

Statement of the Honorable Jackie Nytes, City-County Councillor,
City-County Council of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana
On behalf of the National League of Cities

Before the
Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

Hearing on
Local Perspectives of the Livable Communities Act

Good morning, Chairman Dodd, Ranking Member Shelby, and members of the Committee. Please allow me if you will to offer a special greeting from the folks back home to our Hoosier member of the Committee, Senator Evan Bayh.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of the National League of Cities and thousands of locally elected municipal officials like myself who value the important partnership that our American cities have long shared with the federal government. We have accomplished so much together. The Livable Communities Act will ensure that we continue to do so in even better ways than before, despite the increasing demands on available resources.

Across America, rapidly changing economies, demographic shifts, environmental pressures and aging infrastructure keep us in local government awake at night. City governments and their local partners work hard to deliver the many programs developed and funded by Congress. We are immensely grateful for the opportunity those programs have given us to address the challenges inherent in sustaining and growing our old cities, new suburbs, and small towns.

Reviewing the purposes of the Livable Communities Act, I am encouraged by the recognition that these many programs can not be allowed to act each as single instruments, but in fact will achieve their greatest impact if they play as an orchestra providing coordinated and integrated support. From my own experience, I want to speak to the value of such united efforts to underscore the importance of the approach called for in the Livable Communities Act.

In Indianapolis, we have a number of redevelopment efforts underway, each the product of extensive, community driven planning and engagement.

In the Binford Redevelopment and Growth area (BRAG), residents and area businesses originally joined together to fight blight and sprawl. They have since become a united voice to spearhead six priority issues: pedestrian access and connectivity, business development, crime reduction, increasing parks and green space, sustainability and the development of transit driven opportunity.

In the Mapleton Fall Creek area, where portions of the old neighborhood were 50% vacant and abandoned, a community based development corporation expanded its focus from affordable housing to a vision of comprehensive community redevelopment where they understand that removing blight, creating green space, restoring commercial and retail services and enhancing transportation options are all necessary to transform a neighborhood built in the 20th century for 21st century lifestyles.

In the Martindale Brightwood community, long abandoned rail yards and former industrial sites are now being rescued and repurposed for urban agriculture, transit oriented development and the provision of new schools and recreational opportunities.

These stories lead one to ask why, if cities are doing so much already with our federal dollars, do we need the Livable Communities Act?

We need it because we must encourage a shared sense of vision about the work to be done. The most sustainable growth must be nurtured from every possible angle...cities can not just fix houses, or just build parks, or just enhance mobility by either adding sidewalks or more transit options—cities must do all of these things in concert and we can only act in concert back home in our cities if the programs supporting our efforts share this holistic approach.

Given the current and near term fiscal environment, local governments are working hard to continue to identify ways to improve efficiency and streamline delivery of services to lessen the impact of the downturn on the families living in our neighborhoods. The Livable Communities Act would help cities achieve these goals by formalizing the links between different federal agencies that every city and town comes into contact with --

facilitating the interdependency of programming that we all have come to understand is critical.

In Mapleton Fall Creek, they are building highly energy efficient homes and retrofitting 90 year old homes to meet the highest current energy standards and trying to help the financial industry appreciate what these energy savings can mean to the financial capacity of a first time home buyer.

In BRAG, developing the new transit stop will mean that families can afford to stay in their homes in the area even if the jobs have moved elsewhere because the decreasing costs of transportation and increased access give them more affordable options.

In Martindale Brightwood, the resurgence of community gardens and schools that value walking and riding over automobiles allow the community to tackle a frightening trend in the younger populations of our inner city—childhood obesity.

This all can happen when we can focus the resources of the community development programs like the Community Development Block Grant Program, the transit and the housing programs, the energy efficiency programs, the finance and mortgage regulators and those who help to fund our infrastructure -- all on the same prize: healthy, livable communities.

I commend Senator Dodd and the other sponsors of this legislation for seeking input from the National League of Cities and other local government groups from the very beginning; and I urge this Congress to continue your role as a great partner for our American cities. We have much work yet to do.



Mapleton-Fall Creek Development Corporation

130 East 30th Street • Indianapolis, Indiana 46205 • 317/923-5514

Rehabilitation of 342 E. 30th St.



BEFORE



AFTER

Project Description

This Housing Trust Fund request will support a comprehensive community development effort in the heart of Mapleton-Fall Creek. These funds will rehab a blighted property on a major thoroughfare and provide affordable housing to 4 low income tenants, priority of which will be given to clients of the Bethlehem House program who are re-entering the community. The project is an extension of the work being completed in the 20/21 Area through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP). By leveraging these two funding sources, MFCDC can begin revitalizing the 30th St. Corridor and use NSP to impact more homeownership units and commercial properties in the 20/21 Plan.



MFCDC purchased 342 East 30th from an out of state investor who had neglected the property for decades. The quad-plex sits on the boundary between the 20/21 Area and the Historic Meridian Park Neighborhood. The plans are to restore this property to maintain historic qualities while adding energy efficiency and modern designs (See Attachment A). The vacant lot behind this property is in the Indy Land Bank, and will be purchased to provide surface parking and outdoor sitting space. The rehab quality will emphasize green building practices and meet (at a minimum) Energy Star standards. These features are standard to provide renters with the lowest housing costs and the greatest value.

These units will provide MFCDC more flexibility in providing housing to individuals who otherwise do not qualify for housing in the vicinity. Due to the challenges these individuals are overcoming, few pass the initial credit and background check that is given to potential tenants. MFCDC's relationship with Bethlehem House, coupled with HTF's support of this project, offers a unique opportunity for quality housing in the neighborhood. Considering transportation is one of the largest hurdles Bethlehem House participants must overcome, this project's location is ideal for the individuals they are serving.

MFCDC shares its facilities with Bethlehem House, an HIV and addictions counseling organization. The partnership at 342 East 30th provides an opportunity for MFCDC to offer

quality housing to Bethlehem House's clients. Currently, there is a lack of 1 Bedroom units within walking distance of Bethlehem House, and many of their clients experience chronic housing problems and lack transportation. These units are 2 blocks from their day center (and MFCDC's leasing office), which will provide the residents with the level of support and monitoring they'll need to be successful in their treatment program.

The property management team at MFCDC has 59 units under management, including 50 currently being developed by the Whitsett Group in the immediate vicinity. However, MFCDC has no 1 bedroom units to meet the demand identified by Bethlehem House. MFCDC has hired two full-time staff to serve as Asset Manager and Leasing Agent, both of whom have intimate knowledge of the neighborhood and our rental properties. Josh Kupke MSW and Roselyn Huggins started work in April, 2010, both live in the neighborhood and are committed to providing quality affordable housing.

Historically, maintaining a good relationship with tenants has been difficult due to lack of adequate staff. This led to rental properties being neglected and tenants becoming dissatisfied with their situation. With the addition of our Asset Manager and Leasing Agent, this project will have an opportunity to succeed at providing a safe, quality home where the management staff will be active and engaged. This, in turn, will benefit not only the tenants of this project, but the neighborhood as a whole (Attachment B: Staff Resumes).

The development will cost \$ 246,307 and MFCDC requests \$214,807 from the Housing Trust Fund (HTF). Attachment C provides the Development and Operating Budgets for the project. MFCDC will utilize funding from NSP to cover acquisition cost (\$27,500), and Citizens Energy will provide up to \$4,000 for energy efficiency efforts. HTF funding will cover hard construction costs, a 10% contingency and an 8% developer fee. We estimate construction to cost \$67/s.f. based on the costs for two similar rehab projects currently under contract. One adjacent lot will be purchased from the Indy Land Bank for this development.

The operating budget will have positive cash flow based with rent affordable to households at 30-50% AMI (See Attachment C). Target rent will be \$325 per unit, and the energy efficient units will minimize utility costs for the long term.

In addition to energy efficient green design, the exterior of the property will see a major facelift and outdoor living space will be incorporated into the site design. An exterior patio and parking area will be included in the site design. The model-type of development will help attract investment in the community by providing a model of how to do it.

Attachment A

Plot Lines

3006 New Jersey will be purchased from the Indy Land Bank to provide surface parking and green space for the rental at 342. The adjacent lot (346 E. 30th) is owned by a responsible property owner, and conversations about the future of that lot will be happening in the near future.



After sitting vacant for ten years, this home was made habitable through a combination of NSP dollars, State NAP tax credits to raise money, and HOME funds for down payment assistance for a young family including children and grandmother.



BEFORE



AFTER

INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS OF TARGET AREA

550	Total number of Parcels
274	Active Parcels
77	Vacant Buildings (not boarded)
71	Vacant/Boarded Buildings
127	Vacant Lots
17	Non-residential uses
161	Multi-family structures

HOUSING INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

Buildings in the Target Area were assessed by a team from Schmidt Associates. A detailed housing assessment report was developed for all structures in the neighborhood to determine how MFDCD can assist in revitalizing the area.

INFRASTRUCTURE ASSESSMENT

The team also assessed the condition of the streets, alleys, curbs and sidewalks based on a rating system established by SEND CDC/SPEA and DPW in 2008. To improve the failing streets and allies, the estimated improvement cost in 2009 was approximately \$1,613,000. Improvements to curbs and sidewalks amounted to approximately \$1,224,000.

EXISTING LAND USE & BROWNFIELDS

The Target Area is primarily zoned for dwelling use with a commercial corridor along Central Ave. Within the Target Area, there are eight designated brownfields. Most of these brownfields sites have previously been dry cleaners or gas stations.

TRANSPORTATION

Central Avenue is one-way travelling south-bound. Converting this street to a two-way street would create more interest for economic development opportunities in the 2900 block. By converting Central to a two-way street, Ruckle Avenue would become less travelled. Ruckle Ave. would then revert back to a traditional residential street with slow traffic and safe pedestrian crossings.

NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Mapleton-Fall Creek team hosted seven community meetings over a period of three months in 2009. The meetings varied from whole community input to individualized interests like school-aged parents and senior citizens.

Residents enjoy being close to downtown, the quiet streets, and neighbors who have been in the neighborhood for a long time. The community is concerned about vacant and boarded properties, home maintenance, the poor condition of infrastructure, and absentee landlords.

In 2008, Mapleton-Fall Creek Development Corporation (MFDCD) and Schmidt Associates developed a Vision Plan for a Target Area in the Mapleton-Fall Creek neighborhood (south of 32nd Ave, west of College Ave, north of Fall Creek Pkwy, and east of New Jersey Ave). The purpose of the 2021 Vision Plan was to establish ideas and solutions to spur economic and physical redevelopment in the identified Target Area. After that study was complete, the MFC Target Area was selected by the City of Indianapolis to receive funds from the Neighborhood Stabilization Program to revitalize the area. This Master Planning effort provided for a detailed inventory and analysis, as well as defined revitalization goals for each property in the Target Area.

The Target Area Master Plan identifies action items for the community to implement - based on assessments, community input, and established goals. The Plan highlights opportunities for land acquisition, removal of blighted structures, home rehabilitation, new home ownership, and rental development for low-income families.

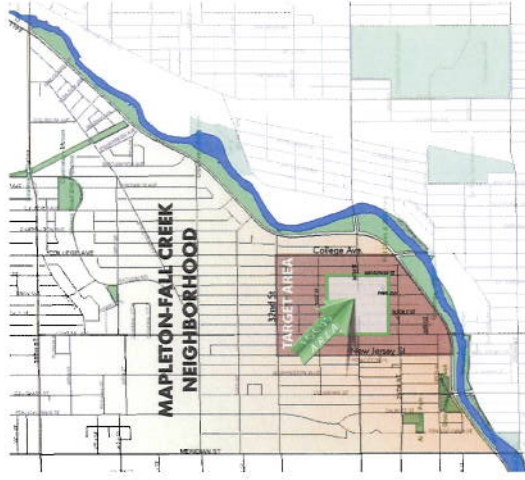
MASTER PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

QUALITY OF LIFE PRINCIPLES

- Plan for holistic neighborhood improvements.
- Include every block in the plan.
- Be a partner in decreasing potential criminal activities.
- Strategically locate parks to be more readily accessible to all area residents.
- Strategically purchase property on Central Avenue for redevelopment as a school and mixed use/ multi-tenant property.
- Provide opportunities for private development.
- Upgrade infrastructure.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

- Focus on increasing occupancy and restoring population within the neighborhood.
- Prioritize all efforts as follows:
 1. Remove blight and stabilize neighborhood
 2. Continue improvements with new/infill construction
- Strengthen neighborhood assets through positive development of adjacent/available property "clusters".
- Target properties with the worst assessed scores.
- Ensure that redevelopment allows for a range of income levels.
- Purchase and Replat 1/2 and 1/3 size lots to allow for more saleable property or provide opportunities to combine with neighboring parcels.
- Increase the ratio of single-family residential structures.



MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Mapleton-Fall Creek Development Corporation
110 East 18th Street • Indianapolis, Indiana 46205 • Tel: 317-923-2199



SCHMIDT ASSOCIATES

TARGET AREA MASTER PLAN

MASTER PLAN INITIATIVES

NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENTS
With fifty percent vacancy, there are significant opportunities for improvement. Once the inventory and assessment were complete, the team established a list of projects that could be completed in order to stabilize the neighborhood within the Target Area. The proposed project categories included;

- Acquire property
- Remove blight
- Build single-family homes
- Rehabilitate buildings (for home ownership or rental)
- Develop a park
- Develop a school
- Build retail/senior housing
- Grant money for weatherization
- Grant money for home repair assistance
- Grant money for facade improvements

These projects affect 265 properties in the Target Area with an estimated cost of \$17 million, based on 2009 construction costs.
The projects designated as high priority were submitted to the City of Indianapolis to utilize funding from the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP). The Mapleton-Fall Creek Development Corporation was awarded \$3.6 million to make improvements to the Target Area through the NSP project. Projects utilizing NSP funds include acquisition, demolition, rehab, and new construction for foreclosed or abandoned properties. The NSP improvements will be located within the focus area of the Target Area, shown on cover map.

MASTER PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

OPEN SPACE

Three parks are planned for the neighborhood. The Central Indiana Community Foundation has granted MFDCDC dollars to acquire properties for the purpose of providing parks in the neighborhood.

A community garden group has presented MFDCDC with a partnership proposal to develop a Community Garden Resource Center in the Target Area.

CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT

Just south of 32nd Street and Park Avenue a single-family cluster development is proposed. This development will be similar to the existing cluster of one-story homes in the 2900 block of Broadway. This development may provide a great opportunity to incorporate the traditional one-story Habitat for Humanity homes or homes for "empty-nesters."

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Homes in this Mapleton-Fall Creek neighborhood are typically two-story with a pitched roof and front porch. To fit into the context of the larger neighborhood, Habitat for Humanity homes located in the neighborhood-adjacent to typical homes- shall be two-story. Suggested locations for these homes are in the 2800 block of Central, 3000 block of Ruckle, and 2900 block of Park.

MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT

A mixed-use development is proposed in the 2900 block of Central Avenue. The proposed use for this development is retail on the first floor with senior housing above. The development should have a 0' setback with parking located on the street and in back. Storefronts will open to Central Avenue. Although this neighborhood is located outside the Indianapolis Regional Center Plan 2020 boundaries, the design of this development should follow the principles set forth.

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

MFDCDC has continued to look for opportunities to bring a community building into the Target Area. This community building may serve as a school, public or private. Due to the phase-out of the bussing law, students who are currently bussed to Decatur Twp. will remain in the neighborhood. A new school could serve this population. The proposed location of a school development is in the 2800 block of Central, on the east side. A task force has been created for this.

IndyGo PARTNERSHIP

IndyGo currently has three bus routes that travel in the Target Area neighborhood- 2, 17, and 30. With the possibility to convert Central Ave. to a two-way street there are several opportunities as it relates to bus circulation in the Target Area. Pending available transit enhancement funds the opportunities include:

- Create a "transfer hub" at the intersection of 30th and Central. This hub could have bus pull offs, benches/shelters and possibly have "next bus" displays as three of the IndyGo routes would connect at this point.
- Purchase crosswalk signals for the intersection
- Re-engineering sidewalks to allow benches along 30th St.
- Re-route of Rt. 19 if Central becomes a 2-way street

CONCLUSION

The MFDCDC and its partnering team have developed a strategic revitalization plan that, if implemented successfully, can transform this Target Area into a vibrant, quality neighborhood for families and businesses. With the surge of NSP investment- MFDCDC has the resources to kick-start the revitalization efforts by removing blight, rehabilitating homes, and acquiring land to stabilize the neighborhood.



Mapleton-Fall Creek Development Corporation
MASTER PLAN
 WORK PLAN December, 2009

SCHMIDT ASSOCIATES
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