

# City Of Harrisonburg Small Area Plan for the Northeast Neighborhood



## City Council Meeting

Tuesday, June 24, 2025



Harrisonburg Redevelopment  
& Housing Authority



# **AGENDA**

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- Project Introduction
- Community Engagement
- Document Development & Organization
- Questions

# Project Introduction

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*“A lot of the time, we focus on the homes that were demolished, whereas when I think about urban renewal, it’s about the community and sense of community that was lost.”*

*Monica Robinson, Executive Director of SVBHP*

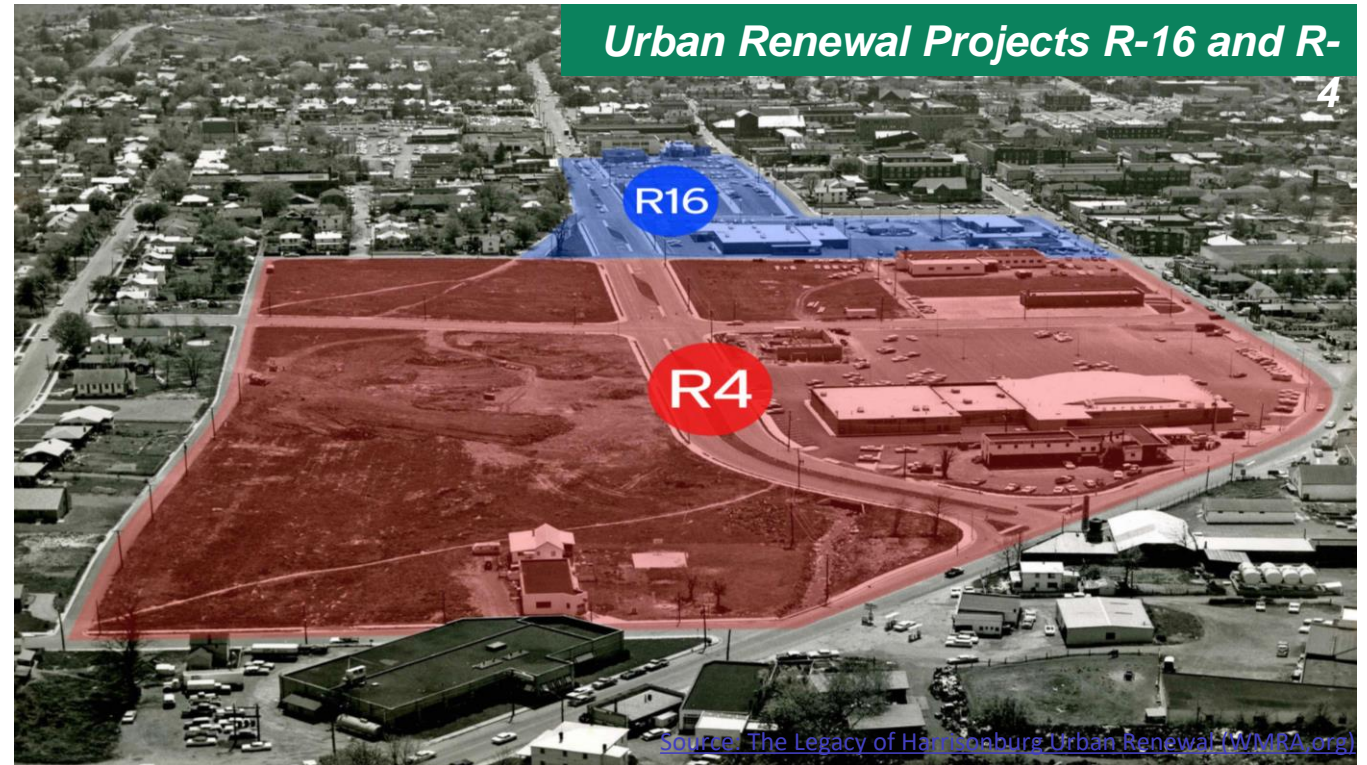
# Project Goal: Develop a Community-Driven and Actionable Neighborhood Plan for the City of Harrisonburg's Northeast Neighborhood





# The Northeast Neighborhood is a Historical Neighborhood Impacted by Urban Renewal

- African Americans have shaped the Neighborhood since Emancipation.
- In the 1950's, Urban Renewal projects condemned many Black-owned homes and businesses.
- Hundreds of residents were displaced.
- Multiple community places were destroyed.





# The Northeast Neighborhood Continues to Experience Harm From Urban Renewal


- Social and economic effects on residents and heirs
- Vacant lots
- Mason Street and other infrastructure built during Urban Renewal is too car-centric
- Community is isolated from Downtown
- Lack of trust in government



# Community Connectors Grant Allowed For the Development of the SAP

Harrisonburg was selected in September 2023 to be the recipient of a **Community Connectors Program** grant through national nonprofit Smart Growth America and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

**COMMUNITY CONNECTORS**  
A program to help small and mid-sized communities repair the damage of divisive infrastructure



**Participating Communities:**

- Albany, NY
- Appleton, WI
- Buffalo, NY
- Cleveland, TN
- Durham, NC
- East Orange and Orange, NJ
- Flint, MI
- Harrisonburg, VA
- Jefferson Parish, LA
- Macon, GA
- Minneapolis, MN
- National City, CA
- Saint Louis, MO
- Spokane, WA
- Trenton, NJ

Smart Growth America  
Improving lives by improving communities

AMERICA WALKS

EQUITABLE CITIES

NU MO New Urban Mobility alliance



# Harrisonburg Community Connectors Vision Statement



*"Rebuilding trust between Northeast Neighborhood residents and the City, repairing past harms, and reconnecting today's Northeast Neighborhood to the heart of the city are our most important goals. We commit to prioritizing the needs, wants, and desires of Northeast Neighborhood community members as we scope potential future investments in the community."*

The community's team is led by:



Harrisonburg Redevelopment  
& Housing Authority





# Community Engagement

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*Developing the Community-Driven Small Area Plan*

# The SAP Was Developed Through Successful Community Engagement



Northeast Neighborhood Association (NENA) and the Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project (SVBHP) guided the direction of the engagement.



# The SAP Was Developed Through Successful Community Engagement

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Around **240 individuals** participated in **five engagement events** held over a **seven-month period**.

- Community Luncheon & Neighborhood Tour  
Saturday, November 9, 2024
- Virtual Community Meeting  
Monday, December 9, 2024
- Visioning and Design Workshop  
Saturday, February 15, 2025
- Community Survey  
December 2024 – March 2025
- Draft Small Area Plan Community Input Meeting  
Monday, June 2, 2025



# The Community Was Involved Through All Project Stages

Community involved  
throughout all project phases

## PHASE 1: UNDERSTAND

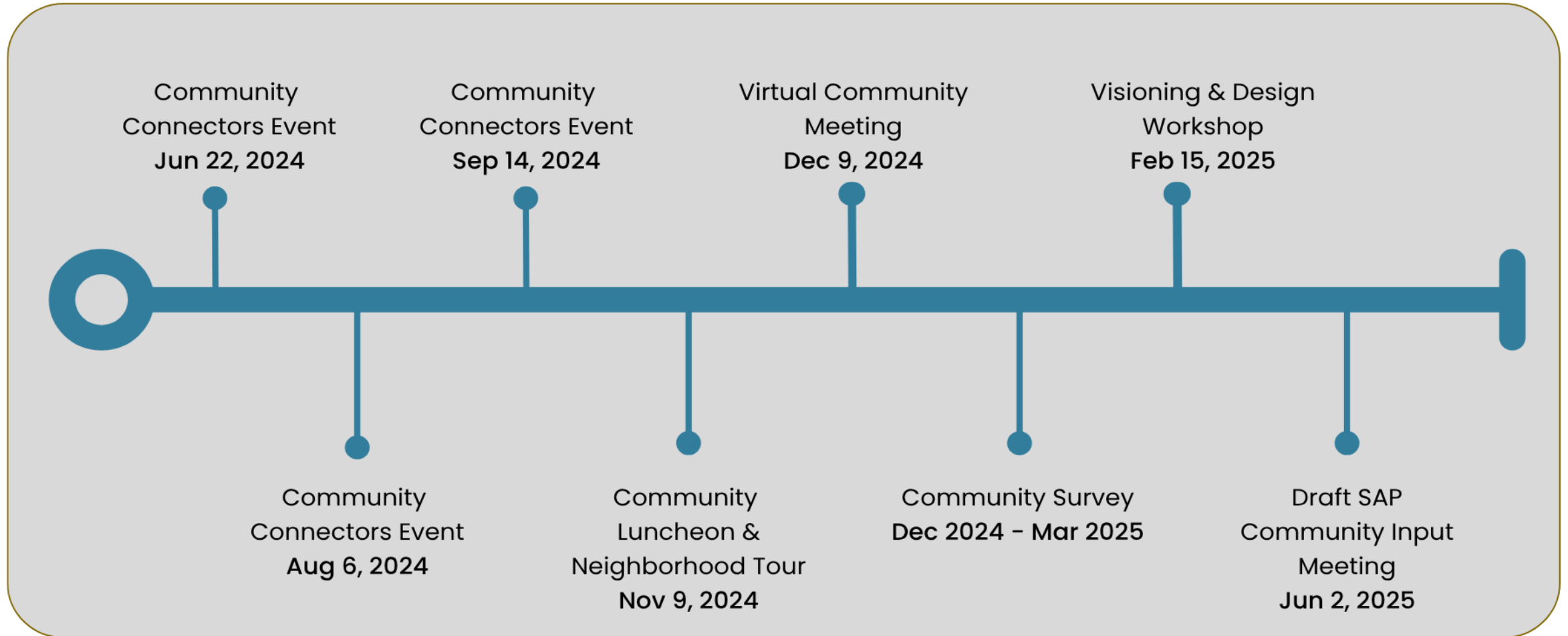
During this phase, the project team built a strong relationship with the Neighborhood's community, gaining insight into its history. The project team also analyzed current data and reviewed existing plans to gain a better understanding the Neighborhood's current conditions.

## PHASE 2: ENVISION

In this phase, the project team collaborated with the community to develop and refine a shared vision for the Neighborhood's future.

## PHASE 3: SHAPE

For the third phase, the project team established the community's priorities and identified goals and strategies, considering all gathered community input and documented existing conditions to date.



PHASE 1:  
Introduced the Project, Generated Interest,  
Reviewed Existing Conditions & Identified  
Priorities





## PHASE 2: Co-created SAP's Vision Statement



*"The Northeast Neighborhood is **a resilient community, rich in history, particularly in our African American heritage.** Today, we are known for our **caring and diverse spirit**, where residents can connect and access the resources they need. We envision **a future that honors our past while building a vibrant and welcoming community.***

*Here, **everyone has the opportunity to thrive** through homeownership, wealth-building, and access to essential services like quality education, affordable housing, and childcare. We will be a **model of inclusivity**, guided by the principles of equity, compassion, and collaboration. We will have well-lit walking and biking routes that reconnect the neighborhood with downtown.*

*Together, we will ensure that **every voice is heard**, and every decision is made with the well-being of all residents in mind. We aspire to create **a safe, supportive and joyful neighborhood - a place where our children can flourish, our businesses can thrive, and our residents feel a deep sense of pride and belonging.***



# PHASE 3: Identified Guiding Principles, Goals, and Strategies & Reviewed Draft Document



GATHERING AND BELONGING



RECONNECTING TO DOWNTOWN



SAFETY AND SECURITY



OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL (ECONOMIC MOBILITY)



HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS



# Document Development & Organization

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*The Engagement Process Directly Shaped the  
Recommendations in the SAP*



# About the SAP

- Goals and strategies are a result of extensive engagement.
- Plan focuses on place-making and place-based solutions.

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# FIVE (5) KEY THEMES INTO NINE (9) FOCUS AREAS & 12 GOALS



## Key Themes (Priorities)



GATHERING AND BELONGING



RECONNECTING TO DOWNTOWN



SAFETY AND SECURITY



OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL (ECONOMIC MOBILITY)



HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

## Focus Areas



HISTORY AND CULTURE

GOAL 1



GATHERING AND BELONGING

GOAL 2



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

GOALS 3 & 4



CONNECTION TO DOWNTOWN

GOALS 5 & 6



TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

GOAL 7



HOUSING AND PUBLIC SAFETY

GOAL 8



ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND COMPETITIVENESS

GOAL 9



NATURAL SYSTEMS AND SUSTAINABILITY

GOALS 10 & 11



HEALTH

GOAL 12

## KEY THEMES

Five guiding principles shaped by community input.

## FOCUS AREAS

Defined areas of focus within broader key themes.

## GOALS

Broad and long-term guides for achieving the community's vision.

## STRATEGIES

Specific policies, infrastructure improvements, partnerships, or other actions necessary to achieve objectives, create essential conditions, or overcome barriers.

## ACTIONS

Concrete steps taken to implement strategies.



## CASE STUDY OR SPOTLIGHT

Focused example that highlights relevant context or a similar project.

## GATHERING AND BELONGING



### HISTORY AND CULTURE

**Goal 1: Celebrate and educate others about the Northeast Neighborhood's rich African American history and cultural heritage.**

***Strategy 1.1: Develop programs that celebrate the Northeast Neighborhood's African American heritage.***

- *Gather history from those with lived experience and history of the Northeast Neighborhood.*





GATHERING AND BELONGING



RECONNECTING TO DOWNTOWN



SAFETY AND SECURITY



OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL (ECONOMIC MOBILITY)



HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS



**History and Culture**

Goal 1



**Gathering and Belonging**

Goal 2

# Gathering and Belonging

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## Goal 1: Celebrate and educate others about the Northeast Neighborhood's rich African American history and cultural heritage.

- Strategy 1.1: Develop **programs that celebrate the Northeast Neighborhood's** African American heritage.
- Strategy 1.2: Identify **reliable financial resources** to preserve and enhance Newtown's cultural assets.
- Strategy 1.3: Incorporate public art that raises awareness about what was lost during the Urban Renewal process and celebrates the Neighborhood's diversity of languages and ethnic backgrounds today through a variety **of public art media** (i.e., sculpture, performances, festivals).
- Strategy 1.4: Attract **tourists and visitors** to the Northeast Neighborhood to learn about Newtown's history and cultural assets.
- Strategy 1.5: Continue to use preservation easements, registries, and other **tools to enhance the architectural integrity and historical significance** of homes and sites in the Neighborhood.

# Gathering and Belonging

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## Goal 2: Build community connections through placemaking, inclusive gathering spaces, and community events for all ethnic groups present in Northeast Neighborhood.



- Strategy 2.1: Organize accessible and inclusive **community concerts, food festivals, and arts programming** for everyone at the Lucy F. Simms Center.
- Strategy 2.2: Partner with local schools to **host after-school programs at the Lucy F. Simms Center** to deepen youth engagement.
- Strategy 2.3: Create **inclusive spaces that welcome newcomers** from diverse ethnic backgrounds in the Northeast Neighborhood.
- Strategy 2.4: Create **friendly environments for senior citizens** that support independence, well-being, and social inclusion.





GATHERING AND BELONGING



RECONNECTING TO DOWNTOWN



SAFETY AND SECURITY



OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL (ECONOMIC MOBILITY)



HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS



**Community Connections**  
Goals 3 & 4



**Connection To Downtown**  
Goals 5 & 6

# Reconnecting to Downtown

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## Goal 3: Empower the Northeast Neighborhood's community or residents to shape the future of the area.



- Strategy 3.1: Maintain **engagement between the City and the CBOs** through meetings in familiar settings (e.g., neighborhoods, places of worship) and public forums to foster dialogue.
- Strategy 3.2: **Educate both the public and City staff about the impacts of past Urban Renewal** and current opportunities for improvement.
- Strategy 3.3: **Build CBO's capacity** for grant writing and project management.

## Goal 4: Addressing harm caused by Urban Renewal.

- Strategy 4.1: **Prioritize infrastructure** projects in the Northeast Neighborhood.
- Strategy 4.2: Implement infrastructure projects, **especially stormwater and transportation projects**, as identified in this SAP.

# Reconnecting to Downtown

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## Goal 5: Strengthen the link between the Northeast Neighborhood and Downtown.

- Strategy 5.1: **Expand public art and Downstreet streetscape** to the Downtown area in the Northeast Neighborhood.
- Strategy 5.2: Enhance Northeast Neighborhood **gateways, or entry points, to reinforce placemaking** and strengthen community identity.

## Goal 6: Revitalize N. Mason Street to make it an inviting street.

- Strategy 6.1: Improve N. Mason Street to make it more **bike- and pedestrian-friendly based** on Smart Growth America's Complete Streets Leadership Academy's demonstration project results.
- Strategy 6.2: Convert N. Mason Street to a major **neighborhood destination** by attracting businesses and promoting community activation.
- Strategy 6.3: Implement **urban design projects to connect** the Northeast Neighborhood to Downtown and other destinations in the City.
- Strategy 6.4: Implement **Complete Streets interventions on N. Mason Street** to mitigate the legacy of segregation that excluded African Americans from participating in Downtown civic life.





GATHERING AND BELONGING



RECONNECTING TO DOWNTOWN



**SAFETY AND SECURITY**



OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL (ECONOMIC MOBILITY)



HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS



**Transportation & Mobility**  
Goal 7



**Housing & Public Safety**  
Goal 8

# Safety and Security

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## Goal 7: Provide transportation, pedestrian, bike, and public transit infrastructure to promote connectivity, accessibility, and inclusiveness for all residents in the Northeast Neighborhood.

- Strategy 7.1: Provide **improvements in walking routes to connect people to places** with a focus on sidewalks.
- Strategy 7.2: **Improve safety on local streets** in the Northeast Neighborhood by installing additional traffic calming measures where appropriate.
- Strategy 7.3: Add and **improve lighting throughout** the Northeast Neighborhood, especially around key walking corridors.
- Strategy 7.4: Increase **public transportation use** by improving the comfort, safety, and accessibility of bus stops.
- Strategy 7.5: Increase **Neighborhood access to electric vehicle (EV)** charging stations.
- Strategy 7.6: Enhance **safety at designated school bus stops**.

# Safety and Security

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**Goal 8: Build a safe and strong Northeast Neighborhood by ensuring healthy and sustainable housing options that meet the diverse needs of all residents, including legacy residents and those seeking affordable housing opportunities.**

- Strategy 8.1: **Update land use regulations and zoning** to align with the Neighborhood's preferences.
- Strategy 8.2: Explore the use of **tax incentives or inclusionary zoning** to support and encourage the creation of affordable and mixed-income housing.
- Strategy 8.3: **Preserve existing housing** stock.
- Strategy 8.4: Work with Our Community Place (OCP) and the Navigation Center to identify a **new state-of-the-art facility for OCP** located outside of the Northeast Neighborhood.
- Strategy 8.5: Enhance **quality of life and public safety for homeowners, landlords, tenants, and transient populations** through code enforcement and proactive efforts to prevent **underutilized properties** from falling into disrepair.
- Strategy 8.6: Develop a **community-centered anti-displacement** strategy.
- Strategy 8.7: Facilitate **pro-bono estate planning to resolve issues** around "tangled" titles, wills, and insurance.





GATHERING AND BELONGING



RECONNECTING TO DOWNTOWN



SAFETY AND SECURITY



**OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL (ECONOMIC MOBILITY)**



HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS



**Economic Mobility &  
Competitiveness**  
Goal 9

# Opportunity For All

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## Goal 9: Make the Northeast Neighborhood a great place to open, own, and operate a business with a workforce that has opportunities to professionally grow.



- Strategy 9.1: Encourage and incentivize future owners to **transform the Roses site into a mixed-used hub** with economic and educational opportunities, and mixed-income housing.
- Strategy 9.2: Create a **centralized and accessible community hub** for educational and workforce development.
- Strategy 9.3: Continue to **host educational programs and workshops that support all families** in areas such as language learning, job training, and civic engagement.
- Strategy 9.4: Educate developers, investors, and businesses on how to **take advantage of the Opportunity Zone tax incentive**, allowing investors to defer taxes on the invested gain amounts until the Congress-mandated deadline.
- Strategy 9.5: Support small businesses and **foster business opportunities** in the Northeast Neighborhood.
- Strategy 9.6: Encourage the establishment of new preschools, **child care** centers, and in-home care providers in the neighborhood to expand access to high-quality and easily accessible child care.



GATHERING AND BELONGING



RECONNECTING TO DOWNTOWN



SAFETY AND SECURITY



OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL (ECONOMIC MOBILITY)



HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS



**Natural Systems &  
Sustainability**



Goals 10 & 11  
**Health**  
Goal 12



# Healthy Environments

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## **Goal 10: Build a sustainable Northeast Neighborhood that is resilient to the effects of climate change.**

Strategy 10.1: Plant **native plants and trees in public areas**, like parks, recreational spaces, streets, and private properties, to provide shade, mitigate the urban heat island effect, and **reduce stormwater concerns**.

Strategy 10.2: Partner with established organizations and agencies to provide community gardens and pollinator gardens to **encourage biodiversity and local food production**.

Strategy 10.3: Explore the opportunity for installation of **recycling bins, trash cans, and dog waste stations** at appropriate locations.

Strategy 10.4: Use multi-level resources (individual, organizational, and municipal) to **implement green infrastructure**, such as rain gardens and bioretention systems, for stormwater management and flood mitigation where feasible.

Strategy 10.5: Expand **renewable energy, energy conservation, weatherization, and water-efficient technologies** in the Northeast Neighborhood as part of broader sustainability efforts.

# Healthy Environments

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## Goal 11: Preserve the Northeast Neighborhood's scenic vistas.

Strategy 11.1: Improve awareness, access, and amenities to **enhance community and visitor enjoyment** of Northeast scenic vistas.

Strategy 11.2: Establish land use strategies (e.g., zoning, easement, etc.) to **preserve and protect scenic vistas** throughout the neighborhood.



# Healthy Environments

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**Goal 12: Enhance Neighborhood health by ensuring access to affordable, healthy foods, welfare services, ADA-compliant facilities, and recreational spaces.**

Strategy 12.1: Improve **access to fresh, affordable food** through farmers' markets, local grocery stores, cooperative food options, and community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs.

Strategy 12.2: Investigate **sustainable urban agriculture** and food production practices.

Strategy 12.3: Continue to **provide behavioral health services** outside the Northeast Neighborhood and promote affordable health services and mental wellness support for unhoused individuals, especially during daytime hours.

Strategy 12.4: Encourage physical activity and water safety education by **maintaining existing recreational spaces and creating a new swimming pool** for all neighborhood residents.



# Implementation Matrix

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**Community-informed strategies formed the basis of an implementable Small Area Plan for the Northeast Neighborhood.**

## POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Parties that could support the lead entity in execution and implementation.

## STRATEGIES

Specific policies, infrastructure improvements, partnerships, or other actions necessary to achieve objectives, create essential conditions, or overcome barriers.

## POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Potential funding sources that may be explored to support implementation.

## LEAD ENTITY

Party mainly responsible for the implementation of the recommendation.

## PRIORITY

Priority levels—high, medium, and low—are assigned based on feedback from community engagement efforts.

## SUMMARY

- The Northeast Neighborhood is a historically and culturally rich neighborhood. However, it was impacted by Urban Renewal and its effects are still felt today.
- The Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan (SAP) was developed to acknowledge past harm and help shape the Neighborhood's future.
- The SAP is a community-driven document based on the feedback obtained throughout all project phases.
- The SAP is an actionable document presenting goals, strategies, and actions.



# QUESTIONS?

## THANK YOU

