

Assets and Issues

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This Chapter provides a summary of the assets and key issues that were identified during the preparation of the Master Plan: While identifying issues to be addressed is important, it is equally important to consider ways to maximize the neighborhoods' assets, which are quite extensive for these two neighborhoods.

- 1) Each member of the Master Plan Advisory Committee was individually interviewed at the start of the project to provide a beginning framework of issues to research;
- 2) The Master Plan Advisory Committee reviewed the findings of the existing conditions and trends summarized in Chapter 2, and prioritized issues that arose from the meeting discussions;
- 3) The list of issues was presented at the March 2008 community meetings and attendees had the opportunity to prioritize and add to the list. The list was later made available on the internet so that neighborhood residents who were unable to attend the March community meetings could also comment.

It is important to note that the issues identified by residents may or may not be validated by facts. In such cases where factual information may contradict the identified issue, it will be necessary to address community perception that differs from reality.

Of the five most pressing issues to be addressed by the Master Plan, three are concerns related to housing. The top five issues listed in order include:

- number of foreclosures and vacant houses,
- poor physical state of buildings on main streets and number of vacant buildings,
- physical decline in the housing stock due to lack of repairs and inappropriate renovations,
- number of absentee landlords,
- lack of destination shops and attractions.

Based on the number of issues raised by the Advisory Committee and confirmed at the public meetings, the issues are categorized into eight categories:

Housing and Neighborhood Character

Retail Services

Community Facilities and Services

Community Heritage and Identity

Economic Development

Recreation

Environmental Protection and Natural Resources

Transportation Connections

Housing and Neighborhood Character

Assets

- Family oriented: a good place for to raise families
- Senior-friendly
- Economic and professional diversity of residents: there is a mix of income levels, professional training and backgrounds that contribute to the area's interesting demography
- Quality of housing stock when compared to the entirety of Cleveland
- Affordable housing stock
- Historic and Victorian housing stock: "old town feel", with sidewalks, and street lights
- Interesting architecture

Issues

- Number of foreclosures and vacancies
- Physical decline of housing stock; lack of repairs; poor/inappropriate renovations
- Absentee landlords: many felt they contribute to the deterioration of the housing stock
- Increase in the number of rental of single-family houses/ participation in the voucher program
- Perceived increase in the amount of poverty in the neighborhood
- Concern that current residents will move out of the neighborhoods, especially if Cleveland's residency requirement is repealed
- Shortage of independent, senior-friendly housing that is close to neighborhood centers
- Loss of senior residents—concern that seniors are following their children to the suburbs

Retail Services

Assets

- Eclectic group of mom and pop shops
- Most goods and services that one needs are available within the community: there is a comprehensiveness to the array of retail
- Steelyard Commons
- Decent city services to the neighborhoods
- Safety of the neighborhoods

Issues

- Poor physical state of the main arteries: number of vacancies and degraded buildings; commercial buildings, corridors streetscapes and curbs in state of disrepair, especially at Pearl and Broadview
- Lack of "destination" shops and attractions to draw people to area; no coffee shop, upscale dining, grocery with specialty/organic choices
- Residents don't support local retail
- Need wider range / types of restaurants, especially family-friendly ones

Two Neighborhoods Preserving Our Past, Planning Our Future **Together**

Community Services and Facilities

Assets

- Presence of MetroHealth Hospital and medical facilities
- Presence of MetroHealth's Senior Health and Wellness Center in Downtown Old Brooklyn
- School facilities: quality schools within public system as well as other choices including charter, public and private
- Benjamin Franklin Community Garden
- Decent city services to the neighborhoods
- Safety of the neighborhood: Old Brooklyn is the second-safest neighborhood in Cleveland
- Abundance of churches
- Programming at local branches of the Cleveland Public Library system
- A large number of Block Clubs in both neighborhoods

Issues

- Perceived lack of police presence and slow police response time
- Crime and perceived crime
- Perception of an increasing drug presence
- Perception of poor schools keeps people from moving in or staying
- Too many kids on the street; no place for neighborhood youth to go, nothing constructive for them to do
- Some residents, often seniors, feel that they are prisoners in their own homes; some areas are not senior-friendly
- Health issues, including lack of access to affordable, healthy and fresh food as well of lack of exercise

Community Heritage and Identity

Assets

- Presence of *Art House*
- Cultural richness and interesting architecture
- Neighborhood diversity and distinctiveness
- Historic richness: building on the historical register, historical districts, cemeteries, historic baseball diamond
- Nationally dedicated Ohio & Erie Canalway America's Byway goes through the hearts of the neighborhoods
- Local cemeteries
- Active social service organizations including: Brookside Center, Brooklyn Kiwanis, and Senior Citizen Resources
- Approximately 160 active block groups and three neighborhood civic associations

Issues

- Poor neighborhood marketing; nonresidents don't know all the good things about the neighborhoods
- No "town" square or gathering place where people can unite for community or social events
- Decline in respect for neighbors: residents often inconsiderate and loud late into the night
- Lack of neighborhood pride; no sense of neighborhood or community
- Tensions between different population groups
- Negativity in the media: media misrepresents the neighborhood by focusing on the negative
- Lack of neighborhood unity: divisions between Old Brooklyn and Brooklyn Centre neighborhoods

Economic Development

Assets

- Central Location: close to Downtown and Cleveland Hopkins International Airport; centrally located in the County and accessible via I-71, I-178 and I-480
- MetroHealth Hospital and MetroHealth's Senior Health & Wellness Center
- Metroparks Zoo and other destinations
- Stable household incomes
- Development potential of Lower Big Creek Valley

Issues

- Poor physical state of the main arteries: number of vacancies and commercial buildings in a state of disrepair
- Need more jobs and more stable jobs
- The small size of many commercial parcels and buildings discourage new development; need to take advantage of land assembly opportunities
- Impacts of past and present business including landfills, junkyards, (Henninger Landfill), salt piles, and rock crushing operations

Environmental Protection and Natural Resources

Assets

- Lower Big Creek and its Valley; views into the valley from along the rim of the Valley
- Floodplain in the valley provides natural storage for storm water
- Abundance of greenspace throughout the neighborhoods
- Numerous tree-lined streets
- Existing soil types offer potential to use “green infrastructure” to manage storm water runoff

Issues

- Impacts of past and present business including landfills, junkyards, salt piles, and rock crushing operations
- Illegal dumping in Valley and lack of environmental stewardship by both residents and non-residents
- Hillside subsidence

Transportation Connections

Assets

- Availability of public transportation; GCRTA bus routes are on all major and commercial streets including Pearl Road, Broadview Road and Memphis Avenue
- Construction of the new Fulton Road Bridge
- Improvements on State Road
- Close proximity and easy access to all major highways
- Neighborhoods are walkable and bikeable
- Safety of the neighborhoods

Issues

- Excess utility poles are ugly and obstruct pedestrian walkways
- Streets are not as safe as they used to be
- Traffic goes too fast south of Pearl Road (Brooklyn Brighton) Bridge
- Some traffic lights are not well timed
- Snow plows pile snow on sidewalks along the Pearl Road Bridge and make it unsafe to walk across the bridge

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