?

Free Fridge programs are mutual aid programs that function to counter food insecurity and food waste in a community and to promote the accessibility of fresh and healthy foods. Mutual aid programs are not charities as they function to resist a hierarchical structure and rather bring forth a reciprocal “resident supporting resident” format. These programs establish publicly accessible fridges and shelves throughout the neighborhood for community members to access food as needed. Residents have 24/7 access to the fridges. Volunteers and neighbors stock the fridges with donations from restaurants, grocery stores, and local farms. Some Free Fridge programs also include clothing.

How would this benefit my community?

The goal of Free Fridge programs is to serve as a supplemental food source to expand food access to community residents. Free Fridge programs also work to reduce food waste by acquiring excess food from grocery stores and restaurants.

It is important to note that while these programs are beneficial, they are “a Band-Aid solution to a deeper-rooted systemic issue” and do not have the capacity to eliminate food insecurity.¹

Why do I need to learn about this?

Free Fridge programs are grassroots mutual aid projects and not charities. To ensure that these are sustainable neighborhood-run programs residents must establish the operating structure of the program, advertise the program to secure food and monetary donations, and find a range of neighborhood volunteers to maintain the fridges by keeping fridges stocked, throwing away expired food, and cleaning the fridges.

Funding

Because these are mutual aid programs, Free Fridge programs rely on donations, including financial support, food, and clothing donations from community members.

Maintenance and Operation

Community members volunteer to maintain the upkeep of the fridges by cleaning them and getting rid of any expired food.

Where can I learn more about this?

See That Fridge on the Sidewalk? It’s Full of Free Food

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/08/nyregion/free-food-fridge-nyc.html>

¹ Quote by Tahia Islam in, “Community Fridges are Lifelines for the neighborhoods they serve,” <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/22285863/community-fridges-neighborhoods-free-food>.

Community Fridges are Lifelines for the neighborhoods they serve

<https://www.vox.com/the-goods/22285863/community-fridges-neighborhoods-free-food>

Freedge

<https://freedge.org/>

Case Studies

Woo Fridge

<https://woofridge.org/about-us/> and <https://www.telegram.com/story/news/2021/01/15/hunger-community-fridge-neighborhoods-donations-worcester/4160018001/>

This is a mutual aid project that works to make food accessible to those who are dealing with food insecurity. Established in 2021, Woo Fridge receives food donations from local farms, restaurants, and grocery stores. This project is considered a “food rescue mission,” to reduce food waste and assist community members with accessing food. It has established methods to ensure that the program is sustainable both in labor and in food donations.

Detroit Community Fridge

<https://detfridge.com/#faq> and <https://detourdetroit.com/detroit-community-fridge-grows/>

This program is similar to Woo Fridge in its format as a grassroots mutual aid program accessible 24/7. Founded in 2020 to mitigate food insecurity exacerbated by the pandemic, this community fridge receives monetary donations on Venmo and food or clothing donations. The procedures of the program are: 1) Take what you need. 2) Leave what you don’t need. 3) Label anything you add to the fridge with the date it was prepared, the name of the dish, and its ingredients—especially known allergens. Volunteers have ensured the sustainability of this program by cleaning the fridges and donating. One local business has also offered donations and electricity to power one of the fridges.

Geothermal Energy

What is geothermal energy?

The first modern use of geothermal energy to heat buildings dates back to the 19th century and has been used since as a form of renewable energy, which can offset the need for fossil fuels. Geothermal energy consists of a circulating system of underground fixtures connected to a heat pump within the building that it is heating. The temperature underground stays around a constant 55° Fahrenheit, so in the winter, the heat from the Earth is brought through pipes to heat buildings, and in the summer, the heat in buildings is pushed back into the Earth which cools the building. In addition to heating buildings, geothermal energy pumps also serve as water heaters.

How will geothermal benefit my neighborhood?

The main benefits of geothermal energy are to meet the same energy needs as fossil fuels while cutting greenhouse gas emissions and making renewable energy more affordable along with creating more jobs. Geothermal energy can decrease carbon dioxide emissions up to about 1/6 the amount of natural gas.¹ Additionally, geothermal energy provides resilience during inclement weather events. The main critique of geothermal energy is the large initial investment to install the underground fixtures and heat pump in the building for which the system is heating, however, geothermal is cost-effective over time as the underground system can last up to 50 years, and the in-building heat pump can last up to 24 years.²

Why do I need to learn about this?

Burning fossil fuels is the most significant cause of climate change. As greenhouse gas emissions caused by burning fossil fuels for energy have increased, so have global temperatures which cause detrimental impacts. Some effects of climate change that have already begun to occur in Massachusetts are more frequent extreme weather events and flooding, higher risks of drought and lengthened wildfire seasons, and worsened air quality. In order to mitigate further degradation of the climate, utilizing renewable and more sustainable resources is necessary to do away with fossil fuels as our main sources of energy, otherwise known as decarbonizing. One example of renewable energy that can support these decarbonization efforts is geothermal energy.

Funding Geothermal Projects

Investing in geothermal energy, or ground-source heat pumps, can be an expensive investment and can cost up to \$25,000, however, there are ways to finance geothermal projects.

At MassSave, rebates for \$15,000 are available for ground-source heat pumps for a whole home. For partial homes, rebates are available for \$2,000 per ton with a maximum of \$15,000.

<https://www.masssave.com/residential/rebates-and-incentives/ground-source-heat-pumps>

¹ “Geothermal FAQs,” <https://www.energy.gov/eere/geothermal/geothermal-faqs>.

² “Geothermal Heat Pumps,” <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/geothermal-heat-pumps>.

In addition, MassSave provides loans of up to \$50,000 with no interest to financially support the installation of ground-source heat pumps. In order to secure a loan, homeowners must find a contractor to complete the project, complete the correct paperwork with a signature from the contractor, and finally submit an authorization form in order to receive the loan from a lender.

<https://www.masssave.com/residential/rebates-and-incentives/heat-loan-program>

Maintenance and Technical Assistance

In general, geothermal systems have fewer problems than air source heat pumps, however, they still require routine maintenance to be completed by a professional. During a system check, a qualified technician will inspect the indoor components, the circulating equipment, and the ground-coupled heat exchanger. The frequency of these inspections is dependent upon the specific component but generally varies between quarterly, semi-annual, and annual. Geothermal contractors may provide a warranty on the system to offer continued support to the homeowner after installation, but there are also geothermal technicians from other servicing companies who can conduct ground source heat pump and general geothermal system maintenance.

<https://www.pnnl.gov/projects/om-best-practices/ground-source-heat-pump#Maintenance%20Checklist>

Case studies

“Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana Replaces Coal-fired Boilers with Campus-Wide Geothermal Energy”, Environmental Resilience Institute, Indiana University, <https://eri.iu.edu/erit/case-studies/ball-state-university-geothermal.html>.

Constructed between 2009 and 2014 to include 47 buildings on the system, this project cost \$83 million to implement. Since its completion, the university has reduced its water usage by an average of 45 million gallons of water and \$2.2-2.5 million of energy costs per year. The use of geothermal energy has reduced carbon dioxide emissions by 85,000 tons each year. This study indicates that geothermal has significant environmental and economic benefits, especially in networked systems.

“Eversource Geothermal Pilot Program,” Framingham, Massachusetts,

<https://www.framinghamma.gov/3416/Geothermal-Pilot-Program>

In April 2023, the Department of Energy (DOE) announced a \$13 million investment into community geothermal projects in 11 cities, including one project in Framingham, Massachusetts which would connect 37 buildings to the same geothermal system. ¹After assessing the system for two heating and two cooling, if this project proves to be effective, this networked geothermal project has the potential to cut energy costs for residents by 20% and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60%. The goal of the project in Framingham, according to the DOE, is to support and study the efficacy of a “Geothermal heat-pump heating and cooling system adjacent to another geothermal demonstration project and

¹ “DOE Announces \$13 Million to Support Community Geothermal Heating and Cooling Solutions”,

<https://www.energy.gov/articles/doe-announces-13-million-support-community-geothermal-heating-and-cooling-solutions>

integrated with other renewable energy systems in a socioeconomically and ethnically diverse city.”¹ Due to the large scale of the project and the need to gain access to customers’ homes to install fixtures to connect to the underground piping, project stakeholders conducted community engagement to gain public support for the project. As of June 12, 2023, construction of the project in Framingham has begun.

Where can I go to learn more?

“Geothermal FAQs,” Geothermal Technologies Office, Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy, <https://www.energy.gov/eere/geothermal/geothermal-faqs>.

“Geothermal Heat Pumps,” Energy Saver, Energy.gov, <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/geothermal-heat-pumps>.

“What is Renewable Energy?” Climate Action, United Nations, https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-renewable-energy?gclid=CjoKCQjw4s-kBhDqARIsAN-ipH23jabBDV9HITshV5Iwd2xCRh7PnRTFULM_wocjMv5Ohd9IgpYoHkgaAvIUEALw_wcB.

“Geothermal Energy,” Climable.org, <https://climable.org/geothermal>.

¹ DOE Announces \$13 Million to Support Community Geothermal Heating and Cooling Solutions”, <https://www.energy.gov/articles/doe-announces-13-million-support-community-geothermal-heating-and-cooling-solutions>.

Institutional Expansion and Development

What is Institutional Master Planning?

In 1996, Boston adopted the Article 80 process which was established as part of the zoning laws in the city to assess the impacts on the surrounding built environment and residents in the neighboring communities. Under Article 80, there are four types of plans that are overseen, one of which is Institutional Master Planning which is conducted by hospitals and educational institutions to express the development or expansion plans of an institution. These are frequently revised regardless of whether development is occurring. Institutional Master Planning is meant to be “thoughtful and transparent,” to acknowledge and mitigate the impacts of development on the surrounding community. ¹ Because of the potential effects on residents, Institutional Master Planning requires community engagement for a comprehensive plan. ²

What is a Community Benefits Agreement?

A community benefits agreement (CBA), also called an “economic empowerment mechanism,” is a legal contract that is formed between an institution and the residents of a community. ³ The CBA is established to gain support for the project from residents while also mitigating disruptions to the community during a development project. Because projects of expansion are detrimental to residents, especially structurally and economically disadvantaged communities, a community benefits agreement works to support residents through financial assistance, access to affordable housing, and other social programs.

What is the process of relocating residents during institutional expansion?

Development and expansion of an institution can cause displacement of residents. To ensure that this does not occur, institutions can work with residents in areas of planned development to secure new and affordable housing. Using institutional funding in partnership with a Department of Housing and Urban Development certified relocation specialist displaced residents can guide displaced residents through a methodical relocation process to find affordable housing. ⁴

How do Community Benefits Agreements and Institutional Master Planning benefit my neighborhood?

Institutions tend to lack transparency in their communications with neighboring communities which has detrimental effects on residents and neighborhoods. Although unlikely that institutions will stop expansion, Community Benefits Agreements and Institutional Master Planning can provide legal

¹ Institutional Master Planning, <https://www.bostonplans.org/planning/institutional-planning/institutional-planning>.

² Boston’s Article 80 Process <https://www.bostonplans.org/projects/development-review/what-is-article-80> and A Citizen’s Guide to Development Review under Article 80 of the Boston Zoning Code <https://www.bostonplans.org/getattachment/610ddaf1-a547-4eb9-bb22-4d0938f354f6>.

³ Community Benefits Agreement, <https://www.policylink.org/resources-tools/tools/all-in-cities/good-jobs/community-benefits-agreements#:~:text=A%20CBA%20is%20a%20legally,if%20the%20project%20moves%20forward>

⁴ Holyoke Urban Renewal Plan - Relocation, https://storage.googleapis.com/proudcity/holyokema/uploads/2022/10/08_Relocation1.pdf.

support and transparency to residents, while also conducting community engagement or a public review process to understand the needs of the community and mitigate neighborhood disruption.

Why do I need to learn about this?

Educational or medical institutions surrounded by residential neighborhoods have various methods of obtaining land in order to expand their campus. One of these approaches is to buy homes for sale in the residential area and let them sit vacant until the university has ownership of enough space to build new developments at which point the university demolishes the vacant homes. Another mechanism of land acquisition is through eminent domain in which a public entity acquires private property without needing approval from residents. Residents, however, do receive compensation for the loss. Overall, these acquisitions and development practices can disrupt neighborhoods.

Institutions with surrounding residential communities that hope to expand can have adverse impacts on the neighborhood. It is important for neighboring communities to be aware of the plans of institutions and how, as community members, to voice their concerns and needs, whether through Community Benefits Agreements or in the community engagement portion of Institutional Master Planning.

Case Studies

Sheila Foster, “Columbia University Expansion into West Harlem, New York City,” in *Strengthening environmental reviews in urban development: Urban Legal Case Studies: Volume 6*, ed. UN-Habitat (UN-Habitat, 2018), <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/NYC%20Case%20Study.pdf> and West Harlem Community Benefits Agreement <https://gca.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/2016-11/CBAAgreement.pdf>

In New York City, Columbia University planned expansion of its campus which would eliminate existing affordable housing. Additionally, it would cause detrimental effects on the residents of the community through a loss of culturally significant property and job opportunities. Throughout the university’s planning process for this expansion, they involved neighborhood groups and residents to voice their concerns about the project. From this engagement with the surrounding community, a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) was produced in 2009. Within Columbia University’s CBA with the residents of Harlem, concrete settlements were established to provide continued support to the community even after expansion. Many of the settlements in the CBA were financial support for residents, however, some included accessibility to resources and programs that Columbia would provide. Although signed in 2009, pushback against Columbia persists as the threat of gentrification and displacement continues, according to Columbia students and Harlem residents. Therefore, this has not been a faultless plan.¹

Boston Medical Center Institutional Master Plan

https://www.bmc.org/sites/default/files/About_Us/BMC_IMP_2021.pdf

This plan emphasizes the role of the institution, the planned projects, the best mitigation strategies for avoiding community disruption, and the reasons for infrastructural improvements. Examples of reasons for upgrades are aging buildings, energy efficiency and resiliency, the need for patient

¹ Sheila Foster, “Columbia University Expansion into West Harlem, New York City,” in *Strengthening environmental reviews in urban development: Urban Legal Case Studies: Volume 6*, ed. UN-Habitat (UN-Habitat, 2018)

housing, research, and increasing the hospital's patient capacity. In this plan, Boston Medical Center also lays out a community benefits outline that offers programs and support to the community in the following categories: access to services, housing, financial security and economic mobility, violence and trauma, behavioral health, substance use disorder, and food insecurity. ¹ Included in this plan are also photos and maps of the neighborhood and hospital to visually indicate the locations of plans.

Where can I learn more?

Community Benefits Agreements

<https://www.policylink.org/resources-tools/tools/all-in-cities/good-jobs/community-benefits-agreements#:~:text=A%20CBA%20is%20a%20legally,if%20the%20project%20moves%20forward>

Boston's Article 80 Process

<https://www.bostonplans.org/projects/development-review/what-is-article-80>

A Citizen's Guide to Development Review under Article 80 of the Boston Zoning Code

<https://www.bostonplans.org/getattachment/610ddaf1-a547-4eb9-bb22-4d0938f354f6>

Institutional Master Planning, <https://www.bostonplans.org/planning/institutional-planning/institutional-planning>

¹ Boston Medical Center Institutional Master Plan

https://www.bmc.org/sites/default/files/About_Us/BMC_IMP_2021.pdf

Land Trusts

What is a land trust?

Land trusts are managed and overseen by a community organization, nonprofit, or city government and work to acquire properties to maintain and sell for a fixed price. Cities may establish a land trust to promote homeownership among low- or middle-income populations. Because the land is already owned by a trust, the homeowner's only financial responsibility during the sale of the home is the house or the "vertical improvements" on the land.¹ To maintain the affordability of housing, land trusts may set an area median income that residents must fall under in order to purchase a home on the plot of land. Those who own or rent homes on land trusts enter into a 99-year lease which ensures that even after the sale of the home, the price does not increase. Although a homeowner may decide to sell their home, due to the 99-year lease of the land trust, homes will continue to be sold for an affordable cost. Land trusts resist the potential for a home or property to appreciate, which also maintains affordability. They function to support the well-being of the community because they "remove land from the speculative real estate market and manage it for the common good."²

How does it benefit my community?

Land trusts have a variety of benefits, both for individuals and the community as a whole. For individuals, land trusts can promote increased rates of homeownership by ensuring the affordability of homes on land. Promoting affordable homeownership in land trusts can also work to confront racial disparities by increasing the homeownership rates in demographics that have historically had lower rates of homeownership. A community benefit of land trusts is their role in countering gentrification. Gentrification is the process of affluent people moving into a neighborhood resulting in increased real estate and housing prices, subsequently pushing longtime residents out of the area as they are no longer able to afford the increased housing prices. Land trusts, overall, support community longevity and resist disruption from external entities.

Why do I need to learn about it?

Given their 99-year lease structure, land trusts provide residents with the opportunity to pursue affordable homeownership opportunities while also being protected from potential rising housing costs and subsequent displacement. Additionally, residents can cultivate community without disruption by outside developers.

Funding a Land Trust

A land trust obtains land through sale or donations, or by acquiring vacant properties. Although the preferred method of obtaining land is through donation, financial support for a land trust is pertinent to their success in purchasing land plots as necessary. Funding for a land trust also supports operational costs, such as staff salaries. Examples of funding include loans, seed money, and donations from private and public entities.

¹ "About the Moab Area Community Land Trust," Moab Area Community Land Trust, <https://www.moabelt.org/about>.

² Community Land Trusts: Affordable Access to Land and Housing <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Community%20Land%20Trusts%20Affordable%20Access%20to%20Land%20and%20Housing.pdf>, 5

Case Studies

New Communities, Inc. - The first land trust established in the US in 1969

<https://www.newcommunitiesinc.com/>

Established in 1969 as the first community land trust, New Communities, Inc. has worked to cultivate economic development, social justice, and community building for African-American farmers facing struggles to find land ownership opportunities.

Moab Area Community Land Trust

<https://www.moabclt.org/>

This land trust is operated by a nonprofit organization that intends to increase opportunities for affordable housing and homeownership by establishing a 99-year lease of the land with the homeowner. This ensures that housing costs do not increase. Recently, after receiving a large land donation and \$4.3 million in tax credits, the land trust is constructing three community buildings, which will include 300 housing units in total, to expand affordable housing opportunities. The land trust is also completing improvements on existing homes.

Community Land Trusts and Stable Affordable Housing - Case Studies of Albany, GA, Houston, TX, Oakland, CA

<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr-edge-featd-article-110419.html>

In two historically Black Houston neighborhoods, the Third Ward and Independence Heights, housing prices have begun to increase as residents from outside neighborhoods have begun to move into the areas which has caused displacement. In order to deter increased housing prices, Houston Community Land Trust (HCLT) builds new homes on land obtained by the land trust and sells the homes to income-qualified residents. The land trust constructed homes are also tied to a 99-year lease on the land which ensures that homes maintain affordability even when sold.

Where can I learn more?

“About Land Trusts,” Land Trust Alliance, <https://landtrustalliance.org/why-land-matters/land-conservation/about-land-trusts>

Community Land Trusts: Affordable Access to Land and Housing

<https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Community%20Land%20Trusts%20Affordable%20Access%20to%20Land%20and%20Housing.pdf>

“What City Leaders Need to Know About Community Land Trusts,” National League of Cities

<https://www.nlc.org/article/2021/08/17/what-city-leaders-need-know-about-community-land-trusts/>

“Community Land Trusts,” PolicyLink

<https://www.policylink.org/resources-tools/tools/all-in-cities/housing-anti-displacement/community-land-trusts>

Microgrids

What is a microgrid?

Microgrids are a form of electrical grid that can function in conjunction with the main electrical grid or on its own when power on the main grid is lost during an outage. Currently, the most common form of microgrid is a diesel generator which can provide emergency power to a building or group of buildings if there is a power outage. Unfortunately, diesel generators are not efficient and cause air pollution. However, modernized models of microgrids utilize renewable energy such as solar or wind energy to power the grid.

How would a microgrid benefit my neighborhood?

Energy-efficient microgrids are emerging as an effective solution to ensure the resilience of electrical grids. As more extreme and frequent weather events occur due to climate change, the potential for power outages on an aging, centralized electrical grid increases. Microgrids also address environmental justice issues by investing in new infrastructure in communities that will be the hardest hit by climate change. This type of infrastructure functions to mitigate the severity of power outages caused by inclement weather by lessening the energy load on the larger grid. This is done by diversifying energy sources while also serving as a backup source of energy. Through a localized electrical grid to provide more efficient and affordable energy, microgrids are shifting the nature of how to distribute energy effectively and sustainably.

Why do I need to learn about this?

Cities have the opportunity to implement microgrids both to decarbonize and improve the resilience of the electrical grid for city services and residents. Residents can call upon city officials to consider establishing a microgrid and communicate with other residents to educate them about the community benefits of a microgrid.

Funding for a Microgrid

In Chelsea, Massachusetts, funding to establish a new community microgrid came from grant money to complete a microgrid feasibility study, funding to establish a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness project (one of these projects was a community microgrid), along with other federal funding, and additional financial support from the city. Although an expensive venture overall, with the use of a variety of funding sources, community microgrid projects are attainable. In addition to funding for this type of project, when microgrids produce extra energy, this excess power can be sold to the main electrical grid for a profit. These benefits ensure that funding microgrids are cost-effective.

Technical Assistance

Microgrid systems are maintained through a central control system that manages the entire microgrid system to ensure that it runs without error and disconnects from the main grid during a power outage.

Case Studies

Chelsea, Massachusetts Microgrid Project

<https://www.motherjones.com/environment/2023/04/microgrids-chelsea-massachusetts-environmental-justice-climate-resilience/>,
https://www.chelseama.gov/community/community_microgrid.php, and <https://files-cdn.masscec.com/reports/Chelsea%20-%20Community%20Microgrid%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf>.

Chelsea, Massachusetts is categorized as an Environmental Justice population and sits in a location that will be hardest hit by climate change-caused flooding. To maintain resilience in natural disasters, the microgrid project will be a municipal service to ensure that emergency and governmental services retain electricity in cases of power outages to provide necessary emergency services to residents.

Borrego Springs, CA Microgrid

https://climable.org/microgrids?gad=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwq4imBhBQEiwA9Nx1BqgmoL2NvNUkCq-TPc8_PYQpjbS5FgeobkiITcAxNyo5TjKuym6r_RoCOJIQAvD_BwE

The microgrid in Borrego Springs, California was established to ensure that residents have reliable access to air conditioning in a region of frequent severe weather, wildfires, and consistent dangerous heat. Since its implementation, this solar powered system has averted at least two significant outages, as a result of extreme weather, because of the microgrid.

Where can I learn more?

“Grid Systems,” Office of Electricity, <https://www.energy.gov/oe/grid-systems>.

“Meet the microgrid, the technology poised to transform electricity,” Climate, Vox,
<https://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2017/12/15/16714146/greener-more-reliable-more-resilient-grid-microgrids>.

Mighty Microgrids,

https://ilsr.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2016/03/Report-Mighty-Microgrids-PDF-3_3_16.pdf

“The U.S. Department of Energy’s Microgrid Initiative,” The Electricity Journal,

<https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2016/06/f32/The%20US%20Department%20of%20Energy%27s%20Microgrid%20Initiative.pdf>

“Community Microgrids Program,” Massachusetts Clean Energy Center,

<https://www.masscec.com/program/community-microgrids>

Pedestrian Zones

What is a pedestrian zone?

A pedestrian zone, also known as a pedestrian mall or no-car zone, is an area dedicated to improving pedestrian experiences in an urban area. These areas can be permanently closed to cars, or be closed only during certain times on certain days of the week. Pedestrian zones tend to include local businesses and restaurants where pedestrians can shop and eat.

How would this benefit my community?

Pedestrian zones have economic, environmental, and social benefits. In these zones, which are commonly surrounded by local businesses and restaurants, pedestrians have more access to these shops which increases engagement. Environmentally, without cars in the area, there are lower levels of carbon emissions which improves air quality. Pedestrian zones also can support social well-being and community engagement by increasing opportunities for social interaction among community members in these areas.¹

Why do I need to learn about this?

Even with these benefits, city planners should take into consideration the potential impacts of these zones and establish proactive mitigation strategies prior to the implementation of these zones. Pedestrian zones do have the potential to cause gentrification, the process of affluent people moving into a neighborhood with resulting increased real estate and housing prices, and subsequently pushing longtime residents out of the area as they are no longer able to afford the increased housing prices. As preferable areas of real estate, pedestrian zones have increased housing prices in certain cities, which has forced longtime residents out of the area. Planners can consider how to incorporate affordable housing in these plans to ensure that residents are not displaced. Residents and neighborhood councils, as members of the community, can engage in the planning process for these areas to ensure that City officials and planners of the zone prioritize the needs and wants of residents.

Case Studies

National League of Cities - Streets as Connectors: Pedestrian Zones in Cities

<https://www.nlc.org/resource/new-report-on-pedestrian-zones/>

This report examines pedestrian zones in a variety of places, both international cities and cities in the United States. One example of a US city with a 40-year history of pedestrian zone usage is Madison, Wisconsin. City officials converted a highway into a limited car zone to prioritize pedestrian and bicycle traffic and increase the economic development of local businesses and restaurants in the area surrounding the Capitol building and the University of Wisconsin. Within the last 20 years, State Street has had higher rates of public transportation usage and increased bike use with the inception of the Madison Bicycle bike share program. More restaurants and apartments have also been established

¹ “Streets as Connectors: Pedestrian Zones in Cities”, National League of Cities, https://www.nlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/CS_PedestrianReport_Final_WEB-1.pdf.

in the area, which has increased rent prices. As indicated in this case study, although these zones have environmental, social, and economic benefits, there must be a comprehensive planning process to ensure that pedestrian zones do not result in resident displacement.

Seasonal Streets

<https://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/pedestrians/seasonalstreets.shtml>

New York City offers temporary pedestrian zones on various streets throughout the city at different times during the year. Community-based organizations in partnership with NYC DOT plan the logistics of each of these seasonal spaces to organize events and ensure that businesses along the road can receive deliveries as needed. In past years, designers of the pedestrian zones have placed temporary furniture and art displays in the area. These four zones have increased pedestrian traffic during the seasonal street periods. In 2018, pedestrians' engagement with shops on Doyers Street increased by 69% and pedestrian traffic increased by 111%. ¹ On Broadway Street in 2017, pedestrian traffic increased by 30%. ²

Where can I learn more about this?

Strong Avenue, Northampton, MA

"Summers on Strong"

<https://www.gazettenet.com/StrongAvenue-hg-05252021-40642962> and

<https://northampton.live/summer-on-strong>

Pedestrian Zones: Definition, History, and Outlook

<https://www.treehugger.com/pedestrian-zones-definition-history-and-outlook-5185356>

¹ "Seasonal Streets", New York City Department of Transportation,
<https://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/pedestrians/seasonalstreets.shtml>.

² "Seasonal Streets", New York City Department of Transportation,
<https://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/pedestrians/seasonalstreets.shtml>.

Planting Fruit Trees in Urban Orchards

What are urban orchards?

Urban orchards are districts in cities that are dedicated to planting and growing trees. The locations of urban orchards can vary from parks to vacant lots to schools to residents' properties. Currently, Springfield's only established urban orchard is located at Johnny Appleseed Park in Forest Park.

To form a sustainable urban orchard, many stakeholders are required to secure funding and resources to plant and cultivate the trees. Stakeholders may include the city government, community-based organizations, neighborhood councils, private organizations, and community residents. The City of Springfield offers a list of the best-suited trees for the climate, however, in the urban orchard planning process, consideration for expanded types of trees, including fruit trees, may be examined.¹

How will this benefit my neighborhood?

Urban orchards are beneficial to the environment as trees can offset carbon emissions by absorbing carbon dioxide which also improves air quality in an area. More trees in cities can also lower the intensity of high temperatures in "heat islands," or urban areas that, "experience higher temperatures than outlying areas."² Heat islands are an environmental justice issue that disproportionately impacts communities of color and low-income populations. Increased shade from trees on homes may also reduce home energy cooling costs. Additionally, including fruit trees in urban orchards will expand access to fresh fruits for more residents.

Why do I need to learn about this?

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has established the Greening the Gateway Cities Program (GGCP), which includes parts of Springfield, to "increase tree coverage in urban areas in Massachusetts", especially within Environmental Justice populations.³ Community members can play an integral role in the implementation of urban orchards as there are opportunities for residents to grow trees on their own properties or assist in community tree planting and cultivation projects. Residents including renters, homeowners, and business owners, in the McKnight-Hill neighborhoods can request free trees to plant from the GGCP program. Currently, fruit trees are not included in this program as they do not increase canopy cover because they must be trimmed frequently.

¹ "Trees We Offer," GGCP Springfield, <https://www.springfield-ma.gov/park/ggcp/trees-we-offer>.

² Using Trees and Vegetation to Reduce Heat Islands, <https://www.epa.gov/heatislands/using-trees-and-vegetation-reduce-heat-islands> and Heat Island Effect, <https://www.epa.gov/heatislands>.

³ Greening the Gateway Cities, [https://www.springfield-ma.gov/park/ggcp#:~:text=Greening%20the%20Gateway%20Cities%20Springfield%20\(GGC%20Springfield%20or%20GGCP\)%20was.lot%2C%20porch%2C%20or%20building](https://www.springfield-ma.gov/park/ggcp#:~:text=Greening%20the%20Gateway%20Cities%20Springfield%20(GGC%20Springfield%20or%20GGCP)%20was.lot%2C%20porch%2C%20or%20building).

Maintenance

The City of Springfield offers a guide for tree care for residents who have received a tree from the Greening the Gateway Cities Program which indicates that trees need to be watered once a week for two years with 25 gallons of water, mulch should be applied around the tree trunk, and pruning only needs to take place if there are dead branches in the first three years. Additional maintenance questions or needs may be directed to the Greening the Gateway Cities Program.

Case Studies/Urban Orchards Around the United States

Philadelphia Orchard Project

<https://www.phillyorchards.org/>

The Philadelphia Orchard Project (POP) is a non-profit organization that plants fruit trees to increase food access. There are about 40,000 vacant lots and high levels of poverty in Philadelphia. POP uses these vacant lots along with schoolyards and community gardens to plant fruit trees. According to POP, fruit tree planting has environmental (improving soil health, cultivating environmental justice work) and aesthetic benefits. In addition, it has opportunities to increase access to fresh fruit expanding community environmental education. POP oversees or partners with 66 urban orchards which include Demonstration POP Orchards (Public Access), POP Community Orchards, Supported POP Orchards, and Other City Orchards. Since its inception in 2007, POP has planted 1,578 trees, 3,912 shrubs/vines, and 26,217 perennials, and has had the support of 926 volunteers.

Boston Food Forest Coalition

<https://www.bostonfoodforest.org/>

The Boston Food Forest Coalition (BFFC) is a community land trust that establishes community-based and operated gardens in areas that experience high levels of climate and racial injustice. Before being converted to food forests, these plots of land were vacant lots that BFFC acquired from the city for a low cost. BFFC has indicated that these food forests work to mitigate the impacts of climate change by increasing vegetation, including plants that produce food, in urban areas and investing in green infrastructure in structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods. Currently, the BFFC has nine food forests with one upcoming addition.

Where can I learn more about this?

How to Start an Urban Orchard

<https://www.arborday.org/trees/bulletins/coordinators/resources/pdfs/073.pdf>

Greening the Gateway Cities Program

<https://www.springfield-ma.gov/park/ggcp>

ReGreen Springfield - Urban Orchard Resource Dashboard, <http://regreenspringfield.org/urban-orchard-resource-dashboard/>

Rooftop Solar and Installing Solar on Historic Homes

What is rooftop solar?

Rooftop solar is an option for homeowners to install solar panels on their roofs to decarbonize their home's energy usage. Decarbonization means reducing carbon emissions that lead to climate change. This model of obtaining solar energy is specifically for those who own their home, however, in community solar models everyone, regardless of whether they own their home or rent it can benefit from solar energy. Homeowners have the option, like in community solar models, to buy or lease solar panels installed on their homes. Owning solar panels allows homeowners to use the energy produced from the installed panels and receive state and federal incentives for installing solar. For those who choose to lease solar panels, the homeowner still obtains affordable solar energy for their home, but a solar energy company owns and maintains the panels.

What are the regulations for installing solar panels on historic homes?

Solar Panels on Historic Properties

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/solar-panels-on-historic-properties.htm>

As property owners intend to increase the energy efficiency of their homes or buildings, solar panels have proven to be an effective method of decarbonizing the built environment, especially in old and historic buildings that tend to be inefficient. However, there is an added level of consideration when looking to install solar panels on historic buildings as there are local, state, and federal protections on these properties to maintain their architectural and historic integrity. Technical Preservation Services of the National Park Service and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards of Rehabilitation have established that installing solar panels on historic properties should be considered on a case-to-case basis; they have suggested that installation is generally acceptable with some caveats. The NPS provides an overview of acceptable solar panel installations, including:

1. Installing solar panels on a new addition of a building rather than on the original structure
2. On flat roofs, the angle of the solar panels should be decreased to ensure that there is less protrusion above the roofline
3. Pole-mounted arrays function so the solar panels are not installed on the building itself, but the building can still benefit from solar energy
4. On a low slope gable, solar panels can be installed against the roof – without the need for angling the panels themselves – in order to make them less visible
5. The visibility of solar panels installed on a cross gable are obstructed by pediments which makes them this an acceptable option
6. Solar panels can be installed on a rear porch roof that is a new addition
7. In order to mitigate a solar array's impact on a cultural landscape, solar panels can be installed in an area separate, but nearby, in order to reap the benefits of solar energy.

An additional recommendation from NPS indicated that solar-powered hot water systems are best suited for historic buildings as they are less extensive and require fewer solar panels which ensures that the panels are not visible.

What are the benefits of rooftop solar?

Rooftop solar works to both promote renewable energy in residential homes to decarbonize energy usage which reduces carbon emissions and reduces energy costs for homeowners. Currently, rooftop solar systems are connected to the main electrical grid, so power will still be lost in the case of an outage, however, if the system were to be connected to a microgrid, rooftop solar would allow the home to retain electricity during inclement weather caused outages. ¹

Why do I need to learn about this?

As climate change continues to progress, one method of mitigation is decarbonizing energy usage by moving from dependence on fossil fuels to renewable energy, like solar energy. Rooftop solar allows homeowners to decarbonize their own home's energy usage.

Funding

There are a variety of forms of federal and state financial assistance available to alleviate any large upfront installation costs for homeowners looking to install solar panels on their home. These are in the form of Solar Renewable Energy Credits, Massachusetts State Tax Credits, and Mass Solar Loans. According to Energy Sage, without financial assistance applied, solar panel installation costs between \$15,130 and \$20,470, but over 20 years, a homeowner could save up to \$55,758 on energy bills. ²

Technical Assistance

For those who lease solar panels, the company that owns the solar panels will install and maintain the panels. In a solar panel ownership model, homeowners are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of their solar panels, but solar installation companies can provide maintenance services. Rooftop solar companies may also have a maintenance contract that would provide homeowners with continuing maintenance support of the solar panel system.

Case Studies

Solarize Philly

<https://solarizephilly.org/>

Solarize Philly works to make solar energy more accessible and affordable for homeowners. Currently, 20,000 households have signed up for this program and 1,300 contracts have been signed. This program was established by the Philadelphia Energy Authority (PEA) and specifies approved solar installers to complete projects. This program allows homeowners to either own or lease PV systems. With the option to own a system, homeowners receive a 30% investment tax credit along with Solar Renewable Energy Certificates, along with the energy savings from having solar. In the option to lease solar, the installers maintain and own the PV system at no cost to the homeowner. However, the installer receives the tax credit and SRECs, but the homeowner does still benefit from energy savings by buying energy from the PV system.

¹ The Road to Resilience with Rooftop Solar, <https://www.energy.gov/eere/articles/road-resilience-rooftop-solar>.

² Energy Sage, <https://www.energysage.com/local-data/solar-panel-cost/ma/?rc=p-masscec>.

Acton Historic District Commission's Guidelines for Solar Installations in Historic Districts

<https://www.acton-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/6919/HDC-SOLAR-GUIDELINES>

Many protections of historic properties exist at the local level and may place stricter regulations than federal standards on what changes or renovations can be made on a property, including solar panel installations. In Acton, Massachusetts, the Acton Historic District Commission has established, "Guidelines for Solar installations in Historic Districts." Based on these regulations, solar panels are permitted, however, property owners and installers must follow strict guidelines, many of which relate to the visibility of the panels. According to these rules, 1) solar panels cannot be on the front portion of a roof – the portion that faces the public *governing* road, 2) solar panels can be on a roof that is visible to the road, as long as it is not the public *governing* road. These are especially preferable if there are other protrusions – chimney, pediments – on the roofline that obscure the view. One caveat in this consideration is that solar panels must not "dominate," the roof, 3) if another, less visible, location is available for the solar panels not facing the *governing* road, the solar panels should be added there instead, 4) solar panels must be parallel to the roof's surface and be moved away from the edge of the roof to lessen the visibility. Other fixtures required for solar panel installation must not be detectable. Further, all aspects of the installation must be able to be disassembled without causing damage to the structure.

Solar panels can be added, but must not be visible. On a flat roof, homeowners must ensure that solar panels do not protrude and on sloped roofs, solar panels can only be placed on the rear and not visible from the *governing* road.

Where can I learn more about this?

Rooftop Solar

https://www.energystar.gov/products/rooftop_solar

Solar Panels on Historic Properties

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/solar-panels-on-historic-properties.htm>

Mass Solar Loans

<https://www.masscec.com/program/mass-solar-loan>

Solar Energy Resources for Consumers

<https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/solar-energy-resources-consumers>

The Road to Resilience with Rooftop Solar

<https://www.energy.gov/eere/articles/road-resilience-rooftop-solar>

District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines - Roofs on Historic Buildings

<https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/DC%20Roof%20Guidelines.pdf>

Self-Cleaning Toilets for Parks/Portland Loo

What is the Portland Loo?

The Portland Loo is an innovative ADA-accessible design of public restrooms to lessen the impacts of any disrepair on the bathroom and limit any illicit activities in the bathroom. On the exterior of the stall is a sink for handwashing. In some cities, these restrooms are accessible 24/7, but in others, they are locked overnight. To power these stalls, low volt or solar energy is used.

What are its benefits?

Designers of The Portland Loo hoped to eliminate illegal activity that commonly occurs in traditional public park restrooms by adding grating at the top and bottom of the stall which allows sounds to move through. Although completely private in terms of visibility, the small openings at the top and bottom of the stall ensure that users know that the stall is in a public setting. Installing these stalls in high pedestrian traffic areas reduces the potential for illicit activity to occur as there will be more usage of these restrooms by pedestrians or park users. The stall also has built-in blue lighting which makes it more difficult for those using intravenous drugs to find their veins. This reduces drug use within the public stalls.

Cost

The Portland Loo: World Class Solution to Your City's Public Restroom Needs

<https://pffcdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Portland-Loo-Presentation-DC-march-2017-1.pdf>

Cost of the stall itself - \$90,000

Shipping ~ \$3,500-\$5,000

Installation

- Utility - \$22,000-\$25,000
- Foundation - \$7,000-\$9,000
- Installation - \$3,000-\$4,000

Maintenance per year ~ \$11,000-\$12,000

Maintenance

Past self-cleaning designs in other cities, like Seattle, were retired due to their excessive mess with too much water on floors. In the Portland Loo, maintenance workers are still required to clean the bathroom, however, it is a streamlined process as the material is made to be hosed off or quickly wiped down.

Where can I learn more about this?

The Portland Loo

<https://portlandloo.com/the-loo/>

It's austere and uncomfortable. That's precisely the reason the 'Portland Loo' is finding a home in King County <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/its-austere-and-uncomfortable-thats-precisely-the-reason-the-portland-loo-is-finding-a-home-in-king-county/>

Dayton buys quirky Portland Loos: public toilets you can see inside (sort of) <https://www.daytondailynews.com/local/dayton-to-buy-quirky-portland-loos-public-toilets-you-can-see-inside-sort-of/4TMD0F4635DDXIKAPUFFK5GLBE/>

River gets new 'Portland Loo' Public Restroom <https://thisisreno.com/2023/03/river-gets-new-portland-loo-public-restroom/>

Tangled Titles and Estate Planning

What is a tangled title?

Tangled titles most commonly occur when a homeowner dies without completing a legally recognized will. If no legal will exists listing an inheritor to the home, the person who would have been the inheritor does not receive legal ownership of the home. The process of regaining ownership of the home is an expensive endeavor due to complicated legal matters. If an heir plans to sell the home of a deceased family member, the home associated with a tangled title cannot be sold. A legal inheritor's name must be on the housing deed and legal will to do so. Unresolved tangled titles, and the subsequent loss of home ownership, lead to the loss of generational wealth especially in demographics that historically and currently have lower levels of home ownership than others, specifically communities of color and low-income populations.¹ Further, because many people dealing with tangled titles are low-income, these residents may lack access to legal counsel due to the high cost of an attorney's services.

What are the benefits of estate planning?

Estate planning to avoid tangled titles is necessary for anyone who owns a home. Even if a homeowner has a will, it must go through the probate process to be considered legally binding. Verbal promises are not legally binding. Estate planning indicates a legally recognized inheritor in the will which averts any legal challenges after a person's death. In addition to avoiding legal challenges, estate planning alleviates some stress of surviving family members during a difficult time.

Why do I need to learn about this?

There is a prevalent, but false, sentiment that estate planning is only for very wealthy residents with many assets.² However, to avert tangled titles, every homeowner should complete an estate plan with an associated legally recognized will. Residents can also call upon the city to offer accessible estate planning services to support residents in avoiding tangled titles in Springfield.

Case studies

How "Tangled Titles" Affect Philadelphia

<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2021/08/how-tangled-titles-affect-philadelphia>

¹ The case study referenced specifically focuses on St. Louis. Nicholas Phillips, "How 'tangled titles' freeze wealth in Black neighborhoods (and probably elsewhere in St. Louis, too)," St. Louis Magazine, <https://www.stlmag.com/news/solutions/a-problem-in-deed-tangled-titles/>.

Additionally, in Baltimore and Philadelphia, it has been indicated that tangled titles most disproportionately impact Black residents. "How 'Tangled Titles' Affect Philadelphia", <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2021/08/how-tangled-titles-affect-philadelphia>, "Tangled titles obstruct generational wealth for thousands of city families," WYPR News, <https://www.wypr.org/wypr-news/2021-12-06/tangled-titles-obstruct-generational-wealth-for-thousands-of-city-families>.

² "Tangled titles obstruct generational wealth for thousands of city families," WYPR News, <https://www.wypr.org/wypr-news/2021-12-06/tangled-titles-obstruct-generational-wealth-for-thousands-of-city-families>.

Philadelphia has an estimated 10,407 tangled titles which is likely lower than the true amount. Tangled titles most disproportionately impact Black residents in Philadelphia. This study indicates that the impacts of tangled titles are both individual and communal. Tangled titles can inhibit generational wealth, cause degradation of homes and foreclosure, heighten chances for deed theft, and lead to increased crime and the chance for fires in neighborhoods with high tangled title numbers. To mitigate these impacts, homeowners should create an estate plan with a legally recognized will and sign up for Fraud Guard to protect against deed theft.

“Tangled titles obstruct generational wealth for thousands of city families,” WYPR News, <https://www.wypr.org/wypr-news/2021-12-06/tangled-titles-obstruct-generational-wealth-for-thousands-of-city-families>.

In Baltimore, like Philadelphia, tangled titles disproportionately impact Black residents. This story touches on the experience of one resident who lived in her parents’ home and cared for them, but when they passed away, her name was not on the transferred housing deed, which caused a tangled title and subsequent legal issues. One reason residents do not complete estate planning is that it requires the discussion of death which can be a difficult topic for many people. The engages the community by offering free estate planning assistance to avoid tangled titles. A significant impact of tangled titles is that the homes may fall into disrepair because surviving descendants of a deceased homeowner may not have the financial means to care for the home. Although there are home maintenance grants and loans for income-qualified residents, homes with tangled titles do not qualify. Because tangled titles are such a significant issue in Baltimore, the Maryland Volunteers Lawyers Service (MVLS) has offered free estate planning and probate process support for residents.

Where can I go to learn more?

Probate of Wills and Estates

<https://www.mass.gov/probate-of-wills-and-estates>

City of Philadelphia (PDI) - Helping residents get legal ownership of their homes and protect their generational wealth

<https://www.phila.gov/programs/probate-deferment-initiative-pdi/>

Homeowner Tactics to Overcome Problems with Tangled Titles

<https://library.nclc.org/article/homeowner-tactics-overcome-problems-tangled-titles>

Tangled Title: Frequently Asked Questions

<https://philalegal.org/resources/tangled-title-frequently-asked-questions>

Massachusetts law about wills and estates

[https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-law-about-wills-and-estates#print-sources:-estate-planning-\(drafting-a-will,-etc.\)-](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-law-about-wills-and-estates#print-sources:-estate-planning-(drafting-a-will,-etc.)-)

Nicholas Phillips, “How “tangled titles” freeze wealth in Black neighborhoods (and probably elsewhere in St. Louis, too),” St. Louis Magazine, <https://www.stlmag.com/news/solutions/a-problem-in-deed-tangled-titles/>.

Tool Libraries

What is a tool library?

A tool library is a method of sharing tools in a community to ensure all residents have access to them to complete home or garden projects. These programs are housed in places accessible to community members within the neighborhood. Tool libraries are most commonly managed by a city government, a nonprofit organization, or a separate entity whose main purpose is to run the tool library. Residents can check out tools, like library books, for a period of time. When a resident needs a specific tool to complete a project the tool library would allow this resident to utilize the tool, and not spend extra money on a tool that they may only ever need to use once.

How would it benefit my neighborhood?

The benefits of tool libraries are multifaceted as they provide environmental, economic, and social benefits. As mentioned previously, tool libraries work to counter overconsumption to support environmental sustainability. Tool libraries also function to promote affordable home maintenance, and other home projects, by making tools accessible to all, especially for residents who would not be able to afford them otherwise. Finally, tool libraries support community engagement by hosting classes and events.

Why do I need to learn about this?

Tool libraries are community-run programs that community members or community-based organizations establish. To implement a lasting program, community members must be at the forefront of the planning and operations. Tool or monetary donations are required for the library inventory and volunteers are needed to oversee the checkout process and lead trainings.

Funding

Tool libraries may be free or require a small membership fee to sustain the program. Some tool libraries have established scholarships to ensure that the library is accessible to all. Other funding may be acquired through donations (tools or monetary funds) and late fees.

Technical Assistance

In addition to supplying tools, some tool libraries may offer classes to teach residents how to use tools and complete basic home repairs.

Where can I learn more about this?

Sustainable consumption toolkit - Tool Lending Library

<https://sustainableconsumption.usdn.org/initiatives-list/tool-lending-libraries>

Taking a Building's Vital Signs: A Lending Library of Handheld Instruments

<https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1422&context=ischoolsrj>

Case Studies

Transition Northfield, MA

<https://transitionnorthfieldma.org/>

Founded in 2010, Transition Northfield, MA functions as a tool library to support residents' needs by also addressing “economic instability, rising energy costs and global climate change.”¹ In 2018, the program had more than 200 members. In addition to offering tools for checkout, Transition Northfield, MA has also held “Fix-It Fairs” in which residents can bring broken objects or furniture and learn from volunteer repairpeople about how to fix their objects or pieces of furniture.

The Tool Library

<https://thetoollibrary.org/about/>

In Buffalo, NY, The Tool Library is a volunteer-operated program for neighborhood residents. In addition to loaning out tools for individual projects, this program organizes large-scale community beautification and garden projects and art installations for residents to participate in. Another aspect of this project is training for residents on how to operate tools and complete projects. Although this program does require a membership fee, in order to maintain accessibility to all, The Tool Library has funding for those who may not be able to afford a membership

¹ “Northfield to host ‘Fix-It Fair’ at library,” <https://www.recorder.com/Transition-Northfield-organizes-fix-it-fair-16547059>.

Traffic Calming

What is traffic calming?

Traffic calming measures are efforts to mitigate automobile-related collisions and injuries by reducing travel speed and traffic volume and prioritizing pedestrian and bicyclist safety. There are a wide variety of types of traffic calming mechanisms that include enforcing behavioral shifts in drivers and physical changes to the road to slow down automobiles. These methods range from small to large financial investments from the city. Considered in the adoption and installation of these methods is their impact on emergency vehicles, as some of these measures would increase emergency response time.

How would this benefit my community?

In order to mitigate risks on the road, traffic calming practices can be implemented. Although pedestrians and cyclists are the most vulnerable on roads, traffic calming measures may assist in lessening the severity of car accidents by reducing automobile speeds.

Why do I need to learn about this?

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and the City of Springfield published the Springfield Complete Streets Implementation guide which addresses opportunities for improving street design for safety and efficiency. The city can implement this plan to ensure the safety of Springfield residents on roads. Residents can inform the city about specific roads of concern and potential areas of improvement that would most benefit their neighbors and neighborhood.

Examples of Traffic Calming Measures

Common traffic calming measures include roadway design elements such as:

- Speed humps
- Roadside trees
- Diagonal diverters
- Sidewalk extensions

Case studies

Neighborhood Slow Zones

<https://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/motorist/slowzones.shtml>

In order to reduce the amount and severity of automobile-related accidents and improve road safety, New York City has implemented Neighborhood Slow Zones. In these areas, the city has lowered the speed limit from 25 mph to 20 mph. In addition to decreasing the speed limit, physical traffic calming measures have been installed. Since the inception of these zones, there has been a “10-15% decrease in speeds, 14% reduction in crashes with injuries and 31% reduction in vehicle injuries.”¹

¹ Neighborhood Slow Zones, <https://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/motorist/slowzones.shtml>.

Promising Local Practice in Road Safety: A Primer for Safer Streets

<https://www.nlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/CS-Road-Safety-Brief.pdf>

According to the National League of Cities, 46,000 people were killed as a result of road-related accidents in 2021. Cities in the United States, including Somerville, MA, have adopted Vision Zero plans to address this high number of road-related deaths. Somerville has begun to implement designs that address accessibility, sidewalk and intersection safety, and improve bus stops. For transparency purposes, the city has created an online map that indicates all of the locations where road safety measures have already been established.

Where can I learn more about this?

West Hartford Neighborhood Street Traffic Calming Program

<https://resources.finalseite.net/images/v1649677425/westhartfordctgov/qlk4vdzwpayzjstrhmiu/TrafficCalmingProgram-March2022.pdf>

Delaware Traffic Calming Design Manual

https://nacto.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/DE-Traffic-Calming-Manual_2012.pdf

Traffic Calming, City of Northampton, MA

<https://www.northamptonma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/15943/Traffic-Calming-Manual-Sept-2020?bidId=>