

Heart of the Westside / Fairfield Acres

Community That Cares

Neighborhood Assessment Report

*

Neighborhood Workshop Date: November 2, 2002
Accepted by City Council Date: March 24, 2003



Sponsored by:

City of Springfield
Department of Planning and Development

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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 that Springfield and Greene County will pursue to stabilize or improve existing neighborhoods and to create sustainable attractive new neighborhoods. The *Neighborhoods 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.

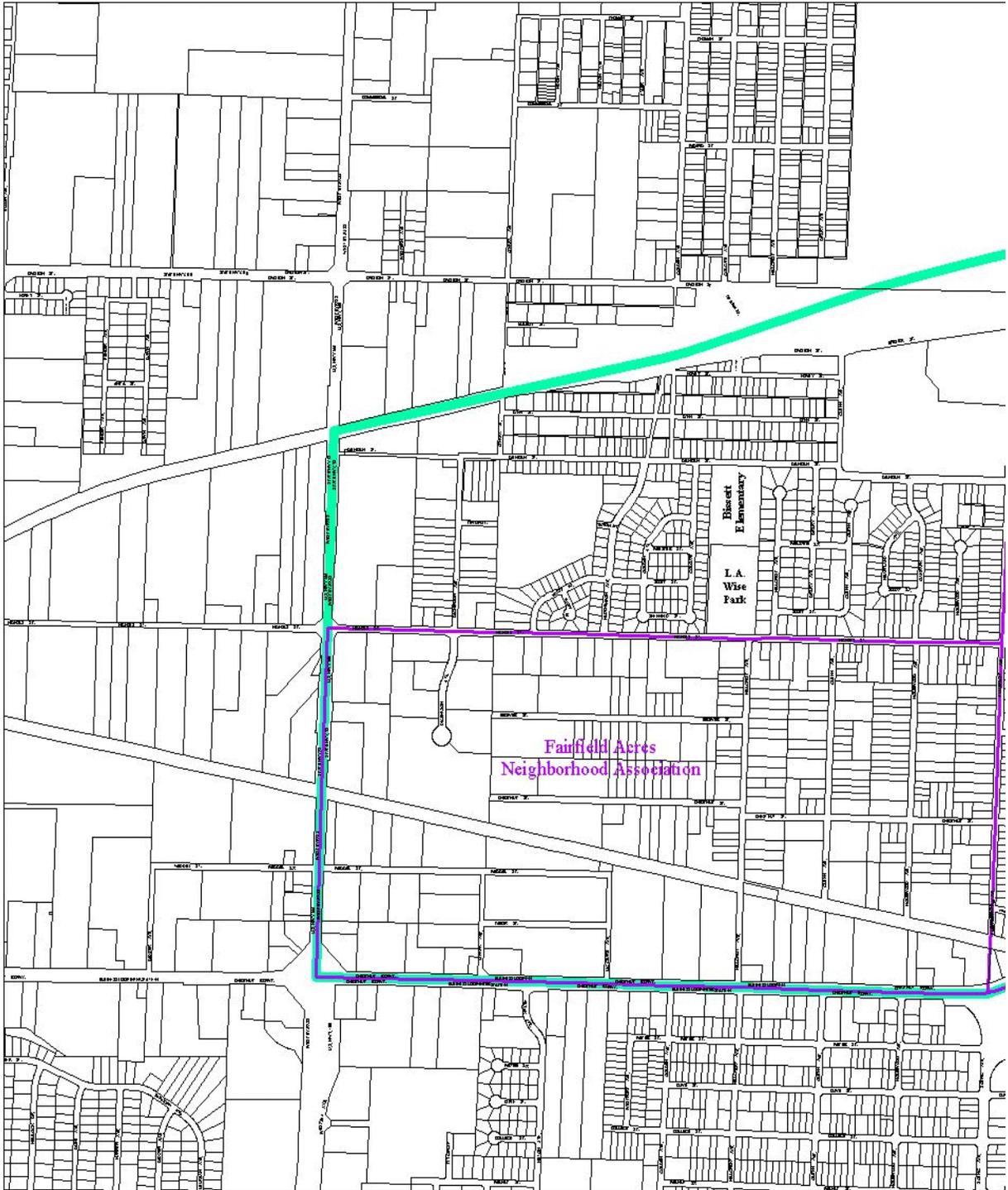
Springfield's Neighborhood Assessments process mirrors a public input process developed and utilized by the City of Kansas City, Missouri.

With assistance from City staff, residents, business representatives and people who work in local institutions provided input at the Heart of the Westside / Fairfield Acres Assessment Workshop. These community members mapped their community, and identified assets and priority issues in their neighborhood.



As residents arrived at the workshop, they located their property on the neighborhood map.

Heart of the Westside / Fairfield



Planning & Development Department
City of Springfield, Missouri
10-22-2002



Acres Neighborhood Assessment



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:

Community That Cares

Other suggested slogans:

- Growing from the Heart
- Tenacity for Human Development
- Prosperity in the Heartland
- Taming the Wild West
- Working With Neighbors
- Growing Together

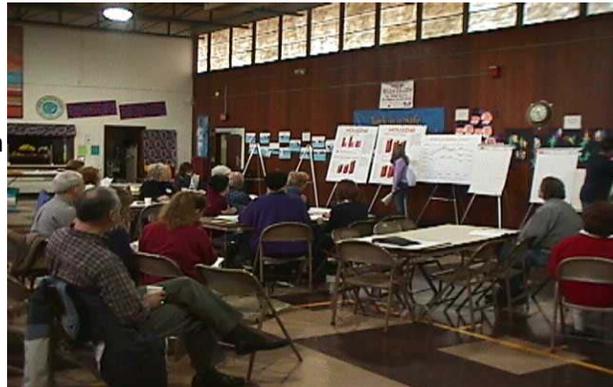


During a short break in the workshop, participants voted on a slogan for their neighborhood and their neighborhood type.

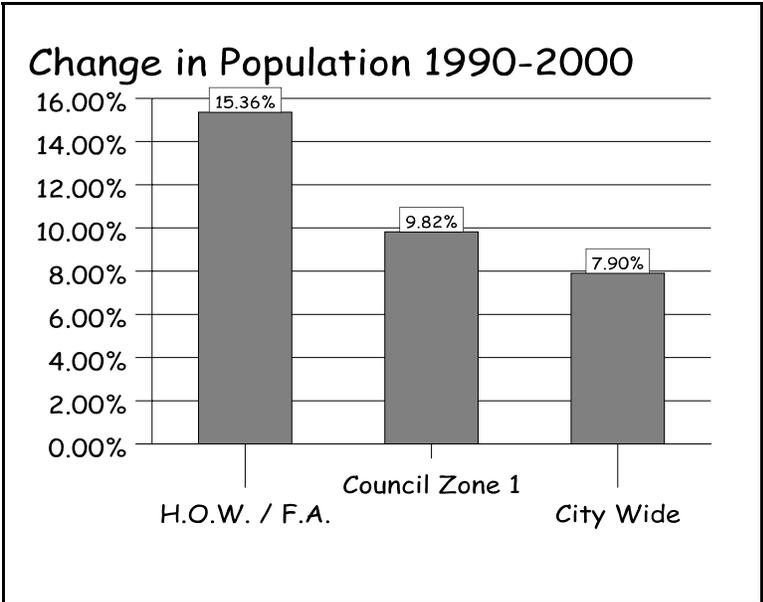
STEP 1: FACTS ABOUT MY NEIGHBORHOOD

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

During Step 1 participants were presented with charts showing demographic facts about their neighborhood in relation to their Council Zone and city wide.

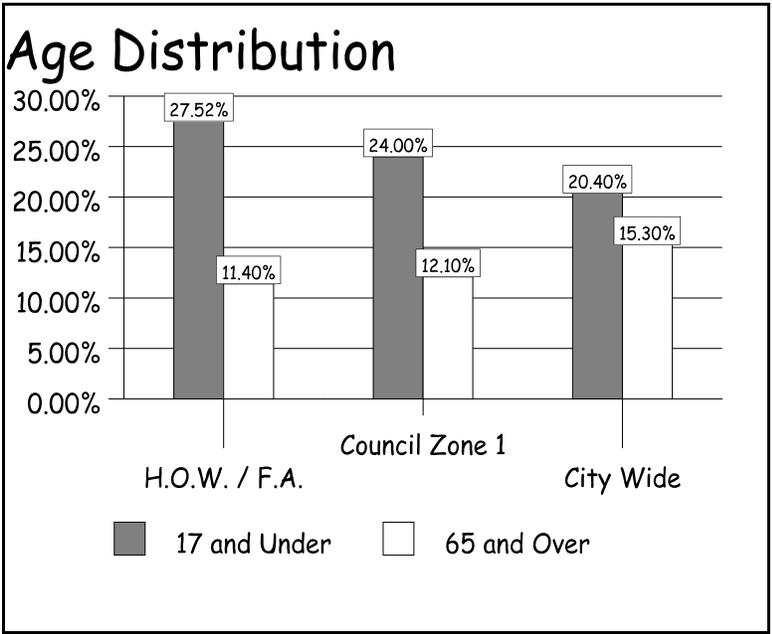


POPULATION



In 2000, there were 6,178 persons living in Heart of the Westside / Fairfield Acres. Between 1990 and 2000, the population in Heart of the Westside / Fairfield Acres increased by 15.36%. By comparison, the population increased in Council Zone 1 by 9.82% and in the City by 7.90%.

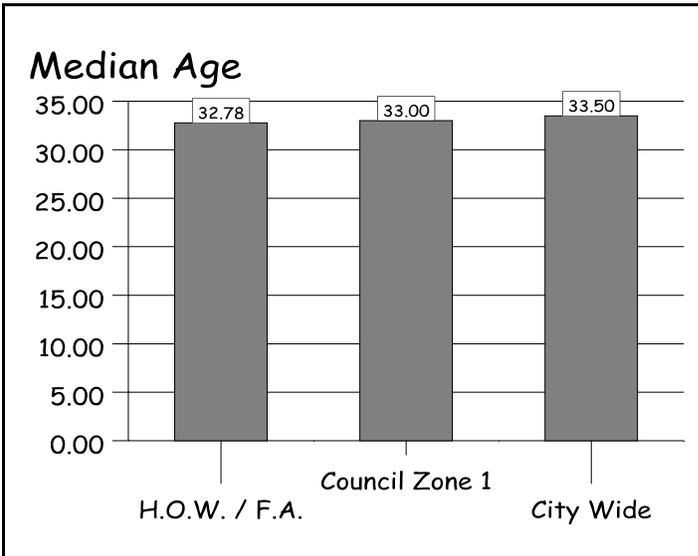
2000 Census



The percentage of people under age 17 in Heart of the Westside / Fairfield Acres is 27.52% and 11.40% are over the age of 64. By comparison, Council Zone 1 has 24.00% under age 17 and 12.10% over age 65. City wide 20.40% are under age 17 and 15.30% are over age 65.

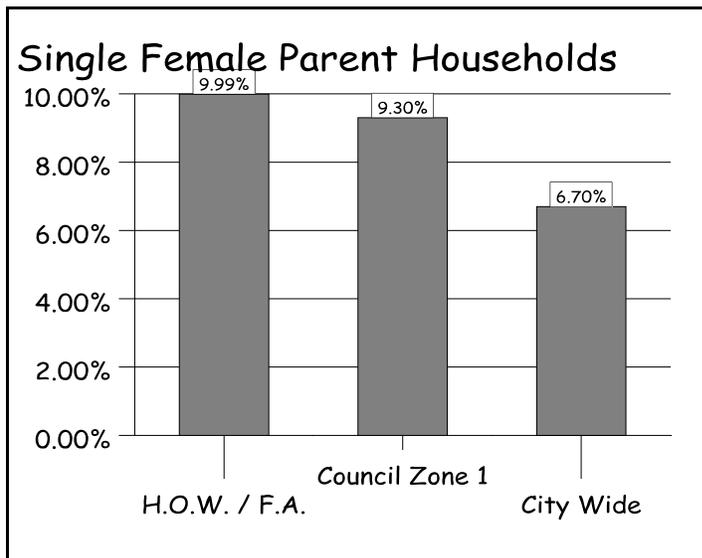
2000 Census

POPULATION



2000 Census

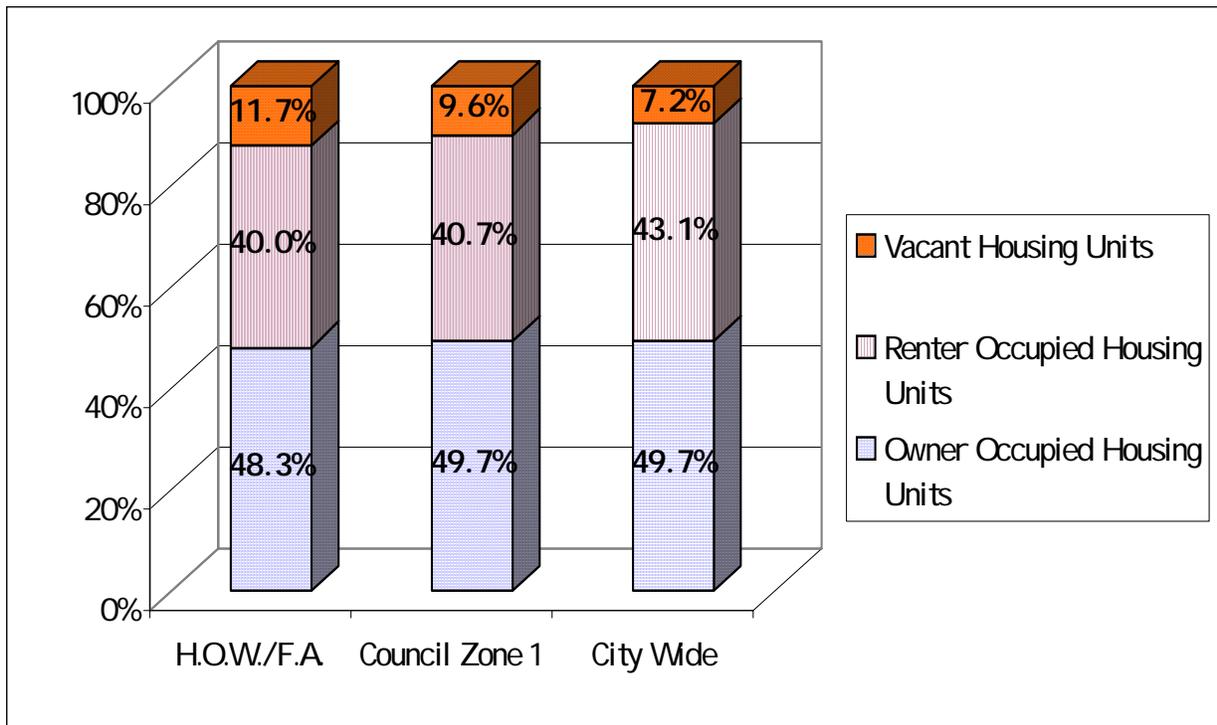
In Heart of the Westside / Fairfield Acres, the median age is approximately 33, which means that half of the people in your neighborhood are younger than 33, and half are older than 33. In Council Zone 1, the median age is 33, and city wide it is 33.5.



2000 Census

The percentage of single female parent households (with children under 18 years of age) in Heart of the Westside / Fairfield Acres is 9.9%. This compares with 9.3% in Council Zone 1 and 6.7% city wide.

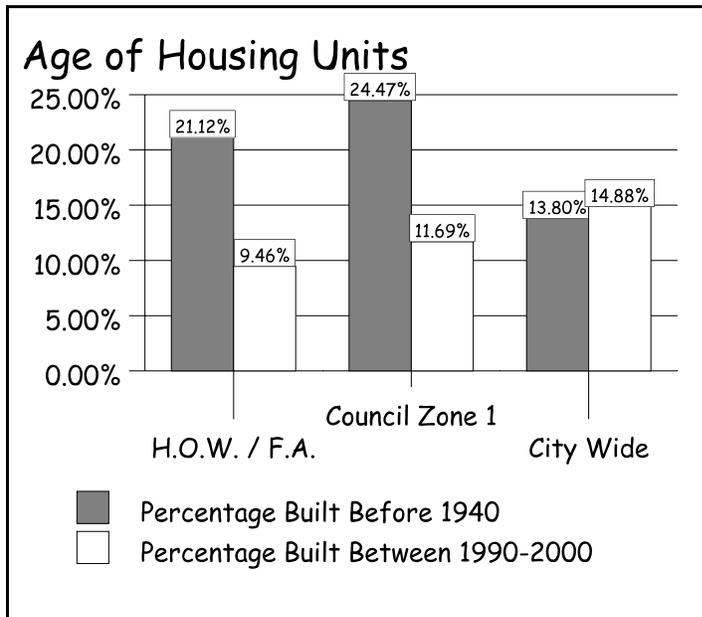
HOUSING OCCUPANCY



The housing in Heart of the Westside/Fairfield Acres is composed of 48.3% owner occupied, 40% renter occupied, and 11.7% vacant housing. The percentage of owner occupied housing in your neighborhood is only slightly less than that of Council Zone 1 and the city as a whole which are both 49.7%. The percentage of rental housing and vacant housing in your neighborhood are Marginally higher than that of Council Zone 1 and city wide.

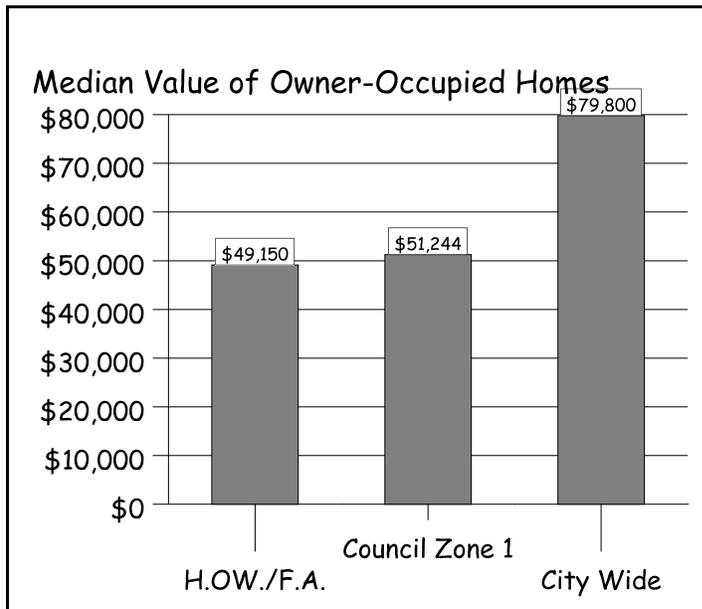
HOUSING

A housing unit is 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 Heart of the Westside / Fairfield Acres built before 1940 is 21.12%. This compares with 24.47% in Council Zone 1 and 13.8% city wide. In addition, the percentage of housing units built in Heart of the Westside / Fairfield Acres between 1990 and 2000 is 9.46%. This compares with 11.69% in Council Zone 1 and 14.88% city wide.

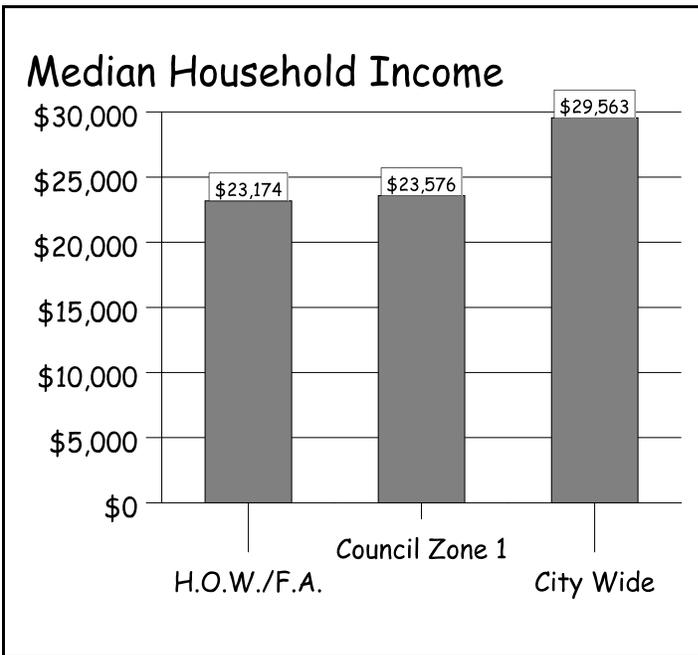
2000 Census



In Heart of the Westside / Fairfield Acres, the median value of an owner-occupied home is \$49,150. This means that half of the owner-occupied homes in the neighborhood are valued at more than \$49,150, and half are valued for less. The median value of owner-occupied homes in Council Zone 1 is \$51,244 and city wide is \$79,800.

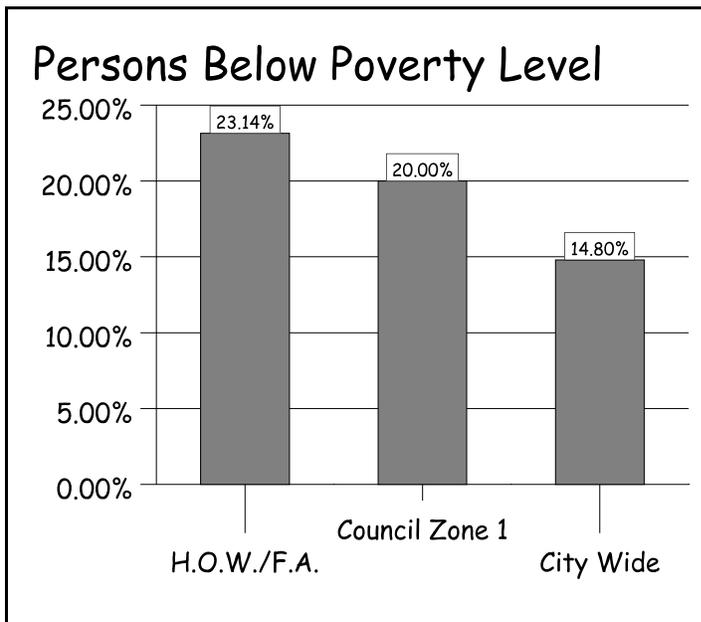
2000 Census

INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT



2000 Census

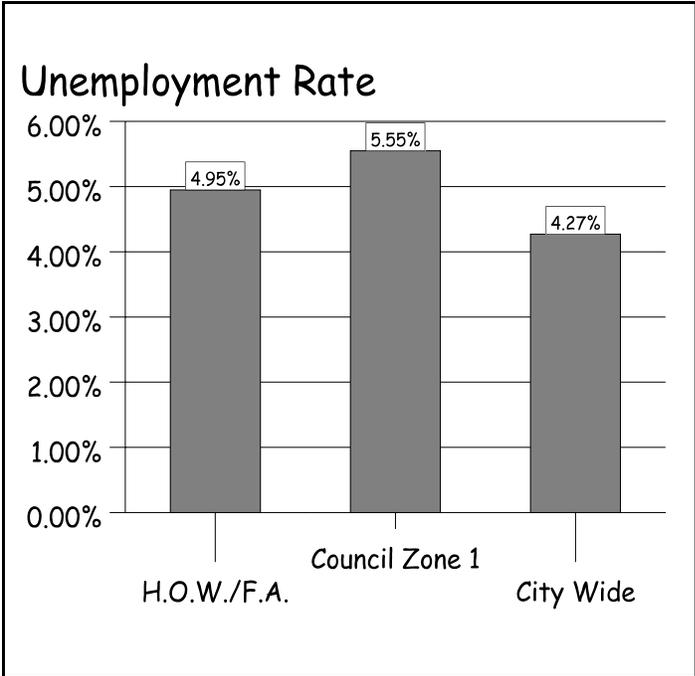
The median household income in Heart of the Westside / Fairfield Acres is \$23,174, which means that half of the households in the neighborhood have incomes of more than \$23,174 and half have less. This compares with median household incomes of \$23,576 in Council Zone 1 and \$29,563 city wide.



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 Heart of the Westside / Fairfield Acres is 23.14%. This compares to 20% in Council Zone 1 and 14.8% city wide.

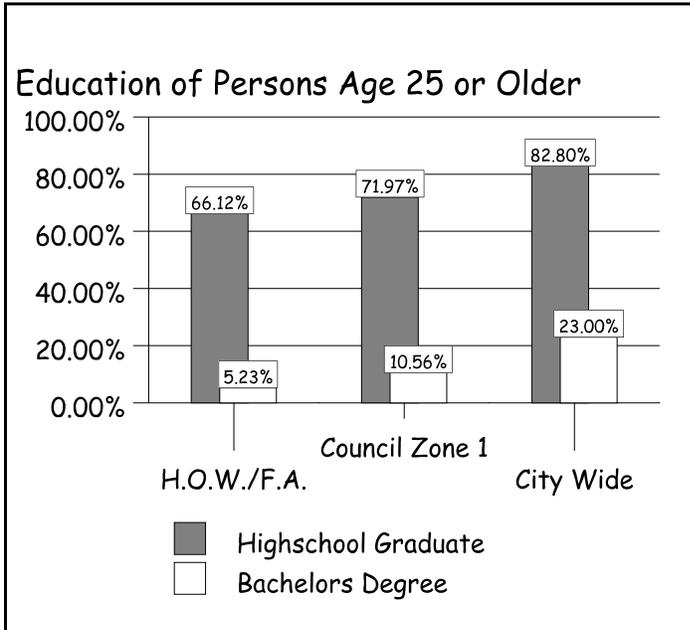
INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT



In Heart of the Westside / Fairfield Acres, 4.95% of persons are unemployed. In Council Zone 1, the percentage is 5.55%, and city wide the percentage is 4.27%.

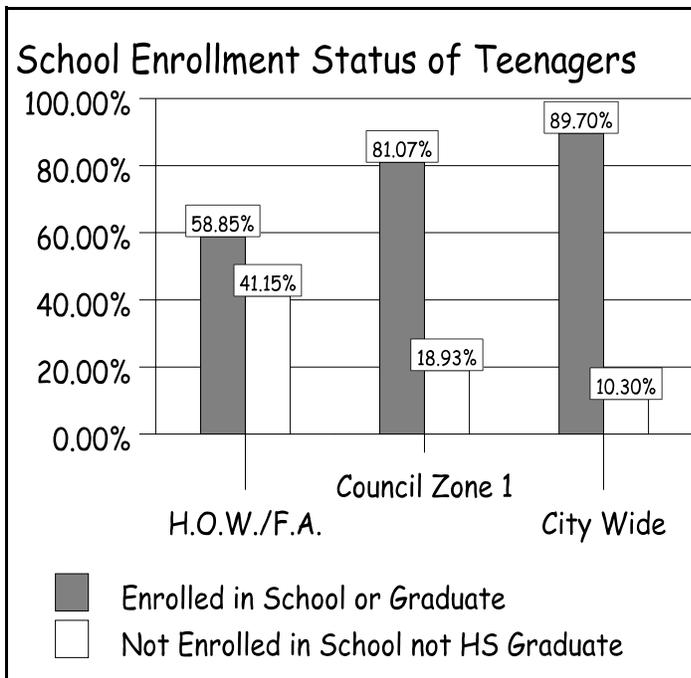
2000 Census

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND SCHOOL ENROLLMENT



Information shows highest level of educational attainment by persons 25 years of age or older. The percentage of persons within Heart of the Westside / Fairfield Acres who have attained a high school diploma as their highest level of education is 66.12%. In Council Zone 1, it is 71.97% and 82.80% city wide.

2000 Census

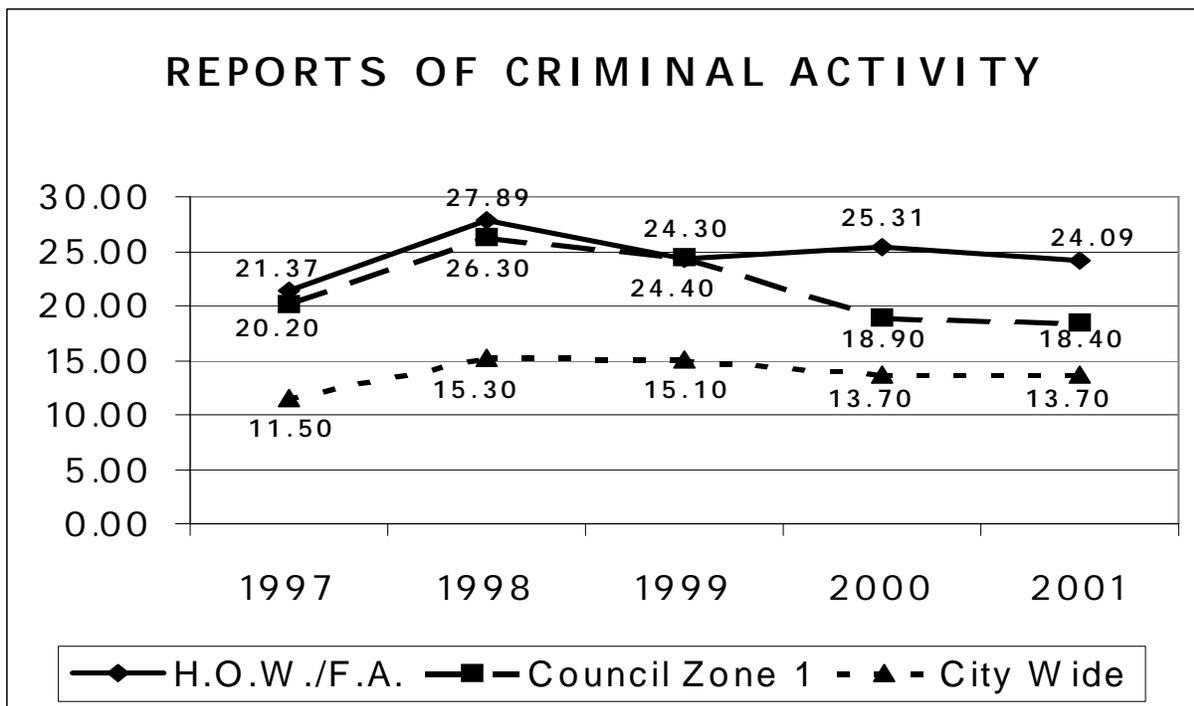


The percentage of teenagers within Heart of the Westside / Fairfield Acres who are enrolled in school or have graduated is 58.85%. In Council Zone 1 it is 81.07% and 89.70% city wide.

2000 Census

REPORTS OF CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Reports of criminal activity have been compiled from the year 1997 to 2001 for comparison with your neighborhood, Council Zone 1, 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.

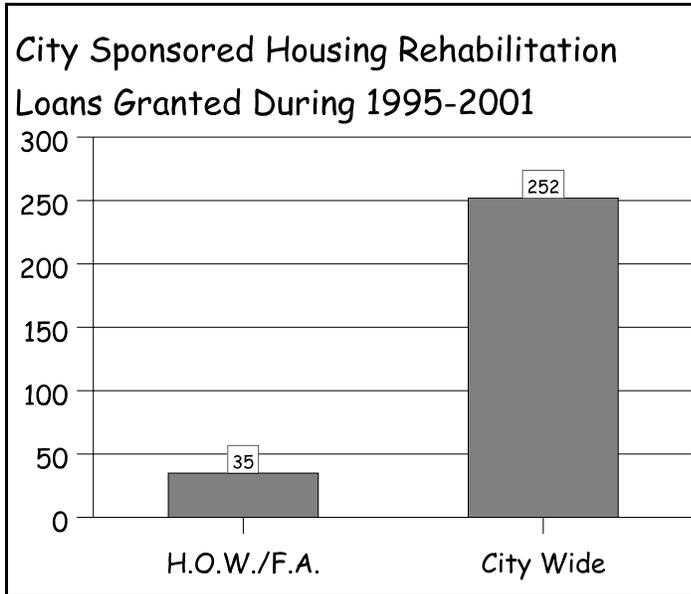


The Heart of the Westside / Fairfield Acres neighborhood shows a higher concentration of police service calls than Council Zone 1 and the city as a whole over the last five years. 1997 marks the lowest number of reported crimes for Heart of the Westside / Fairfield Acres followed by a sharp increase in all areas in 1998. Reports of criminal activity remain steady in the years following 1998 but do not mirror the decrease experienced by Council Zone 1 and the city as a whole.

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.

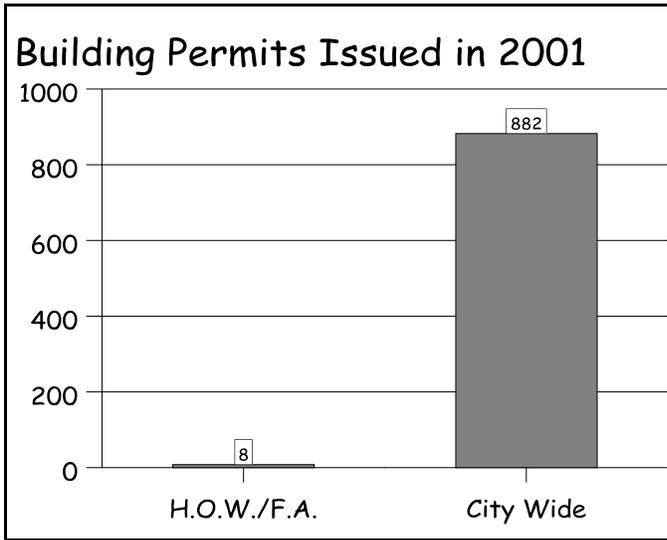


City of Springfield, Department of Planning and Development, Grants Administration and Program Implementation Division

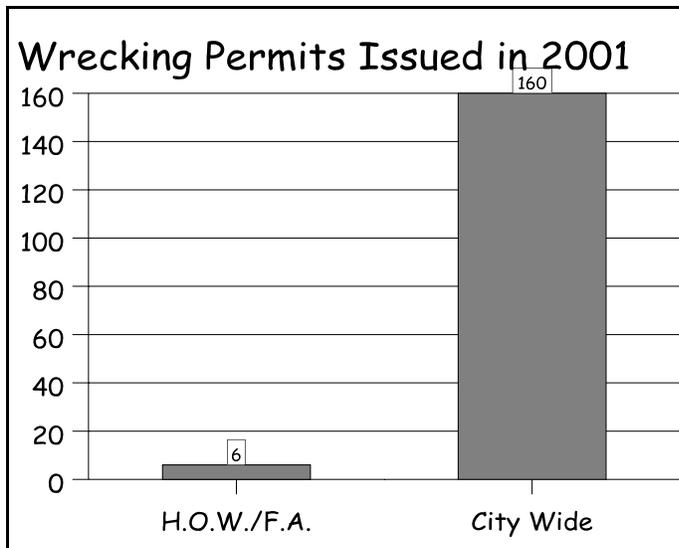
DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

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.



City of Springfield, Department of Building Development Services



City of Springfield, Department of Building Development Services

STEP 2: MY NEIGHBORHOOD I S

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:

- Victorian Homes (Park, Lynn, Lexington & Calhoun, etc.)
- Old Barn (Hutchison & Calhoun)
- Vaughn's Drive In (Division & West)
- York School
- Bissett School
- Nichols Park

Paths:

- West Avenue
- Division Street
- Nichols Street
- Marion Avenue

Activity Centers:

- Nichols Park
- Schools and Churches
- York School
- Bissett School
- Wise Park

Edges or Barriers:

- Loose Dogs
- Burlington Northern RR Crossing Fulbright
- Lack of Sidewalks
- Wise Park Accessibility
- Chestnut Expressway
- West Avenue

Features:

- Nichols Park

Neighborhood Images



Landmark:

This older Victorian home, located at Park and Lynn, is an example of the historical landmarks in the neighborhood.

Landmark and Activity Center:

The neighborhood considers York Elementary, along with other neighborhood schools, both as landmarks and activity centers.



Paths and Edges or Barriers:

Picture here is the intersection of Chestnut Expressway and West Avenue. Chestnut Expressway was identified as an edge or barrier to the neighborhood. West Avenue was listed as a path in the neighborhood and as an edge or barrier.

Activity Center:

The workshop participants identified all Churches within their neighborhood as activity centers and assets.



Landmark, Activity Center and Feature:

Nichols Park is a multi-functional resource for the neighborhood.

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.

- Old Barn (Hutchison & Calhoun
- Boys & Girls Club Pick-Up Program
- Neighborhood Clean-Up (Americorp)
- Auto Repair Shops
- Joe's Tire Shop
- Garrisons on Division
- Forest Avenue (Community oriented and very active)
- Dollar General Store
- Immanuel Baptist Church
- Habitat For Humanity
- Old Trees & Old Homes
- Kind people lived in neighborhood a long time
- Multi-generational
- Churches
- Caring Communities
- Vaughn's Drive In
- Cedars
- Historical neighborhood
- Union Garrison Station
- Location of City rehabilitation loans
- Boys & Girls Club
- Police Car Take Home Program
- Salvation Army
- Nichols Park



The workshop participants listed this old barn at the corner of Hutchison and Calhoun as unique asset to their neighborhood.



Nichols 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 Grant Beach neighborhood.

- Neighborhood beautification
 - Because proximity to Airport and entrance of Springfield
 - Brines Salvage yard and others
- More employers
- Light at Nichols and Kansas
 - Too slow to change green
 - Light quickly turns red
 - No left turn signal
- Pedestrian tunnel at 500 block North Fulbright
- Educate people on rehabilitation programs
- More neighborhood involvement
 - Meetings
 - Neighborhood watch
- Begin a neighborhood team with the City
- Trash control
- Junk
- Increase neighborhood pride
- Improve property maintenance
- Control rodents
- Improve animal treatment
- Better access to Chestnut Expressway
- Improve alley surfaces (potholes)
- Left turn lane is needed at West Avenue and Chestnut Expressway
- Better enforcement of noise ordinance
- Better screening of salvage yards
- Clean-up salvage yards
- Don't allow cars to pile up above salvage yard fencing

STEP 5: DESCRIBING MY NEIGHBORHOOD

The *Vision 20/20 Neighborhood's 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 following four unique Neighborhood Types 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 Heart of the Westside / Fairfield Acres Neighborhood 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 **Redevelopment**. Following is a description of that neighborhood type.

I have watched my neighborhood decline for many years now. The commercial areas are not as vibrant with activity as they used to be. Many residents, businesses and institutions have moved away. Many of the homes and businesses have fallen in disrepair and vacant and/or boarded up homes and buildings are noticeable throughout the neighborhood.

Basic infrastructure, such as streets, water/sewer service and sidewalks, has fallen in disrepair. There are parts of the neighborhood that are inadequately served by infrastructure. There is potential for major redevelopment, perhaps by assembling vacant lots concentrated in the area and by improving the existing infrastructure. Some existing homes and businesses could be rehabilitated as part of the redeveloping area, but some will have to be demolished and cleared to make way for new homes and businesses.

Few committed residents remain in the neighborhood. With significant changes, as well as a strong commitment from the residents and others in the community, this neighborhood will once again become viable.



Brochures and pamphlets were available on a variety of programs and services. City staff were on hand to answer questions and concerns.

STEP 6: MAKING MY NEIGHBORHOOD BETTER

The Grant Beach 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. The following actions are listed in three categories and according to total number of votes.

Things we can do **Ourselves**:

- Recognize Nice Properties With an Award or Sign
- Membership Drive/Advertise for the Neighborhood Association
- Organize a Petition for Neighborhood Grocery Store
- Start a Newsletter
- Join the Neighborhood Association
- Create A Work Program For Kids (babysitting, lawn mowing)
- Organize Block Parties
- Turn in Violations of Loose Animals to the City Health Department
- Thank Existing Employers for Remaining in the Area

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

- Expand The Neighborhood Watch program (Neighborhood, Police)
- Establish a Neighborhood Team with the City
- Educate about Home Rehabilitation Programs (Neighborhood, City)
- Encourage Utilization of Rehabilitation Programs (Neighborhood, City)
- Coordinate Placement of New Sidewalks (Neighborhood, PTA, City)
- Provide Alternative Truck Parking
- Promote Bus Shelter Placement (City Utilities, Neighborhood)
- Provide Childcare for Preschool Aged Children (Schools, Churches, Community Partnership of the Ozarks, Neighborhood)

- Establish Safe Houses (Police, Neighborhood
- Establish Youth Programs With Area Churches (Neighborhood, Churches)
- Work With The Missouri Career Center to Advertise Youth Work Programs
- Work With The Association to Find Affordable Trash Service
- Partner With A Trash Hauler to Eliminate Bulky Items (couches, appliances)
- Work With The City and BNR to Provide Pedestrial Access in 500 block North Fulbright
- Add A Light at Park and Chestnut To Improve Access to Chestnut (Neighborhood Association, MoDOT)

Things the **City** should do:

- Add Left Turn Lanes from West Avenue on to Chestnut Expressway
- Investigate The Construction of a Community Center in Nichols Park
- Require Removal of Bulky Items to Reduce Rat Population
- Improve The Enforcement of Noise Ordinance
- Lessen the Impact of Salvage Yards (screening, clean-up, piling)
- Provide Incentives For Businesses to Move Into Vacant Buildings
- Target The Mosquito Problem (culvert 700 blk West Park and other areas)
- Encourage Entertainment for Youth & Family to Locate in Neighborhood
- Correct Power surges and Blackouts
- Fix Leaning Utility Poles (City Utilities)
- Add Bus Shelters (by York and others) (City Utilities)
- Improve Alley Surfaces
- Target Repeat Offenders of Health/Property Violations
- Beautification: Provide Incentives/Requirements for Businesses to Improve Landscaping
- Prohibit Truck Parking/Traffic in Neighborhood
- Provide An Incentive for A Grocery Store to Locate in the Neighborhood

CITY ACTION PLAN

PRIORITIES

During the Neighborhood Assessment workshop, Heart of the Westside/Fairfield Acres residents identified 40 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. Heart of the Westside/Fairfield Acres residents chose the following actions as their top 10 priorities:

- Left Turn Lane Needed from West Ave on to Chestnut Exp (City)
- Investigate the Construction of a Community Center in Nichols Park (City)
- Add a Traffic Signal at Park and Chestnut to Improve Access to Chestnut (City)
- Recognize Nice Properties With an Award or Sign (Neighborhood)
- Expand the Neighborhood Watch Program (Neighborhood, Police)
- Membership Drive/Advertise for the Neighborhood Association (Neighborhood)
- Require the Removal of Bulky Items to Reduce Rat Population (City)
- Improve the Enforcement of the Noise Ordinance (City)
- Lessen the Impact of Salvage Yards (screening, clean-up, piling) (City)
- Provide Incentives For Businesses to Move into Vacant Buildings (City)

CITY ACTION ON PRIORITIES

Heart of the Westside/Fairfield Acres 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 Heart of the Westside/Fairfield Acres residents, various City departments and City Utilities have committed to taking the following 3 actions in the Heart of the Westside/ Fairfield Acres Neighborhood Assessment Area:

Issue: The City should construct a left-hand turn lane at the intersection of West Avenue and Chestnut Expressway.

Response: Subject to the approval of the Missouri Department of Transportation, the Springfield Public Works Department will construct left-hand turn lanes at this location. This project will require some additional paving on a portion of West Avenue, some restriping and the possible replacement of signal detector loops. Improvements are estimated to cost roughly \$10,000.

Issue: The neighborhood and the Police Department should **partner** to expand the Neighborhood Watch program.

Response: Officers in the Police Department's Community Services Section will soon receive training in the creation of Neighborhood Watch groups. When this is accomplished the Police Department will be able to assist in the creation of this program in a much more expedient manner. As of now, the Department's Crime Prevention Officer is the primary officer assigned to assist neighborhoods who express an interest in creating a Neighborhood Watch group. In addition, neighborhood Officer Jim Calhoon is available to assist the Heart of the Westside association in accomplishing this task.

Issue: The City should lessen the impact of salvage yards (clean-up, piling, screening).

Response: A City staff committee is working on a proposal to amend the health code section of Springfield City Code by requiring salvage yards (and other similar uses) to maintain their stored material in a more orderly manner. New standards for the screening of such uses will also be considered by the staff committee.

CITY RESPONSE ON PRIORITIES

Some of the priorities identified on page 25 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 investigate the construction of a community center in Nichols Park.

Response: The recently approved parks and open space bond provides funding for earmarked projects. Funding was not included for the construction of a community center building in Nichols or any other “neighborhood park”. The City is working with the school district in certain locations as part of the “school park” concept. This concept includes using school facilities, which are directly adjacent to city parks, in much the same manner as a stand alone community center building. The school could be used after hours for parks department sponsored or community events and meetings. The Vision 20/20 Parks, Open Space and Greenways Element indicates that such an arrangement should be promoted at Bissett Elementary and Wise Park. If interested, neighborhood residents should contact and coordinate with the City Parks Department.

Issue: The City should add a traffic signal at Park and Chestnut to improve access to the expressway.

Response: The traffic signal at Chestnut Expressway and Park Avenue was removed a number of years ago because it was too close to the signal at West Avenue to time the signals for good progression on Chestnut. It is recommended that neighborhood traffic use the signal at West Avenue for a controlled access to Chestnut Expressway. The turn lane improvements proposed in this report for the West/Chestnut intersection should make the use of this intersection even more convenient.

Issue: The City should require the removal of bulky items from property to reduce the rat population.

Response: An ordinance prohibiting the exterior placement of indoor furniture has been adopted for the Phelps Grove neighborhood and helps to address this issue. Adoption of this type of ordinance for the Heart of the Westside/ Fairfield Acres area may require a broader base of support throughout the neighborhoods. If interest remains, the neighborhood associations should work to solidify neighborhood support to address this issue.

Issue: The City should improve enforcement of the noise ordinance.

Response: The neighborhood should coordinate directly with the Police Department to identify the offending locations in order to allow for pro-active patrol. Officers will attempt to remedy the situation through communication with the offending parties and enforcement if necessary. Neighborhood Officer Jim Calhoun will also notify the Department’s Traffic Section, Traffic Services

Officers, Beat 21 Officers and the Springfield Public Information Office to request assistance in dealing with these violations.

Issue: The City should provide incentives for businesses to move into vacant buildings.

Response: A variety of City and State loan and tax incentive programs already exist to stimulate reinvestment in non-residential properties in the Heart of the Westside/Fairfield Acres neighborhoods and surrounding areas. The City's efforts revolve around the Small Business Development Loan Program which is conditionally available to property owners within the assessment area. In addition, this assessment area is within the Springfield Enterprise Zone, established by the Missouri Department of Economic Development. Developers of commercial and industrial properties in this area are eligible for local property tax abatement and state income tax credits.

CITY ACTION ON OTHER ISSUES

Other actions, while not determined by Neighborhood Assessment participants to be a priority, were proposed that might require City involvement to be undertaken. Of those actions, the City commits to the following:

Issue: Partner with the City to establish a Neighborhood Team.

Response: The Neighborhood Teams program is intended to abate chronic code violations for the most problematic properties in a neighborhood. Code enforcement actions dealing with issues such as: trash, weeds, inoperable vehicles, dangerous buildings, noise, etc. on specific properties is discussed between neighborhood representatives and city officials at each Team meeting. The Heart of the Westside Neighborhood Watch Association should actively seek to join the Team program. The Springfield Planning Department will distribute Neighborhood Team program information to the Association.

Issue: The neighborhood and City should partner to encourage the utilization of, and educate, neighborhood residents about City sponsored home rehabilitation programs.

Response: The Springfield Planning Department has met with the neighborhood association and provided 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.

Issue: The neighborhood should **partner** with City Utilities to provide more bus shelters on established routes.

Response: City Utilities is considering the installation of an additional bus shelter on Nichols Street in the vicinity of York Elementary School. In addition, City Utilities and the Springfield Public Works Department are discussing the feasibility of a bus shelter in the vicinity of Division and Farmer.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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

City Council

Denny Whyne
Zone 1 Councilman

Mary Collette
General Councilwoman A

Shelia O. Wright
Zone 2 Councilwoman

Conrad Griggs
General Council Seat B

Ralph Manley
Zone 3 Councilman

Teri Hacker
General Councilwoman C

John D. Wylie
Zone 4 Councilman

Bob Chancellor
General Councilman D

City Staff

Nick Heatherly, Building Development Services
Jim Fry, Health Department
Becki Michel, Health Department
Heather Parker, Health Department
Chuck Marinec, Planning & Development
Michael Pinkley, Planning and Development
Miles Park, Parks Department
Officer James Calhoon Police Department
Lt. Kevin Routh, Police Department
Claudia Crighton, Public Information Office
Marcia Chism, Planning and Development

