

GREEK ROW AREA REVITALIZATION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW



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SUMMARY

The Greek Row Area Revitalization Plan was adopted on October 14, 2002. The document represented a partnership comprised of the City of DeKalb, Northern Illinois University, Pan-Hellenic organizations located in the area, property owners and residents. The purpose of the plan was to address key issues and challenges in the neighborhood. Major areas to be addressed included Lighting, Public Safety, Neighborhood Pride & Appearance, Code Enforcement & Zoning, Economic Development, and Parking.

Strategies to address these objectives were identified by neighborhood residents and property owners. Implementation of some strategies required assistance from the City of DeKalb in partnership with Northern Illinois University and the creative vision of all participants interested in promoting the continued vitality and revitalization of the Greek Row Neighborhood.

A total of \$100,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds were spent by the City with emphasis no sidewalk repair and replacement and enhanced alleyway lighting. Other activities were required time and cooperation from the residents and property owners. Because the neighborhood is 100% rental and a majority of the tenants are students, continued sustainability of the projects will be the greatest challenge.

Following input from the residents and property owners, a plan was adopted. The strategies and recommended activities to meet the goals are listed below with a more detailed explanation of the implementation process and progress provided later in the document.

GREEK ROW AREA REVITALIZATION PLAN OBJECTIVES

LIGHTING OBJECTIVE: To develop a program for improved lighting in the Neighborhood.

- Conduct a light study
- Increase lighting for public/private properties
- Continue tree-trimming program
- Explore creating a private property lighting compliance program

PUBLIC SAFETY OBJECTIVE: To develop a realistic perception of neighborhood safety through working jointly with City of DeKalb and NIU law enforcement officials and all residents and property owners to develop local crime prevention efforts.

- Increase communication and education between residents and law enforcement officials
- Continue bike and foot patrol
- Develop a Neighborhood Watch Program
- Install lighted bus shelters
- Investigate environmental design
- Develop a Porch Light Program

NEIGHBORHOOD PRIDE & APPEARANCE OBJECTIVE: To establish programs that improves the aesthetics of the Neighborhood, thus creating more neighborhood pride and enhancing the quality of life for residents.

- Create a Neighborhood Association
 - Establish a Neighborhood Clean-Up Program
 - Develop an Aesthetics Improvement Program
 - Conduct a diversity study

- Review trash removal policies
- Examine the creation of information centers—Kiosks
- Sidewalk Replacement Program
- Review Private Property Rehabilitation Programs
- Review the creation of a special service area

CODE ENFORCEMENT & ZONING OBJECTIVE: To develop programs to reduce the number of property maintenance violations and improve compliance with zoning regulations.

- Consistent and aggressive inspections and enforcement of property maintenance codes
- Create a Property Maintenance Association
- Review Rental Rehabilitation Program
- Increase education and information relating to property maintenance
- Conduct a land use study
- Update zoning regulations

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE: To support programs that boost the current economic vitality of commercial activity in the Neighborhood and research the shopping desires of residents and need for new businesses.

- Discuss strategies to market the City and the Neighborhood to commercial developers
- Investigate financial incentives for economic development

PARKING OBJECTIVE: To develop methods to maximize the availability of parking spaces on private property and public streets.

- Conduct a parking inventory
- Investigate the creation of shared parking
- Update code regulations on parking

Citizen participation is a critical element in successful neighborhood planning. However, this participation becomes even more important in the implementation and sustainability of the improvements that come about as a result of the plan. It is imperative that the open lines of communication between area residents and the City that were created during the planning process continue into the future. Residents must continue to voice their concerns and take a proactive role to ensure the leadership necessary to sustain the viability of this Plan and continued implementation of the solutions necessary to maintain Greek Row Neighborhood as the “Jewel of NIU.”

Greek Row Neighborhood Mission

The recommendations set forth for the revitalization of the Greek Row Neighborhood were designed to improve the quality of life for residents in this area. The Plan was created to address the needs and opportunities identified in the Neighborhood and fulfill the Mission of the Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Plan.

<p><u>Greek Row Neighborhood Revitalization Plan</u></p> <p><u>Mission</u></p> <p>The mission of the Greek Row Revitalization Plan is to create a neighborhood where people of various social and economic backgrounds choose to live, to develop a sense of pride and unity, to instill a feeling of safety and welcome for residents and visitors, and to maintain the unique University character of the area.</p>

PLAN OBJECTIVES IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS AND PROGRESS

LIGHTING OBJECTIVE: To develop a program for improved lighting in the Greek Row neighborhood.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	LEAD PARTNERS	PROPOSED TIMELINE	OUTCOME MEASURES	STATUS	TOTAL SPENT
Conduct a lighting study	Public Works Hired engineers	Fall 2002	Develop implementation strategies	Complete	\$4,246.82
Increase lighting for public/private properties	Public Works/CDD Neighborhood Property Owners	Fall 2004	Implementation of lighting study strategies Updated survey by Task Force walk-thru	Installed lighting in the alleyways in two blocks from Normal Road to Blackhawk Drive	\$20,630.56 Property owners to pay on-going utility costs
Continue tree-trimming program	Public Works Commonwealth Edison/Neighborhood Property Owners	On-going	Review tree-trimming during updated lighting survey walk-thru by Task Force in Fall 2004	Regular trimming as needed	Included as a general fund expense
Creating a Private Property Lighting Compliance Programs	Public Works/CDD Neighborhood Residents and Property Owners	On-going	Documented increase in compliance with property maintenance standards	Regular compliance reviews by Property Maintenance	No additional funds allocated

PUBLIC SAFETY OBJECTIVE : To develop a realistic perception of neighborhood safety through working jointly with City of DeKalb and NIU law enforcement officials and all residents and property owners in local crime prevention efforts.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	LEAD PARTNERS	PROPOSED TIMELINE	OUTCOME MEASURES	STATUS	TOTAL SPENT
Increase communication and education	Police/NIU Police Citizens and Property Owners	On-going	Documented reduction in both minor and serious criminal activity	Regular Greek Row meeting held during fall semester	No additional funds allocated
Continue Bike and Foot Patrol Program	Police/SA	On-going	Documented reduction in both minor and serious criminal activity	On-going, successful program	No additional funds allocated
Develop a Neighborhood Watch Program	Police Citizens and Property Owners	Fall 2003/ On-going	Formation of at least one Neighborhood Watch Program	No programs have been implemented	None
Install lighted bus shelters	NIU Student Association Public Works/CDD	Spring 2004	Installation of at least four bus shelters	Shelters were installed with additional shelter being considered	Contracted with outside vendor. No additional funds spent
IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	LEAD PARTNERS	PROPOSED TIMELINE	OUTCOME MEASURES	STATUS	TOTAL SPENT

Investigate environmental design	Public Works/CDD Commonwealth Edison Neighborhood Property Owners	Spring 2003 – 2006	Consultation with at least four private property owners per year	No property owners were willing to participate	
Develop a Porch Light Program	Citizens and Property Owners	Fall 2002 / On-going	Increase in number and length of time private owners utilize porch lights	Poor response from residents	

NEIGHBORHOOD PRIDE & APPEARANCE: To develop programs that improves the aesthetics of the Greek Row neighborhood thus creating more neighborhood pride while enhancing the quality of life for residents.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	LEAD PARTNERS	PROPOSED TIMELINE	OUTCOME MEASURES	STATUS	TOTAL SPENT
Create a Neighborhood Pride Association	Citizens and Property Owners	Fall 2003 / On-going	Creation of at least one Neighborhood Pride Association	No association has been established	
Review trash removal policies	Public Works/Waste Management Neighborhood Property Owners Pan-Hellenic Organizations	Spring 2003 / On-going	Documented increase in compliance with property maintenance standards	Increased enforcement in this area Residents are complying	No additional cost
Examine the creation of an information center-Kiosks	CDD Citizens and Property Owners	Spring 2004	Installation of information centers/kiosks in at least four bus shelters	The bus shelters include advertisement by local business but no general information	No additional expenditure
Sidewalk Replacement Program	Public Works/CDD	On-going	Documented increase in maintenance of sidewalks	Replaced sidewalks in the target area that were damaged or deteriorated	\$82,027.27
Review Private Property Rehabilitation Programs	CDD Neighborhood Property Owners	Fall 2003	Workshop by City Council to consider rehab program, and major rehabilitation of at least two properties in the Neighborhood	None-no rehab assistance for investor-owned properties has been approved	
Review the creation of a special service area	Property Owners	Spring 2004	Recommendation for special service area available for discussion with property owners	A special services area was created in conjunction with the alleyway lighting project	On-going utility costs will be paid with taxes collected through the special service area

CODE ENFORCEMENT & ZONING: To develop programs to reduce the number of property maintenance violations and to enforce zoning regulations.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	LEAD PARTNERS	PROPOSED TIMELINE	OUTCOME MEASURES	STATUS	TOTAL SPENT
Consistent and aggressive inspections and enforcement of property maintenance codes	CDD	On-going	Documented reduction in compliance with property maintenance standards	Increased fees for re-inspection of rooming housing has increased compliance Addition of a hearing officer has increased compliance	No additional funds allocated
Create a Property Maintenance Association	Neighborhood Property Owners Pan-Hellenic Organizations	Fall 2003 / On-going	Create at least one Property Maintenance Association	None	
Review Rental Rehabilitation Program	CDD Neighborhood Property Owners	Fall 2003	Workshop with City Council to consider creation of a Rental Rehabilitation Program	None	Many property owners are making private investments in property.
Increase education and information relating to property maintenance	CDD Citizens and Property Owners	On-going	Documented increase in compliance with property maintenance standards	Regular meeting with fraternities and sororities	No additional funds allocated
Conduct a land use study	Planning Commission/ CDD	Fall 2003	Complete land use study	Complete	
Update zoning regulations	Planning Commission/ CDD	Spring 2004	Implementation of results from land use study	No changes in zoning have been made	



An example of private investment in the neighborhood.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: To support programs that boost the current economic vitality of commercial activity in Greek Row as well as researching the shopping desires of residents and need for new businesses.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	LEAD PARTNERS	PROPOSED TIMELINE	OUTCOME MEASURES	STATUS	TOTAL SPENT
Discuss strategies to market the City and Neighborhood to developers	EDC/CDD/FD	Spring 2003	Creation of economic development strategies for the neighborhood	Grocery store project on hold – no other development interest	
Investigate financial incentives for economic development	EDC/CDD/FD	Fall 2004	Workshop with City Council to consider creation of Incentive Program for the Neighborhood	Greek Row is a priority in current economic development guidelines	

PARKING: To develop programs to maximize the availability of parking spaces on private property and public streets.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	LEAD PARTNERS	PROPOSED TIMELINE	OUTCOME MEASURES	STATUS	TOTAL SPENT
Conduct a parking inventory	PWD/CDD	Spring 2003	Complete Inventory	Done	No additional funds allocated
Investigate creation of shared parking	PWD/CDD Neighborhood Property Owners	Fall 2003	Completion of review of parking inventory	Due to lack of available space it was determined to not be a feasible alternative	
Update code regulations on parking	PWD/CDD	Fall 2003	Implementation of regulations identified in the parking inventory review	No changes recommended	



Examples of attractive aesthetics in the Neighborhood

CONCLUSION

Successful neighborhood revitalization includes three elements – planning, implementation and long-term maintenance. No element can succeed without support from both public and private partners. In the Greek Row area, which is 100% rental property, the public partners include the City of DeKalb and Northern Illinois University and private partners are landlords and tenants. Neighborhood revitalization usually includes equal participation by government and citizens in the planning. Implementation usually starts with greater investment of public capital and emphasizes commitment by the citizens for long-term maintenance. However, due to the concentration of college students in Greek Row a complex process requiring greater commitment by the public partners to renewed education of the residents is required.

While the formal planning and implementation stages have been complete and the following conclusions provide evaluation of those efforts, they are only the beginning of the process. The true measure of success of the Greek Row Area Revitalization Plan will be long-term sustainability of the neighborhood.

LIGHTING OBJECTIVE: The goal of this objective was to improve the safety of residents by increasing the lighting in parking lots and other public access areas. This was accomplished by installation of poles and more efficient light fixtures in areas between buildings. The installation was paid for by the City of DeKalb and a special service area was created to pay the long-term electrical costs associated with the upgrades.

PUBLIC SAFETY OBJECTIVE: Implementation by the City of bike patrol program has been very beneficial and additional late night security, sponsored by NIU Student Association, shows the students' willingness to help make the area safer. Lighted bus shelters on highly traveled routes provide a safer place for students to wait for transportation. Other activities have been designed to provide students with information and services that would better serve their needs. Public safety could be increase even more if communication between the property owners, residents, NIU and City offices is strengthened. Participation in a program to improve safety through environmental design would also be cost efficient and create a greater sense of security for all residents.

NEIGHBORHOOD PRIDE & APPEARANCE: The Neighborhood Pride Association has not been created and, while the bus shelters were installed in some key areas, there have been no information kiosks included. The City did replace and/or repair all damaged or deteriorated sidewalks in the area and will work with landlords to ensure long-term maintenance. There has also been some private reinvestment in the area by property owners.

CODE ENFORCEMENT & ZONING: Continue to inform the residents of the zoning regulations to ensure compliance with codes. No Property Maintenance Association was created but the City's enhanced property maintenance program has helped to eliminate some of the persistent issues. A land use study was completed by Community Development Department staff but not zoning changes have been recommended to the Council for their consideration

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: No major commercial development has occurred in the area. However, adjacent property owners are still considering development of a shopping area that would include a grocery store.

PARKING: The goal of this objective was to maximize the available parking spaces on private property and public streets. A parking inventory indicates that parking is an issue. However, in order to insure adequate access by emergency response vehicles, not changes to on-street parking were recommended. If zoning changes are considered, off-street (private) parking regulations will be included in that process.