

Northwest

Neighborhood Assessment Report

Neighborhood Workshop Date: March 22, 2003
Accepted by City Council Date: August 11, 2003



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 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 Northwest Neighborhood Assessment workshop. These community members mapped their community, and identified assets and priority issues in their neighborhood.

STEP 1: FACTS ABOUT MY NEIGHBORHOOD

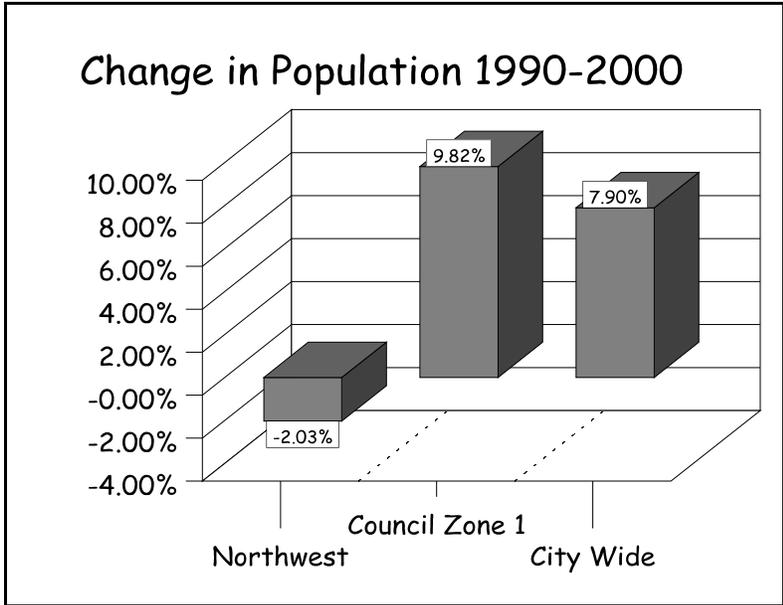
The data presented at the Assessment Workshop was from the 2000 Census, the Police Department, Building Development Services and the Planning & Development Department's Grants and Program Implementation Division.



Neighborhood Assessment participants had access to a variety of demographic information during the workshop.

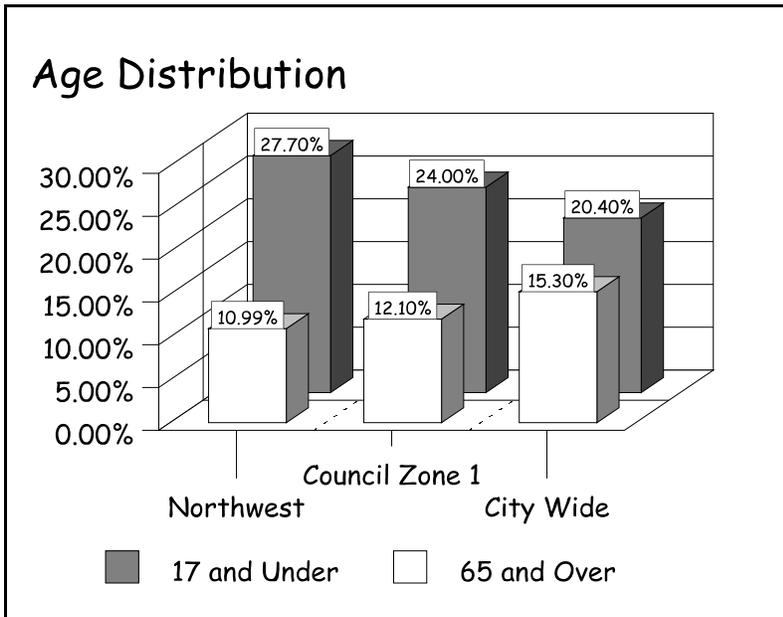
The data contained on pages 5 through 14 of this report was made available to workshop participants in the form of charts or as a portion of their workbook.

POPULATION



2000 Census

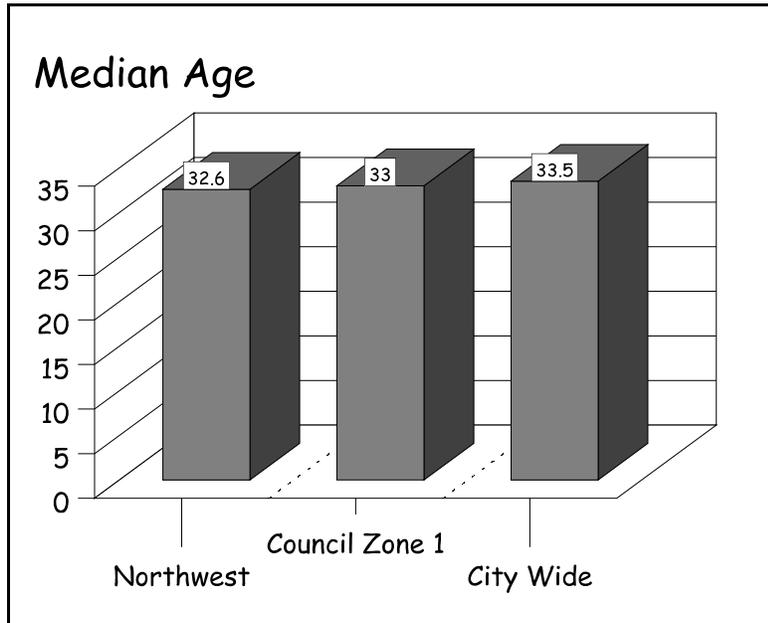
In 2000, there were 4,347 persons living in the Northwest neighborhood area. Between 1990 and 2000, the population in your neighborhood decreased by 2.07%. This resulted in a negative percent change in population for the neighborhood. By comparison, the population increased in Council Zone 1 by 9.82% and City Wide by 7.90%.



2000 Census

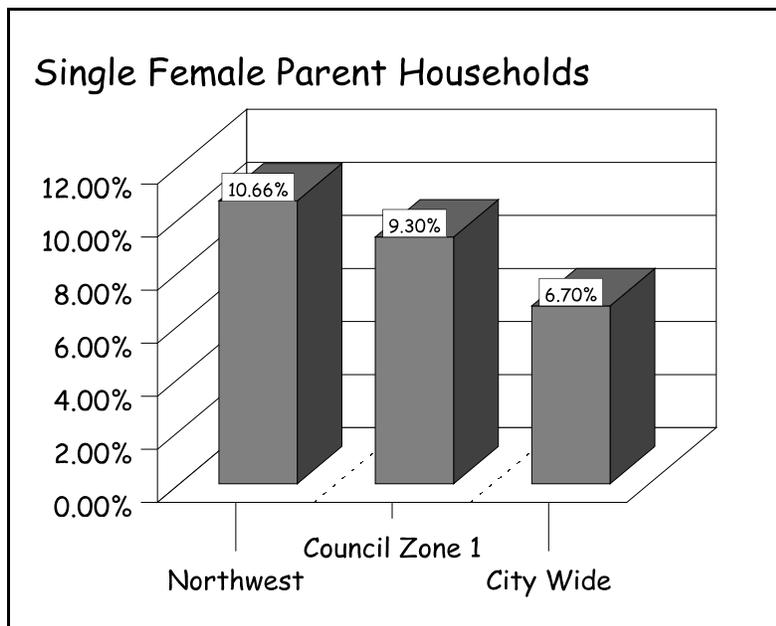
The percentage of people age 17 and under in the Northwest neighborhood area is 27.7% while 11% are 65 years or older. By comparison, in Council Zone 1, 24% of the population are 17 and under and 12.1% are 65 or older. City wide 20.4% are 17 and under and 15.3% are 65 and older.

POPULATION



2000 Census

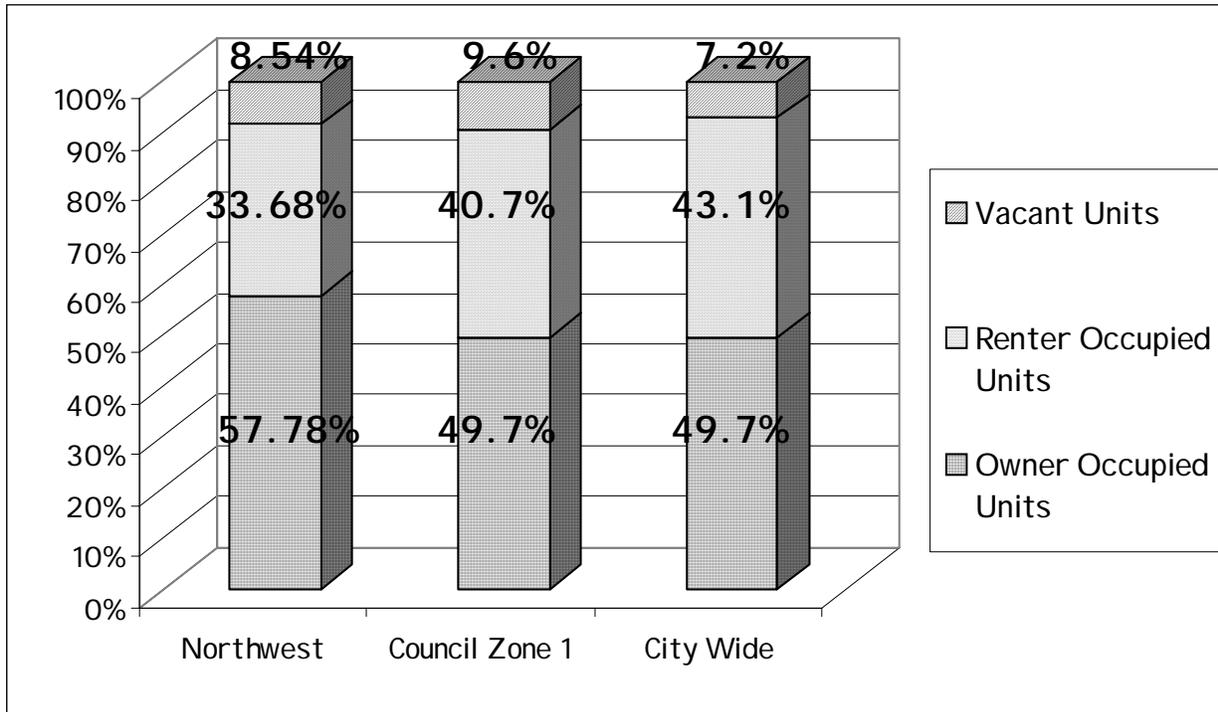
In the Northwest neighborhood area, the median age is 32.6, which means that half of the people in your neighborhood are younger than 32.6, and half are older than 32.6. In Council Zone 1, the median age is 33, and city wide it is 33.5.



2000 Census

The percentage of single female parent households (with children under 18 years of age) in the Northwest neighborhood area is 10.66%. This compares with 9.3% in Council Zone 1 and 6.7% city wide.

HOUSING OCCUPANCY

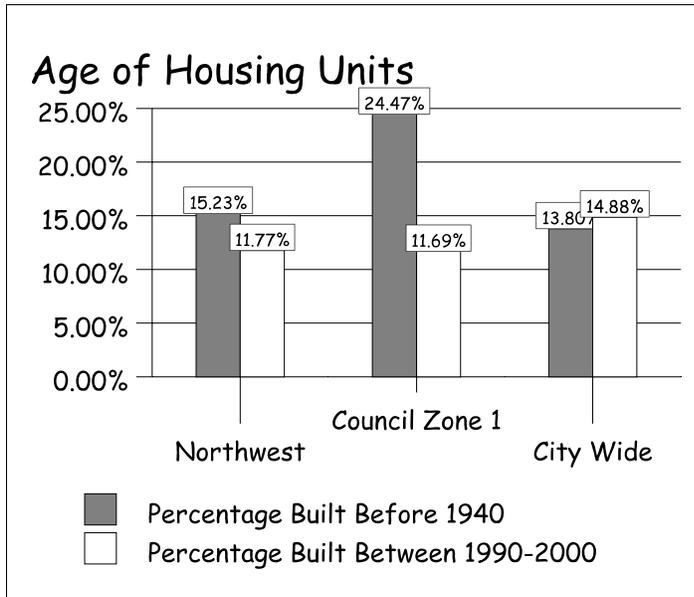


2000 Census

The housing in the Northwest neighborhood area is composed of 57.78% owner occupied, 33.68% renter occupied, and 8.54% vacant housing. The percentage of owner occupied housing in your neighborhood is more than that of your council zone and the city as a whole which are both 49.7%. The percentage of rental housing in your neighborhood is less than that of the City, while the concentration of vacant housing is less than that of your council zone and slightly above that of the city.

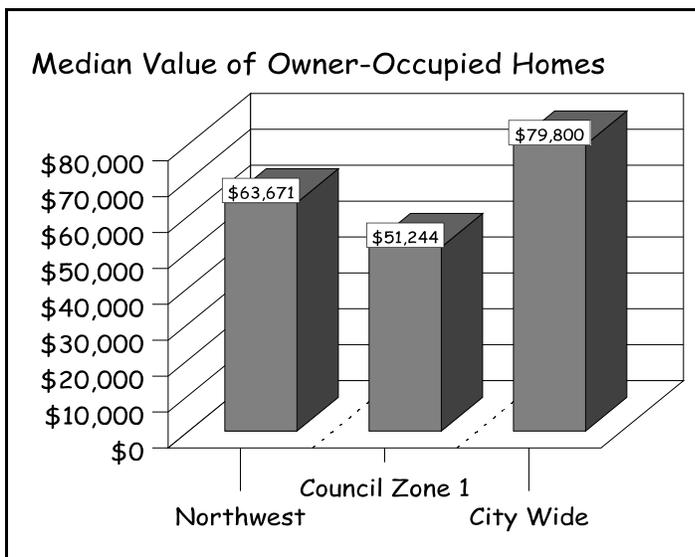
HOUSING

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 the Northwest neighborhood area built before 1940 is 15.23%. This compares with 24.5% in Council Zone 1 and 13.8% city wide. In addition, the percentage of housing units built in the Northwest neighborhood area between 1990 and 2000 is 11.8%. This compares with 11.7% in Council Zone 1 and 14.9% city wide.

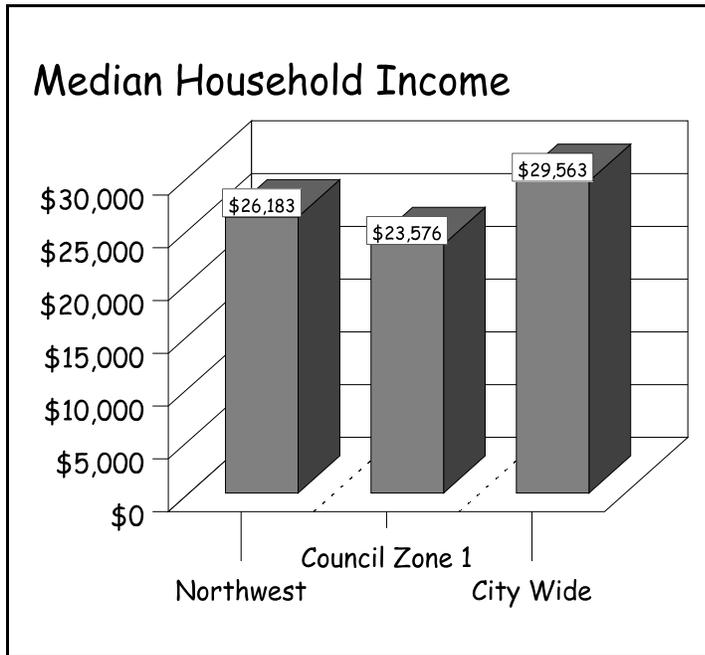
2000 Census



In the Northwest neighborhood area, the median value of an owner-occupied home is \$63,671. This means that half of the owner-occupied homes in the neighborhood are valued at more than \$63,671, 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.

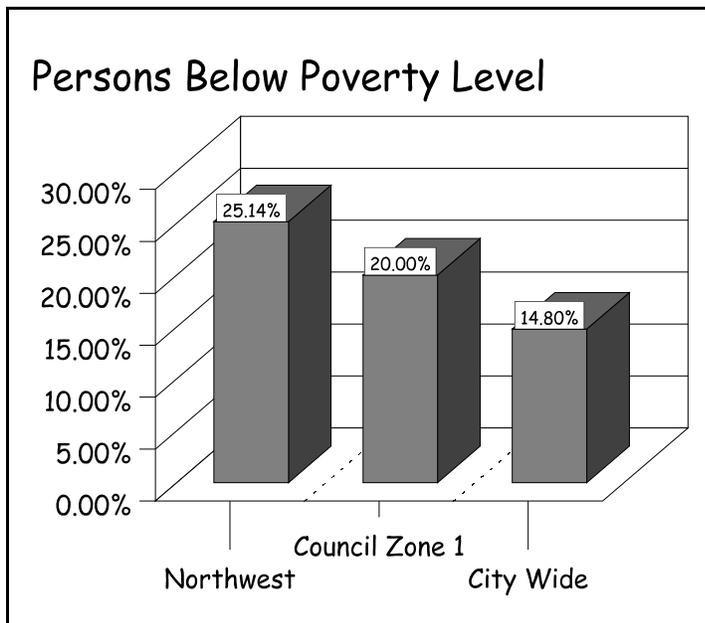
2000 Census

INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT



2000 Census

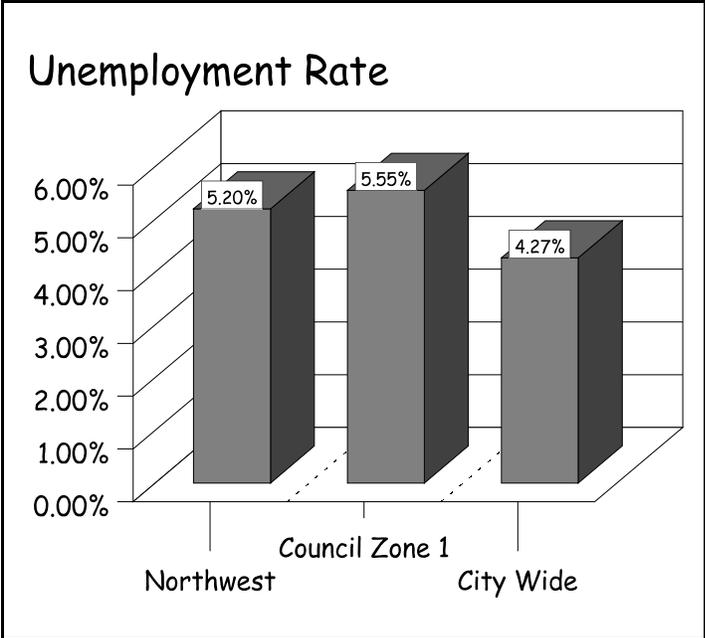
The median household income in the Northwest neighborhood area is \$26,183, which means that half of the households in the neighborhood have incomes of more than \$26,183 and half have less. This compares with median household incomes of \$23,576 in Council Zone 1 and \$29,563 city wide.



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 the Northwest neighborhood area is 25.14%. This compares to 20% in Council Zone 1 and 14.8% city wide.

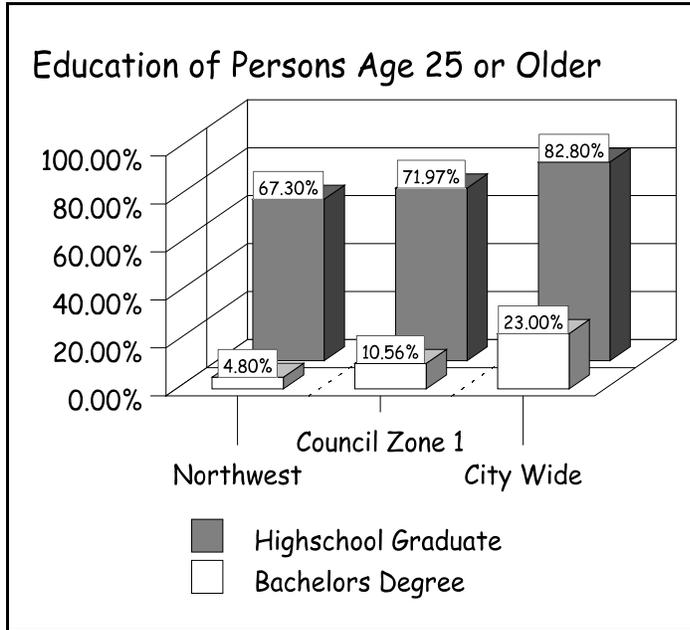
INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT



In the Northwest neighborhood area, the unemployment rate is 5.2%. In Council Zone 1, the percentage is 5.55%, and city wide the percentage is 4.27%.

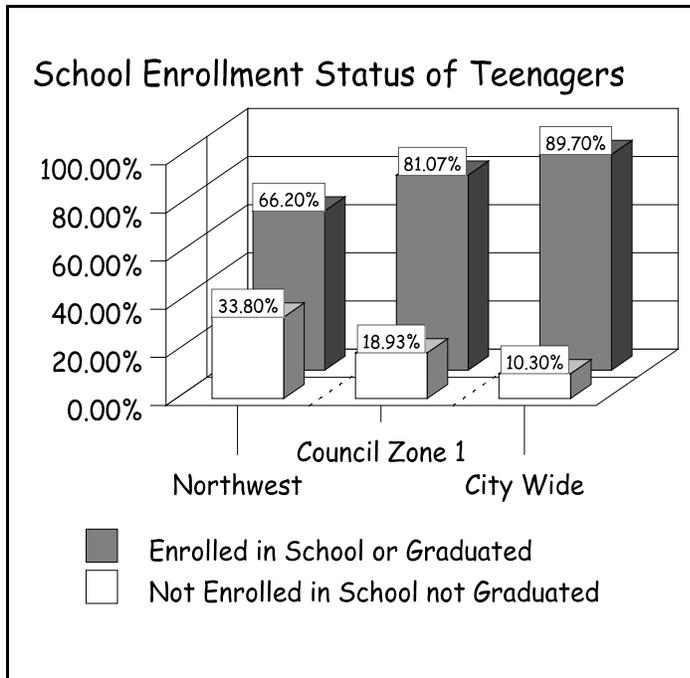
2000 Census

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND SCHOOL ENROLLMENT



2000 Census

Information shows highest level of educational attainment by persons 25 years of age or older. The percentage of persons within the Northwest neighborhood area who have attained a high school diploma as their highest level of education is 67.3%. In Council Zone 1, it is 72% and 83% city wide.

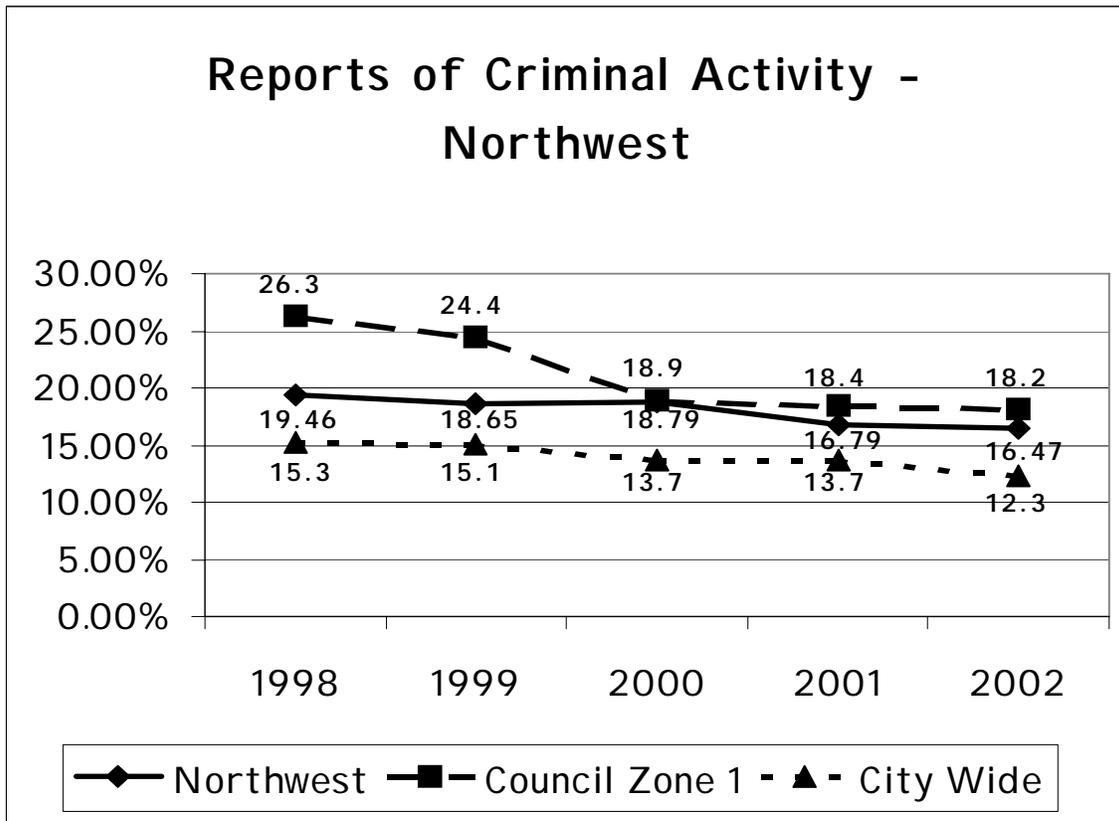


2000 Census

The percentage of teenagers within the Northwest neighborhood area who are enrolled in school or have graduated is 66.2%. In Council Zone 1 it is 81.07% and 89.7% city wide.

REPORTS OF CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Reports of criminal activity have been compiled from the year 1998 to 2002 for comparison with your area, 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.



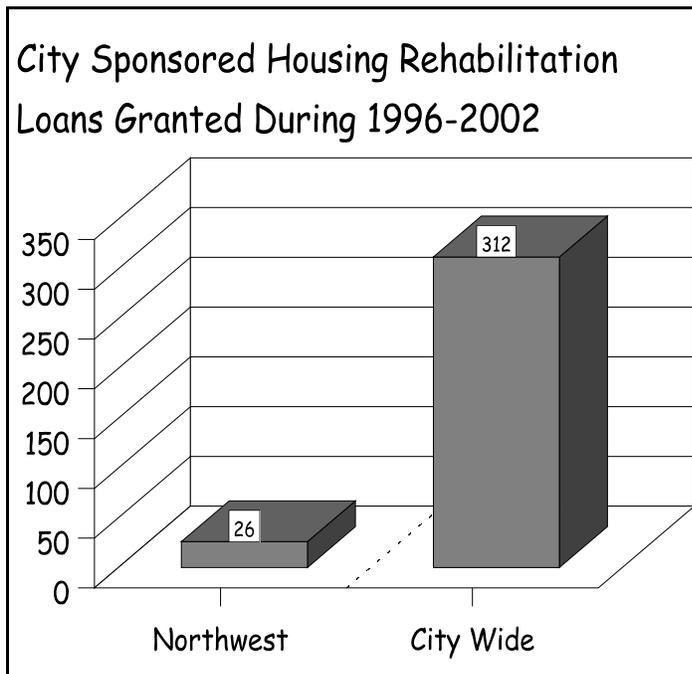
Data Received from City of Springfield, Police Department; Data Compiled by City of Springfield, Department of Planning and Development, Neighborhood Conservation Office

Police calls for service in the Northwest neighborhood area have remained mostly steady over the five year period from 1998 to 2002. The number of reported crimes per persons is slightly above the average for the city as a whole, but remains below that of Council Zone 1. 1998 marks the highest number of reported crimes for the Northwest neighborhood area followed by a steady decrease in recent years.

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. The percentage of housing rehabilitation loans granted for the Northwest neighborhood area compared to the city as a whole is 8.3%.

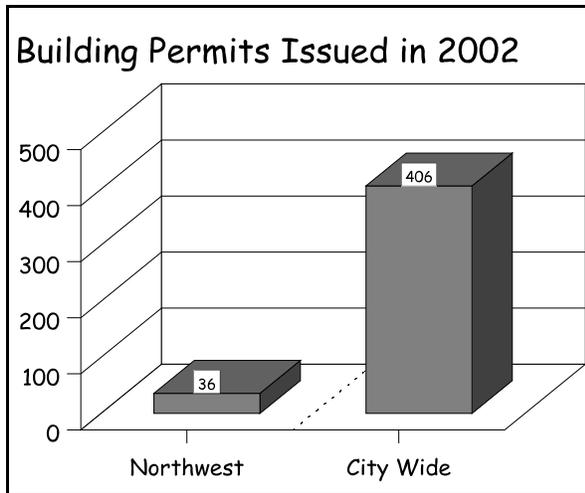


City of Springfield, Department of Planning and Development,
Grants and Program Implementation Division

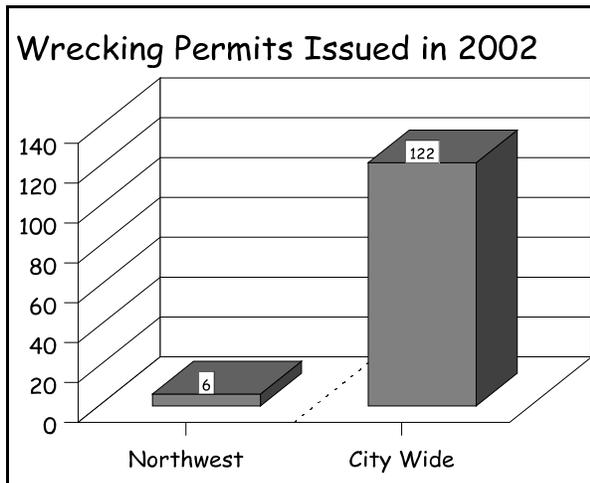
DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

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. The percentage of building permits and wrecking permits issued as compared to the city as a whole is 8.9% and 4.9% respectively.



City of Springfield, Department of Building Development Services



City of Springfield, Department of Building Development Services

Neighborhood Images



Watkins Park playground area. Residents would like to see the Community Center reopen.



Residents would like to see more benches and picnic tables within Watkins Park.



St. John's Northwest Family Care is located within the Northwest area.



St. John's Urgent Care Center is located within the Northwest area.



Pedestrian overpass for Ed V. Williams school children.



Ed V. Williams School which is located within the Northwest area.



Neighborhood residents identified the area around Wal-mart Supercenter as a traffic congestion issue.



The Town and Country shopping center located within the Northwest area has recently received a new facade.



Lowe's is located north of Wal-mart on Kansas Expressway.



Interstate 44.



With the formation of the Tom Watkins Neighborhood Association, the Community Center shown above will experience renewed activity.

STEP 2: 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.

- Fire Station
- Tom Watkins Park
- Medical Facilities - St. John's
- Pedestrian Overpass For Ed V. Williams School
- New Industrial Park - PIC West
- Walmart Supercenter
- Ed V. Williams Elementary
- Reed Junior High
- Infill Residential Housing
- New Businesses on Kansas Expressway
- Airport Access
- Library Station
- Transportation (Highways, Railroads)
- New Residential Subdivisions
- Caring Communities
- Demolition of Blighted Buildings



The new Library Station is located at 2535 North Kansas Expressway. This is a very important asset to the neighborhood.

STEP 3: 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 Northwest neighborhood.

- Reduce traffic congestion on Kansas Expressway around the Walmart Supercenter
- Right hand turn lane (southbound) on High Street, west of Kansas Expressway and also on Atlantic Street
- Residential properties that look like salvage yards - need cleaned-up (many inoperable vehicles / cars)
- Add mail drop boxes at various locations (Atlantic & Lexington)
- High Street west of Kansas - needs surface repair
- Improve enforcement of noise ordinance
- Have City conduct periodic inspections for code violations - be proactive
- Better code enforcement - recurring calls on same property for code violations
- Trash cleanup annually - for northwest area, include abandoned vehicles
- Street lights - not working at Kansas Expressway, Kearney to I-44
- Review of infrastructure in this area
- Thoman/Hilton drainage problem - standing water at the intersection
- Add Police Substation - increase police presence
- Make improvements at Watkins Park such as:
 - ▶ more benches
 - ▶ picnic tables
 - ▶ reopen community center
- Need neighborhood association
- Abandoned houses
- Make bulky item/appliance pickup more convenient
- Inadequate pedestrian crossing on Kansas at Atlantic
- Hazardous intersection at Park and Kearney (Ed V. Williams Elementary School)
- Oakland (Kearney to High) - inadequate street width
- Lighting improvements throughout the neighborhood

STEP 4: Describing My Neighborhood

The *Neighborhood 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 *Neighborhood 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 Conservation Stabilization Redeveloping

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 Grant Beach 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.



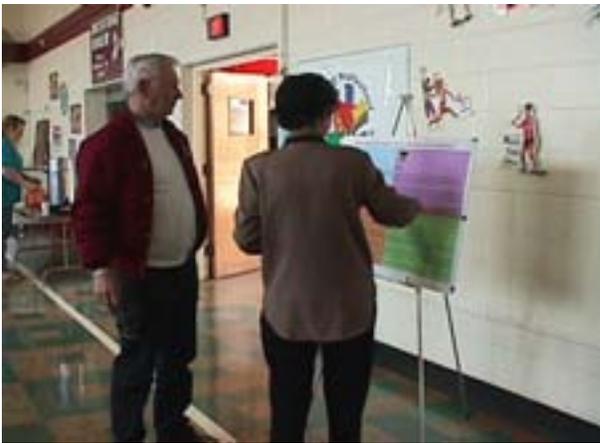
Those who attended the workshop were asked to vote on the Neighborhood Type that best described their neighborhood. Their choice was **Redeveloping**.

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.



Residents vote on their neighborhood type.

STEP 5: Making My Neighborhood Better

Northwest area residents talked about specific actions their community can take to address the issues and challenges identified earlier in the assessment. They brain stormed 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 the total number of votes.

Things we can do **Ourselves**:

- I identify the location of abandoned buildings in the neighborhood.
- Continue to report code violations on properties.

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

- Participate in the annual Caring Communities trash clean-up.
- Work with Caring Communities to form a neighborhood association.
- Coordinate with C.U. to identify streetlights on Kansas from Kearney to I -44 which need maintenance.
- Work with the Post Office to place mail drop boxes at various locations (Atlantic/Lexington).
- Coordinate with C.U. to improve street lighting in residential areas of the neighborhood.

Things the **City** should do:

- Review the infrastructure in the neighborhood (lights, sidewalks, streets, sewers, etc.).
- Make improvements to Watkins Park such as:
 - ▶ Additional benches
 - ▶ Need picnic tables
 - ▶ Reopen community center

- Improve traffic conditions on Oakland Avenue (street width is not adequate for traffic volume and speed - convert to "one way" or increase width).
- Make improvements at Kansas and Atlantic to facilitate pedestrian crossing.
- Conduct periodic, proactive and neighborhood-wide inspections for code violations.
- Make repairs to the road surface on High Street west of Kansas Expressway.
- Increase Police presence in neighborhood with a Police Substation.
- Improve enforcement of noise ordinance.
- Make improvements to the hazardous intersection at Park and Kearney by Ed V. Williams School.
- Reduce traffic congestion at Walmart area.
- Practice proactive code enforcement to deal with multiple calls on same property.
- Add right hand turn lanes on High Street and on Atlantic Street, for southbound traffic at Kansas Expressway.
- Correct the drainage problem at Thoman and Hilton.



Northwest Neighborhood residents voted on their top priorities for improving their neighborhood.

CITY ACTION PLAN

PRIORITIES

During the Neighborhood Assessment workshop, Northwest residents identified 20 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. Northwest residents chose the following actions as their top priorities:

1. The neighborhood and the **City** should participate in the annual Caring Communities trash cleanup.
 2. The **City** should conduct a review of condition of infrastructure in the neighborhood (lights, sidewalks, streets, sewers, etc.)
 3. The **City** should make improvements to Watkins Park such as adding benches, adding picnic tables, reopening the community center, etc.
 4. The neighborhood should **partner** with Caring Communities to form a neighborhood association.
 5. The **City** should improve traffic conditions on N. Oakland Avenue (street width is not adequate for traffic volume and speed - convert to “one way” or increase width).
 6. The **City** should make improvements to the intersection of Kansas and Atlantic to facilitate pedestrian crossing.
 7. The neighborhood should **partner** with City Utilities to identify street lights on Kansas Expressway (Kearney to I-44) which need maintenance.
 8. The **City** should conduct periodic, pro-active and neighborhood-wide inspections for code violations.
-

CITY ACTION ON PRIORITIES

Northwest 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 Northwest residents, various City departments have committed to taking the following 4 actions in the Northwest Neighborhood Assessment Area:

Issue: The City should make improvements to Watkins Park such as adding benches, adding picnic tables, reopening the community center, etc.

Response: The Springfield/Greene County Parks Department will provide additional benches and picnic tables for Watkins Park in the fall. The Parks Department is open to suggestions from a neighborhood organization regarding the specific number and location of these, and other similar amenities, that are desired. The Parks Department is also considering minor improvements to the Watkins Park Community Center to make it a more attractive facility for meetings and events throughout the year.

Responsible Department: Springfield/Greene County Parks

Issue: The City should improve traffic conditions on N. Oakland Avenue (street width is not adequate for traffic volume and speed - convert to "one way" or increase width).

Response: The Springfield Public Works Department has installed two-way traffic warning signs with 15 mph advisory plaques on the Kearney and High ends of N. Oakland to better control speed and inform motorists of potential encounters with approaching traffic. The designation of this section of N. Oakland as a one-way street will be considered if there is agreement among property owners on this section of the street that the warning signs have not alleviated the problem and think a one-way street option is acceptable. Widening this section of the roadway is not recommended. This street is contained within a narrow right-of-way serving very few properties. The cost of acquiring necessary right-of-way for access to so few lots provides a minimal community benefit for the cost.

Responsible Department: Public Works

Issue: The neighborhood should partner with City Utilities to identify street lights on Kansas Expressway (Kearney to I-44) which need maintenance.

Response: The concern about street lights in this vicinity has been brought to City Utilities attention. All areas of the City are patrolled by City Utilities at night to make sure that street lights are functioning properly. City Utilities is able to visually monitor all street lights within the municipal limits generally about once a week. Whole sections of lights can often fail simultaneously because they may be wired to the same electrical line. A recent review of this area revealed that the continual light failure is due to old underground wiring. A MoDOT intersection improvement at Kansas and Kearney is scheduled to commence within the next twelve (12) months. To avoid the unnecessary duplication of effort, City Utilities will wait to replace the wiring system for lighting in this area until a scheduled MoDOT work commences. In the meantime, contact Brent McKinney of City

Utilities at 831-8762 to report outages. City Utilities will continue to make minor modifications to the wiring until the overall intersection improvement occurs.

Responsible Department: City Utilities

Issue: The City should conduct periodic, pro-active and neighborhood-wide inspections for code violations.

Response: The Springfield Planning Department will distribute Neighborhood Team information to the new Tom Watkins Neighborhood Association. 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 neighborhood association should actively seek to join the Team program.

Responsible Department: Planning

CITY RESPONSE ON PRIORITIES

Some of the priorities identified on page 23 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 neighborhood and the City should participate in the annual Caring Communities trash cleanup.

Response: The Springfield Public Works Department has previously partnered with community groups by assisting with personnel and specialty equipment (brush chippers) with cleanup efforts on public right-of-way. The Public Works Department remains available to discuss partnering opportunities with other organizations to identify ways in which it can assist in future clean-up efforts.

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

Issue: The City should conduct a review of condition of infrastructure in the neighborhood (lights, sidewalks, streets, sewers, etc.)

Response: Divisions of the Springfield Public Works Department already continually update city-wide inventories of infrastructure elements that fall within the City of Springfield's purview. The Street Maintenance Division routinely inspects city streets and adds street segments to its Annual Resurfacing and Restoration Program. The Traffic Engineering Division annually inspects all pavement markings, flashers and signals throughout the city. In addition, Traffic Engineering maintains a database of sidewalk needs on a citywide basis and regularly adds to the city's sidewalk inventory. The Sanitary Services Division also has a comprehensive inspection and assessment program for all sanitary sewer lines throughout the Springfield area.

Responsible Department: Public Works

Issue: The City should make improvements to the intersection of Kansas and Atlantic to facilitate pedestrian crossing.

Response: The pedestrian crossing on the north side of the intersection of Kansas and Atlantic is under the authority of MoDOT. The timing of the pedestrian signal at this location is set to provide adequate time for the crossing of Kansas Expressway when the pedestrian pushes the button. The closure of Doling School has significantly reduced the volume of pedestrians using this crossing. These factors, combined with the cost of providing more elaborate pedestrian related facilities (ex. pedestrian overpass), make investment in this pedestrian crossing a lower priority in light of other capitol improvement needs.

Responsible Department: MoDOT

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 will commit to or consider the following:

Issue: The City should make repairs to the surface of High Street west of Kansas Expressway.

Response: An inspection of collector streets in the neighborhood found only one utility crossing on High Street, which had been recently repaired, the remainder of the street was found in good condition. The inspection did find several utilities cuts and surface defects on Atlantic Street through the neighborhood. The

Springfield Public Works Department will repair the utility cuts and defects and will add this segment of Atlantic Street to our Annual Resurfacing Program in 2004 or 2005.

Responsible Department: Public Works

Issue: The City should add right-hand turn lanes on High Street and on Atlantic Street for traffic turning southbound on Kansas Expressway.

Response: The Springfield Public Works Department has forwarded the request for a separate eastbound to south right turn lane from Atlantic to Kansas Expressway to MoDOT for their consideration. However, a separate eastbound right turn lane may not be feasible due to the proximity of the frontage road on the west side of the intersection and the fact this is a very large intersection for pedestrians to cross.

MoDOT, in conjunction with the City, has initiated signal removal at the intersection of Kansas Expressway at High Street, in accordance with recommendations contained in the recently completed Access Management Study for Kansas Expressway and Glenstone Avenue. When the signal is removed, a directional median will be installed which will limit eastbound traffic on High Street to a right turn only. Therefore, a separate eastbound right turn lane will not be needed.

Responsible Department: Public Works

Issue: The City should correct the drainage problem at the intersection of Thoman and Hilton.

Response: The Thoman & Hilton intersection is extremely flat and depressed - it is likely a sinkhole. To correct the problem a significant project (estimated at \$500K) would need to be constructed to drain the area. In addition, drainage easements would need to be donated by several property owners. Although there is no funding available for the project at this time The Springfield Public Works Department will add it to the City's Unfunded Needs Project List.

Responsible Department: Public Works

Acknowledgements



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

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