

Weller

A Neighborhood On The Move

Neighborhood Assessment Report

Neighborhood Workshop Date: May 17, 2003
Accepted by City Council Date: September 29, 2003



Neighborhood Assessment Program

Sponsored by:

City of Springfield
Department of Planning and Development
Neighborhood Conservation Office

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VISION 20/20 AND NEIGHBORHOOD ASSESSMENTS



The Vision 20/20 *Neighborhoods Plan*, a portion of the Springfield/Greene County Comprehensive Plan, was adopted on July 10, 2000. The *Neighborhoods Plan* outlines objectives and actions that Springfield and Greene County will pursue to stabilize or improve existing neighborhoods and to create sustainable attractive new neighborhoods. The *Neighborhood Assessment* process was adopted by City Council in order to implement a portion of the *Neighborhoods Plan*. Specifically, the *Assessment* process implements the *Plan* by:

Allowing local residents to create an "*Assessment of neighborhood condition*". Helping local residents to identify where "*Targeted neighborhood improvements*" are needed. Identifying where "*Housing services*" and "*Housing assistance*" programs are desired.

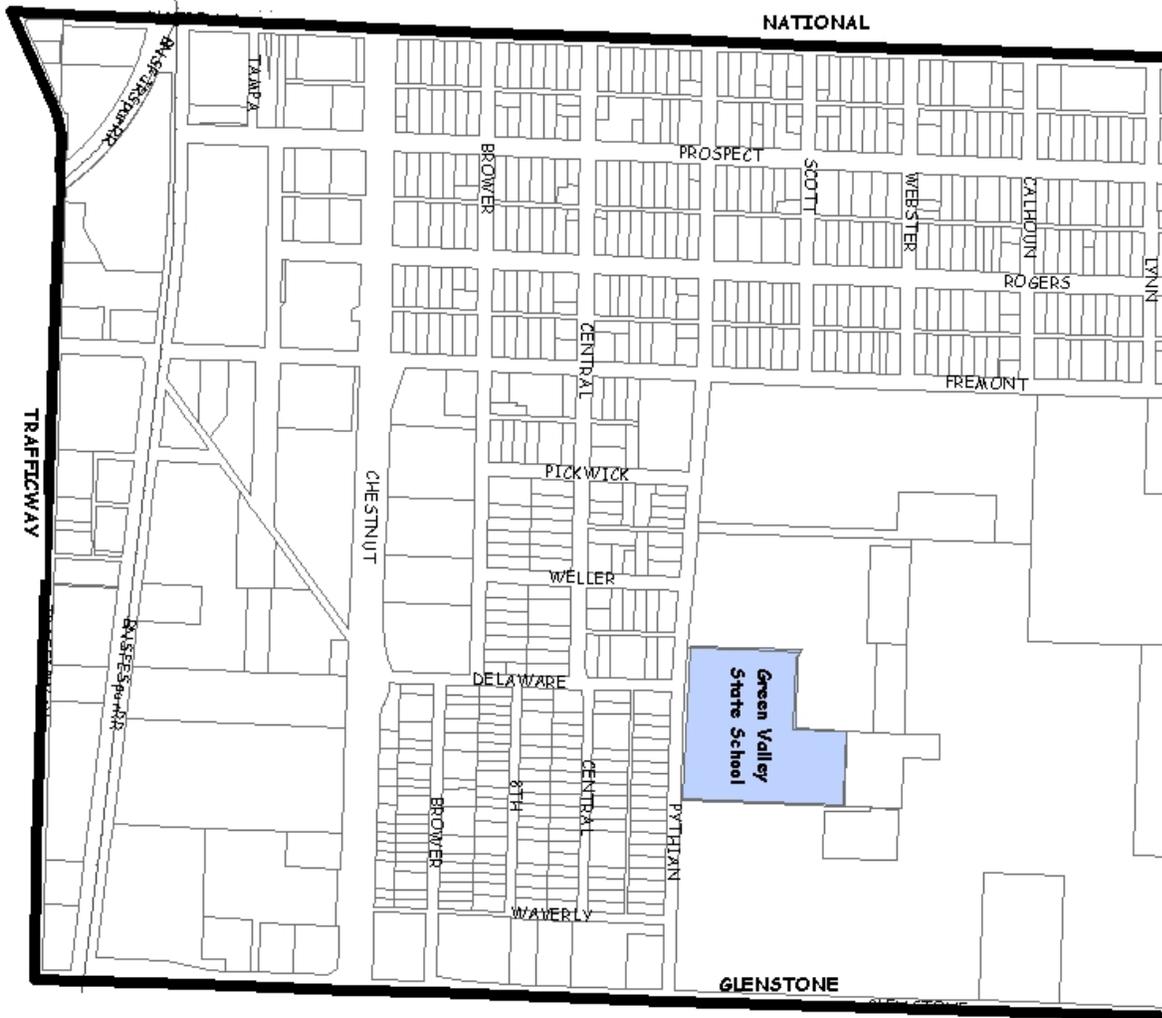
Springfield's *Neighborhood Assessment* process mirrors a public input process developed and utilized by the City of Kansas City, Missouri.

With assistance from City staff, residents, business representatives and people who work in local institutions provided input at the Weller Neighborhood Assessment workshop. Participants mapped their community, and identified assets and priority issues in their neighborhood.

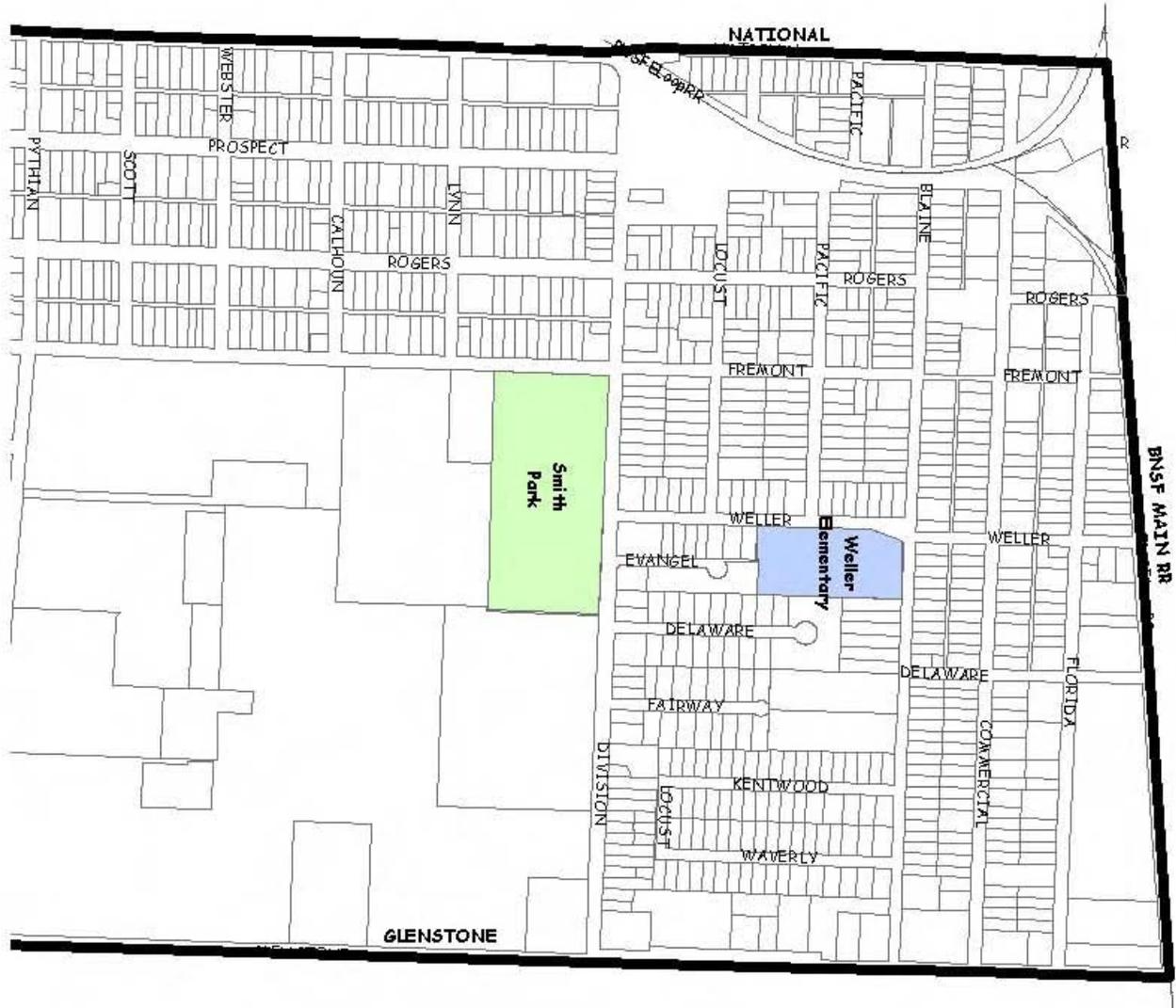


Participants get ready to begin working through the neighborhood assessment process.

Weller Neighborhood



Assessment Area



Planning and Development Department
City of Springfield, Missouri

CHART NOTES



Neighborhood Slogans

The attendees listed several slogans to describe their neighborhood. The slogans helped the participants to identify how they viewed their community.

The selected slogan:

A Neighborhood On The Move

Other suggested slogans:

- Weller Ways To Success
- Tracking Success



Participants are voting on the slogan which best describes their neighborhood.

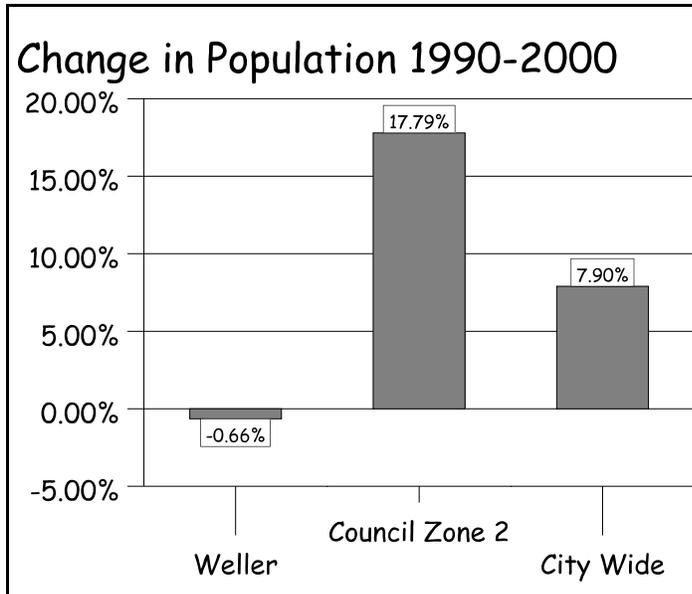
STEP 1: Facts About My Neighborhood

The data presented at the Assessment Workshop was from the 2000 Census, the Police Department, Building Development Services and the Planning & Development Department's Grants and Program Implementation Division.



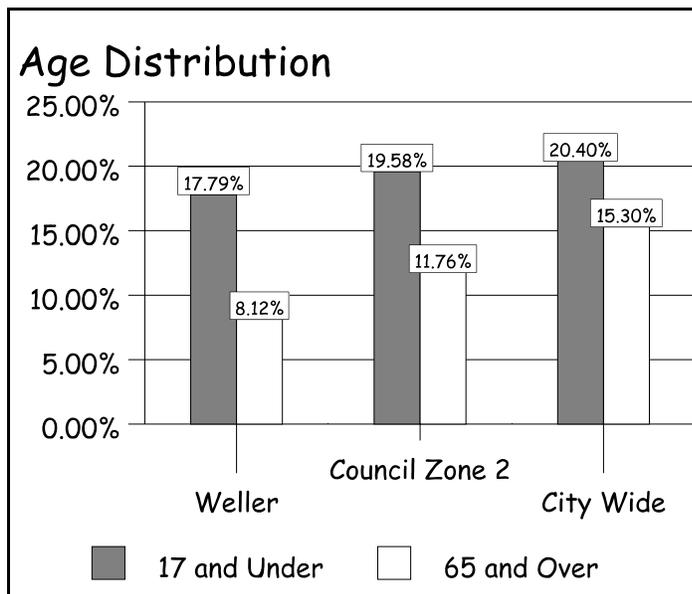
During Step 1 participants were presented charts showing demographic facts about their neighborhood in relation to their Council Zone and the city as a whole.

POPULATION



In 2000, there were 3,621 persons living in the Weller neighborhood. Between 1990 and 2000, the population in the Weller neighborhood decreased by 0.66%. By comparison, the population increased in Council Zone 2 by 17.79% and in the City by 7.90%.

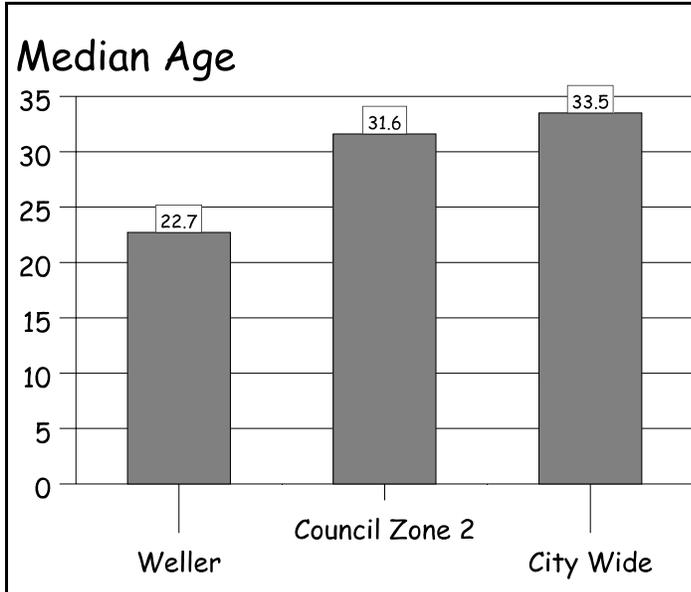
2000 Census



The percentage of people under age 17 in the Weller neighborhood is 17.79% while 8.12% of the people in the neighborhood are over the age of 64. By comparison, Council Zone 2 has 19.58% under age 17 and 11.76% over age 65. City wide 20.40% are under age 17 and 15.30% are over age 65.

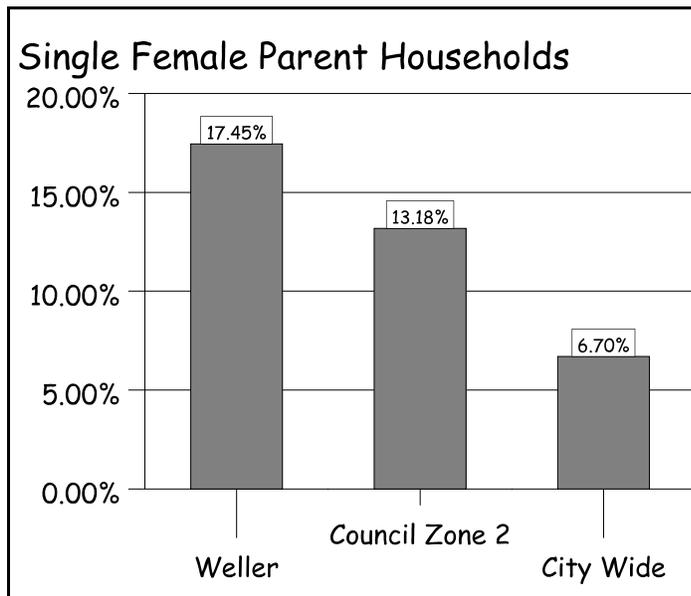
2000 Census

POPULATION



2000 Census

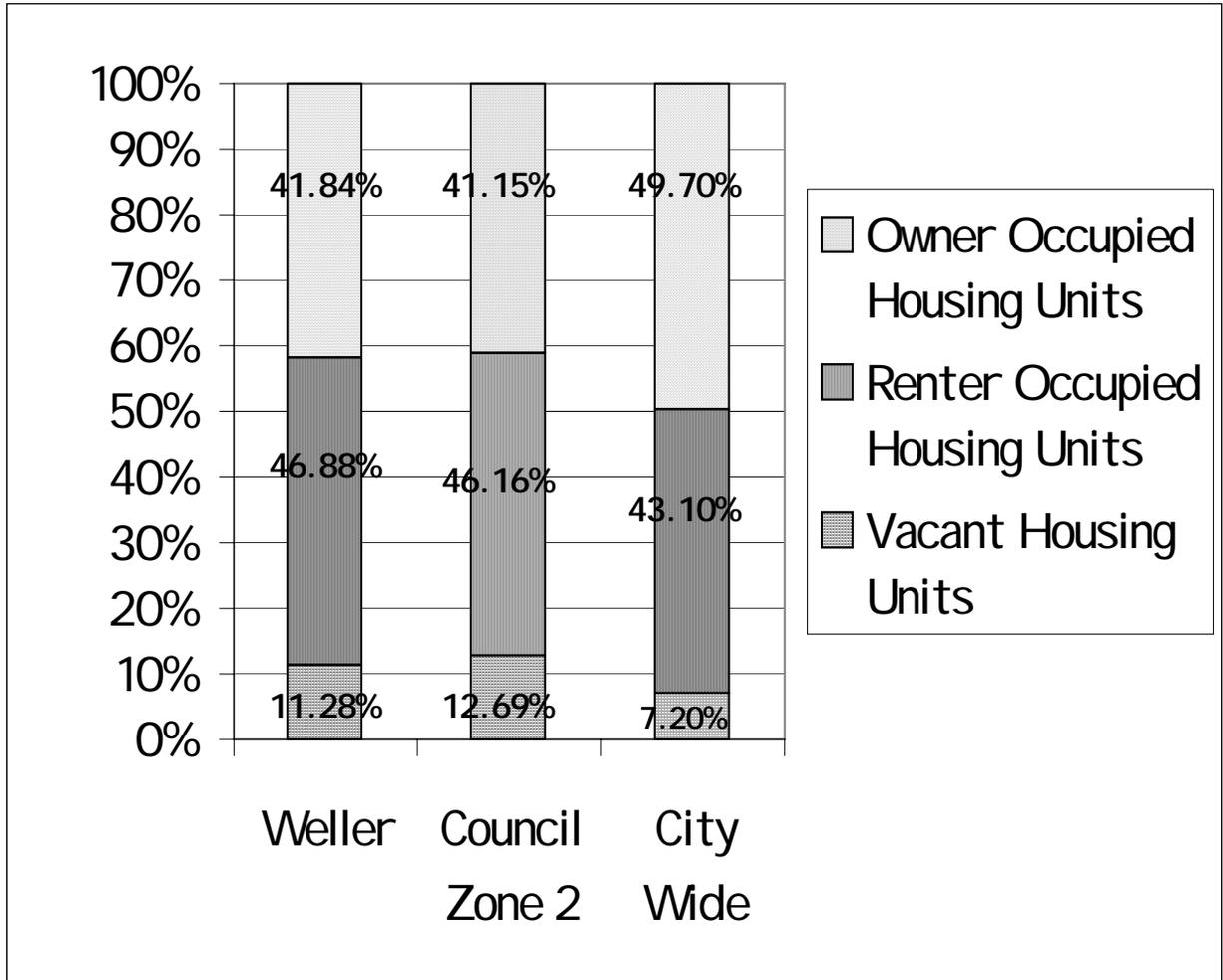
In the Weller neighborhood, the median age is slightly less than 23, which means that half of the people in your neighborhood are younger than 23, and half are older than 23. In Council Zone 2, the median age is 31.6, and city wide it is 33.5.



2000 Census

The percentage of single female parent households (with children under 18 years of age) in the Weller neighborhood is 17.45%. This compares with 13.18% in Council Zone 2 and 6.7% city wide.

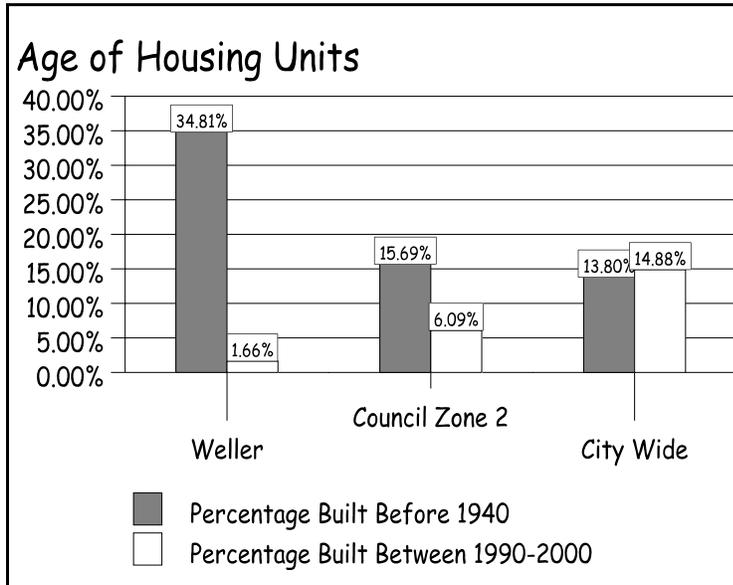
HOUSING OCCUPANCY



The housing in the Weller neighborhood is composed of 41.84% owner occupied, 46.88% renter occupied, and 11.28% vacant housing. The percentage of owner occupied housing in your neighborhood is almost identical to that of Council Zone 2 and slightly less than the city as a whole. The percentage of rental housing is also comparable to Council Zone 2 but is still above the city as a whole. The percentage of vacant housing in the Weller neighborhood falls in between that of Council Zone 2 and the city.

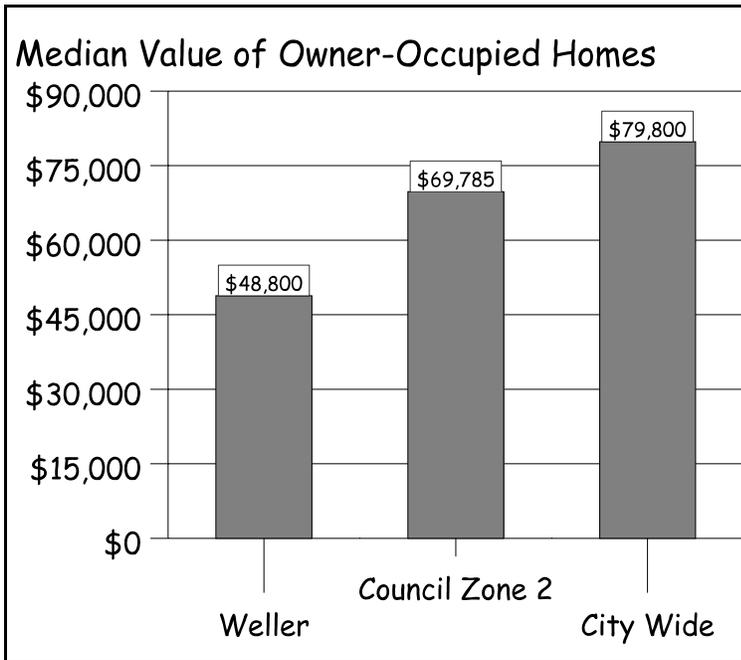
HOUSING

A housing unit is defined as a house, an apartment, a mobile home or trailer, a group of rooms, or a single room that is occupied as a separate living quarters, or, if vacant, is intended for occupancy as a separate living quarters.



The percentage of housing units in the Weller neighborhood built before 1940 is 34.81%. This compares with 15.69% in Council Zone 2 and 13.80% city wide. In addition, the percentage of housing units built in the Weller neighborhood between 1990 and 2000 is 1.66%. This compares with 6.09% in Council Zone 2 and 14.88% city wide.

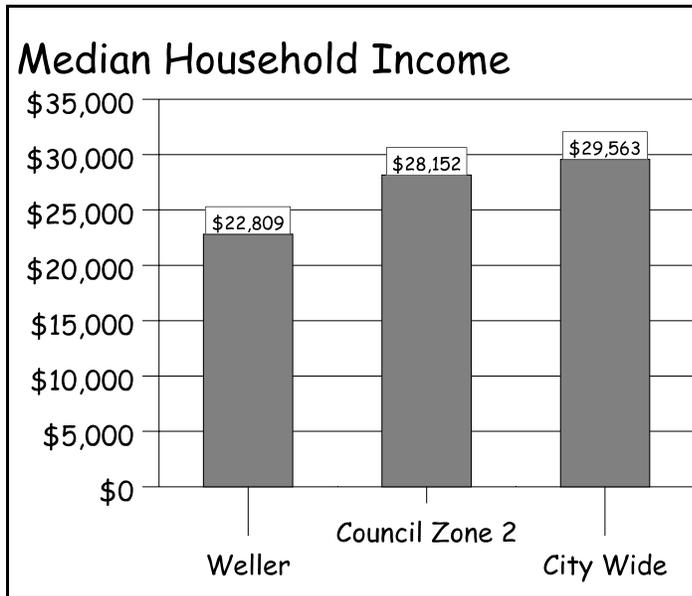
2000 Census



In the Weller neighborhood, the median value of an owner-occupied home is \$48,800. This means that half of the owner-occupied homes in the neighborhood are valued at more than \$48,800, and half are valued for less. The median value of owner-occupied homes in Council Zone 2 is \$69,785 and city wide is \$79,800.

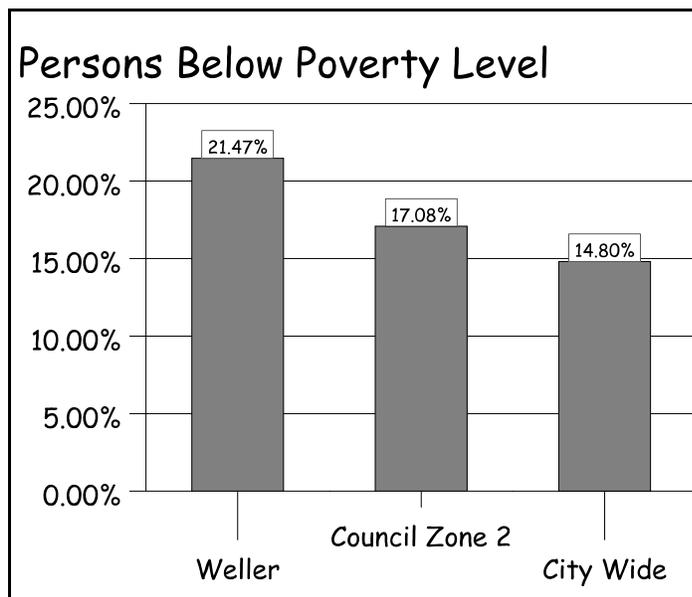
2000 Census

INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT



The median household income in the Weller neighborhood is \$22,809, which means that half of the households in the neighborhood have incomes of more than \$22,809 and half have less. This compares with median household incomes of \$28,152 in Council Zone 2 and \$29,563 city wide.

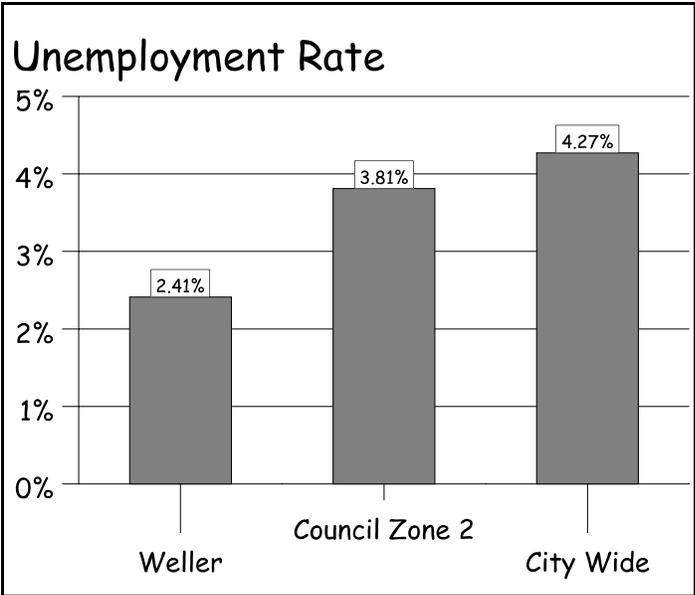
2000 Census



Poverty level is based on the income, age and number of people in the household. The percentage of persons living below the poverty level in the Weller neighborhood is 21.47%. This compares to 17.08% in Council Zone 2 and 14.80% city wide.

2000 Census

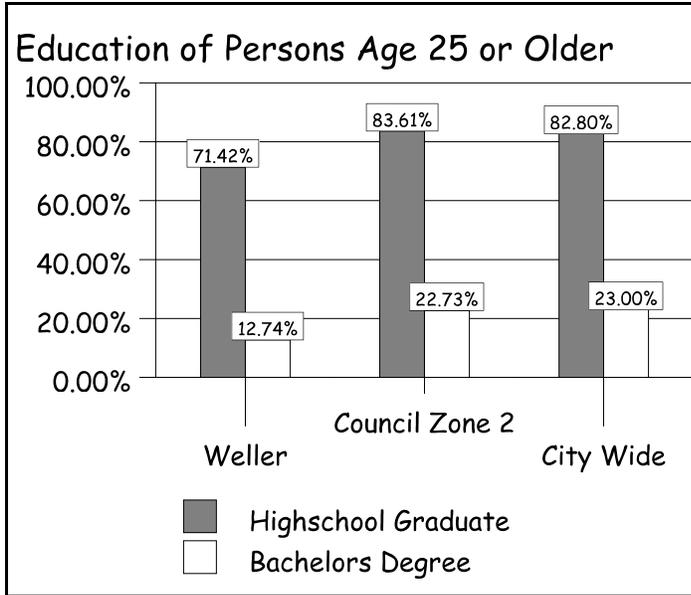
INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT



In the Weller neighborhood, 2.41% of persons are unemployed. In Council Zone 2, the percentage is 3.81%, and city wide the percentage is 4.27%.

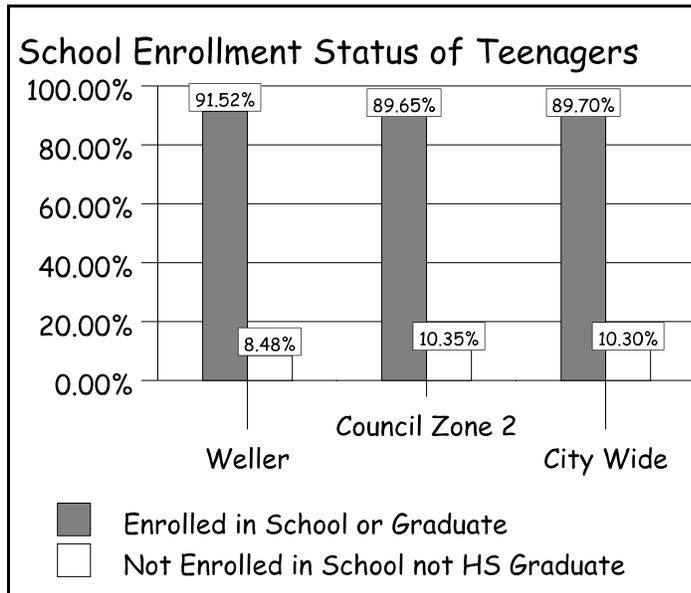
2000 Census

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND SCHOOL ENROLLMENT



The percentage of persons 25 years of age or older within the Weller neighborhood who have attained a high school diploma as their highest level of education is 71.42%. In Council Zone 2, it is 83.61% and 82.8% city wide.

2000 Census

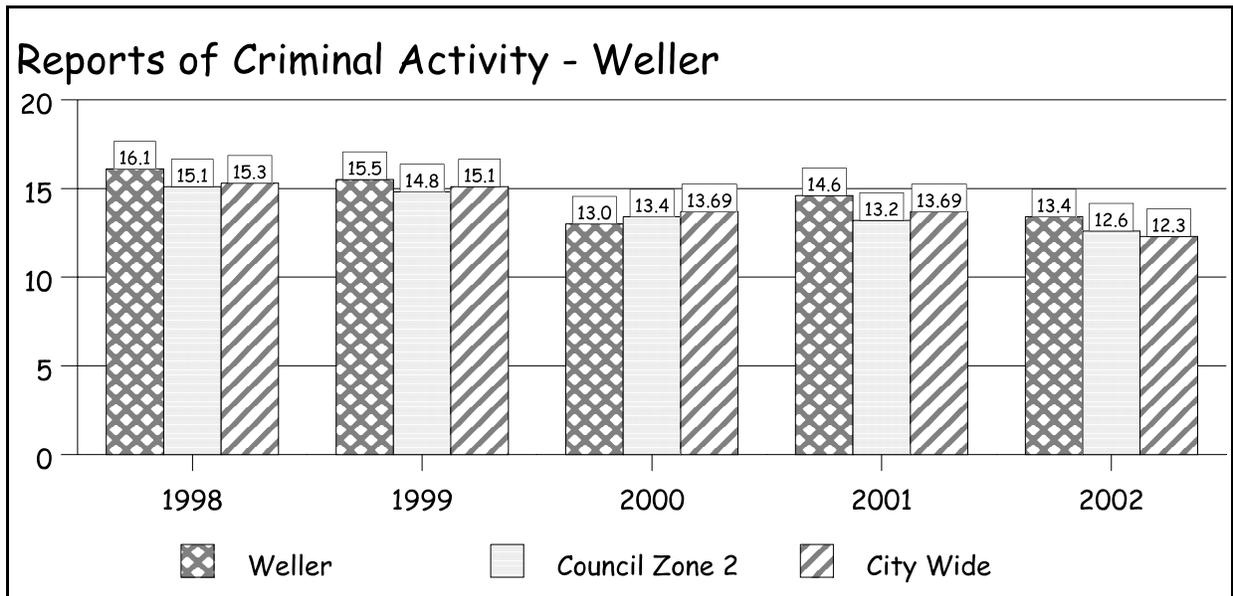


The percentage of teenagers within the Weller neighborhood who are enrolled in school or have graduated is 91.52%. In Council Zone 2 it is 89.65% and 89.70% city wide.

2000 Census

REPORTS OF CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Reports of criminal activity have been compiled from the year 1998 to 2002 for comparison with your neighborhood, Council Zone 2, and the city as a whole. These reports include calls for service to the Police Department for the following activities: assault, drugs, general disturbances, noise disturbance, loud parties and residential burglaries. The chart below reflects the number of calls for police service per 100 people in each area.



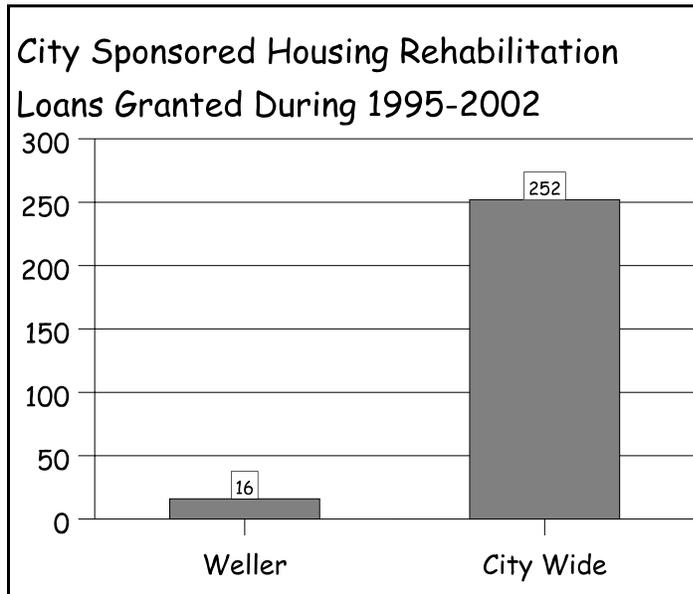
Data received from City of Springfield, Police Department; Data compiled by City of Springfield, Department of Planning and Development, Neighborhood Conservation Office

Reports of criminal activity in the Weller neighborhood show a similar pattern to that of Council Zone 2 and the city as a whole. This pattern reflects a steady decline in reports since 1998.

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

Housing Rehabilitation Loans

Housing rehabilitation loans granted by the city include low-interest loans for the renovation of owner-occupied homes, and low-interest loans for the rehabilitation of rental properties. This information was retrieved from the City of Springfield, Department of Planning & Development, Grants and Program Implementation Division.

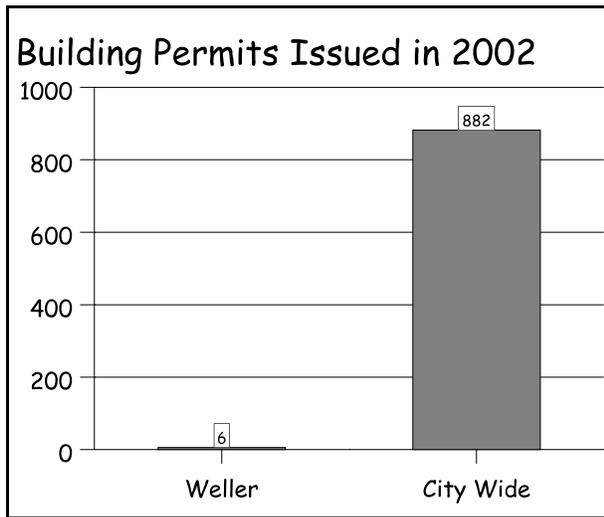


City of Springfield, Department of Planning and Development,
Grants Administration and Program Implementation Division

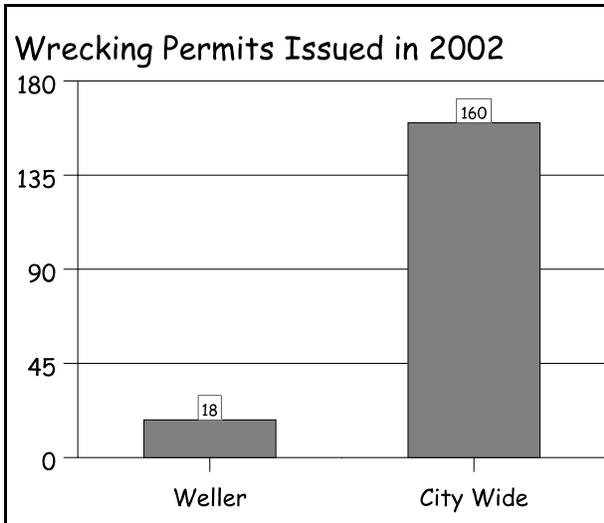
DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

Building and Wrecking Permits

Building permits are issued by the city for activities including the construction of new buildings, additions to existing buildings, remodeling, damage repair, etc. Wrecking permits are issued for any type of demolition activity - whether for part of a structure or an entire structure. This information was retrieved from the City of Springfield, Department of Building Development Services.



City of Springfield, Department of Building Development Services



City of Springfield, Department of Building Development Services

STEP 2: My Neighborhood Is

Workshop participants identified how they experience their neighborhood, and considered those things they want to protect, preserve or enhance. They thought about the landmarks, paths, activity centers, districts, edges or barriers, and features. These were noted on a wall map.

- △ *Landmarks* — significant physical objects, like buildings or signs
- +++ *Paths* — routes people use to get places
- *Activity centers* — gathering places to do some activity
- *Districts* — areas of recognizable character
- \\ \\ *Edges or barriers* — a limit or boundary that prevents people from enjoying the neighborhood or something in it
- ✕ *Features* — things people like and would like to preserve or enhance

Landmarks:

- Evangel University
- O'Riley General Hospital Site
- Crosstown Barbecue
- Pythian Home
- National Guard
- Darby's Market
- Symphony House
- Corner Grocery (Florida & Fremont)
- Weller Elementary School
- Tefft Center
- Boys & Girls Club
- O'Riley Gym
- National/Chestnut Grain Towers

Paths:

- Alleyways

Activity Centers:

- Evangel University

- Neighborhood Churches
- Smith Park
- Northview Shopping Center
- Weller Elementary School
- Tefft Center

Districts:

- Historic Homes

Edges or Barriers:

- Chestnut Expressway
- Lack of Sidewalks
- RR Tracks
- Division Street
- Butternut Bakery Parking Lot
- Jordan Creek
- Downtown Airport Flight Pattern

Features:

- Darby's Market

Neighborhood Images



Landmark and Feature:
The participants considered the Darby's Market to be a landmark within their neighborhood.

Landmark:
Crosstown Barbecue located on Division Street was identified as a neighborhood landmark. This restaurant is well-known throughout the city for its barbecue.



Landmark and Activity Center:
The neighborhood considers Weller Elementary, along with other neighborhood schools, as both landmarks and activity centers.



Landmark and Activity Center:
Tefft Center was also identified by participants as a landmark and activity center for the neighborhood.

Landmark:
The Springfield Symphony building, located on Division Street, was identified by neighborhood residents as a landmark located within their neighborhood.



District:
The older rock home pictured here is an example of the many older homes that characterize the Weller area as a unique district.



Edges or Barriers:

Division Street was identified as a barrier in the neighborhood. Residents noted the difficulty for pedestrians and bicyclists in crossing this busy street.

Edges or Barriers:

The BNSF Railroad is a daily barrier to transportation in the neighborhood.



Edges or Barriers:

STEP 3: My Neighborhood's Assets

Workshop participants identified assets that add value to their neighborhood. The assets include places, groups, organizations, equipment, skills, abilities and any other asset that adds value to the neighborhood. These assets are listed in random order.

- Smith Park
- Solo Grocery store
- Price Cutter store
- New construction
- Diversity of skills, trades, labor
- Churches
- Boy's & Girl's Club
- National Guard Armory
- Development Center of the Ozarks
- American Legion
- Housing stock - sells fast
- Snow removal
- Evangel University
- City rehab programs
- High percentage of working age individuals
- Proximity to major thoroughfares



Pictured above is the Washington Avenue Baptist Church which is one of the many churches participants identified as assets to their neighborhood.



This is the Boys and Girls Club which is an asset and located within the neighborhood.



Smith Park was identified as an asset to the neighborhood.

STEP 4: If I Could Fix One Thing

In every neighborhood there are some things that need to be changed. These issues can prevent residents from enjoying their neighborhood and from doing the things they like to do. Below is the list of “fixes” that workshop participants said they would like to see in the Weller neighborhood. The items in this list are in random order.

- Add sidewalks to more streets.
- Repair segments of existing sidewalks.
- Increase economic opportunities for youth by holding job training for ages 15-35.
- Establish a neighborhood association.
- Coordinate with Evangel University on their plans for growth.
- Rezone non-residential districts in the northern portion of the neighborhood.
 - GM (Florida) to residential
 - Commercial to residential
- Rezone R-TH to R-SF for single family residences
- Establish mini-parks for kids to play (tot parks)
- Notify citizens of (property) tax levy before it is due so citizens can plan.
- Fix-up (rehab) run down houses.
- Remove porta-potty to different location (less visible) in Smith Park.
- Provide better warning on railroad tracks at Blaine.
- Address the problem of feral cats.
- Need “dead end” sign on existing Delaware/Fairway/Division sign posts.
- Improve safety for pedestrians crossing at Fremont or Weller at Division.
- Widen Division Street and raise the speed limit.
- Provide better traffic enforcement on Fremont and Rogers (speed).
- Establish a neighborhood watch program.
- Abate trash on property and front porches.
- Crosstown smoke - filter the chimney in some way.
- Remove garage sale signs (placards) on poles.
- Demolish rundown houses.
- Improve drainage on Division between Glenstone and National.
- Clean-up trash 2 times per year.

- Provide curbing on Fremont Street north of Commercial.
- Reduce litter.
- Add bus shelters at Division and Weller.
- Abate weeds and maintain yards.

STEP 5: Describing My Neighborhood

The *Neighborhoods Plan* recognizes that not all neighborhoods in Springfield are the same. The character and condition of where we live varies according to age, history, type of housing and other factors. Each community has different strengths and opportunities. Each has different assets and priorities that drive unique strategies for improvement. The *Neighborhoods Plan* developed four unique Neighborhood Types that generally describe Springfield neighborhoods. Each Neighborhood Type suggests what actions are required for an area to become or stay healthy. These four types (assigned the colors Blue, Orange, Purple and Green in the Neighborhood Assessment workshop) are:

Developing (Blue)	Conservation (Orange)	Stabilization (Purple)	Redeveloping (Green)
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The Assessment is a beginning point from which the community can move forward and achieve quality living environments through a commitment to continuous improvement. The descriptions for these four Neighborhood Types are contained in the Weller Assessment Workbook.

In the workshop, participants defined the tools, actions and strategies for improving their community. They will use this information to strategically apply public and private resources in a way that is based on existing conditions, trends, opportunities, strengths and needs. Once other neighborhoods identify their type, then similarly "typed" Springfield communities can connect and partner around common issues and projects while assisting each other in developing their organizations.



Those who attended the workshop were asked to vote on the Neighborhood Type that best described their neighborhood. Their choice was **Stabilization**.

My neighborhood has been developed for some time. Several of the businesses and institutions located in the neighborhood may be changing,

either recently expanding, scaling back services, just moved into the neighborhood or considering moving to another location outside the neighborhood. Places of worship, schools, recreational and entertainment facilities, and businesses provide opportunities near my home.

Tree-lined streets, historic structures or qualities, public art and/or other amenities characterize the neighborhood and give it a sense of place. Due to age, several of the streets and sidewalks need repair or replacement and the water and sewer services may also need to be upgraded. Many houses, businesses, and public areas appear to lack routine maintenance (painting, yard upkeep, tree trimming, awning repair, etc.) or are vacant. Such conditions are impacting the value of my property and I don't know if I want to invest more money in the property.

Problems are starting to add up and are becoming harder to fix through our neighborhood association, a call to the City, or neighbors getting together to help one another. There are good aspects to the neighborhood but there are also problems that need to be addressed if the neighborhood is going to continue to be a place I want to live.

STEP 6: Making My Neighborhood Better

Weller workshop participants talked about specific actions their community can take to address the issues and challenges identified earlier in the assessment. They brainstormed ideas, concentrating on those actions that can be performed by the community to improve the neighborhood.

Below are the lists of all the ideas mentioned by workshop participants. They voted on the ideas that they most want implemented to make their neighborhood better.

Things we can do **Ourselves**:

- Sponsor a neighborhood litter pickup.

Things we can do with a **Partner**:

- Establish a Neighborhood Organization (Neighborhood, Caring Communities).
- Participate in or sponsor a neighborhood trash clean-up 2 times per year (Neighborhood, City, Community Partnership of the Ozarks).
- Communicate with Evangel University about concerns regarding a campus plan (Neighborhood, Evangel).
- Market job training programs (Neighborhood, Community Partnership of the Ozarks).
- Partner with the Humane Society on removing feral cats from neighborhood (Neighborhood, Humane Society).
- Establish a neighborhood watch program (Neighborhood, Police).
- Establish a neighborhood team for the neighborhood (Neighborhood, City).

Things the **City** should do:

- Rezone current R-TH and GM areas to R-SF to reflect existing single-family uses.
- Enforce existing building codes on dangerous buildings.

- Market home rehabilitation loan programs.
- Monitor speeding on Rogers and Fremont Avenues.
- Determine how to better filter smoke from Crosstown Bar-B-Que.
- Increase penalties for people who don't clean up properties (litter/weeds/trash).
- Improve stormwater drainage on Division from Glenstone to National.
- Place "dead end" signs on poles at the Delaware and Fairway intersections with Division.
- Add a bus shelter at Division & Weller.
- Place city trash cans at certain high visibility locations.
- Improve pedestrian crossing at the Fremont or Weller intersections with Division.
- Add sidewalks at the following locations:
 - On both sides of Division.
 - Rogers between Division & Central.
 - Fremont between Division & Pythian.
- Repair & maintain existing sidewalks.
- Notify citizens of the (property) tax levy before it is due so that people can plan.
- Increase fines for illegally placed signs on CU poles.
- Establish mini-parks (tot lots) on vacant lots in the neighborhood.
- Prepare an ordinance to better abate the problems of loose cats.
- Improve visibility at BNSF RR crossings by cutting brush and installing better signs or barricades.
- Add curbing on Fremont from Division to Commercial.
- Widen Division Street and raise the speed limit.



Assessment participants work on ways to improve their neighborhood.

CITY ACTION PLAN

PRIORITIES

During the Neighborhood Assessment workshop, Weller residents identified 26 actions that they could do “themselves”, “with a partner”, or actions the “city” could take. Following the workshop, attendees voted for the actions that they felt were the most necessary to improve their neighborhoods. Weller residents chose the following actions as their top priorities:

1. The **City** should rezone current R-TH and GM areas to R-SF to reflect the existing single-family uses.
 2. The **City** should enforce existing building codes on dangerous buildings.
 3. The neighborhood should **partner** with Caring Communities to form a neighborhood association.
 4. The neighborhood should **partner** with the Community Partnership of the Ozarks and the City in sponsoring/participating in neighborhood trash clean-ups two (2) times a year.
 5. The **City** should actively market home rehabilitation loan programs within the neighborhood.
 6. The neighborhood should **partner** with Evangel University to address neighborhood concerns regarding any potential campus plan.
 7. The neighborhood should **partner** with the Community Partnership of the Ozarks to market job training programs.
 8. The **City** should monitor speeding on N. Fremont and N. Rogers Avenues.
-

CITY ACTION ON PRIORITIES

Weller participants were told throughout the Neighborhood Assessment workshop that the city could only focus on a few activities in the short term. Based on the input and review of the priorities identified by Weller residents, various City departments and other organizations have committed to taking the following 6 actions in the Weller Neighborhood Assessment Area:

Issue: The City should rezone current R-TH and GM areas to R-SF to reflect the existing single-family uses.

Response: The Springfield Planning Department has reviewed land uses in the neighborhood. While over 76 percent of properties are zoned for duplex development, only 3 percent of properties contain duplexes. In contrast, no properties within Weller are zoned for single family uses although over 82 percent of the properties within the neighborhood contain single family homes. The Planning Department will provide further information to City Council for potential comprehensive rezonings in the neighborhood that reflect existing land uses.

Responsible Department: Planning

Issue: The neighborhood should partner with Caring Communities to form a neighborhood association.

Response: The Community Partnership of the Ozarks met with neighborhood residents and formed a "steering committee" intended as the first step of creating a viable neighborhood association. The steering committee organized a meeting schedule and officers have now been elected. The Weller Neighborhood Association is now scheduling neighborhood-wide events.

Responsible Department: N/A - COMPLETED

Issue: The neighborhood should partner with the Community Partnership of the Ozarks and the City in sponsoring/participating in neighborhood trash clean-ups two (2) times a year.

Response: The Community Partnership of the Ozarks' Americorps program has scheduled a Weller area clean-up for fall 2003. The clean-up will be marketed throughout the summer. The Springfield Public Works Department can participate in the clean-up by chipping and hauling brush from a central location should Americorps need this service.

Responsible Department: N/A (Note: Public Works assistance available on request)

Issue: The City should actively market home rehabilitation loan programs within the neighborhood.

Response: The Springfield Planning Department will meet with a re-formed neighborhood association to provide an overview of city sponsored home rehabilitation programs. The Planning Department's Grants Division will also

conduct a mass mailing in the neighborhood to provide more information about the programs.

Responsible Department: Planning

Issue: The neighborhood should partner with the Community Partnership of the Ozarks to market job training programs.

Response: The Community Partnership of the Ozarks will be working with the newly re-formed neighborhood association to start a "Community Resource Information Sharing" project. This type of project is specific to each neighborhood and has proven more effective in bringing services to the neighborhood.

Responsible Department: N/A

Issue: The City should monitor speeding on N. Fremont and N. Rogers Avenues.

Response: The Springfield Police Department has been conducting speed enforcement on Fremont and Rogers Avenues with the combined efforts of the Community Services and Traffic divisions. The Department will also utilize the City's lighted speed indicator signs by placing them at appropriate locations.

Responsible Department: Police

City Response on Priorities

Some of the priorities identified on page 27 can not be undertaken by the City at this time. City action is either not recommended, or can only take place with further involvement and/or information from neighborhood residents. The following list provides some suggestions which neighborhood residents can use to increase the chances that these issues can be better addressed in the future

Issue: The City should enforce existing building codes on dangerous buildings.

Response: The Springfield Building Development Services Department aggressively enforces the City's existing program which deals with buildings that meet the definition of a Dangerous, Blighted or Nuisance building. The Department does not systematically tour neighborhoods looking for these structures, but rely on neighbors and the neighborhood to call the City Service Request line (864-1012) to report suspected locations.

Responsible Department: Building Development Services

CITY ACTION ON OTHER ISSUES

Other actions, while not determined by Neighborhood Assessment participants to be priorities, were proposed that might require City involvement to be undertaken. Of those actions, the City will commit to or has completed the following:

Issue: The City should place “dead end” signs on poles at the Delaware, Evangel and Fairway intersections with Division Street.

Response: The Springfield Public Works, Traffic Engineering Division installed “Street Ends” signs with arrows below the street name signs at the intersections of Division and Fairway, Division and Delaware, and Division and Evangel during the week of June 2, 2003.

Responsible Department: Public Works - COMPLETED

Issue: The City should improve pedestrian crossing at the Weller or Fremont intersections with Division Street.

Response: The Springfield Public Works, Traffic Engineering Division has met with the Director of the new Boys and Girls Club and is working towards installation of a new mid-block traffic signal just east of Fremont Avenue on Division Street. Currently there is a marked crosswalk on Division Street at Fremont Avenue with an Adult School Crossing Guard assigned for the morning and afternoon school crossing times. This Adult Guard will continue to work at these times during the school year. The new signal should be installed by mid August.

Responsible Department: Public Works

Issue: The City should construct sidewalks on Fremont Avenue in the vicinity of Division Street.

Response: Sidewalks exist along the west side of this segment of Fremont. In conjunction with the Division Street crosswalk, the Springfield Public Works, Traffic Engineering Division will construct a sidewalk on the east side of Fremont from Division Street to the new Boys and Girls Club property.

Responsible Department: Public Works

Issue: **City Utilities** should add a bus shelter in the vicinity of Division Street and Weller Avenue.

Response: Should adequate right-of-way exist, City Utilities will place a bus shelter at the Division/Weller location.

Responsible Department: **City Utilities**

Acknowledgments



Tom Carlson, *Mayor*
Tom Finnie, *City Manager*

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Zone 1 Councilman

Mary Collette
General Councilwoman A

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Zone 2 Councilwoman

Gary Deaver
General Councilman B

Ralph Manley, Mayor Pro Tem
Zone 3 Councilman

Conrad Griggs
General Councilman C

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Zone 4 Councilman

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