



Spurring Home Improvements in Texas Middle Neighborhoods by Framing Incentives as Property Tax Mitigators

City of Arlington Texas

NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

- Neighborhood Block Parties & The Block Party Trailer
- Neighborhood Matching Grant
- Arlington Home Improvement Incentive Program
- Neighborhood Leadership Network
- Neighborhood Plans

Property owners often express reluctance to substantially improve their home because their property taxes will increase. The Arlington Home Improvement Incentive Program (AHIIP) was created to mitigate this concern and infuse private investment into existing housing stock.

Although flanked by Dallas and Fort Worth – two areas that are exploding with development of new and modern homes – houses in Arlington are more dated and in need of investment. Neighborhoods in Arlington are full of historic homes built in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, and the city of Arlington believes that bringing investment to the area will also draw commercial businesses and job opportunities.

How It Works: AHIIP gives homeowners a one-year incentive for doing large improvement projects. Projects must amount to at least \$20,000 and the homeowner must apply for the incentive before the project begins. That \$20,000 figure was determined by taking 10% of the average home value in the area, which is around \$200,000. The City logs the pre-improvement city tax value and executes an incentive agreement with the homeowner.

Once the rehab project is complete, the homeowner submits a claim form to the City. City staff verify that the new, increased, after-rehab tax bill has been paid, and then cuts a check to the homeowner based on the increase in the City tax bill after improvements were made. The city portion of the tax bill is only about a quarter of the total tax bill; school districts, counties, hospital districts, and some special assessments make up the rest. The City calculates the pre- and post-work difference in taxes and multiplies that amount by 10, so the homeowner receives 10 times the increase in taxes.

For example, if the improvement increases the City portion of the tax bill by

\$250, the homeowner would receive ten times that amount, or \$2,500. The incentive is capped at \$5,000 per home. Funding comes from a one-time set aside of general funds, which was established in 2011. Typical projects include new kitchens, baths, lot improvements, and pools, and homeowners may include more than one item. The program does not allow landscaping or other non-permanent improvements.

[READ ON!](#)

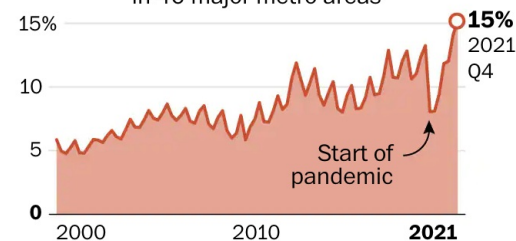
Cleveland State University Launches National Study of Middle Neighborhoods

The Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University was awarded a two-year grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) as a part of RWJF's "Policies for Action: Research on Housing Policies That Promote Equity" program. Titled "Investing in the Middle: A New Approach to Deliver on the Promise of Equitable Neighborhood Development," the project will work to address equity and health in middle neighborhoods.

The research project will study, in-depth, six neighborhoods around the nation. Researchers will also feature mini case studies of an additional group of middle neighborhoods to give a broader national flavor to the study.

As a first step to framing the study, project leader Molly Schnoke and her team developed a fascinating typology of middle neighborhoods that continues to be ground-tested with practitioners. Keep an eye out for an upcoming webinar on the typology. ***Also, if you are interested in being interviewed by Molly's team for a mini case study, please contact [Marcia](#).***

Share of purchased homes bought by investors, in 40 major metro areas



Investors Purchased Record Shares of Homes in 2021

The Washington Post reported a record share of investor home purchases in 2021. Neighborhoods where a majority of residents are Black have been heavily targeted by investors, according to a The Post's analysis of Redfin data. Last year, 30 percent of home sales in majority Black neighborhoods were to investors, compared with 12 percent in other Zip codes. This article includes an interactive map you can use to see investor purchases in your MSA.

[Read full article here.](#)

ICYMI

An interesting article by David Dworkin in the National Housing Conference newsletter rounded up some key issues discussed in the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee at its [second hearing](#) on the impact of single-family residential rentals on home prices, neighborhood impacts and homeownership. Some key points:

- Institutional SFRs are most dominant in neighborhoods with



Area Median Incomes (AMIs) between 80% and 120% – the heart of the first-time homebuyer market.

- **Researchers at the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia** found that between 2007 and 2014, single-family home purchases by institutional buyers accounted for 'a net increase of 9 percent in real house price growth and 28 percent of the reduction in homeownership rates.'
- Where rents are rising, large investors are a part of the problem. According to CoreLogic, in markets targeted by large investors, rent growth for detached properties has been double that of attached properties, led by Miami and Phoenix.

[Read the whole article.](#)



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AFFINITY GROUP REPORT

Engaging Residents in Housing Development Plans and More from the February Community Engagement Chat

This month, the group discussed the challenge of doing community engagement work in a neighborhood where two-thirds of the parcels are vacant lots. Starting next fall, one suburban neighborhood in Cleveland will undergo a major transformation as 250 new homes are built in a small area involving five streets where most existing residents are older adults. In this scenario, gaining input from the current residents is key, but not enough. Once homes are built, the neighborhood will be transformed, and most of the community will have moved into the area from elsewhere.

So, how do we gather input from residents who don't live in the neighborhood yet?

Participants in the Engagement Affinity Group helped brainstorm solutions including

- Start early by engaging existing residents at monthly drop-in sessions for information sharing.
- Build connections between existing residents so that they do not feel isolated as the transformation occurs.

- Provide opportunities for existing residents to share their stories about the neighborhood.
- Use prominent local celebrities/church leaders as a draw to engage residents.
- Connect with nearby businesses, schools, and other anchor institutions like hospitals.
- Build an interactive marketing strategy that allows potential homebuyers to engage with the community such as neighborhood history walks, 5k runs, bike tours, a mural tour, pop-up art shows, chalk fests, outdoor concerts, storytelling events, etc.

The group discussed other topics related to building a neighborhood-based approach in middle neighborhoods, and conversations and connections are continuing. The Middle Neighborhoods Community of Practice hosts drop-in 'engagement chats,' on the third Wednesday of each month at noon (eastern time). Here, practitioners, residents, government officials, etc. can discuss community engagement strategies and build a supportive network to support this vital work.

Next Engagement Chat

Wednesday March 16 @noon

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84667560436>

All are welcome!

Upcoming Free Webinars in March

March 22, 2022
12:00-1:00 pm Eastern

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Beyond Zoom: Practitioner Tutorials on Fun and Effective Virtual Community Engagement Tools



One useful innovation that came out of the pandemic is the development and expanded use of a variety of free virtual tools for engaging with people in our neighborhoods. In this session we'll go beyond the Zoom meeting to learn from middle neighborhood practitioners how they are employing user-friendly platforms like Padlet, edpuzzle and others to connect residents to neighborhood initiatives and to each other.

These tools have great graphics and user interfaces that can be useful in building connections and collecting the information needed to help solve problems. Join us for this one-hour session to see live working examples and to get tips on creating tools and strategies of your own.

Panelists:

Nancy Tunell, Neighborhood Vitality Specialist, City of Garland, TX

Melissa Nemon, Consultant, Londonderry, NH

March 31, 2022
12:00-1:30 pm Eastern
[REGISTER HERE](#)

Middle Neighborhood Trends in the Desert Southwest



The American Southwest has been the fastest-growing region of the nation for several decades, outpacing the national growth rate every decade between 1950 and 2010. The foreclosure crisis hit the Southwest hard, and cities like Phoenix and Las Vegas saw property values drop by 40% or more. Yet, by and large, the region has recovered strongly, and most analysts expect the Southwest to continue growing in population faster than the nation as a whole for the foreseeable future. The 2020 Census found that Phoenix was the fastest-growing big city in the nation from 2010 to 2020. How are middle neighborhoods faring in this super-charged regional economy?

In this session, Alan Mallach and Marcia Nedland will present and discuss findings from a study of middle neighborhoods in six Southwestern cities: Fresno, California; Las Vegas, Nevada; Phoenix, Arizona; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Lubbock and Arlington, Texas. Director of Neighborhood Services Lori Schwarz will share the approach used by the City of Plano, Texas to strengthen middle neighborhoods, including several innovative programs to support community engagement and property maintenance.

Join in to discuss how these markets differ from Midwest and legacy cities, and how the challenges for middle neighborhoods are different, too. And the final report will be available to everyone who registers in advance of the webinar.

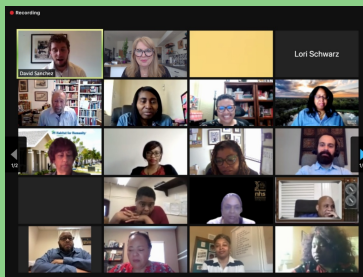
Speakers:

Alan Mallach, *Senior Fellow, Center for Community Progress*

Lori Schwarz, *Director of Neighborhood Services, City of Plano, Texas*

Moderator:

Marcia Nedland, *Principal, Fall Creek Consultants; and Organizer, Middle Neighborhoods Community of Practice*



Recent Webinar Recordings

Moving Middle Neighborhoods Forward: Looking Back and Planning Ahead, What Will Success Look Like in 2022?

Watch Now

With:

Greg Perelka, EVP, Lending Operations, CHN Housing Capital, Cleveland

Lisa Potts, Board Member, Cornerstone, St. Louis

Kathi Thomas-Gibson, Director, Community Services, City of Las Vegas

Shut Out: Exploring the Impact of Institutional Investors on Middle Neighborhoods Watch Now

With:

Timothy Kobie, PhD, Business Process Analyst, City of Cleveland, Ohio

Jayne Lucas-Bauer, Neighborhood Development Project Manager, Old Brooklyn CDC

Sally Martin, Housing Director, City of South Euclid, Ohio

Jeff Verespej, Executive Director, Old Brooklyn CDC

A Practical Method for Assessing the Physical Conditions of Every Property in Your Middle Neighborhood — and Exciting Ways to Put the Data into Action Watch Now

With:

Charles Buki, Founder and President, czbLLC

Peter Lombardi, Director of Revitalization Planning, czbLLC

Find all recordings of the Middle Neighborhoods' webinar series [HERE](#)

Webinars are co-sponsored by the [Middle Neighborhoods Community of Practice](#), the [National Community Stabilization Trust](#), and [NeighborWorks America](#).

In the News + Resources

Please [send us](#) links to articles about your work in middle neighborhoods or topics relevant to middle neighborhoods.

1. [Investors bought a record share of homes in 2021. See where.](#), Kevin Schaul and [Jonathan O'Connell](#), Washington Post, February 16, 2022.
2. [Single-Family Rentals and Homeownership \(Are investor-owned Single Family Rentals \(SFRs\) crowding out homebuying opportunities, especially for first-time homebuyers?\)](#), David Dworkin, National Housing Conference, FEB 13, 2022.
3. VIDEO: [Why The Middle-Class Is Disappearing](#), CNBC, February 9, 2022.



CoP Reports + Action Items

Out and About: We delivered an afternoon workshop on Middle Neighborhoods at the recent

NeighborWorks Virtual Training Institute. In April, we'll lead a session on Middle Neighborhoods at the Arizona Housing Coalition Conference, in Mesa, Arizona. We've submitted a proposal to lead a session at the September Reclaiming Vacant Properties conference in Chicago. That event is presented by the Center for Community Progress.

Custom Webinars: We often get requests for custom webinars on middle neighborhoods, which we gladly deliver! Please let us know if you'd like one for your staff, board, network, or community.

CoP Listserv: Don't forget to use our listserv, MiddleNeighborhoodsCoP@googlegroups.com to share announcements, news articles, questions and the like. If you are in the CoP, you are already a member of the listserv. If you are not a CoP member, but would like to join the listserv, email [us](#).

Actions You Can Take to Grow and Support the CoP

1. Join and participate in the Listserv, MiddleNeighborhoodsCoP@googlegroups.com. This is the most direct way for CoP members to interact with each other. Share your questions and successes.
2. Submit an article, news item, or resource idea for the newsletter to [Marcia](#).
3. Host a Middle Neighborhoods 101 webinar for people in your organization or community to help them learn about middle neighborhoods and launch a discussion on local opportunities. [We](#) will help you plan this and deliver the webinar with you.
4. Submit an idea for a webinar or case study topic to [Ann](#).
5. Convene (virtually until in-person meetings are advisable) with other CoP members in your region to discuss a particular issue, or to start creating a regional action agenda. [Marcia](#) can help you contact your peers and plan your convening.
6. We can also help you convene a group of CoP members by interest rather than geography. Past convenings have included city government representatives.
7. Represent middle neighborhoods in local policy discussions. [We'll](#) share some talking points.
8. Propose and conduct a session on middle neighborhoods for conferences and other convenings or groups you participate in. [We'll](#) help with the proposal, recruiting panelists, planning, etc.