



Three Successful Approaches to Supporting Business Districts in Middle Neighborhoods

Moderator: Marcia Nedland

Organizer, Middle Neighborhoods Community of Practice





Tell us
about you!

- ☐ Nonprofit
- ☐ Gov't local
- ☐ Gov't state
- ☐ Gov't federal
- ☐ Intermediary
- ☐ Consultant
- ☐ Realtor
- ☐ Financial institution
- ☐ Academic institution



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Middle Neighborhoods Initiative

A National Initiative focused on mobilizing attention to reverse the disappearance of middle neighborhoods through decline or gentrification. The initiative does this through:

- Community of Practice: practitioners, policy, researchers
- Research: topics relevant to middle neighborhoods
- Policy Analysis and Advocacy: housing, lending, community dev
- Communications strategies: advancing awareness

Coordinated by **National Community Stabilization Trust** and NeighborWorks America and advised by a Steering Committee of 20 prominent researchers, practitioners and policy makers

stabilizationtrust.org



Characteristics of Middle Neighborhoods

- Mostly single-family homes built for families with children.
- Still well more than 50% owner-occupied, but slowly eroding.
- Housing stock is aging, still in generally acceptable condition, but often lacks features and updates to compete well for today's homebuyers.
- More racially, ethnically and economically diverse.



stabilizationtrust.org



Click [here](#) to learn more about defining Middle Neighborhoods

Refresh Your Map | Zoom | Questions or feedback? **GO**

Your Map

Choose a 2014-2018 layer to display

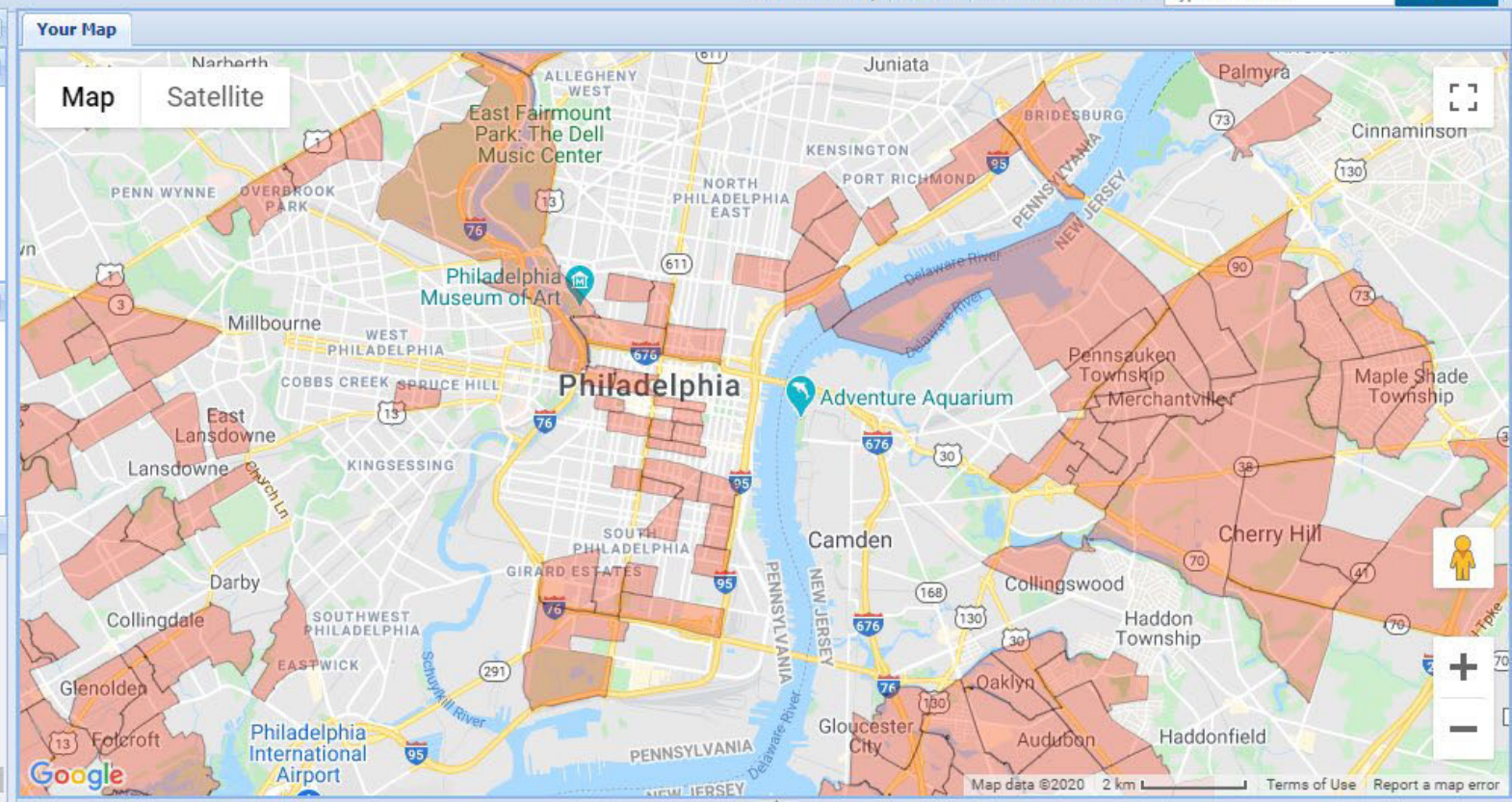
- 2018 City Test 1: 60-100% CMI
- 2018 City Test 2: 80-120% CMI
- 2018 National Test 1: 60-100% NMI
- 2018 National Test 2: 80-120% NMI
- 2018 Regional Test 1: 60-100% AMI
- 2018 Regional Test 2: 80-120% AMI
- 2018 Regional Test 3: 100-160% AMI

Choose a 2006-2010 layer to display

- 2010 City Test 1: 60-100% CMI
- 2010 City Test 2: 80-120% CMI
- 2010 National Test 1: 60-100% NMI
- 2010 National Test 2: 80-120% NMI
- 2010 Regional Test 1: 60-100% AMI
- 2010 Regional Test 2: 80-120% AMI
- 2010 Regional Test 3: 100-160% AMI

MSAs

- Panama City, FL Metro Area
- Parkersburg-Vienna, WV Metro Area
- Pensacola-Ferry Pass-Brent, FL Metro Area
- Peoria, IL Metro Area
- Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD Metro Area
- Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ Metro Area
- Pine Bluff, AR Metro Area
- Pittsburgh, PA Metro Area
- Pittsfield, MA Metro Area



Displaying census tracts with median household incomes between 80 and 120 percent of regional/MSA median (\$69,465), or \$55,572 - \$83,358

Our Panelists

Michael Elliott

- Vice President of Neighborhood Economic development
- Cleveland Neighborhood Progress (Cleveland OH)

Amber Lynch

- Executive Director
- Invest DSM (Des Moines IA)

Nedra Sims Fears

- Executive Director
- Greater Chatham Initiative (Chicago IL)



An aerial night photograph of Cleveland, Ohio. The city skyline is visible in the background with numerous lit-up buildings. In the foreground, a dense residential neighborhood is shown with many houses and streets illuminated by streetlights. The overall scene is a vibrant display of city lights at dusk.

Middle Neighborhoods Investment Program

Main Streets | Side Streets | Neighborhood Marketing

 CLEVELANDNP.ORG

What are Middle Neighborhoods?

Originally Built

- Mostly single-family housing
- Strong main streets

But now

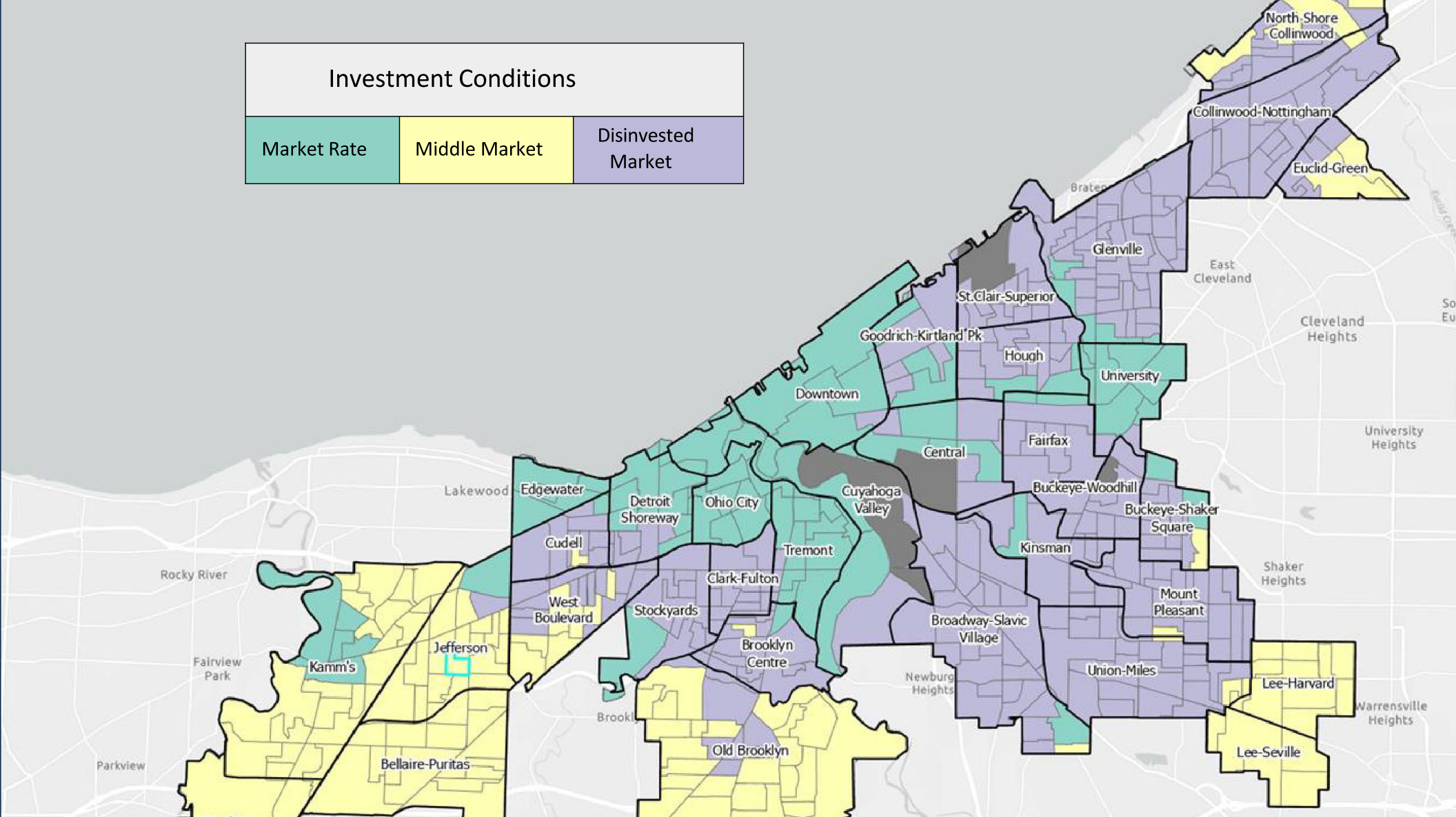
- Decreasing homeownership
- Aging housing stock without features to compete for today's homebuyers
- Property values in decline or flat, or underperforming against city and/or inflation
- Appraisal gaps hindering market-based lending
- Old and vacant storefronts

Investment Conditions		
Market Rate	Middle Market	Disinvested Market

Market Rate

Middle Market

Disinvested
Market



CNP's Approach to Middle Neighborhood Investment

Dual Investment Strategy

- CNP's Middle Neighborhood Initiative is a dual strategy investing in residential (Side Streets) and commercial development (Main Street) projects.
- Commercial investments address barriers to occupancy such as white boxing, storefront renovations and public realm projects to attract businesses.
- Residential investments seek to diversify and modernize neighborhood housing stock with updated amenities while increasing market value.

Why Invest In Main Streets?

- Main streets provide the first impressions of neighborhoods
- Stops the cycle of disinvestment
- Main streets are where entrepreneurs and small businesses thrive
- Attracts commercial amenities for residents

Why Invest in Side Streets?

- *The Investment Gap.* The cost of substantial renovation in Middle Neighborhoods often exceeds the market value of the renovated home. The difference results in an investment gap.
 - This gap is a major barrier to redevelopment or results in substandard rehabilitation.
- Strategic investments will upgrade homes with modern amenities and properties will be sold at the highest possible value
- Investments will be made in small areas of strength and with frequency
- The investments will compete with bad actors purchasing single family residential properties and develop a market to encourage quality private investors

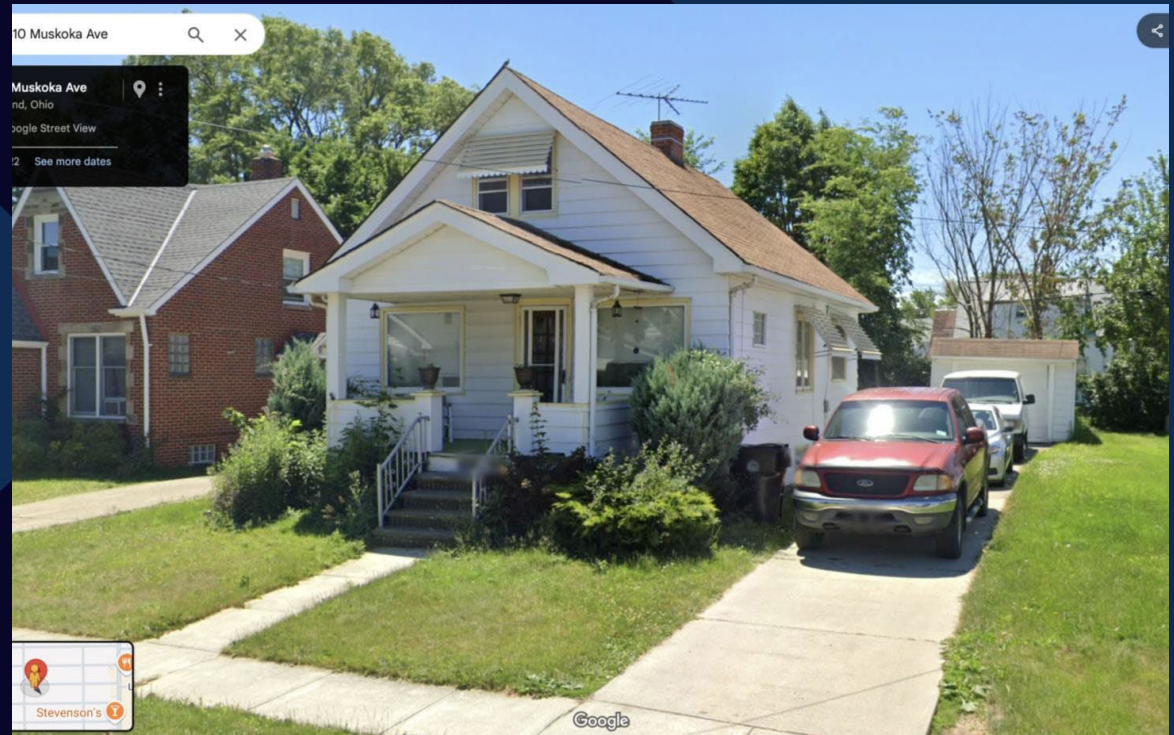
Middle Neighborhoods Side Streets Program

Single Family Home Renovation

19310 Muskoka Ave. North Collinwood Built: 1928

BEFORE

- 2 Bedroom, 1 Bath
- 1-Car Garage
- Knob-and-Tube wiring



Before



...and After



19310 Muskoka Ave.

North Collinwood

Built: 1928

BEFORE

- 2 Bedroom, 1 Bath
- 1-Car Garage
- Knob-and-Tube wiring

AFTER

- 4 Bedroom, 2 Bath
- New 2-Car Garage
- New wiring, furnace, AC, and kitchen



Before



...and After



Before...



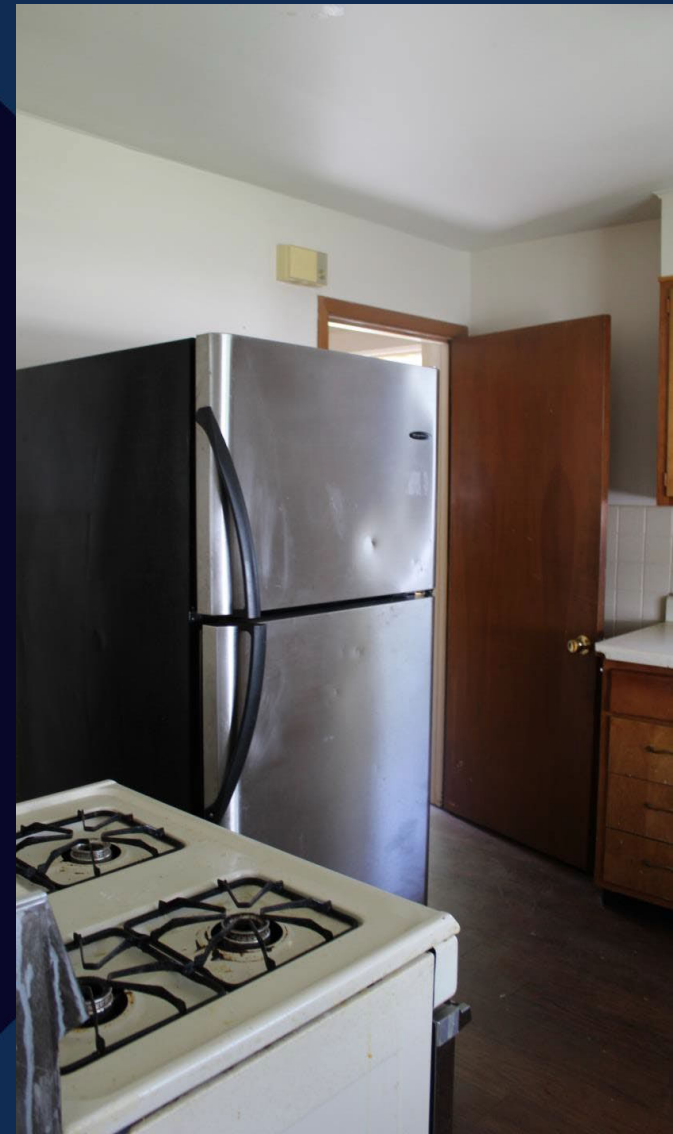
...and After



Before



Before



... and After



Before



... and After



Before...

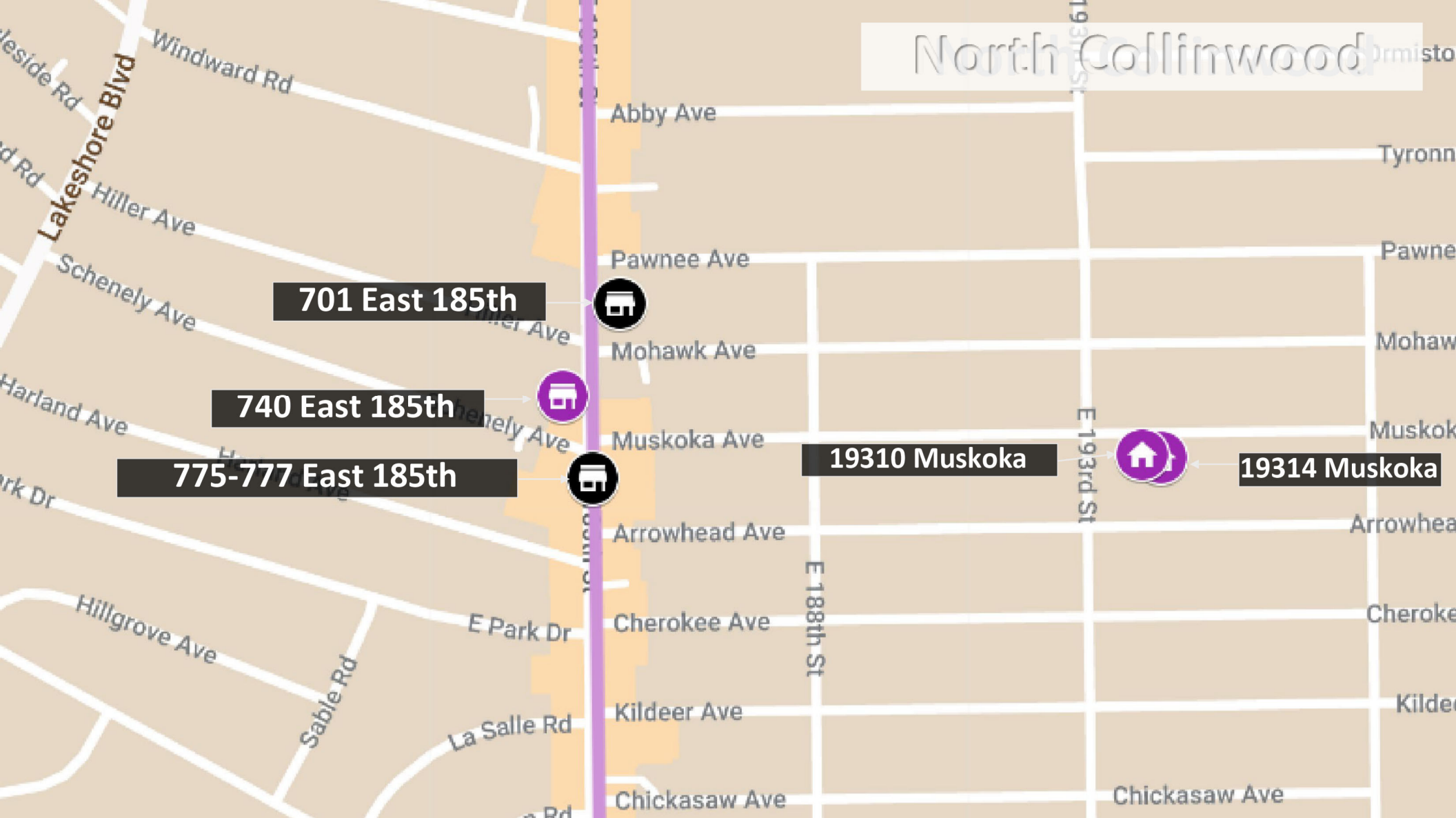
and After



Middle Neighborhoods Main Streets Program

Whiteboxing | Storefront Façade Improvements | Placemaking | Technical Assistance

North Collinwood



White Box Vacant Storefronts

- Neighborhood: Collinwood
- Project Type: White Box
- MN Grant Amount: \$60K
- Total Project Costs: \$200K

Project Description

- Local ownership (City Desk)
- White box a 3,500 SF endcap space (27K) for the entire building)
- Painting, HVAC, Electrical, Plumbing
- Phase 1 of a larger commercial real estate development project



Storefront Façade Improvements

- Neighborhood: Jefferson Puritas
- MN Grant Amount: \$50,000
- Total Project Costs: \$120,000

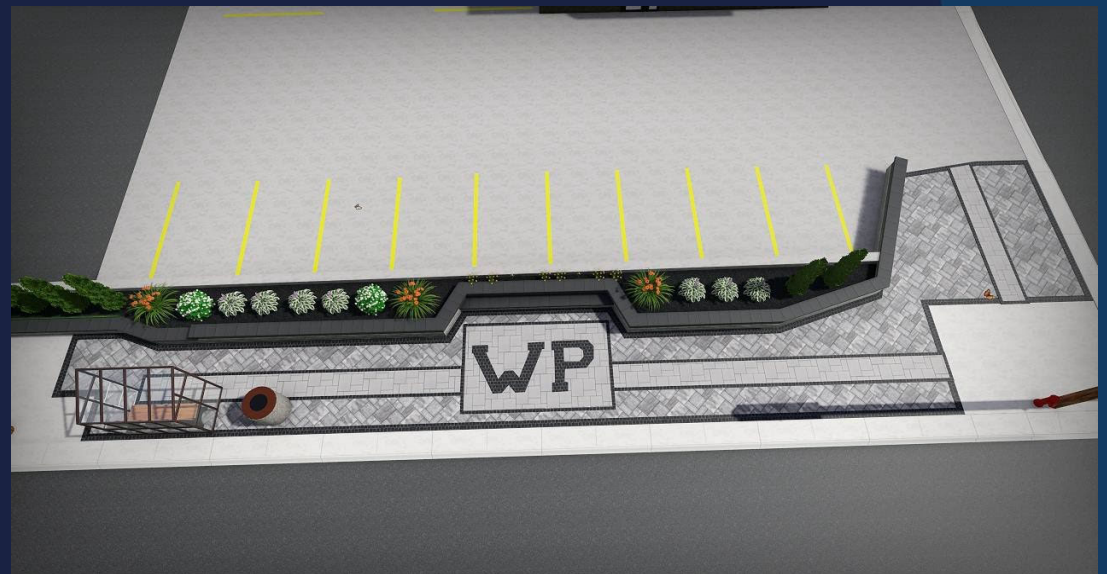
Project Description

- Local ownership
- One active tenant, additional space for up to 3 additional tenants
- Located along a major intersection
- One of 6 MN supported projects within this area.



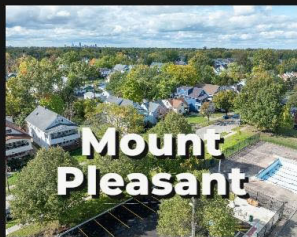
Placemaking

- Perception Changing
 - Cleanliness
 - Safety
- Complements existing investment
- Creates neighborhood level amenities
- Attracts foot traffic to main streets
 - Supported by community events
- Encourages community engagement and a sense of community pride



Neighborhood Branding and Marketing

We  Cleveland Neighborhoods

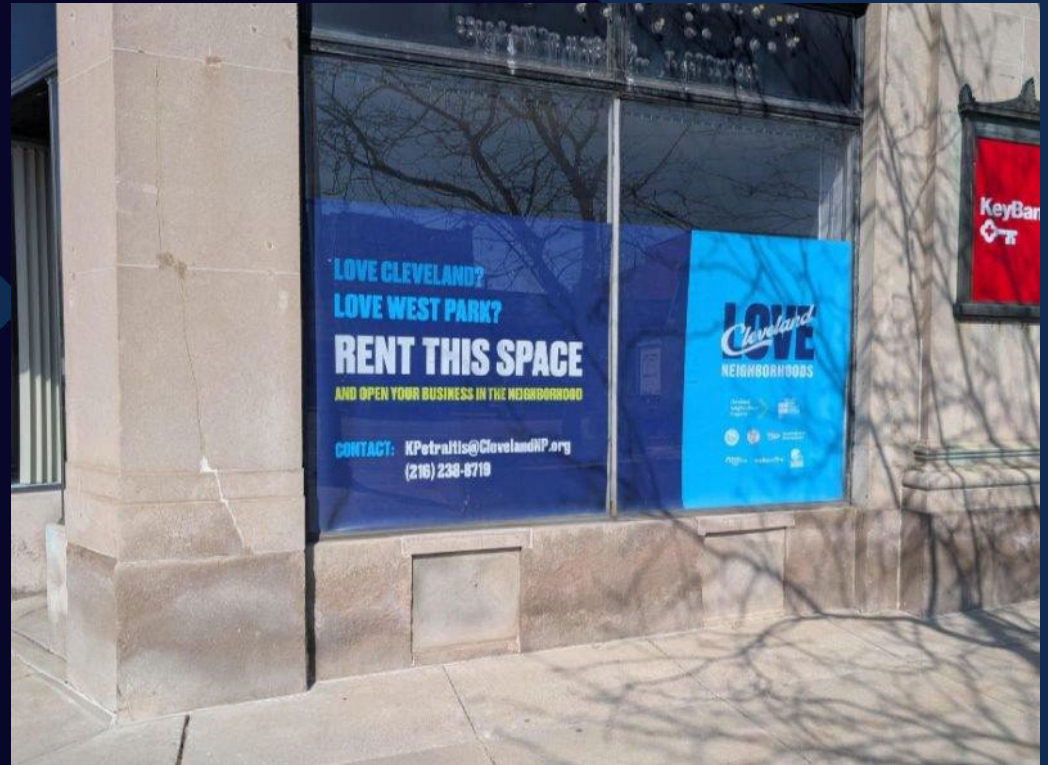


Love Cleveland Neighborhoods
Home Page



Neighborhood Branding and Marketing

Vacant Storefront For Lease Signage



Partnerships and Funding

- Community Development Corporations
 - Pipeline Development
 - TA to small businesses
- Funding Sources
 - Government
 - State of Ohio
 - City of Cleveland
- Philanthropic
 - Various Foundation
 - Cleveland Browns Foundation
 - Rocket Mortgage

FLEXIBILITY IS KEY!!



Measuring Success

The following measures are some of the ways we will track our success, in the short-term and in the long run.

Short-term Impact Analysis

- Comparative analysis of sales on the market at completion of home sale
- Tracking who is participating on commercial and residential jobs. Eye on identifying contractors who have ties to the neighborhoods we serve
- Inquires of white-boxed spaces

Measuring Success

The following measures are some of the ways we will track our success, in the short-term and in the long run.

Interim Impact Analysis

- Analysis of increased property tax valuations via Cuyahoga Fiscal Officer.
- Increase in building and construction permits taken out for properties in targeted Middle Neighborhood areas.
- Inquiries and investment from other sources.

Long-term Impact Analysis

Measuring Success

The following measures are some of the ways we will track our success, in the short-term and in the long run.

- Increases in incomes
- Increases in rents
- Sales completion percentage
- Increase in middle neighborhood
- Positive Perception of residents and

Insights and Challenges

- There are diamonds in the rough, you must take the time to turn over some stones
- Investment is happening... it's just moving slowly
- Residents and business take pride in their neighborhoods
- Job creation should be a secondary measurement not a primary
- One size programs will not fit all
- Technical assistance is needed

Program variety and flexibility is key!!



Thank You!



Michael R. Elliott Jr.

Vice President of Neighborhood
Economic Development
Cleveland Neighborhood
Progress

Cleveland, OH
216-825-1324

Connect with me



[My Digital Business Card](#)

Invest DSM

Des Moines, Iowa





Invest DSM is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization created in July 2019 by a resolution of the City of Des Moines and Polk County. Our focus is to impact middle-market neighborhoods and fill previously unmet needs such as:

- Promote and **finance home renovation projects** to make the housing stock more competitive and marketable.
- Provide financing to support **investments in neighborhood commercial districts** within specific areas.
- **Market & promote** specific areas to ensure a steady stream of homebuyers.
- Support efforts to **grow the leadership capacity** of neighborhood residents and stakeholders.

"Invest DSM was created as a confidence-creation mechanism."

~CZB 2023 Status Report

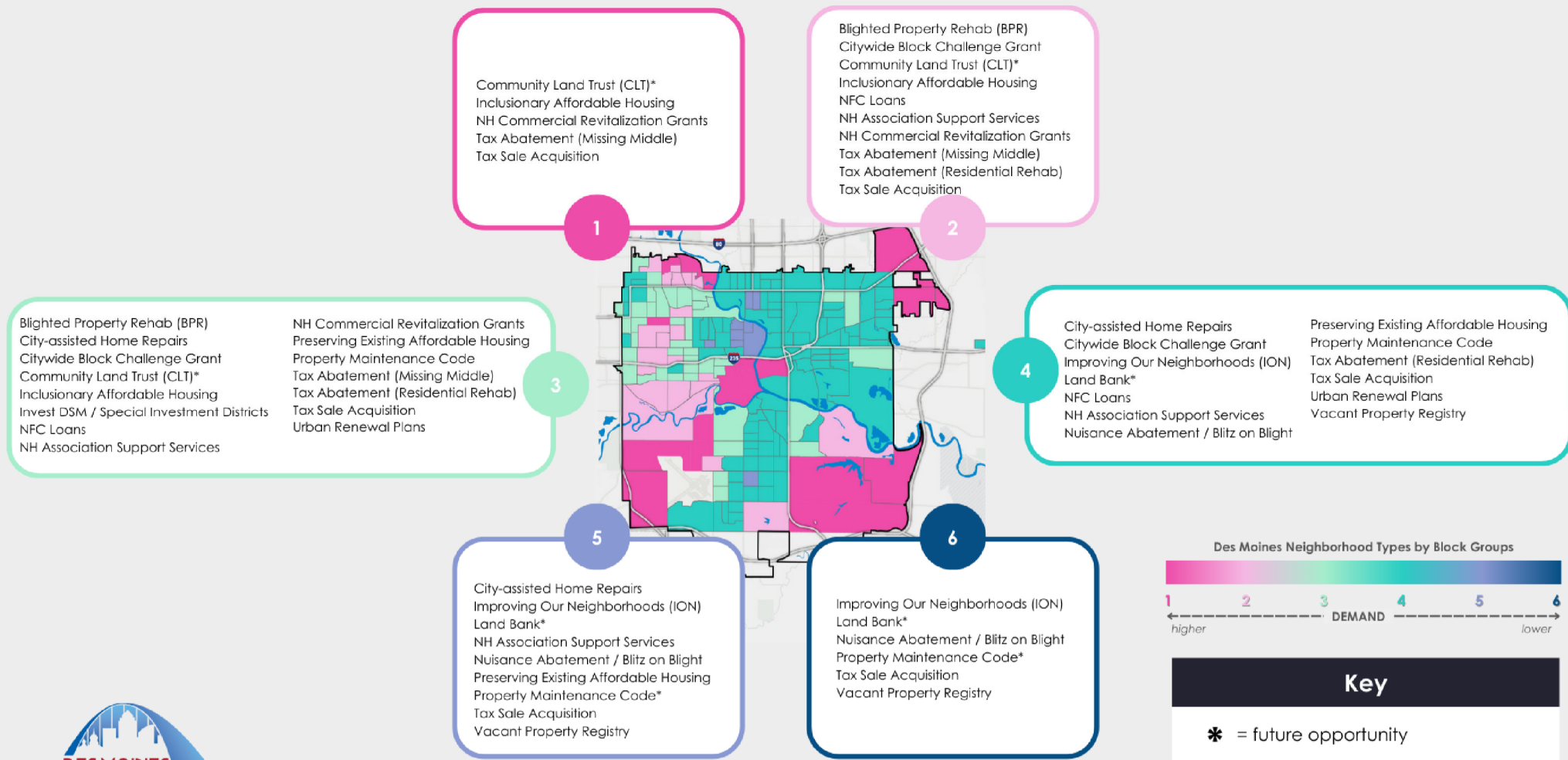
Mission

Invest DSM is a collaborative non-profit organization that leverages innovative and comprehensive solutions to strengthen neighborhoods.

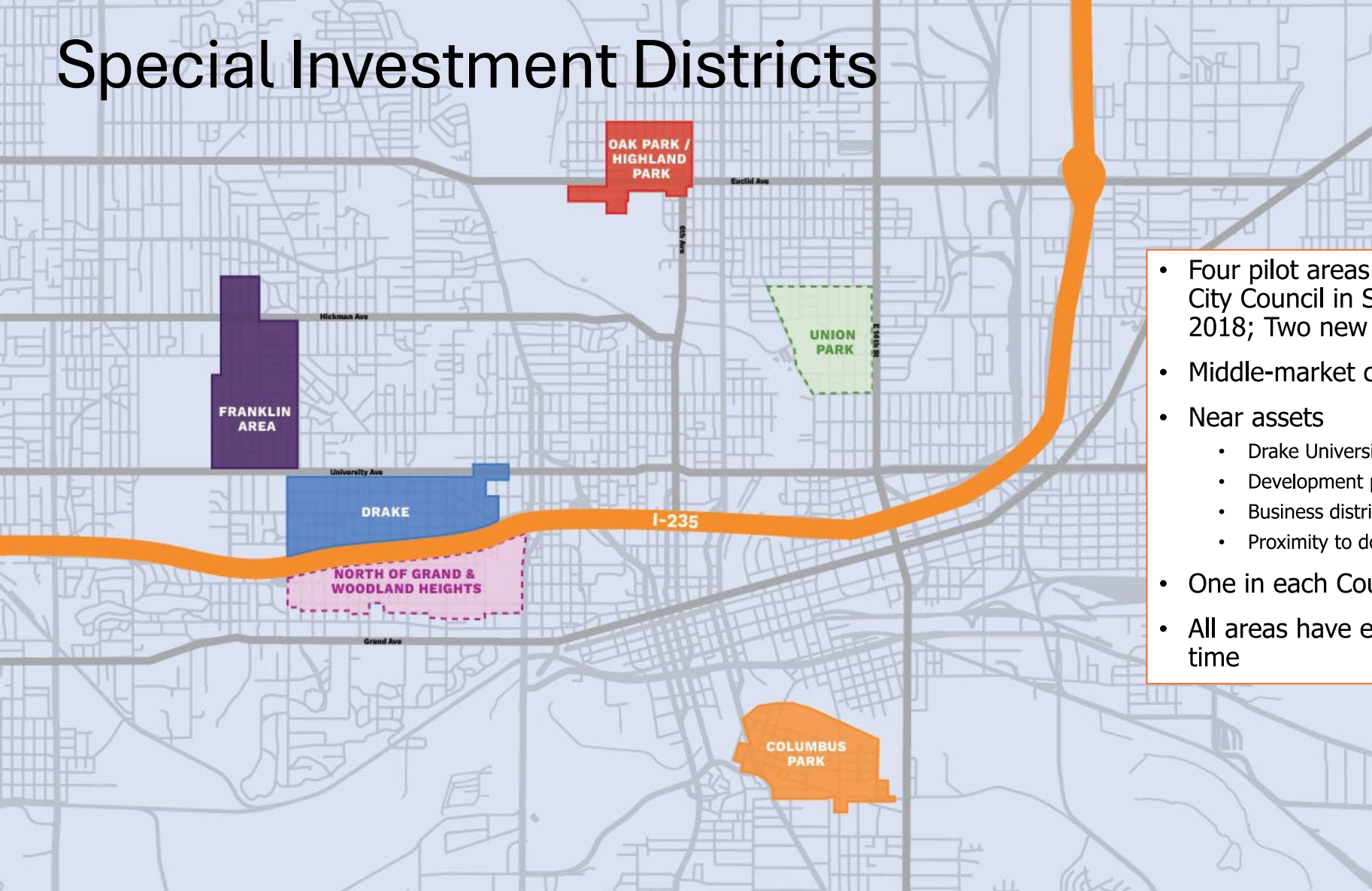
Vision

Vibrant, healthy, thriving neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Revitalization Toolkit



Special Investment Districts



- Four pilot areas selected by City Council in September 2018; Two new in 2024
- Middle-market characteristics
- Near assets
 - Drake University
 - Development project
 - Business district momentum
 - Proximity to downtown
- One in each Council Ward
- All areas have expanded over time



Invest DSM Grant Programs



BLOCK CHALLENGE GRANT



HOMEOWNER RENOVATION



**DEVELOPER REHAB & NEW
CONSTRUCTION – SINGLE
FAMILY**



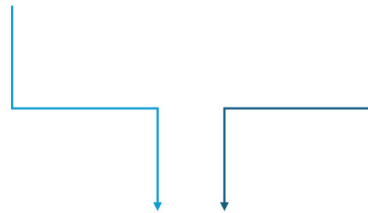
COMMERCIAL



**RENTAL –
SF & MF REHAB
(< 10 UNITS)**



COMMUNITY BUILDING



93% of All Completed Projects have
involved Existing Homeowners





Commercial Grant Program



- Building owner or Tenant is eligible to apply (with owner permission)
- Pre-Development Grant –
 - \$1:\$1 match up to \$10,000 for architectural, engineering, etc.
- Construction Grant –
 - \$1:\$1 match up to \$50,000 (per retail bay)
 - Focused on code compliance & façade / building envelope upgrades
- 39 Projects Completed since 2020, totaling over \$37 million
 - IDSM share \$1.9 million (\$35.2M from other sources)
- Projects range from small upgrades to substantial renovations
 - Art Grant also available for storefront windows, murals, signage design





Oak Park / Highland Park Business District



- North side of Des Moines
- Intersection of two major corridors
 - (6th Ave & Euclid Ave – US Hwy)
- Historic District on National Register
- 2019 – many vacant storefronts, deferred maintenance on buildings
 - A few anchor businesses with passionate, resourceful owners
 - Affordable commercial rents attractive to new generation
 - Strong desire for 3rd Space





Hiland Bakery

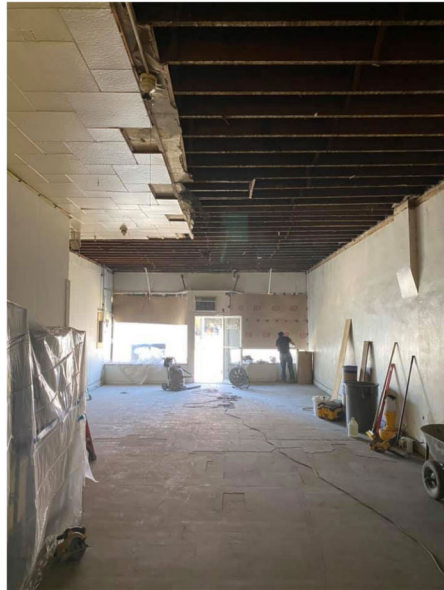


- Bakery opened 1946
- Anchor Business, Retiring Owners
- 2019:
 - New owners bought bakery business
 - Unable to take on full building renovation





Hiland Bakery



Creative Partnership

- Neighborhood Development Corporation (NDC)
 - Purchased Building; Managed Rehab
- Bakery Business Owner
 - Leased Building with Option to Purchase within 5 years
- City of Des Moines
 - Loan to NDC
- Invest DSM
 - Loan to NDC for \$130,000, secured with mortgage & promissory note
 - \$110,000 Repayable at Time of Sale





Hiland Bakery



- Q4 2019: NDC Purchases & Rehabs
 - Project cost approx. \$310,000
- Q2 2020: Rehab Complete; Bakery Re-Opens
- Q4 2022: Bakery Owners purchase building
 - Loans to IDSM & City Repaid
- Q1 2024: New Owner purchases both



2019 Assessed Value: \$66,800

2025 Assessed Value: \$259,000

% Change: Increase of 288%





Chuck's Restaurant



- Italian-American Restaurant First opened in 1956
- Anchor Business; New Owners as of 2014
- Known for free Thanksgiving Meals, Hosting Civic Events
- 2019/2020 – Roof Leak

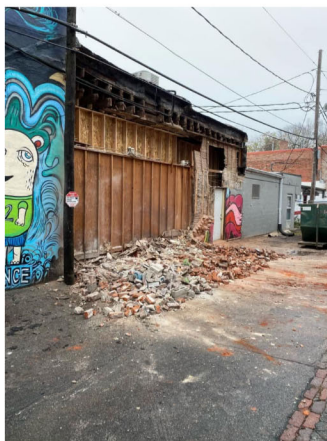




Chuck's Restaurant



- Roof Leak + Significant Structural Repairs
- Late 2020 – Building Purchased by NDC with lease-back to restaurant owners
- 2021 - NDC managed building renovation
- Loan/Grant from Invest DSM





Chuck's Restaurant



- Roof Leak + Significant Structural Repairs
- Late 2020 – Building Purchased by NDC with lease-back to restaurant owners
- 2021 - NDC manages \$1.4M building renovation
 - New roof, HVAC, electrical, plumbing throughout
 - Addressed structural issues
 - Renovated four vacant upper-story apartments
- \$280,000 Grant from Invest DSM
 - Share of net resale proceeds when restaurant owner buys back



2019 Assessed Value: \$155,000

2025 Assessed Value: \$1,036,000

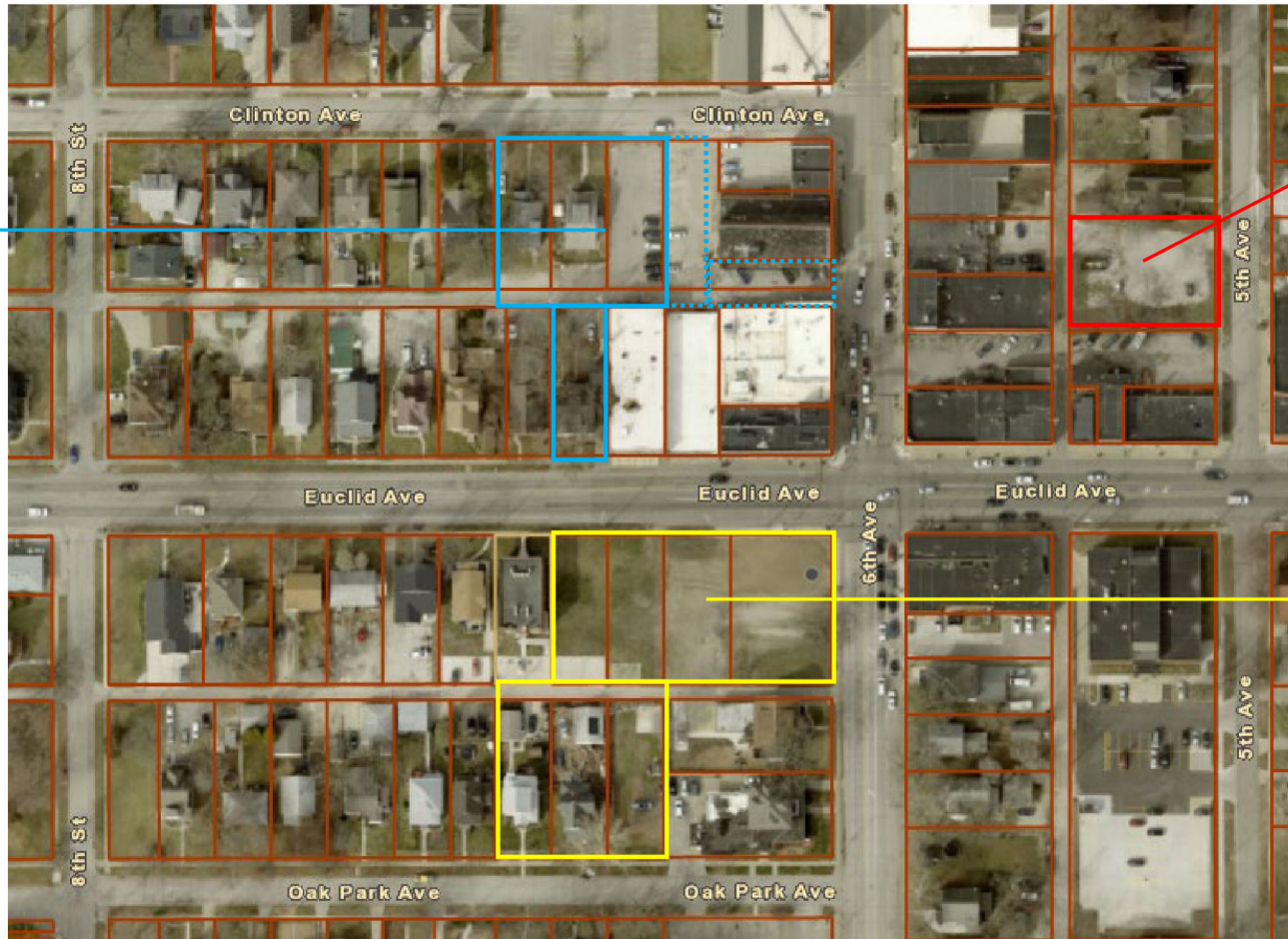
% Change: Increase of 568%



Oak Park / Highland Park Business District



In progress:
Property Acquisition,
& Design/Eng for
expanded parking lot
+ plaza space



Sale pending to
developer for
New Construction
12-unit, 2-story
Residential Building
Highland Park Flats

6th & Euclid
Redevelopment Site

Project on Hold until
the market
environment
improves



Oak Park / Highland Park Business District



- 2025
 - Significant progress; Ongoing work
 - More businesses open each year
 - More spaces renovated each year
 - Lane reduction project to improve walkability & accessibility
- 26 Commercial Grants
 - Total project costs: Over \$12.3M
 - IDSM Grant Amt: \$1.8M
 - Private investment: Nearly \$10.5M



Chicago's Greater Chatham Mahalia's Mile Commercial District Tactical Activations



GREATER
Chatham
INITIATIVE



Tuesday, April 22, 2015
11:00-12:30 EST

Middle Neighborhood Commercial Districts

Debra Sims Fears, Executive Director and MN Co-Practice Committee Chair
Greater Chatham Initiative

Mahalia's Mile

Placekeeping & Placemaking on 79th St.



What is Mahalia's Mile?

- Commercial corridor in Chatham running along 79th St. from State St. to Cottage Grove Ave.
- Named after Mahalia Jackson, who was a long-time resident of the neighborhood
- GCI began a focused revitalization effort in 2022
- Established as an officially designated State of Illinois Cultural District in 2024



Key Objectives

- Economic Development
 - Occupy vacant store fronts
 - Support existing businesses
 - Diversify business mix
- Corridor Beautification
 - Public artwork
 - Facade improvements
 - Add greenery
- Establish Cultural Hub
 - Create new/enhance existing amenities
 - Attract visitors; promote as destination
 - Support artists & arts programming



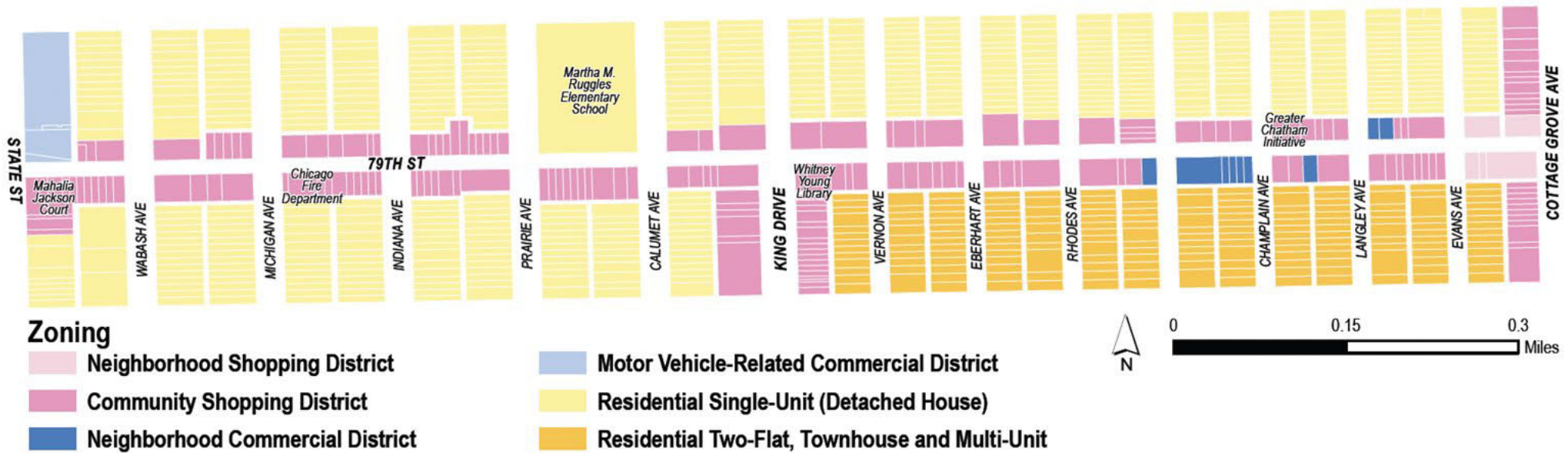
Community Engagement

- From 2022-2024, GCI hosted 12 community meetings with ~400 distinct participants
- These meetings served as opportunities for GCI to present ideas about how to revitalize Mahalia's Mile, and for the community to provide feedback/input and share their ideas
- These meetings were critical to understanding what the community wants and helped GCI form a plan to pursue that vision; these meetings will continue into the future
- There is also a Mahalia's Mile Advisory Committee made up of volunteers from the community that meets every other week



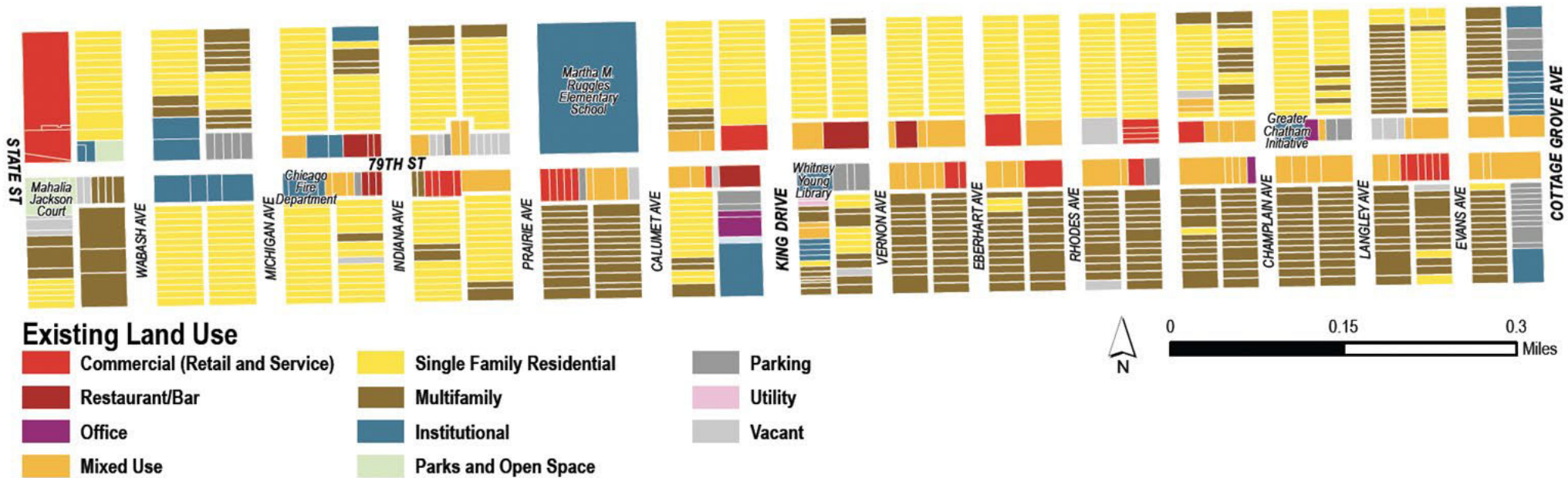
Mahalia's Mile planning committee (January 6th, 2024)

Zoning



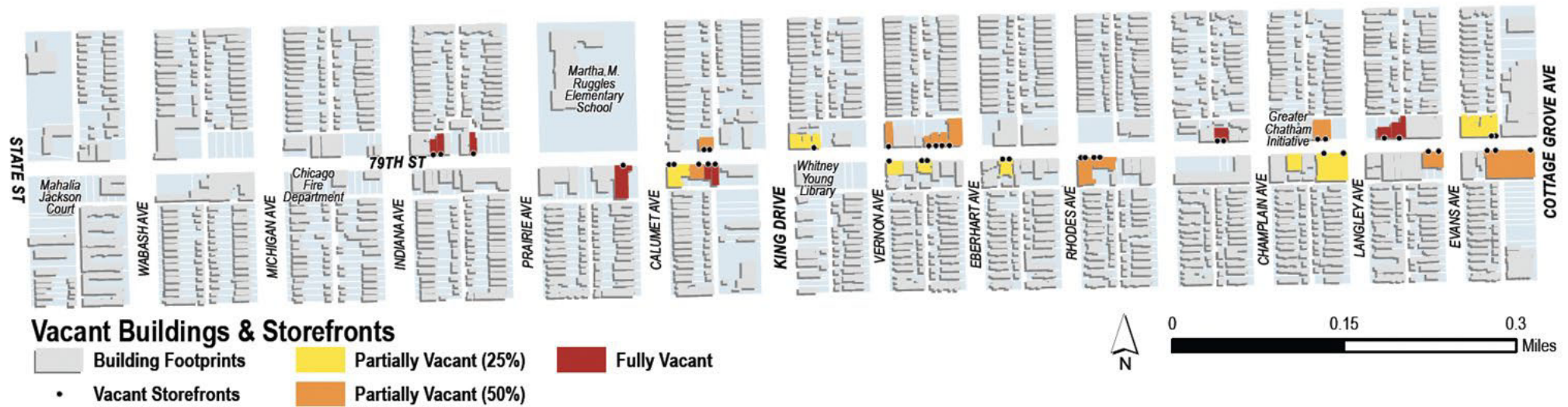
- Corridor zoned as a commercial/shopping district
- All buildings zoned to permit apartments above the ground floor, and most do (with handful of exceptions scattered throughout the corridor)
- Live/work space permitted above ground floor throughout the corridor, and ground floor live/work is possible with special use approval from City

Land Use



- Primary land use along the corridor is commercial (retail, restaurants, etc.), including mixed-use buildings with apartments above
- There is also a fair amount of institutional land use (public facilities, churches, etc.)
- There is minimal open/green space, and few vacant lots (but vacant storefronts are common)

Storefront Vacancy



- There are 77 buildings located along the corridor, containing 180 storefronts
- As of October 2024, 105 of the 180 storefronts (~58%) were occupied, leaving 75 storefronts (~42%) vacant

Cultural Assets



- Mahalia's Mile contains 15 restaurants (excluding fast food chains), including historic businesses such as Duke's Lounge and Josephine's Southern Cooking
- There are several institutional anchors including the Whitney Young Library, Ruggles Elementary, and Carter Temple CME Church
- New cultural destinations include Mahalia Jackson Court, Artists on the 9/Mahalia's Gift Shop, and a series of 8 murals that help tell the story of Mahalia Jackson's life

Mahalia Jackson Court (1 E. 79th St.)



- Built in 2022 on a vacant lot at 79th/State using funding from City of Chicago (DPD)
- Community space that is open to the public on a daily basis
- A variety of events are hosted here including concerts, farmers markets, holiday celebrations, wellness activities/programs, etc.
- Space incorporates artwork (murals, sculptures, woodwork) of over a dozen local artists
- Features a Mahalia Jackson micro-museum housed inside of a shipping container

Mahalia's Gift Shop (735 E. 79th St.)



- In 2022, GCI renovated a vacant storefront at 79th/Evans into “Artists on the 9”, which was an art studio and gallery; the space also served as a venue for cultural events and art classes
- In 2024, GCI pivoted to make the space more of a gift shop that sells a variety of artisan products from local artists and entrepreneurs
- It continues to serve as an art studio and gallery, and as venue for various cultural events and art classes; however, the focus is now more on the retail side

Mahalia Jackson Mural Series

- In 2024, A series of 8 murals were installed along the corridor that help tell the story of Mahalia Jackson's life
- There is a plaque next to each mural with a QR code that leads to a digital exhibit about what is being presented in the mural
- The murals were designed by local artists and installed with support from local youth who were trained in the relevant skills



212 E. 79th St.



218 E. 79th St.

Mahalia Jackson Mural Series



301 E. 79th St.



359 E. 79th St.



435 E. 79th St.

Mahalia Jackson Mural Series



700 E. 79th St.

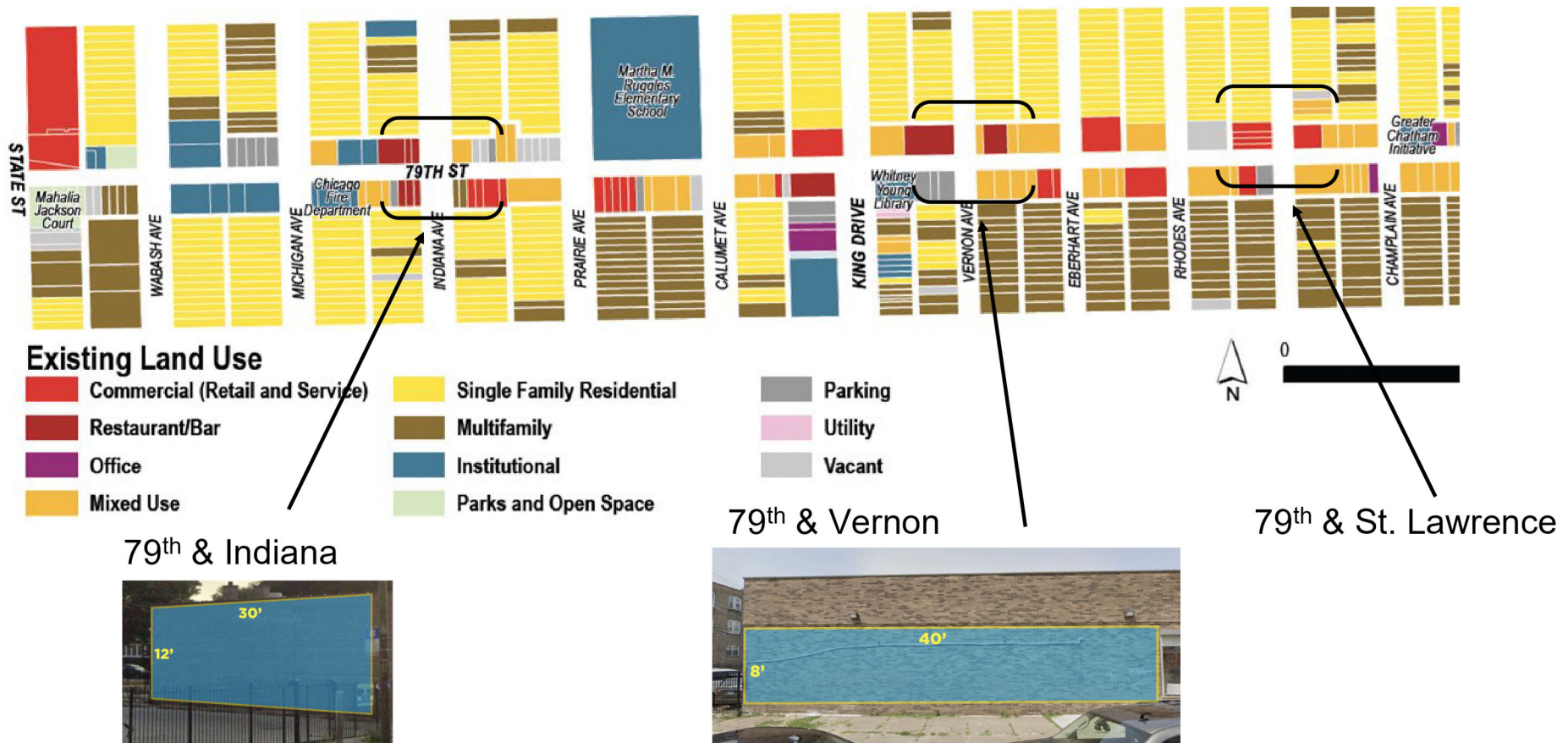


701 E. 79th St.



110 E. 79th St.

3 Nodes Get Murals to Increase Restaurant Sales

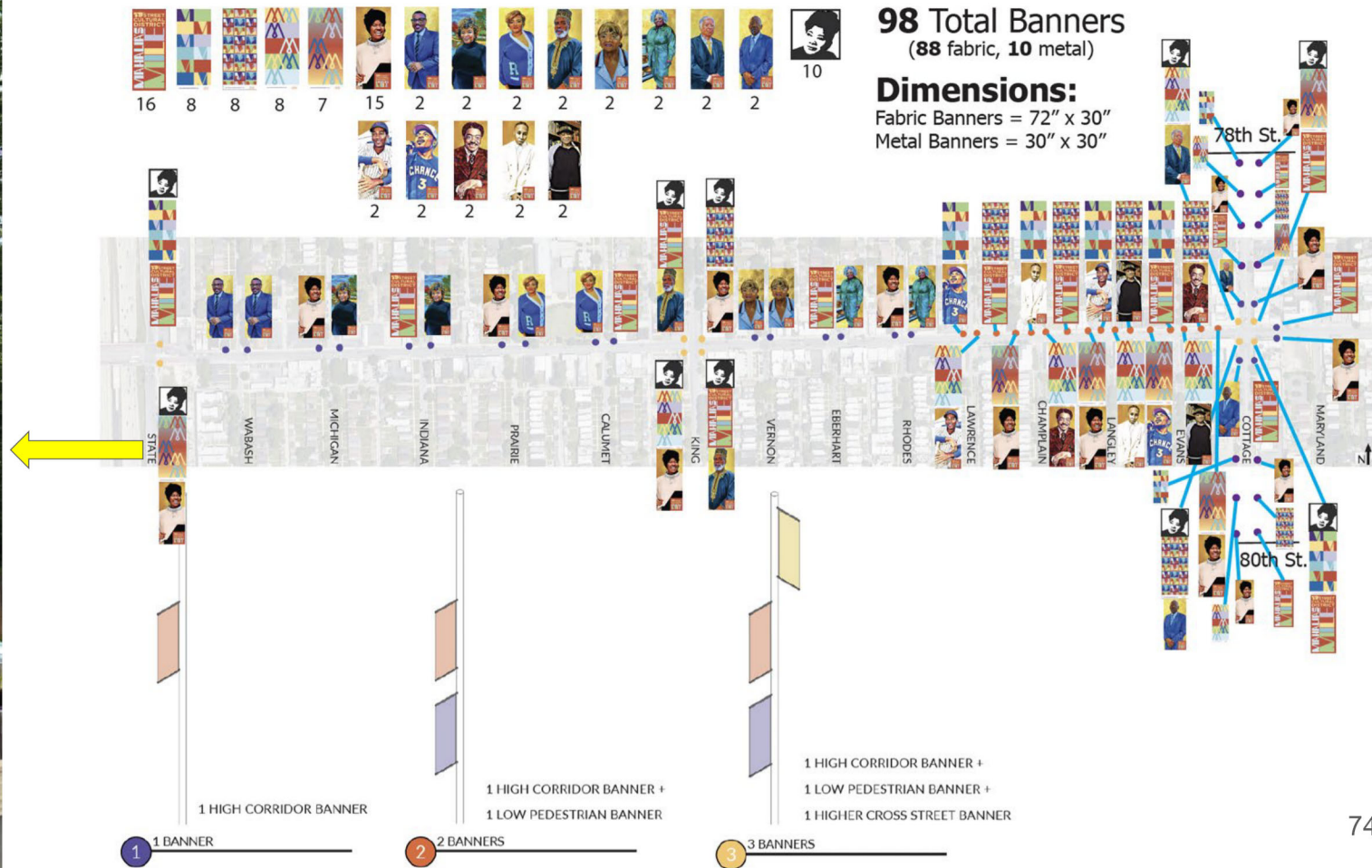


Light Pole Banners

- In 2024, 98 light pole banners were installed along the corridor, including 88 vinyl banners and 10 metal cutouts
- The metal cutouts are of Mahalia Jackson, and the vinyl banners feature portraits of notable individuals from Chatham
- Most of the portraits are from the “Unsung Heroes of 79th St.” series by artist Kristen Williams, which features impactful members of the community that contribute to the vibrancy of the corridor but are not broadly known figures
- The banners were fabricated and installed with assistance from local youth who were trained in the relevant skills

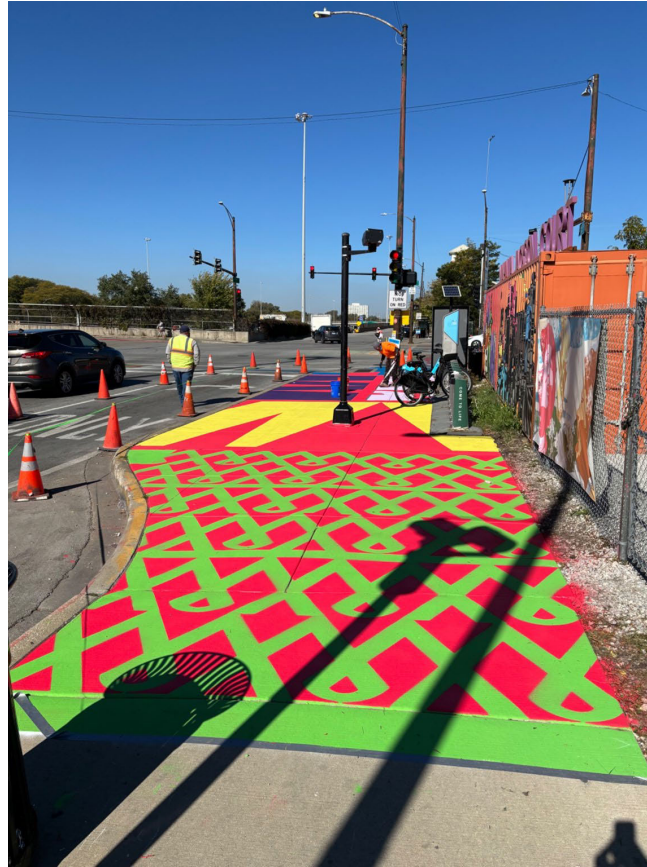


Light Pole Banners



Decoratively Painted Intersections

- The intersections that bookend of the corridor (79th/State & 79th/Cottage Grove) were decoratively painted in 2024
- Painting these intersections helped establish boundaries of Mahalia's Mile, serving as a set of "gateways" that make the corridor more inviting
- This work was completed with assistance from local youth that were trained in the relevant skills



Window Art

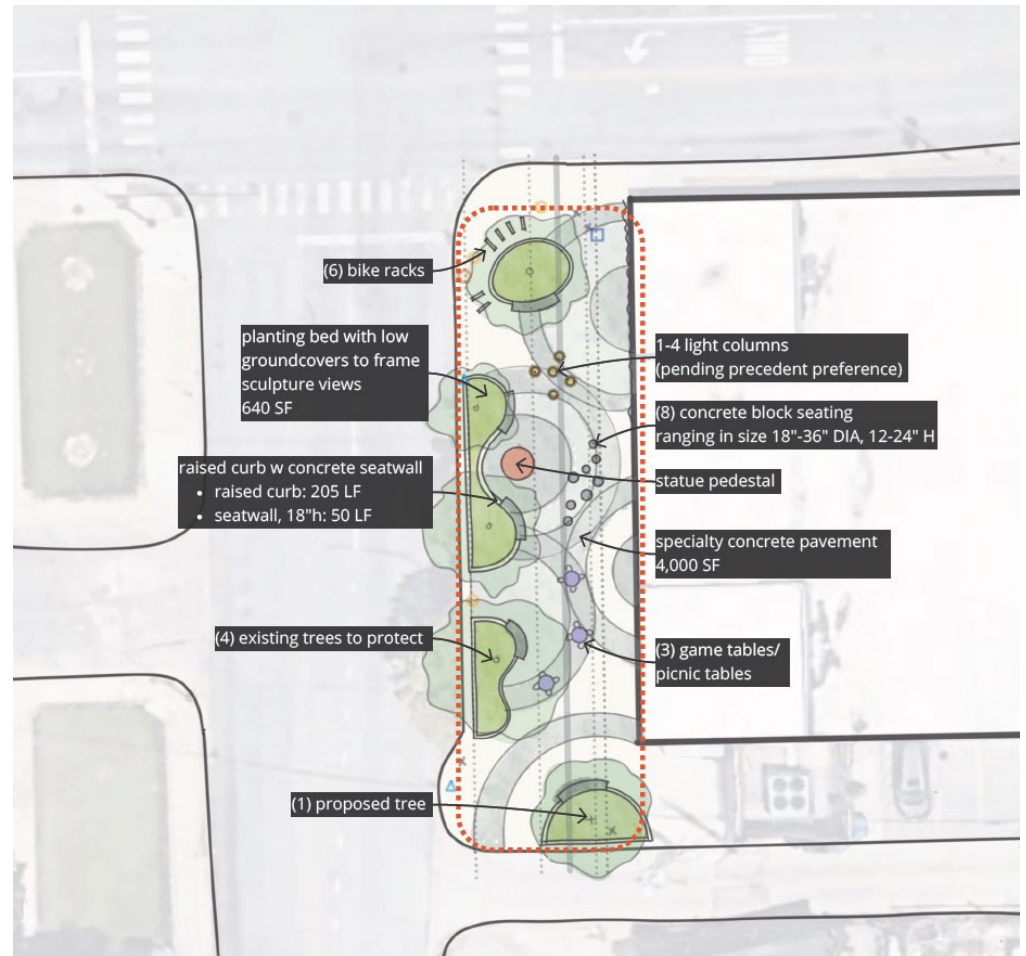


- As a strategy to deal with storefront vacancies, GCI has started covering the windows of vacant storefronts with artwork
- The first location this was done at is at 726 E. 79th St. (pictured above), and was designed by the resident artists at Artists on the 9 in 2023
- This is a strategy GCI intends to replicate for other vacant storefronts along the corridor
- This is a short-term strategy that is meant to beautify a given storefront until it is renovated and/or occupied

Ongoing & Planned Projects

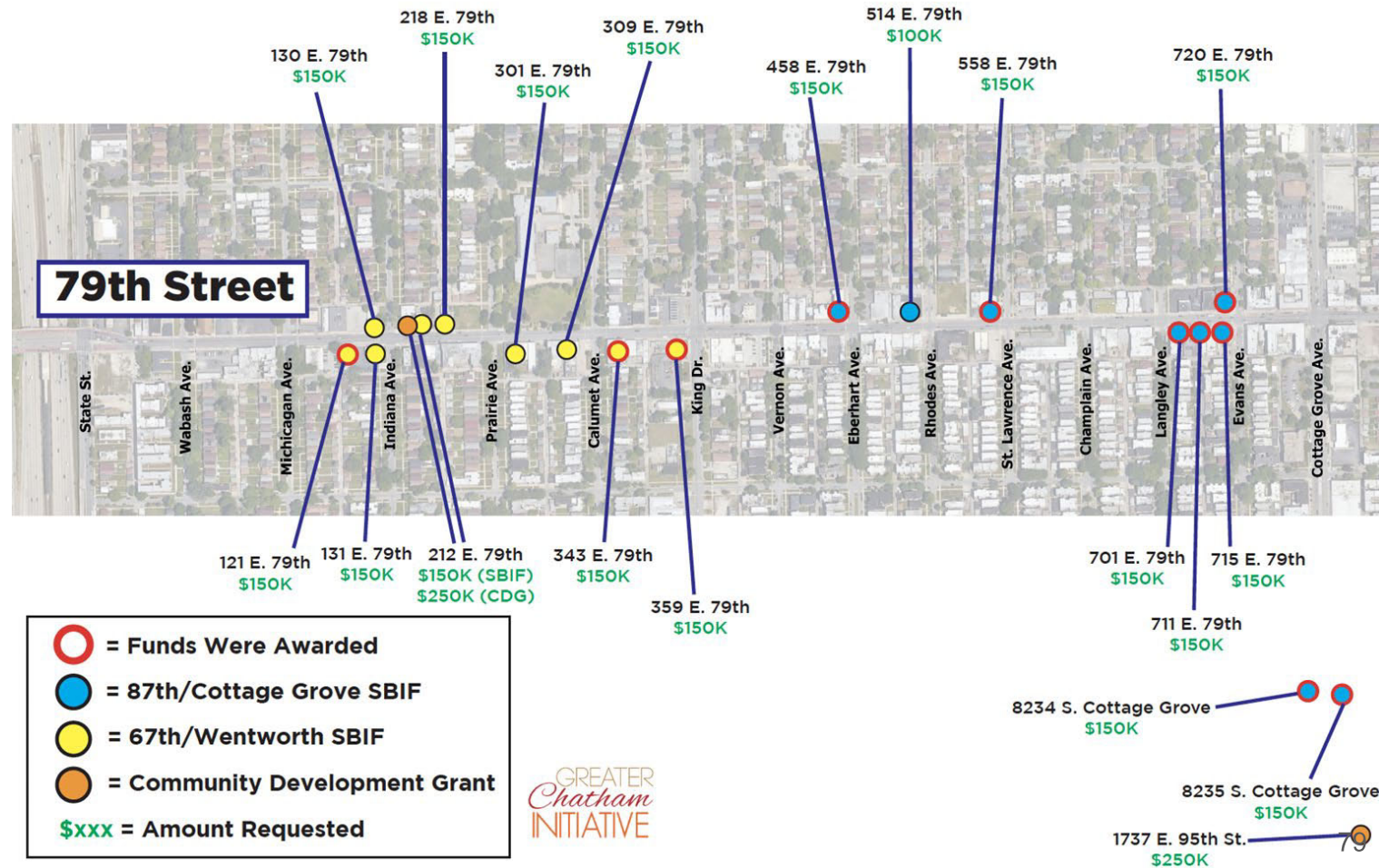
Mahalia Jackson Micro -Plaza (401 E. 79th St.)

- GCI is leading an effort to create a “micro-plaza” adjacent to the Whitney Young Library
- The centerpiece of the plaza is a large-scale statue of Mahalia Jackson, but there will also be seating, landscaping, a new mural & game tables
- Target timeline is to complete the project by September 2025



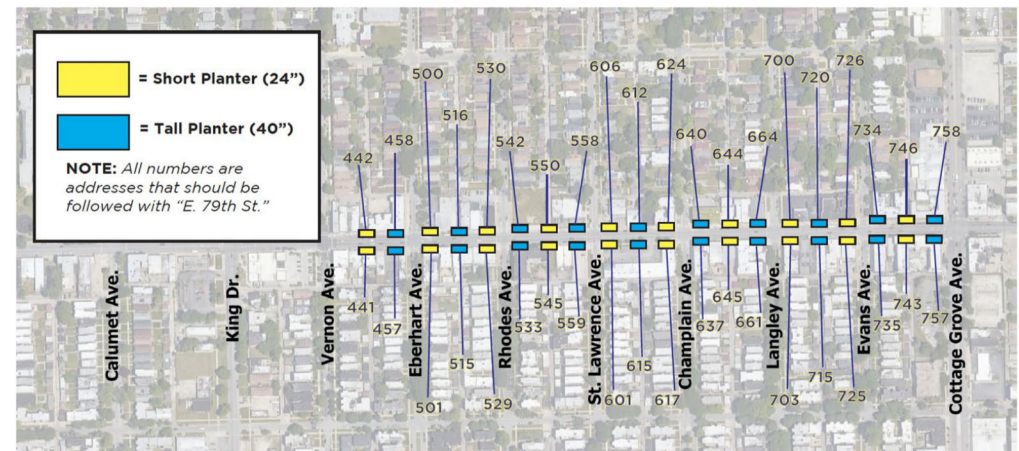
Building Renovations

- GCI has been assisting businesses and building owners along the corridor to apply for capital grants, mainly SBIF (a DPD grant for up to \$150K)
- 9 projects along the corridor were awarded funding (totaling \$1.35M)
- GCI is providing ongoing assistance to the grantees in order to ensure they complete their projects; these projects will help upgrade existing businesses and make vacant, dilapidated spaces occupiable



Planters

- 40 planters (metal, blue) will be installed along Mahalia's Mile in Spring 2025, spanning Cottage Grove Ave. to Vernon Ave.
- Planters were custom fabricated by a local metalworking shop
- Initial arrangement in planters will feature:
 - Arborvitae Danica Evergreens
 - Red Baron Ornamental Grass
 - Sombrero Sangrita Coneflowers



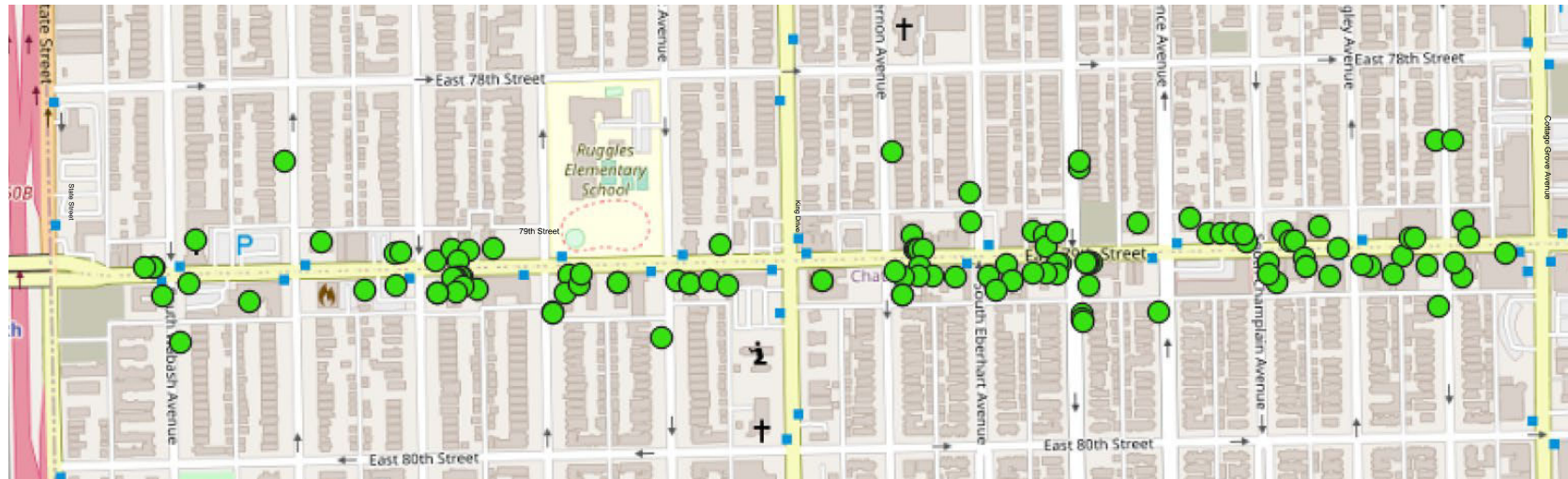
Tree-Lined Corridor

- 193 new trees were approved by CDOT and the Bureau of Forestry for planting along Mahalia's Mile (and on intersecting streets near the corridor)
- They are scheduled to be planted by May 2025
- These trees will provide several benefits, including:
 - Providing shade/cooling temperatures during summer months
 - Mitigating flood risk by absorbing rainfall
 - Beautifying the corridor



Mahalia's Mile currently lacks sufficient tree coverage

Locations of New Trees



Southside Market (433 E. 79th St.)



- Cooperative micro-grocery store & cafe
- Will sell:
 - Produce and other nutritious foods
 - Prepared meals made by local chefs
 - Local food brands
 - Coffee
- Space is currently being developed; aim is to open in 2025

Gateway 79 (1 E. 79th St.)



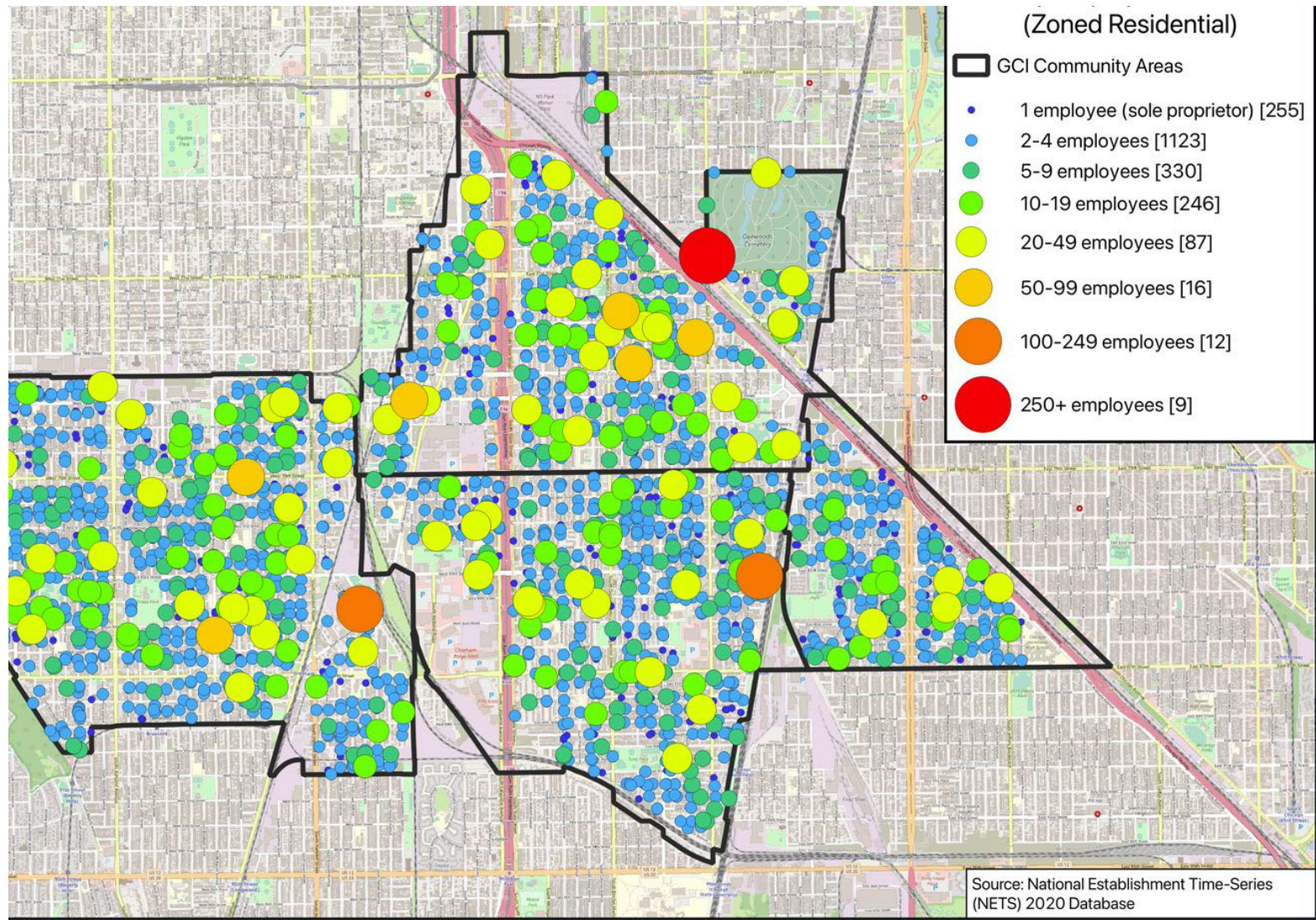
One of several proposed options; not the official design

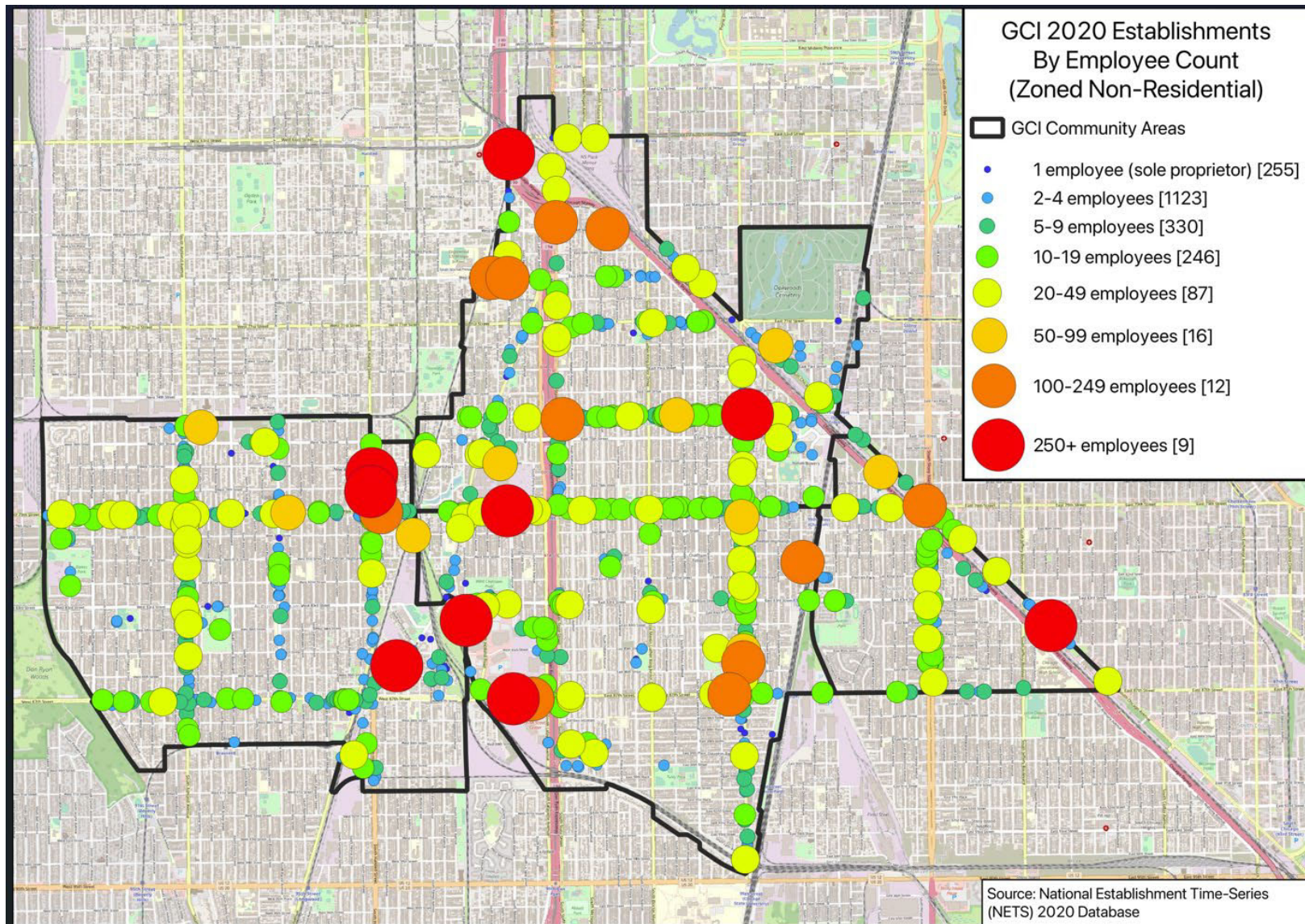
- Planned mixed-use development at 79th/State; groundbreaking TBD
- Developer is Carter Temple Church CDC
- Various configurations are still under consideration, but all include:
 - 6 stories
 - 100+ units
 - A combination of family units (1-3 bedrooms) and senior units (1-bedroom)
- Same site as Mahalia Jackson Court; the plaza will remain until construction begins, and a new plaza will be created elsewhere on the corridor (79th/King Dr.)

Mixed-Use Development (222 E. 79th St.)



- Planned mixed-use development at 79th/Prairie; groundbreaking in 2025
- Developer is Revitalize Communities
- 7 stories, 42 residential units (1-bedroom and 2-bedroom units)
- Rent is affordable; all units are designated for particular income levels ranging from 30-80% of AMI
- ~4000 sf of retail space







Thank you

Nedra Sims Fears, Executive Director
Greater Chatham Initiative
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Upcoming Events

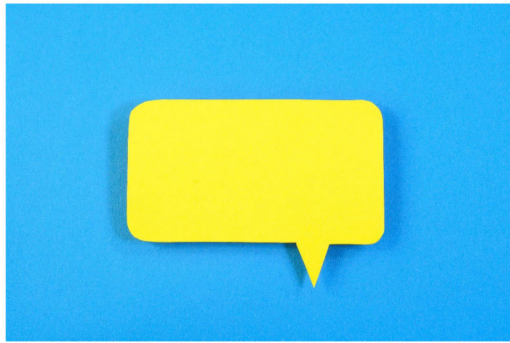
May 28: Engagement Chat (Noon, ET)

❖ Topic: Neighbors Helping Neighbors and Neighborhood Education Strategies

Questions: anndipetta@gmail.com



Thank you for joining us!



- **Please email us** if you have ideas for webinar, case studies, news stories, etc.
- Check out the **Cornerstone Webinar Series:** Center for Community Progress
- **Tell us** about your experience today!



JOIN US!
The Middle Neighborhoods
Community of Practice
(CoP)

The Middle Neighborhoods CoP is an informal, facilitated network of practitioners, researchers and policymakers engaged in revitalizing middle neighborhoods. CoP members share learnings through topical webinars, referrals, site visits, phone calls, and occasional larger group events.

Please join us!

<https://ncst.org/middle-neighborhoods/>

