



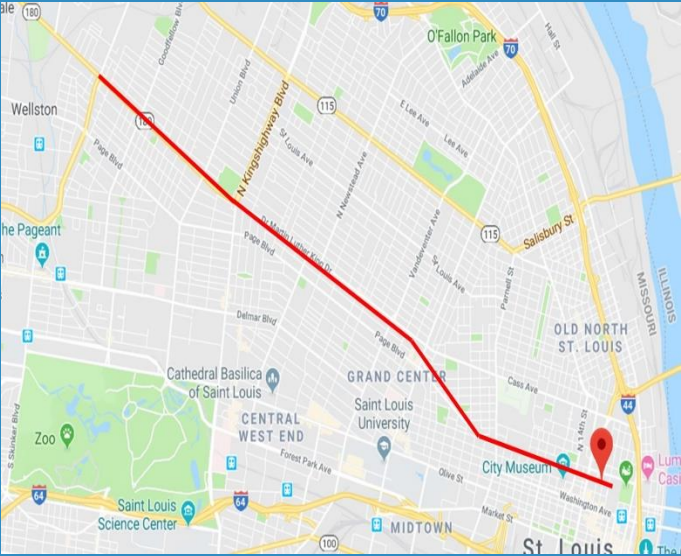
Equity Communities Brief:

St. Louis Development Corporation

October 2022

Introduction

In May of 2022, an IEDC Team completed a technical assistance visit to the St. Louis Development Corporation for the IEDC Equity Communities Cohort to help them with their aim of revitalizing the area on and around the Martin Luther King corridor.



The St. Louis Development Corporation (SLDC) is the economic development arm for the City of St. Louis, Missouri. SLDC is an umbrella, not-for-profit organization with the mission of fostering economic development and growth in the City of St. Louis by stimulating the market for private investment in City real estate and business development and improving the quality of life for everyone who lives in, works in, and visits the City.

SLDC aims to revitalize the area on and around the Martin Luther King (MLK) corridor (hereafter also referred to as “the Project Area”) in a matter that is community-driven and community-owned. The SLDC envisions a corridor occupied largely by small businesses. This means there is an entrepreneurship and workforce development component rather than solely real estate development. The SLDC also aims to support these small businesses. That means creating programming around that, getting ready to open a small business empowerment center, called the Northside Economic Empowerment Center (NEEC), MWBE programs, community development organizations, and technical assistance around the MLK avenue/corridor.

To assist with this goal, SLDC applied to receive technical assistance as an “Equity Community” under the International Economic Development Council’s (IEDC) Equitable Economic Development Playbook’s initiative. As an Equity Community, SLDC received a technical assistance visit from an IEDC Panel from May 17, 2022 - May 20, 2022. On this panel, there were three volunteer subject matter experts and two members of the IEDC staff. The three subject matter experts were Peter Beard, Senior Vice President, Regional Workforce Development, Greater Houston Partnership; Andi Crawford, Director, Economic Development, Accelerator for America; and Morgan Wortham, Managing Director, Maryland Women’s Business Center. The two IEDC staff members were Frankie Clogston, Vice President, Knowledge Management and Development, and Chanell Hasty, Program Manager, Knowledge Management and Development.

During the technical assistance visit, the IEDC Panel met with the following stakeholders (organization, name(s)):

- St. Louis Development Corporation: Neal Richardson, Daffney Moore, Myisa Whitlock, Lance Knuckles, Stacey Fowler, Steve Davis, Zach Wilson, Lorna Alexander,
- St. Louis Economic Development Partnership: Lavoughnda White
- Community Development Agency: Bill Rataj
- RISE STL: Terrell Carter
- Candid: Sara Freetly, Becky Freetly
- BJC HealthCare: Christopher Nolan
- BioSTL: Ben Johnson, Justin Raymundo
- Greater Ville: Kenneth Hutchinson, Norman Harris
- Coog Holdings: Roger Jones
- Social Policy Institute: Washington University: Fanice Thomas
- Morgan Graves Consultants: Marnee Morgan
- Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis: Neelu Panth



- Deaconess Center for Child Well Being: David Nehrt-Flores & Bethany Johnson Javois
- Greater STL Inc.: Valerie Patton
- City of St. Louis Planning & Urban Design Agency: Don Roe
- Fathers and Families Support Center: Cheri Tillis
- Cortex Innovation Community: Natalie Self
- Small Business Empowerment Center: Kevin Wilson
- St. Louis Community Credit Union: Alex Fennoy
- PGAV Destinations: Catherine Hamacher
- Midland State Bank: David Noble
- Missouri Housing Development Commission: Antoinette Cousins

Prisms

The Panel framed observations and recommendations about the Project Area around the four prisms from IEDC's Equitable Economic Development Playbook, based on conversations with the stakeholders:

- **Acknowledge** – Understand history of trauma in the community and lack of trust for the government as a result of systemic racism and disinvestment. As the Economic Justice Plan writes, “Recognizing and reversing historic wrongs is not just a moral necessity, it’s a practical one.”
- **Target** – Programs and investments must be driven to meet the needs of the local Black population in the MLK corridor; a focused investment on a smaller area/stretch will likely have a higher ROI and activate the private market.
- **Collaborate** – Foster more networks such as the Anchor Action Network and North Star Community Partners. Foster relationships between public, private and non-profit partners so that the pipeline for real estate development, entrepreneurship and workforce development produces better outcomes. Involve local actors in program design and implementation.
- **Measure** – Create metrics that recognize success and establish accountability, especially given this once in a generation funding stream.

Assets

The Panel identified several assets in the Project Area, including but not limited to the following:

Fresh Start: Leadership

The City and Project Area have an opportunity for a fresh start because of a number of factors, including a new mayor who has made a commitment to North City. Within SLDC, there is new leadership, a focus on process/system improvements, and a renewed focus on North City.

Once-in-a-lifetime Resources

SLDC and the City now also have substantial public money to deploy with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) (small business grants, revolving loan fund, corridor revitalization with \$9 million for MLK) and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)/Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funds. SLDC should ensure that it considers how these funds can be used effectively while sustaining long-term fiscal sustainability.



Partnerships

The City also has a fresh start with the opportunity to establish trust and engage new partners and community members. There are multiple strong community partnerships and institutions, such as North Star, Friendly Temple Church, Harris Stowe, the Urban League, and the Midwest Bank Center.

Real Estate

The Project Area has an ample supply of land, a vast number of historic buildings all within proximity to downtown and other anchor economic development efforts. SLDC owns about 60% of the property in the Project Area. There is some new residential development in the area including the housing near/on North Sarah Street and housing developed by the Ranken Institute's CDFI with additional housing developed by the Friendly Temple. The Project Area currently offers low property price points that would allow for residents to get into ownership positions, particularly working in conjunction with programs providing assistance with down payment or home renovation support. There is also WSP infrastructure engagement in the MLK corridor.

Clarion Call

Lastly, the Mayor's Economic Justice Action Plan is a huge fresh start for the City of St. Louis. The plan calls for focusing an \$150 million investment in north St. Louis across three broadly defined categories: economic empowerment; equitable and inclusive development; and neighborhood transformation.

Recommendations – Strategies and Case Studies

Many themes arose from the stakeholder conversations that occurred during SLDC's technical assistance visit, leading to recommendations that are separated below into the categories of place (real estate investments) and people (entrepreneurship and workforce).

Place

Strategies

The panel recommends an approach focused on two catalytic investments in the corridor but also supporting ones, many of which can be initiated in the short term.

The Catalytic Investments

The two catalytic investments are the Marshall School and the Sarah MLK node, one of which is waiting for redevelopment to begin, and the other of which it is underway.

- The Marshall School – The proposed redevelopment at the Marshall School could have catalytic effects on businesses and workforce. The Economic Justice Action Plan proposes the NEEC occupy a space at the school (after a temporary home at Sumner High School), to provide for small business and entrepreneurship training. Leveraging partners to lead training workshops there or partnerships with other organizations that provide a workforce pipeline would also be catalytic. Consideration can also be given to establishing a SBDC location within the NEEC. Stakeholders also expressed an interest in using the space for public convening purposes including park space.
- The Sarah MLK Node – This area is part of the Project Area where development has already begun in the form of live/workspaces and some residential development, including energy efficient housing. This area could be targeted so that any additional planned development can be finished and additional infill can be undertaken.



Additional Strategies

There are additional investments that the panel recommends should be considered in the Project Area, some of which are components of the investments discussed above including: finishing residential projects underway; supporting business resilience in the neighborhood; conducting infill on existing sites; and activating vacant land through ways including temporary business space, park space, and convening space.

Immediate Actions

Immediate actions include:

- Create a brand/buzz around the Project Area and define and internally socialize the scope of work to be implemented there
- Finish residential projects that have been started (final phases of Sarah Place)
- Finish remaining streetscape work that had been planned
- Improve speed, delivery and predictability for the private market
- Use local minority contractors (encouraging primes as well as subs)
- Collaborate with local Community Development Corporations (CDCs) (e.g. Tabernacle Community Development Corporation, Ranken Community Development Corporation) on new development projects
- Utilize SLDC Facade funds for businesses in the Project Area
- Employ transportation infrastructure like bus stops
- With respect to all of the above, identify, utilize, and optimize existing and new funding streams from multiple partners, e.g., working with Metropolitan Planning Office and Community Development Agency to tap into HOME Investment Partnerships Grant, Community Development Block Grant, IJJA, ARPA and other streams.

People: Small Business and Entrepreneurship

Strategy – Target Entrepreneurs

In the discussion with Neelu Panth, Community Development Advisor at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, she emphasized that entrepreneurship is an opportunity to gain wealth for black and brown residents who are often unemployed or underemployed. Thus, the panel recommends an approach that assists entrepreneurs in starting and expanding businesses that build off existing industries, have low fixed/start-up costs and have markets (in or adjacent to the neighborhood) in areas such as:

- Food services businesses (e.g., commercial kitchen)
- Mobile businesses/Pop-up businesses (e.g., pop-up food truck or mobile barbershop)
- Urban farming/Hydroponic businesses
- Arts, jewelry, fashion, herbal and health products
- Businesses that can tie into Anchor Action Network and existing pipeline

Positioning entrepreneurs for success will require researching and understanding the potential needs for goods and services in adjacent neighborhoods. Also, there may be a need to identify key skills that can be monetized in an entrepreneurial venture and connected to the adjacent neighborhood economies. In many cases, some entrepreneurs already have a “gig” or a “hustle” part- or full-time and need assistance with turning it into a full-time sustainable job or career or scaling it for further growth.



Strategy – Target Entrepreneur Service Providers

Stakeholders expressed the need to improve the ecosystem and provide more high-touch assistance for small businesses and entrepreneurs. This can be accomplished by engaging partners such as the Small Business Empowerment Center, the St. Louis Community Credit Union, and the Urban League with a goal to: enhance entrepreneurs and small businesses with legal and financial documents and digital literacy skills; support entrepreneurs and businesses in developing their online presence and digital marketing capabilities; help entrepreneurs tie into existing sources of capital (grants, revolving loan funds, CDFI, banks, credit unions and other flexible, patient capital); assist entrepreneurs in connecting with Cortex, WEPOWER, and other existing innovation incubators and training; and, identify industries and businesses focused on strengthening supplier diversity (including the Anchor Network).

Immediate Actions

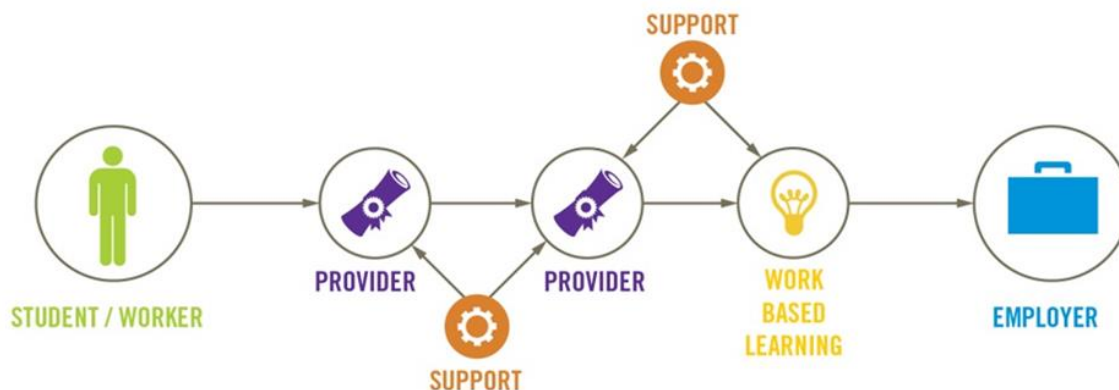
Immediate actions include:

- Fill entrepreneur spaces at incubator in the Heartland Chamber of Commerce at the Urban League
- Achieve full occupancy of live/work spaces at the North Sarah development
- Work with Cortex to bring programming if not physical space to the Project Area
- Engage small business and entrepreneurship ecosystem partner involvement - SBDC, Black Chamber, Urban League, etc.
- Determine commercial/retail market opportunities, e.g. conduct a market analysis
- Develop more networking & small business mentorship opportunities
- Draw businesses to services at the NEEC at Sumner High School (before it moves to Marshall School)

People: Workforce Development

Strategy – Strengthen the Workforce Pipeline for Neighborhood Residents

The strategy is to develop and engage the workforce development ecosystem to foster occupational opportunities for local residents that are connected to in-demand jobs in the neighborhood and regional economies. The diagram below provides an illustration of what this pipeline looks like.



As illustrated above, mechanisms to support the workforce in the corridor successfully include engaging education and community partners to develop and connect students and workers to jobs. Community providers, many of which are faith-based and non-profit such as Fathers and Families Support Center, Tabernacle Community Development Corporation, Friendly Tabernacle Church and the Urban League, provide the support with wraparound services (e.g., childcare, food, housing, transportation) and thus are already playing that role.

The goal is to connect students and workers to employers but not to just make the match; the goal also is to promote job quality and ongoing career growth and economic mobility (e.g., increased benefits, skills-based hiring and education). To tap into these vocational training programs, SLDC must connect community and education partners with employers and improve ways to match residents with career opportunities (e.g., career offices, partner with staffing agencies).

Strategy – Incorporate Employers in Workforce Development

Efforts to strengthen workforce development require strong employer leadership and engagement as this is necessary to drive the innovation needed to strengthen a virtuous cycle of economic growth and prosperity supported by education and skills development for neighborhood residents.

The chart below illustrates how employers can be involved in workforce development both in bringing new workers into the pipeline and further developing and upskilling the existing workforce. As Myisa Whitlock with SLDC aptly stated, “St. Louis has to invest in people and skill them up more.”

Workforce Development Framework



The Anchor Action Network is a great example of the workforce development framework illustrated above. This newly formed group of major employers, that has formed for the purposes of purchasing and hiring, can be engaged in an impactful way to utilize talent pipeline opportunities, including upskilling St. Louisans. Other opportunities would include making connections to the businesses and employers that supply the goods and services to anchor institutions and businesses.

Through conversations with employers, a number of good fields of potential employment emerged including developers and their contractors (which can have the added benefit of being associated with construction in the Project Area), health care, transportation and logistics, manufacturers, unions, and call center/customer service. Additionally, in the process of preparing for the Good Jobs Challenge, numerous other industries and



employers were identified that are candidates for jobs.

Lastly, one cannot forget about the barriers to employment that help perpetuate the skills and opportunity gaps within the workforce development framework. According to Christopher Nolan from BJC HealthCare, the workforce development pipeline should explore barriers to employment, move to a more apprenticeship type style of employment (including the opportunity to create a St. Louis Apprentice Network modeled after the Chicago Apprentice Network developed by Accenture and Aon), have a common application for employment, and hire on the spot. Justin Raymundo, Director, Regional Workforce Strategy at BioSTL, additionally states that the way to close the skills gap and the opportunity gap is to support short-term trainings, access to trainings, and access to childcare.

Workforce Development Actions: Neighborhood Residents

There were several immediate actions discussed amongst the IEDC Panel to address the workforce needs of neighborhood residents that include:

- Establish a Career Office in the NEEC that provides a develop “warm” hand-off to community and education partners
- Identify and engage education and community partners that support skills development
- Identify and engage education and community partners that provide wraparound services (e.g., childcare, food, housing, transportation) for neighborhood residents including segments of the population as needed (re-entry, veterans)
- Assess education and skills of existing workforce (including upskilling opportunities that provide for occupational and economic mobility)
- Increase resident awareness of occupational pathways that provide economic mobility and how to connect to organizations that can provide support, coaching and guidance. Strengthen career coaching and support service by considering approaches developed by Markle Foundation and Rework America Alliance.
- Identify employers with occupational needs in the neighborhood and adjacent geographies.
- Utilize the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation’s Talent Pipeline Management (“TPM”) approach to engage employers, and develop talent pipelines and promote skills-based hiring and education, including apprenticeships and work-based learning
- Create a strong user experience that connects and builds linkages to MLK residents with programs at core institutions like the Urban League, and faith-based institutions
- Tap into vocational training programs that partner with employers (i.e., LaunchCode, NGA - Gateway Global, and BJC).

Conclusion

Neal Richardson, Chairman and Executive Director of SLDC, highlighted that in order to successfully operationalize goals and revitalize North City, there must be attention to the capacity and stewardship of the large inflow of new resources. Toward that end, SLDC has allocated resources in its budget for the upcoming



fiscal year for an operations manager and two project managers to assist the deputy directors in implementing ARPA programs, as well as a housing strategist.

The Panel visited SLDC at an extraordinary time of opportunity which can translate to revitalization of the Project Area.

Below is a conclusion of recommendations emerging from the Panel's conversations with the stakeholders:

- **Acknowledge -**
 - Establish early wins/momentum to build trust (including completion of existing projects) and catalyze local human and business capital
 - Consider reputational risks in investments and execution
 - Ensure long term change management process for MLK investments

- **Target -**
 - Keep a concerted, sustained focus and investment on MLK; stay neighborhood - focused
 - Connect MLK investments and assets to other adjacent and key assets (e.g., North Sarah, NGA, Anchor Institutions)
 - Finish projects that have been started/ fill programs to capacity
 - Conduct market research and risk assessments - is there sufficient demand to support businesses or resource centers? Are there enough people? Consider the consequences of a failure.

- **Collaborate -**
 - Leverage and strengthen existing institutions and “gems” - North Star Community Partners, local CDCs, Ranken, and faith-based institutions - , and advance relationships with other community-based and community-invested partners
 - Activities should be mutually reinforcing and connected to the broader regional economy
 - Use newly available public funding streams to activate the private sector market and move at the pace of the private sector

- **Measure -**
 - Create data driven infrastructure to support performance and execution
 - Establish achievable short-term goals in addition to longer term goals (including process outcomes and measures)
 - Early wins will move the economy toward the goals of the Racial Justice Action Plan and build trust among community members in the City and SLDC
 - Implement continuous improvement to address early losses and support course correction



Metrics/Goals (Short- and Long-term)

The metrics/goals for SLDC are detailed below in immediate actions that can be taken by June 30th:

Immediate Actions (by June 30th)

- Localize existing data sets and goals to focus on MLK corridor area
- Establish metrics and baseline
- Establish both impact metrics and process outcomes
- Selected impact metrics:
 - Increased occupancy at existing incubators
 - Increased occupancy at live/work spaces
 - Number/percentage of businesses receiving revolving loans
 - Number/percentage of businesses receiving small business grants
 - Increased satisfaction of neighborhood residents
 - Increased financial stability of neighborhood residents (e.g., wages, credit scores, savings, etc.)
- Selected Process Outcomes:
 - Establish an SLDC Project Management Office (e.g., Bloomberg Philanthropies Innovation Playbook) to increase alignment, optimize effort, and drive results across the organization (includes continuous improvement methodology)
 - Implement U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation TPM methodology across the workforce development ecosystem

Long-Term Outcomes

- Increase household income and wealth in the Project Area (intermediate metrics include changes in FICO score, increased net income, including reduced debt, and job retention and growth)
- Increase educational attainment in the Project Area (intermediate metrics include short-term credentials of value, increased numeracy, and literacy, etc.)



Case Studies

There are many great examples of corridor revitalization across major cities in the United States. Three are listed below.



Organization: Destination Crenshaw

Location: Los Angeles, California

Tags: downtown corridor revitalization; entrepreneurship; art

In 2017, the city of Los Angeles planned to develop a ground level Crenshaw/LAX metro line through Crenshaw Boulevard. This construction project intended to remove 300 parking spaces that serviced small businesses and 400 trees in this predominantly African American neighborhood of Los Angeles. [Destination Crenshaw \(DC\)](#) was created because of fears surrounding the implementation of the rail line and the erasure of Black Los Angeles culture. As a response to the proposed development, Destination Crenshaw aims to use the rail development to their advantage and bring people and business into the neighborhood. The DC project intends to provide support for black-owned businesses and reparative development solutions and become an economic engine for Black LA artists and the artistic class.

Destination Crenshaw was inspired by the need for black cultural spaces in LA through the creation of commerce-based cultural spaces. The DC project intends to take advantage of the 1.3-mile corridor and rail line to develop this outdoor art and cultural experience. The design of DC will incorporate immersive elements into the corridor that will enhance its cultural aesthetics. These elements include historical information about Black LA, artist background stories, storytelling opportunities, and directional signage. The project will highlight Sankofa Park and include 10 pocket parks, 800 trees, 8 large scale artist installations, street furniture, and over 50 murals.

DC was initiated as a \$100 million project. The project is funded by many public and private investors, including the Getty Foundation for \$3 million and LA Metro for \$14 million. The federal New Market Tax Credit program (NMTC) gave the nonprofit \$29 million that will go toward operational costs, union training and employment programs, local business resiliency, and public art. The DC project also has a major focus on local workforce development. The project has a goal of hiring 70 percent locally and creating over 130 new construction jobs. They also intend to create more than 200 local art opportunities for early- and mid-career black artists in Crenshaw. The project is not finished yet, and it intends to open in the fall of 2022.

Crenshaw Boulevard is home to 43 businesses and the preservation of these businesses is very important to DC's mission. To protect these already existing black businesses, the DC project will provide technical assistance, social media support, business engagement, access to funding, and research and policy creation. Destination Crenshaw has created a program called [DC Thrive](#), which focuses on active programming. Through partnerships with minority-led CDFIs, DC Thrive provides access to accounting, operational, marketing, and lending support as well as funding. Partners for the program include LISC LA, PCR, and Lendistry and Inclusive Action. So far, these organizations have provided accounting software, HR software, social media expert pairing, and financing connections to reduce interest rates. Along with DC Thrive, Jason Foster, President and COO of Destination Crenshaw, shares that to ensure future investment and equitable development it is necessary to create effective financing vehicles such as tax increment financing or an [enhanced infrastructure financing district](#). The creation of a comprehensive team was also vital to the mission. The DC team included a paid community advisory council, Perkins & Will staff, the Los Angeles city council district, and community members such as artists, historians, and landscape architects.

Destination Crenshaw is a prime example of a community adapting to adversity. This corridor revitalization project is meant to amplify the culture of the LA Black community and provide the resources for them to fully engage with the area through small business development, art, and green space. The plan is currently to open Destination Crenshaw in the fall of 2022.

Contact information

Jason Foster, President & COO, jason@destinationcrenshaw.la



Organization: Various

Location: Baltimore, Maryland

Tags: downtown corridor revitalization; historic corridor

Dividing East and West Baltimore, Charles Street is known for its central location and accessibility to the city's downtown amenities. A designated National Scenic Byway, the Baltimore landmark is home to many historic and cultural attractions, such as art museums, cathedrals, and the original Washington Monument, and Johns Hopkins University, the Maryland Institute College of Art, and Loyola University of Maryland are also located nearby.

Decades ago, revitalization of the historic Charles Street corridor began in hopes of bringing people and business back to this once prosperous area of Baltimore with efforts directed toward building renovation, street aesthetics and transportation. With all its assets, the street would make a great business, residential, and historic corridor.

In 2000, investment projects worth about \$100 million were undertaken along the 3-mile strip of Charles Street. The One Charles Center office building, the Walters Art Gallery's 1974 wing, and the Queen Anne Belvedere apartments were all restored and renovated and Penn Station and the Greyhound Station also experienced revitalization. Johns Hopkins University played a large role in the redevelopment of Charles Street with the opening of a student arts center and a new downtown center. One major problem facing Charles Street was its one-way road traffic pattern that harmed businesses that relied on easy access and visibility and gave people little motivation to eat or shop. Johns Hopkins University was a major proponent for the two-way street development that now allows easy access to the school's amenities and the surrounding parks and arts institutions.

[The Charles Village Streetscape Project](#) was created by partners such as Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore City DOT, local business owners, and the community at large to enhance Charles Village. Its goals are to install pedestrian friendly streetscape elements, upgrade the 33rd Street corridor to create a gateway to Johns Hopkins University and the Charles Village retail district and improve intersections of St. Paul Street from 31st to 33rd with new traffic lights, modified lane configurations, and safe pedestrian corridors. The project also plans to create more parking for businesses in this area, and prioritize the maintenance of two-way traffic. Specific amenity improvements include the implementation of brick sidewalks, better lighting infrastructure, enhanced landscaping, new benches, accessible trash and recycling, brick banding along sidewalks, improved medians, granite curbs, and new pavement. The project also included new light up signage and was completed in 2019.

On March 19, 2022, Baltimore's [Penn Station](#) released an updated plan for future development of the rail line that prioritizes historical preservation of the station originally built in 1911. The project, led by the Beatty Development Group and Cross Street Partners in collaboration with Amtrak, will make renovations to the station's appearance and overall functionality. The usable spaces of the renovated station plan include retail and restaurants on the first level, and office space on the next three levels. The mixed-use Lanvale building is going to be transformed into a space for commercial and residential use. They will also develop an additional platform while renovating the existing ones. Amtrak plans to invest up to \$90 million over the next few years in the project. The program has also received \$4 million from the state government, state senate members granted \$3 million, and an additional \$1 million came from the governor's supplemental budget.

Charles Street Corridor has undergone decades of revitalization efforts, and does not plan to stop. The street has experienced diverse development in the form of street beautification, public transit revitalization, and university infrastructure installation. The development aimed to capitalize on the history of the street to attract people to the businesses that line the corridor. Johns Hopkins University was one of the largest partners on the revitalization projects, as they facilitated many of the aesthetic and infrastructural developments around the campus and Charles Street.

Contact information

N/A



Organization: The Preservation of Affordable Housing

Location: Chicago, Illinois

Tags: neighborhood development; food desert

The development of the Woodlawn neighborhood in the South Side of Chicago was a 12-year effort that aimed to produce stronger partnerships, increase public-private investment, preserve and increase housing, create new commercial and recreational amenities, design transit-oriented development improvements, and provide higher quality resources. A study conducted by faculty from Case Western Reserve University and the University of Chicago-Illinois found that the project caused median household incomes to increase, households with children experienced the largest increase in income, racial diversity in Woodlawn increased, crime rates fell, and homeownership rates increased. The [Preservation of Affordable Housing \(POAH\)](#), a non-profit development organization, was able to attract \$400 million in funding from federal, state, and local sources. The development began with a \$30.5 million redevelopment of a blighted 504-unit affordable housing project. The revitalization then built the Woodlawn Resource Center for Employment and Financial Support for neighborhood residents, Metrosquash (a sports and education center), and a Jewel-Osco supermarket. As of 2022, 1,000 mixed income apartments and 90,000 square feet of community space have been developed.

In 2019, a joint effort by government, non-profit corporations, and developers led to the development of the Jewel-Osco grocery store in the Woodlawn neighborhood, ending the community's 40-year distinction as a federally recognized food desert. The 48,000 square foot Jewel-Osco is the first full-service grocery store in Woodlawn in 50 years, a happy outcome many years in the making. It not only provides a much-needed amenity to the community as a grocery store, bakery, and pharmacy, but has also created many full-time jobs. The grocery store employs about 200 people, all of whom are paid living wages. Approximately 95% of the positions are union-affiliated and 80% of the employees are from the greater Woodlawn area. It took more than a year of efforts and working at the Woodlawn Resource Center to recruit and train area residents for jobs.

The development of a grocery store in the Woodlawn neighborhood was a multiyear effort and part of a long-term strategy to revitalize the neighborhood. In 2011, the Obama Administration awarded the City of Chicago a multimillion-dollar grant to redevelop a distressed Section 8 housing project which created a springboard to revive the mixed-income community. By 2018, more than 1,000 units of housing had been built and/or renovated, and for the first time since the 1960s, population and income in the neighborhood began to rise. However, efforts to attract a grocery store were not successful until 2018, when a local real estate developer with intimate knowledge of the neighborhood, DL3 Realty, was brought on board. DL3 Realty partnered with Terraco Real Estate, a well-known shopping center consulting group, to land a deal on the Jewel Osco shopping center. In March 2018, Jewel-Osco broke ground on the Jewel-Osco financed with New Market Tax Credits, equity investments from Northern Trust, a private banking service, and loans from Fifth Third Bank. In addition, The Chicago Community Loan Fund, a CDFI, gave the developer a predevelopment loan in line with its mission to provide flexible, affordable, and responsible financing and technical assistance for community stabilization and development efforts that benefit low- to moderate-income neighborhoods, families and individuals throughout metropolitan Chicago.

Jewel Osco and the Woodlawn neighborhood development programs have served as examples of sustainable community revitalization. Today, the Jewel-Osco market is owned by the [University of Chicago](#), a purchase undertaken with the intention of securing the store as a community asset, and protecting it from ending up in the hands of a national buyer. As a result of these projects, Woodlawn has begun to attract even more development, including a 70-unit apartment complex from POAH and 72,000-square-foot retail and office space from DL3. The once food desert is now quickly catching the eye of developers from around the country.

Contact information

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