NORTHWEST WARREN NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

2015

Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership
Warren, Ohio

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Community Challenge Grant Program

Overview of Community Challenge Grants Program:

The Department of Housing and Urban Development's $28 million Community Challenge Planning Grant Program fosters reform and reduces barriers to achieving affordable, economically vital, and sustainable communities. Such efforts may include amending or replacing local master plans, zoning codes, and building codes, either on a jurisdiction-wide basis or in a specific neighborhood, district, corridor, or sector to promote mixed-use development, affordable housing, the reuse of older buildings and structures for new purposes, and similar activities with the goal of promoting sustainability at the local or neighborhood level. This Program also supports the development of affordable housing through the development and adoption of inclusionary zoning ordinances and other activities to support planning implementation.

The Warren Community Challenge Grant:

The City of Warren was awarded $356,964 for the Warren Community Challenge Program. Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership was subcontracted to complete the work of the grant. The overall goal of the Community Challenge Project is to promote sustainability at the local neighborhood level by addressing the needs for demolition, housing rehabilitation, and vacant land reuse in the efforts to support sustainable, affordable communities. A review of the city's current, historical, and emerging needs led to the development of an action plan that included a citywide parcel inventory divided into five targeted areas to identify vacant housing and vacant land; collaboration with Trumbull County Land Reutilization Corporation (TCLRC) to acquire and transfer ownership of property to owners who have demonstrated an ability to do rehabilitation; reinvigoration of the city's code enforcement system; assessing vacant land for viability for land recycling; and a review of Warren's zoning code to remove regulatory barriers to urban agriculture and greenspace use.

Final Deliverables:

- Comprehensive Parcel Inventory
- Priority Demolition and Rehab Lists
- Neighborhood Plans: Plans will document long-term strategies for handling vacant properties, recommendations for neighborhood projects, and other relevant recommendations for revitalization.

INTRODUCTION

Grant Tasks

Task 1: Parcel Inventory

TNP completed a comprehensive residential parcel inventory that documents the conditions of all residential parcels in the City of Warren.

Task 2: Community Engagement and Participation

TNP has completed 4 rounds of public engagement efforts. Community members from each neighborhood were invited to discuss the conditions of their neighborhoods, see the data that TNP collected, and consider potential land reuse projects throughout their neighborhoods.

Task 3: Vacant Structures and Land Bank Utilization

From the inventory of residential parcels, TNP has created prioritized demolitions lists. These have been modified for each round of funding that has become available throughout the grant period. TNP is in the process of documenting a long-term strategy for vacant properties to be included in complete neighborhood plans for each neighborhood.

Task 4: Vacant Land Reutilization

TNP continues to identify sites for land re-use projects based on available properties, community input, available project "shepherds," and site viability. The Lots to Love project will be released shortly and TNP will invite project ideas from the community, manage the installation of the project, and provide technical support to community groups who are awarded through the program.

Task 5: Zoning

Originally, the HUD grant called for a comprehensive review of the zoning code for the City of Warren. The original plan was to contract out this piece of the grant proposal. The City determined that this was not a productive use of resources, and TNP converted this portion of the proposal into a supportive zoning staff position that would have broader responsibilities, but would still provide guidance for possible legislative and zoning changes to support urban agriculture.

Task 6: Policy Priorities

TNP maintains regular dialogue with supporting partners and provides appropriate policy guidance based on the findings of the inventory and the regular input from community members and supporting partners.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Warren's History

In 1798 Ephram Quinby purchased the land that he would name after Moses Warren. This land was part of the Connecticut Western Reserve and Ephram Quinby's new settlement was named the county seat of Trumbull County, which at the time covered all of the Connecticut Western Reserve's 120 miles. For the first 30 years after its settlement, Warren was the fastest growing and most prosperous town in the region. Unfortunately, with the economic advantage of canal shipping and the development of the Erie Canal in 1825, Cleveland and Pittsburgh began to outpace Warren. As a result of the canal and of local politics, Warren did not see much growth during the remainder of the 19th century and industrialization and manufacturing did not arrive in Warren until the 20th century. The majority of Warren remained agricultural.

At the beginning of the 20th century, a Board of Trade was established, the goal of which was to attract industry to the city of Warren. In 1906 the steel manufacturer that would later become Republic Steel arrived in Warren. Additionally, the Board of Trade succeeded in attracting several craft industries. Between 1910 and 1930, Warren was once again a fast growing city. The rapid growth of Warren during times of industrial boom, gives a partial explanation for the lack of named neighborhoods in the city.
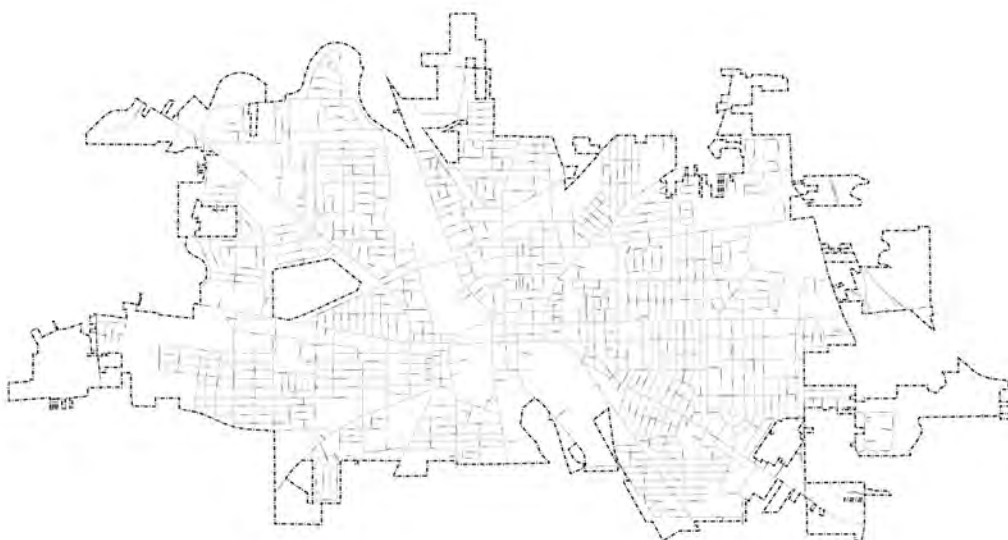
The City of Warren

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

Neighborhood Boundaries

The area known as Northwest Warren is bounded by West Market Street to the South, and the Mahoning River to the East, with the Western and Southern portions extending to the city limits. There are three neighborhoods within the Northwest side of Warren, though neighborhood identity is primarily associated with the Northwest, rather than at the smaller level. The Northwest includes the northern half of Ward 7, and all of Ward 1. The Northwest includes the CDBG target area of census tract 9208.

Northwest Warren Boundary
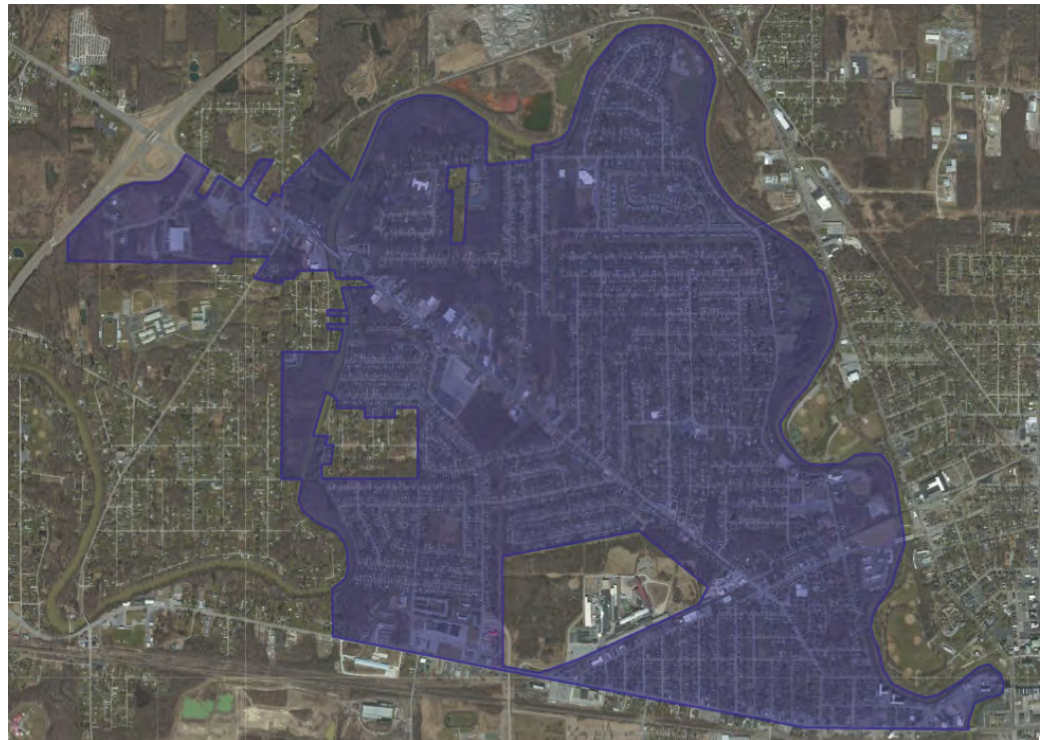
NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

Historical Neighborhood

According to local historian Alex Bobersky, the west side of Warren was historically an immigrant area, populated after Warren began developing its manufacturing base. The area known as Northwest Warren is divided into four sections by the Trumbull County Auditor. The area just west of Downtown Warren was the first to develop; this area has a mean housing year built of 1917. According to Bobersky, this area was settled by migrant Appalachians who came into the city for jobs during the early part of the 20th century. Additionally, much of Warren's growth was restricted by wealthy landowners up until the middle part of the century. Following World War II, more land was sold for development. This was when the other areas of the Northwest Developed. The area North and East of Parkman Road has a mean housing year built of 1952 and the Area South, which is largely taken up by the Austin Starlite neighborhood, has a mean year built of 1959. The west side was home to a great deal of manufacturing particularly along the West Market Corridor and the Railroad tracks. Housing in the Northwest supported these industries when they were vibrant.

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

Current Neighborhood

Based up vacancy rates, geographic boundaries, and community input, this report divides the Northwest area of the City of Warren into three Neighborhoods: The Amvets neighborhood, so called for a park near the middle of the West Market stretch of the neighborhood, is the low income census tract, 9208, and is bounded by West Market to the South, McMyler and Summit to the Northwest, and Tod Ave to the east. This is an area of extremely high vacancy; its roots as a transient Appalachian community still cling to it today. Additionally, the housing stock here is significantly older than the rest of the Northwest, making it a less desirable area. The Austin-Starlite neighborhood, so named for two of its major streets, is a neighborhood that self identifies as separate from the rest of the Northwest. This neighborhood is mostly stable, with some vacancy. The remaining area of the Northwest, due to self-identification and homogeneity, is simply designated "Northwest." This is a very stable area, with only small sections where there are vacancy and blight concerns.

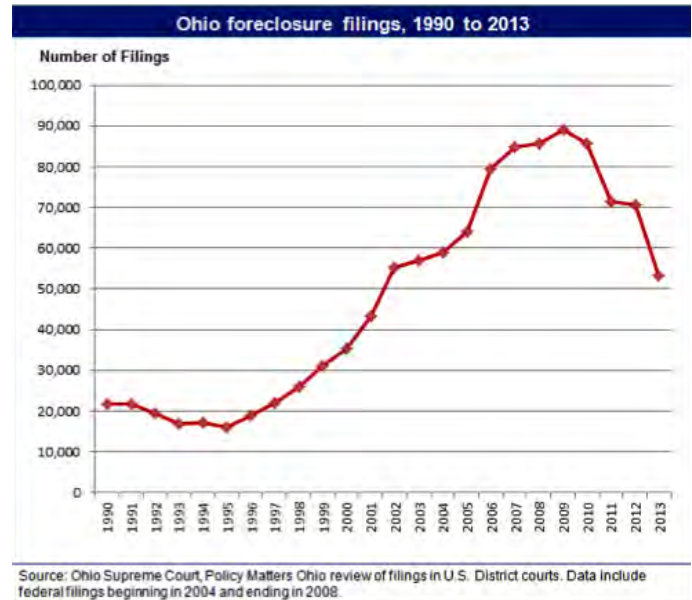*Northwest Warren Neighborhood Boundaries*
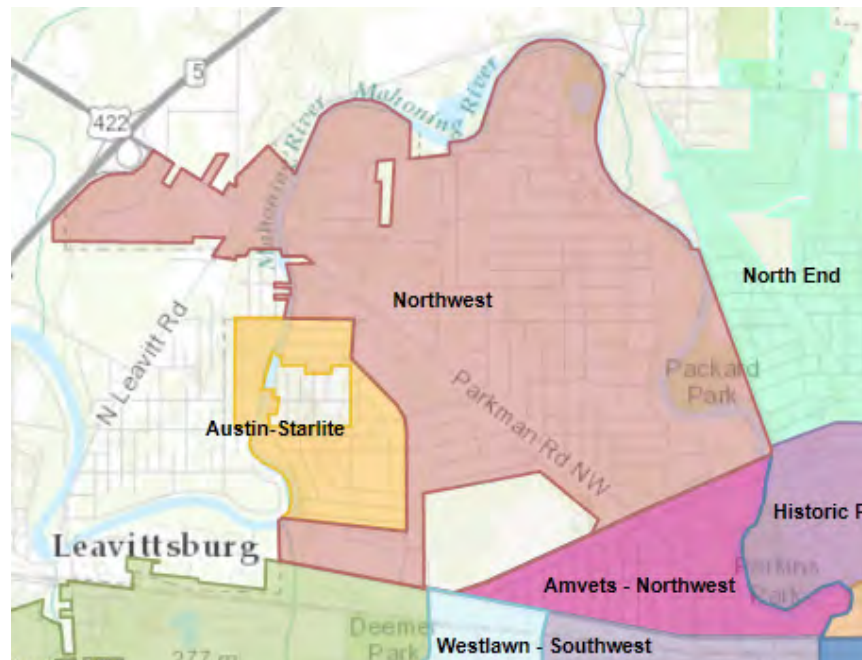
HOUSING MARKET ANALYSIS

Population Decline and Foreclosures

Warren has a population of approximately 41,000 people. It is the county seat and second largest city within the Youngstown-Warren Metropolitan statistical area. Warren has suffered continued population decline following the loss of many manufacturing jobs and problems created by the foreclosure crisis. Ohio had the highest percentage of homes in foreclosure, at 3.9%, nationwide in 2007 (Mortgage Bankers Association). Mortgage filings have been on the decline since their peak in 2009. In Trumbull County in 2009, there were 1605 new foreclosure filings. In 2013 that number had dropped to 1077. When comparing the number of filings per 1,000 people, Trumbull County ranks 13th out of 88 counties in highest number of foreclosure filings. Cuyahoga and Mahoning counties both currently have a higher foreclosure rate, while Summit County's is identical to Trumbull, and Ashtabula, Columbiana, Stark, and Portage all have lower rates. Though the foreclosure rate is falling, and has declined significantly since 2009, it is still significantly higher than at any time during the 1990s.

In addition to foreclosure increases, other shifts have also influenced the housing market within the City of Warren. The 2009 Revitalization strategy discussed the issue of "white flight," citing negative perceptions of public schools amongst the reasons for the trend. Between 1990 and 2010, the white population fell by 30% and the non-white population grew by 26%. Statewide, numbers of whites and non-whites have both increased over the same time period, supporting the concept that white residents are leaving cities, including Warren, but not decreasing overall.

Ohio Foreclosure Filings - Total

Source: Ohio Supreme Court, Policy Matters Ohio review of filings in U.S. District courts. Data include federal filings beginning in 2004 and ending in 2008.

Ohio Foreclosure Filings - By County

| County	Population	Filings	Filings per 1,000 ppl
Cuyahoga	1,263,154	8,829	6.99
Mahoning	233,869	1,306	5.58
Summit	541,824	2,829	5.22
Trumbull	**206,442**	**1,077**	**5.22**
Ashtabula	99,811	505	5.06
Columbiana	105,893	420	3.97
Stark	375,432	1,466	3.90
Portage	163,862	552	3.37
Geauga	93,972	303	3.22
State of Ohio	11,570,808	53,163	4.59

HOUSING MARKET ANALYSIS

Housing Affordability

Traditionally, housing affordability has been investigated by looking at the percentage of income spent on housing. The measure of affordability has been that no more than 30% of household income should be spent on housing. This measure did not take into account additional costs incurred by people who are able to find affordable housing, but not close to other opportunities for education and work. The H&T affordability index includes transportation in the assessment of housing affordability and stipulates that, in order to be considered affordable, a household should spend no more than 45% of its income on housing and transportation combined. In the City of Warren, the H&T affordability calculator shows that although Warren residents have affordable housing, when transportation costs are included 86.7% of Warren residents are paying greater that the 45% of income standard of affordability. According to the H&T Affordability index, Warren households on average spend 50.14% of their income on transportation and housing. The figure below shows the affordability of Warren's neighborhoods. Many residents of the Northwest side are paying considerably more on housing and transportation than the recommended amount. While residents of the Amvets neighborhood are only paying slightly more than recommended, with residents paying 45-50% of their income on housing and transportation, Most residents of Austin-Starlite and the Northwest are paying 50-60%. A small region of the Northwest is actually averaging over 60% of income spent on housing and transportation. This makes it one of the least affordable neighborhoods in the city.

"H+T has been developed as a more complete measure of affordability beyond the standard method of assessing only Housing Costs. By taking into account both the cost of housing as well as the cost of transportation associated with the location of the home, H+T provides the true cost of housing decisions. Dividing these costs by the representative income illustrates the Cost Burden placed on a Typical Household by combined H+T expenses." - htaindex.cnt.org, Center for Neighborhood Technology

Housing + Transportation Cost as a Percentage of Income
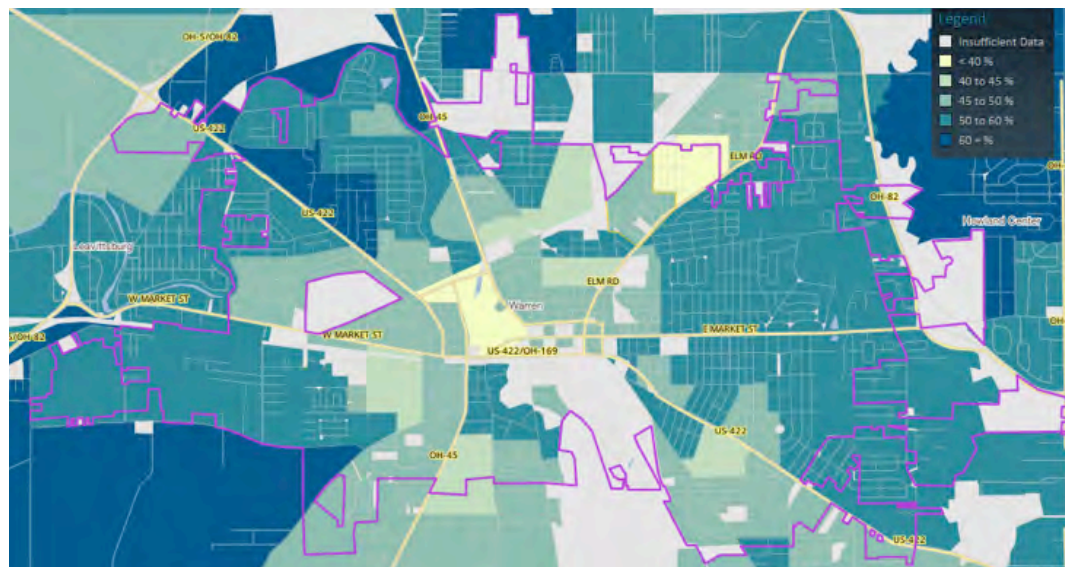
HOUSING MARKET ANALYSIS

Housing Size and Type

As shown in the table, Warren had a higher percentage of single-person households (35.6%) than the statewide average (28.9%) in 2010. Estimates for 2013 show that number is continuing to grow. The average household size is slightly lower than the average household size statewide. These facts suggest that Warren needs to pursue housing more conducive to singles and small families. In addition, Warren is seeing higher senior citizen population than the statewide average. More Warren households have at least one person 65 years old or older (28.9%) than statewide (25.3%). Housing will need to meet the needs of this aging population as well.

In Warren 29.8% of households have a child less than 18 years of age, which is extremely close to the statewide percentage of 31.3. This is slightly less than at the 2000 Census, which was 32.7%. At that time the statewide percentage of households with children was 34%. Although Warren has fewer households with children, that number is falling more slowly than the statewide number.
In the midst of growing single householders and aging household members, Warren should not forget to meet the needs of families, which continue to be a significant portion of households.

Compared to the state overall, Warren has a high percentage of renters. Specifically, Warren has an extremely high rate of renters in the 25-44 age cohort, where 58.4% of householders in the cohort are renters. Statewide, only

Figure 4 - Warren Household Data

2010 Census Data		
	City of Warren	State of Ohio
Households	17,003	4,603,435.00
Household Size by Percentage		
1 Person	35.60%	28.90%
2 Persons	31.20%	34.10%
3 Persons	15.10%	15.60%
4+ Persons	18.10%	21.40%
Average Houshold Size	2.30	2.44
% of Family Households	58.90%	65.00%
% of Households with children	29.80%	31.30%

2013 ACS 3 Year Estimates		
	City of Warren	State of Ohio
Households	17618	4551497
Household Size by Percentage		
1 Person	42.40%	30.00%
2 Persons	28.50%	34.60%
3 Persons	14.00%	15.20%
4+ Persons	15.10%	20.30%

Warren Householders

43%   57%

☐ Rent
☐ Own
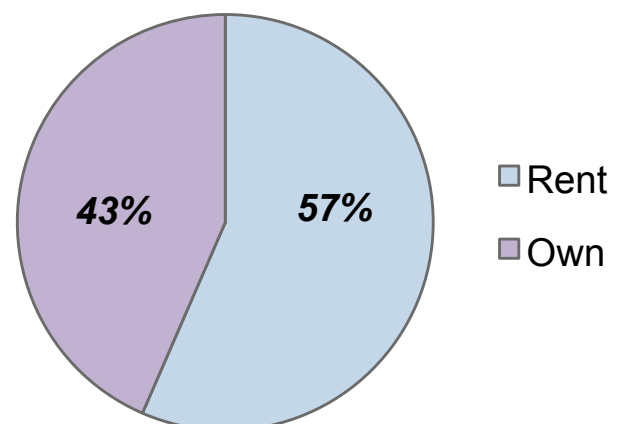
HOUSING MARKET ANALYSIS

Housing Size and Type

Warren Household Structure

FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS	City of Warren	State of Ohio
A. Married Couple with Child(ren)		
2000 Census	3073	1043264
2010 Census	1896	893911
2013 Estimates	1742	848376
CAGR, 2000-2013	-0.04	-0.02
Avg. Annual Gain (loss)	-102.38	-14991.38
% to total	9.89%	18.64%
B. Married Couple, No Child(ren)		
2000 Census	4338	1242534
2010 Census	3516	1279566
2013 Estimates	3311	1284165
CAGR, 2000-2013	-0.02	0
Avg. Annual Gain (loss)	-79	3203.38
% to total	18.79%	28.21%
C. Single Parent Family		
2000 Census	3228	468402
2010 Census	3516	523349
2013 Estimates	4220	511097
CAGR, 2000-2013	0.02	0.01
Avg. Annual Gain (loss)	76.31	3284.23
% to total	23.95%	11.23%

NON-FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS	City of Warren	State of Ohio
A. Single Person Households		
2000 Census	6344	1215614
2010 Census	6050	1328550
2013 Estimates	7467	1366342
CAGR, 2000-2013	0.01	0.01
Avg. Annual Gain (loss)	86.38	11594.46
% to total	42.38%	11.23%
B. All Non-Family Households		
2000 Census	7253	1452750
2010 Census	6990	1611806
2013 Estimates	8345	1631308
CAGR, 2000-2013	0.01	0.01
Avg. Annual Gain (loss)	84.00	13735.23
% to total	47.37%	35.84%

43% of residents in this cohort are renters. This high percentage of renters illustrates an additional challenge for the Warren housing market. Not only are there fewer people in the City, a smaller percentage of those people are choosing homeownership. During the public outreach process, concerns about renters in neighborhoods were common. Many homeowners share the feeling that renters are not as invested in the neighborhood and do not care about the maintenance of the property in which they live in or in the care of neighborhood assets.

One of the likely reasons that these issues were prevalent during public outreach is that, although Warren has a high percentage of renters, there is also a high percentage of residents who have lived in their home for more than 20 years. According to the 2013 ACS estimates, over 25% of Warren residents moved into their current residence prior to 1989, compared with 23% of Ohioans overall.

Warren is also losing married couple households. The 2009 Revitalization strategy showed that Warren was losing married couple households at a rate of 3.9% per year between 1990 and 2008. That rate between 2000 and 2013 shows that Warren is now losing married couple households at a compound rate of 4% per year, with an average yearly loss of 102 such households. This includes both married couples with and without children. Single Parent families have grown over this same time period at a compound annual growth rate of 2% per year since 2000.

HOUSING MARKET ANALYSIS

Northwest Warren Area Specifics

Relative to the rest of Warren, the Northwest has a decent housing market. In 2014, 104 residential homes were sold in the northwest, only the Northeast section of Warren saw more homes sold. The highest sale price in the Northwest in 2014 was $124,000. However, the lowest sale price was $6,651, illustrating that there are still some significant problems with the housing market. The average sale price was $35,489 and the median price was $25,000. A median sale price of $25,000 indicates that properties requiring significant renovation would likely be able to sell for more than their renovation costs, but not much more. Properties requiring only small investments would be able to be sold in this neighborhood for a profit.
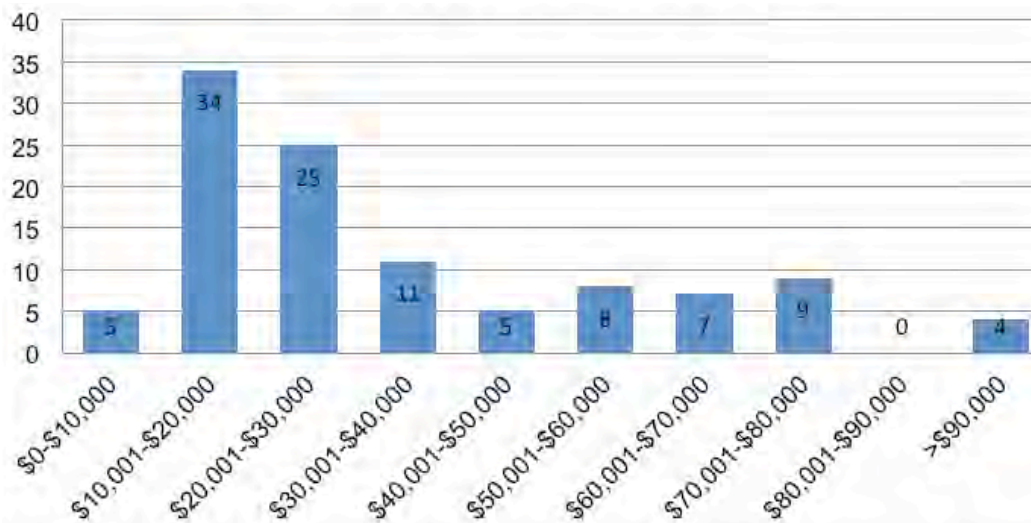
Prices of Northwest Warren Homes Sold in 2014

PUBLIC INPUT

The Engagement Process

A major goal of the Warren Community Challenge Program was to ensure that residents of each neighborhood are aware of the housing situation in their neighborhood and have an opportunity to provide input into what type of solutions they would like to see implemented in their neighborhoods. In order to accomplish this, we underwent a lengthy public engagement process, in several rounds. Meetings were open to the public, and divided by neighborhood. Our outreach process included four rounds of Public Outreach in each of the 5 areas of Warren.

PUBLIC INPUT

Round 1 - Identify Opportunities

The first round of engagement was an introduction to the Community Challenge Process and an opportunity for us to hear from residents about what they think about their own communities. During each meeting, residents went through a variation on a SWOT exercise, in which they talked about Strengths, Challenges (Weaknesses), the specific threat of vacant housing, and the opportunities and goals for the neighborhood.

In that first meeting, discussion groups were divided between residents who lived Southeast of Parkman Road and Northeast of Parkman Road.

In the Northwest neighborhoods Southeast of Parkman Road, including Austin-Starlite and Amvets, the strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities identified were:

Strengths	*Challenges*	*Goals & Opportunities*
• Packard Park/Music Hall • Community Gardens • Fire Station • Memorial Park • Parkman Rd. Plaza • Businesses on Parkman • Parkman Repaving • City Leaders as Residents • NWNA – Patrols, meetings, volunteers • Long Term Residents • River-canoeing • Churches • New Residents • Community Pride	• Elderly Folks Passing Away • Economy • Lack of Transportation • Stonegate (Crime/ Drugs Coming from that Area) • Garden Apartments • St. Joe's Hospital • Problem Property Owners • Lack of Legal Recourse for Dealing with Vacant Properties	• NWNA Willing to Care for Some properties • Deal with Problem Properties (Apartments)

In the Northwest neighborhoods Northwest of Parkman Road, including Austin-Starlite and Amvets, the strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities identified were:

Strengths	Challenges	Goals & Opportunities
• Churches • Stable Neighborhood • High Homeownership Rates • Low(er) Crime • Small Businesses • Good Neighbors • Salvageable Property • Uniform Housing Stock	• Storm Drains • Commercial Vacancy • Street Maintenance • Rental Property • Quality of Rental Property • Quality of Tenants • Housing Values • Residential Vacancy • Low Demo Need	• Rental Inspections • Landlord Accountability • Code Enforcement • Property Maintenance • Rental Registry • Repurposing of Vacant School Sites

PUBLIC INPUT

Round 2 - How Residents Describe the Community

In the second round of meetings, additional meetings were held and the five major areas were divided up into smaller neighborhoods. This allowed for the discussion to be more specific to each resident's immediate neighborhood. Additionally, one daytime meeting was held to accommodate individuals who were unable to make it to evening meetings. The data from the property inventory was presented in each meeting, so that residents could see that snapshot of data and provide any feedback they might have. Attendees during the Round 2 Meetings were asked to complete a brief survey which asked for their age, the length of time they had lived in Warren, their gender, what they cared about most in the valley, and what words they would use to describe their neighborhood.

The following word cloud comes from the words used to describe the Northwest neighborhood by the residents who attended the Community Challenge meetings:

*How Residents Describe the Community*

PUBLIC INPUT

Round 2 - Top Priorities

In the Northwest, the average age of attendees was 68 and the average time living in Warren was 51 years. Of those who chose to provide an answer,14 Female 15 Male.

Overall in the Northwest, when asked what they cared about most in the Valley, the top answers were Crime & Safety, Housing & Code Enforcement, and Vacancy. The top answers Southwest of Parkman were Crime & Safety, Housing & Code Enforcement, Vacancy and Streets. The top answers in the Northeast of Parkman meeting were Housing & Code Enforcement, Crime, Vacancy, People & Community, and Noise. The top concerns from the Noon meeting were Crime & Safety, Housing & Code Enforcement, and Vacancy.

The answers to these questions are valuable in framing the goals of each neighborhood. Given that crime & safety, housing & code enforcement, and vacancy are most important to the residents of the Northwest, these are the concerns that should be addressed as much as possible in efforts to improve the neighborhoods. Not every effort will be able to address all of these important topics, but in order to be successful each effort should have one of these considerations at the forefront.
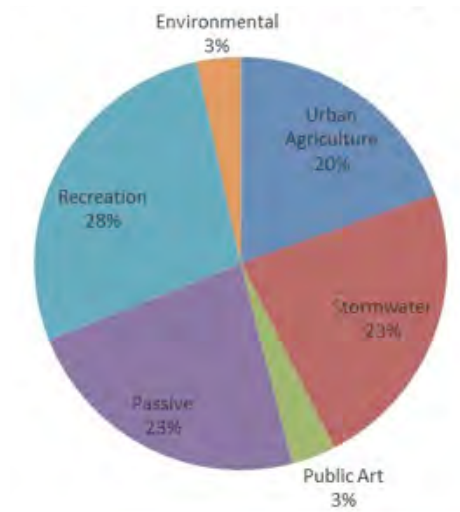
Top Priorities in the Valley
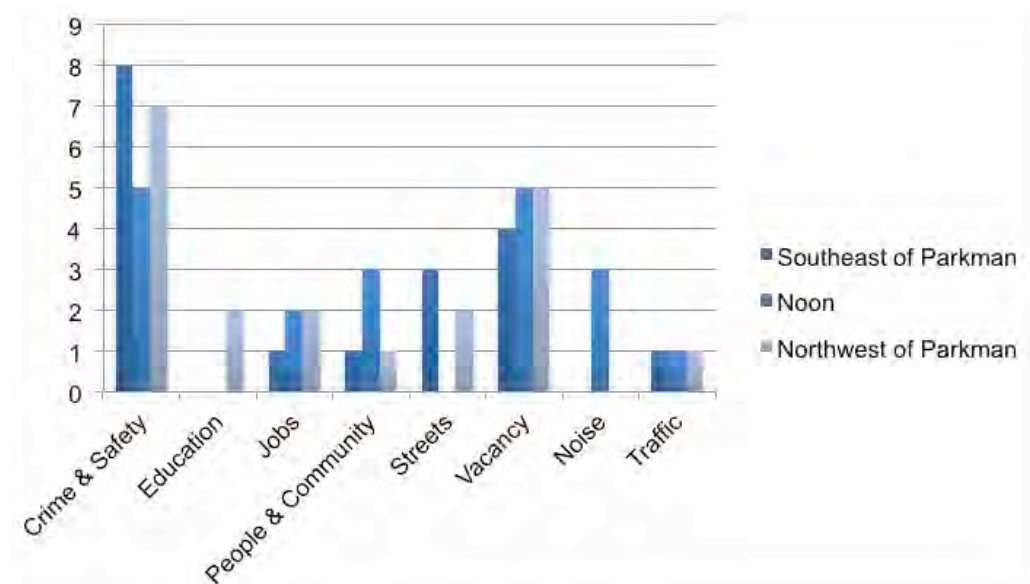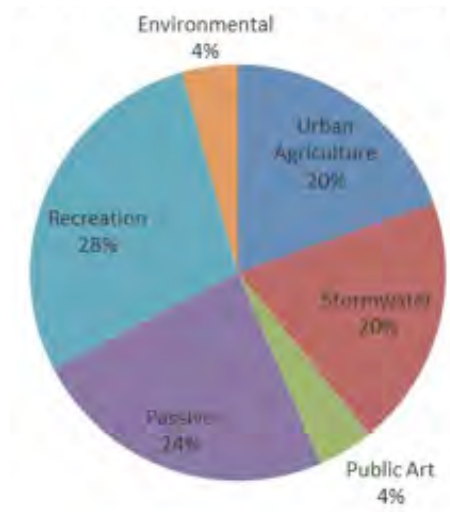
PUBLIC INPUT

Round 2 - Interest in Land-Use Strategies

In order to assess the interest in or objection to certain ways of reusing land, residents were provided with posters illustrating six types of land reuse: Urban Agriculture, Recreation, Environmental Remediation, Passive Green Space, Public Art, and Stormwater Management. Residents were asked to indicate, using a green dot, which uses appealed to them, and using a red dot, which uses did not. The Northwest a whole was relatively evenly divided between appreciating Urban Agriculture, Recreation, Passive Use, and Stormwater Management. They were not overall enthusiastic about uses that focus on environmental remediation or public art.

All Northwest Warren

Environmental 3%
Urban Agriculture 20%
Recreation 28%
Stormwater 23%
Passive 23%
Public Art 3%

Noon Meeting

Environmental 4%
Urban Agriculture 20%
Recreation 28%
Stormwater 20%
Passive 24%
Public Art 4%

Northwest of Parkman

Environmental 0%
Urban Agriculture 22%
Recreation 30%
Stormwater 22%
Passive 26%
Public Art 0%

Southwest of Parkman

Environmental 6%
Urban Agriculture 17%
Recreation 22%
Stormwater 33%
Passive 17%
Public Art 5%
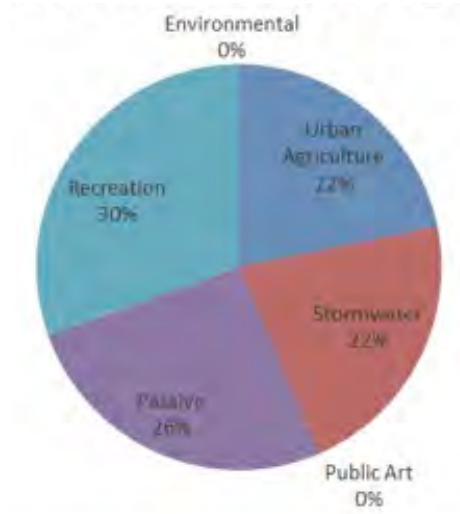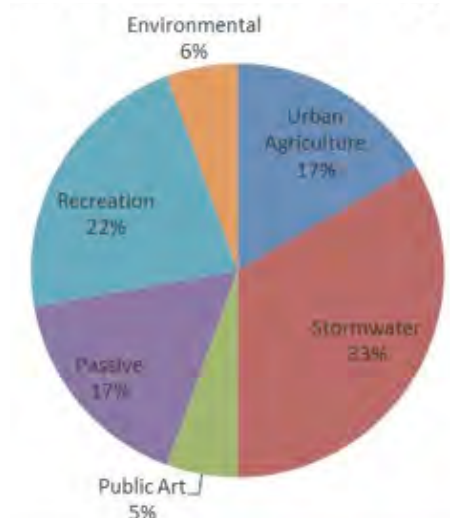
PUBLIC INPUT

Round 3 - Community Designs for Vacant Spaces

During Round 3 of the Public Engagement process residents were asked to consider what they would do with vacant land if they were designing a new use for the space. Residents were split into groups depending on their interests and given free rein to design any type of project they desired. In the Northeast residents were interested in a pool, which is beyond the scope of projects identified by this plan, and in a dog friendly space with a water feature.

The following sketches illustrate some of the ideas that came from the public outreach process. Designs were provided by Haylee Martinko.

Dog Park with Water Feature

CURRENT HOUSING SITUATION IN WARREN

Housing Stock Inventory Grading Scale

In order to assess the full housing situation facing the city of Warren, the Warren Community Challenge Program inventoried all of the residential parcels within the city. In order to accomplish this task, TNP partnered with Youngstown State University's Center for Urban and Regional Studies to design a map that could be edited in the field through the use of the ESRI ArcGIS mapping application. This enabled data to be inputted in real time and pictures to be taken and uploaded simultaneously.

The inventory was only able to look at the exterior of each home. In order to gain as much information as possible, each element of the house was graded on an A-F scale, with "A" equating to perfect and an "F" rating meaning unsafe. The goal for occupied property was to have a complete database that allows TNP to locate properties that are potentially in need of assistance. In the future, this data will allow TNP to reach out to homeowners who may be interested in programs to paint or power wash their homes, to get new gutters, to repair a porch, etc.

For each vacant property, in addition to the grading of each element an overall grade was given to the property. These grades allow for the categorization of properties into those which are good candidates for sale or rehabilitation, those which may be salvageable, and those which are in need of immediate demolition.

A - Excellent

Landscaping/Grass
Recently cut/trimmed

Windows/Doors
Newer, clean, good trim, no cracks/missing panes

Paint/Siding
Clean, no touch-ups necessary

Gutters
Newer, clean, empty, well-maintained

Roof
Newer, no issues

Porch
Well-maintained, no touch-ups necessary

Garage
Well-maintained, no touch-ups necessary

Driveway
Well-maintained, no touch-ups necessary

B - Good

Landscaping/Grass
Could be mowed/
trimmed more
frequently

Windows/Doors
In good condition,
minor touch-ups, no
cracks/missing panes

Paint/Siding
Cleaning or minor
touch-ups, some paint
chipping

Gutters
Older, clean or mostly
clean

Roof
Older, no major issues

Porch
Maintained, minor
touch-ups only

Garage
Maintained, minor
touch-ups only

Driveway
Maintained, minor
touch-ups only

C - Fair

Landscaping/Grass
Landscape is unkempt,
needs attention

Windows/Doors
Cracked windows
present, trim cracked,
doors need repair

Paint/Siding
major painting required

Gutters
Need repair and/or are
very clogged

Roof
Deteriorating, shingles
are weathered

Porch
Needs repairs/major
paint

Garage
Needs repairs, missing
garage door

Driveway
Crumbling, major
cracks, weeds

D - Deteriorated

Landscaping/Grass
High grass, weeds,
overgrown foliage

Windows/Doors
Missing windows
or severely broken
windows present, trim
cracked

Paint/Siding
Major painting required,
open holes, some
siding missing

Gutters
Falling off, missing

Roof
Holes present,
shingles missing and/
or unstable, needs
replaced

Porch
Needs major repairs/
major paint

Garage
Needs major repairs

Driveway
Needs to be repaved,
overgrown

F - Unsafe/Hazard

Landscaping/Grass
Cannot reach doors/
see structure due
to overgrown grass/
foliage

Windows/Doors
House is completely
open

Paint/Siding
Major painting required,
major damage to walls,
significant missing
siding

Gutters
Missing

Roof
In danger of collapse

Porch
In danger of collapse

Garage
In danger of collapse

Driveway
Barely visible, needs to
be repaved

CURRENT HOUSING SITUATION IN WARREN

Vacancy Data

The TNP survey revealed that 10% of housing on the Northwest side of Warren is vacant. In our A-F rating scale, homes with A and B ratings are considered salvageable, C homes are considered potentially salvageable, and D and F homes are considered non-salvageable. Homes were classified as non-salvageable if a significant portion of the home was considered to need major repairs. Most notable problems of non-salvageable homes include damaged roofs, missing windows and or siding, and structural damage to porch or walls. Homes were classified as potentially salvageable if there were some major repairs needed, but the majority of exterior repairs were minor. Homes were considered salvageable if there were only minor repairs needed.
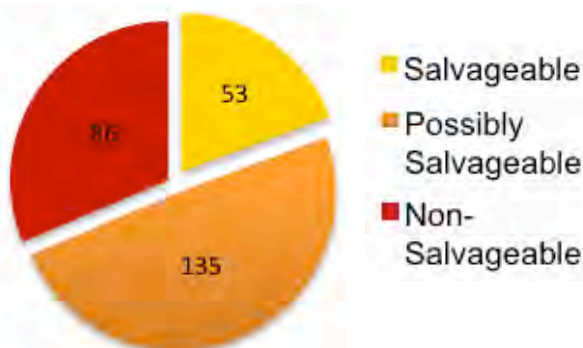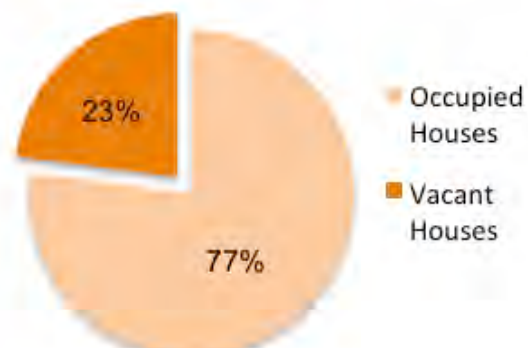
Percent Vacancy
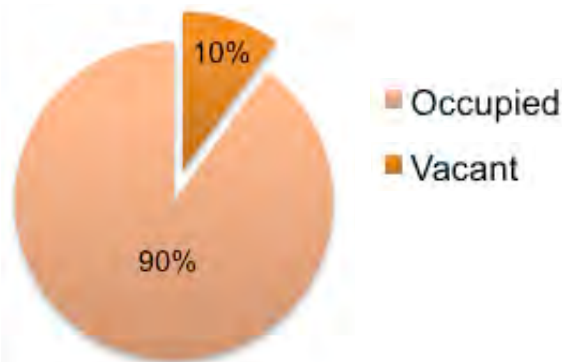
Vacant Structures
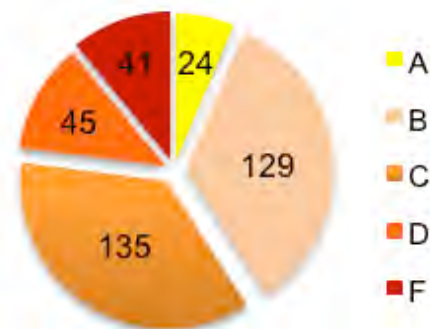
Potential for Salvage

Amvets Vacancy

CURRENT HOUSING SITUATION IN WARREN

Vacancy Data

What can neighbors do if a house is in bad shape?

Step One: If property is in bad condition, report to the Warren City Health Department

Step Two: Check ownership and tax delinquency of the property on the Trumbull County Auditor's Website. If you need assistance or property is tax delinquent, call TNP/ TCLRC at 330-469-6828.

Step Three: If property is not tax delinquent, attempt to contact owner via the address

Of the 374 vacant structures, 86 are classified as non-salvageable, also referred to as "demolition candidates," 135 are classified as potentially salvageable, and 53 are classified as salvageable. With an average demolition cost in the Warren area at approximately $8,000, this means a minimum of $688,000 of investment would be needed to clear up the blight in the Northwest Neighborhood. Though there is a reasonable housing market in most of the Northwest, the majority of vacancies are concentrated within the Amvets neighborhood, resulting in those properties being unlikely to be salvageable. A reasonable estimate of how many "C" rated properties would need to be demolished is 50%. This puts a conservative estimate of the overall required investment at $1,228,000.

Housing Inventory Data by Neighborhood

	Amvets	Austin-Starlite	Northwest
Percent of Structures that are Vacant	23%	6%	5%
Vacant Parcels	31%	10%	8%
Vacant Land	12%	4%	3%
Unsalvageable Vacant Structures	40%	5%	7%
Salvageable Vacant Structures	22%	69%	59%
Possibly Salvageable Vacant Structures	38%	25%	34%

The above table shows important facts uncovered by the inventory. The majority of the Northwest has very low vacancy rates, compared to other areas of the city. However, the Amvets neighborhood is the opposite. With close to a quarter of the houses in the Amvet's neighborhood vacant and 40% of those vacancies rated as unsalvageable, this is one of the highest demolition need areas of the city. In addition to vacant houses, there is also a high percentage of vacant land. The Austin-Starlite neighborhood and the rest of the Northwest area are much more stable. Austin-Starlite shows slightly more vacancy than Northwest, but the difference is negligible. Both areas also show a high percentage of salvageable vacant property, suggesting that renovation and sale of properties should be an attainable goal in these neighborhoods.

CURRENT HOUSING SITUATION IN WARREN
Occupied House Data

Our survey also examined occupied housing within the neighborhoods. The following chart illustrates the average ratings for each element of an occupied house within the Northwest Side of Warren.

The data on occupied housing shows that, out of 3670 occupied houses, 857 received a "C" or lower on at least one element of the grading system. A "C" rating on an element indicates that a significant repair of this element is needed, or in the case of grass or landscaping that more frequent attention is needed. This means that 23% of occupied properties in the Northwest would likely benefit from increased code enforcement.

Siding, windows, and porch are the main elements contributing to an appearance of blight. In the Northwest, only 8% of properties in the Northwest overall received a "C" or lower on at least one of these elements. However, once again the Amvets neighborhood within the northwest shows significantly higher need of code enforcement. In the Amvets neighborhood, 20% of properties have a C or lower rating on one of these main elements.

Homes Benefiting from Code Enforcement
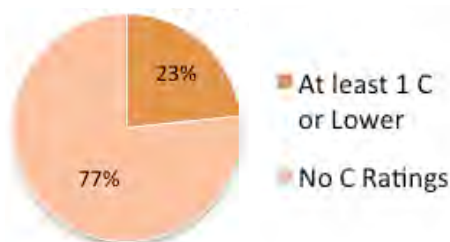
Number of Houses with C or Lower Rating in Each Category
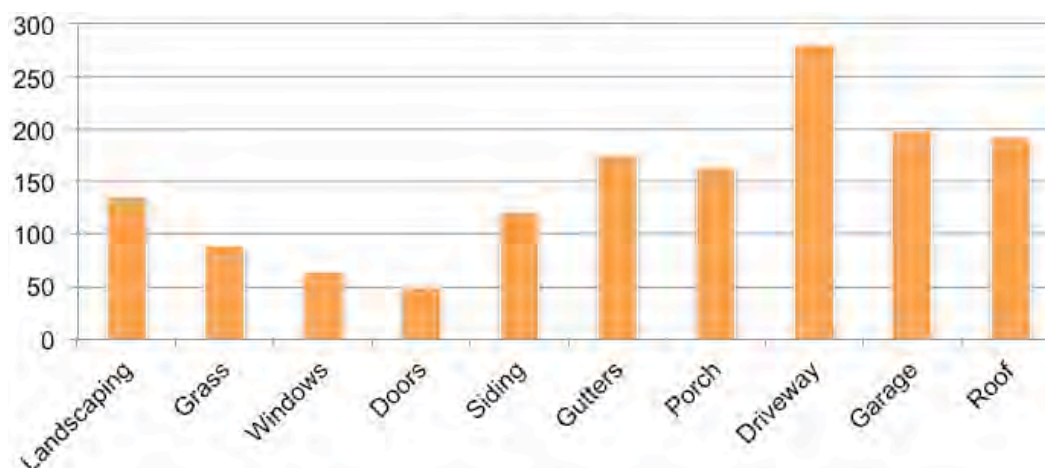
NEIGHBORHOOD CATEGORIZATIONS

Defining Designation Categories

For the purpose of providing the most comprehensive recommendations for each neighborhood, as pertains to its particular challenges and opportunities, this plan divides neighborhoods into four possible categories.

When the Poggymeyer Design group created the 2009 Revitalization Strategy, they used four different designations, this plan also uses four designations, but with slightly different names. In this way, the following designations mirror those in the 2009 Revitalization, but remain distinct for the purpose of clarity between plans. In addition these designations mirror those of the OFHA NIP program.

Category	Description	Neighborhood(s)
Healthy	Community Challenge Inventory showed less than 5% vacancy, and minimal repairs needed on occupied homes. Additionally a healthy neighborhood shows some movement in the housing market and sales that, at minimum, occur at a value higher than $30,000.	No neighborhoods in the Northwest met the definition for Healthy Neighborhoods.
Improvement	Improvement neighborhoods are those neighborhoods where vacancy is below 10%, and minimal repairs are needed on occupied homes.	The Northwest neighborhood and the Austin-Starlite neighborhood both fall into the category of Improvement Neighborhoods
Revitalization	Revitalization Neighborhoods are those neighborhoods where vacancy is between 10% and 15% and repairs are needed on many occupied homes.	No neighborhoods in the Northwest met the definition for Revitalization neighborhoods.
Redevelopment	Redevelopment Neighborhoods are those neighborhoods where vacancy is above 15% and repairs are needed on many occupied homes OR where vacant land exceeds 33% of the available parcels.	The Amvets neighborhood falls into the category of a Redevelopment neighborhood.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal: All residents should feel safe in their neighborhood

Property Stabilization (Short Term)

High Priority for Redevelopment Neighborhoods: Amvets
Medium Priority for Improvement Neighborhoods: Austin-Starlite and Northwest

Safety is a primary concern in high-demolition need neighborhoods. Vacant properties attract criminal activity and thus pose a safety risk for the neighborhood.

Properties vacant in the Amvets neighborhood need to be immediately boarded and secured, to prevent the breaking of windows and the entry of unwanted persons. Properties in other areas of the Northwest should be closely monitored and secured if necessary.

Properties should be boarded using techniques that make an effort to keep up neighborhood aesthetics. Painting of boards can help improve the aesthetics. Boards can be brightly painted adding an artistic element to the neighborhood, or they can be painted black and given accents to appear more similar to windows.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal: All residents should feel safe in their neighborhood

Demolition (Short Term)

High Priority for Redevelopment Neighborhoods: Amvets
Medium Priority for Improvement Neighborhoods: Austin-Starlite and Northwest

Given the steady housing market in the Northwest, renovation should be considered before demolition, but demolitions will still be necessary in cases of unsalvageable properties. Due to the presence of many unsalvageable properties in the Amvets neighborhoods, demolitions will be necessary.

The demolition process is already underway and has been assisted by the federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP), Ohio's Moving Ohio Forward Program (MOF), and Ohio's Neighborhood Initiative Program (NIP). The Community Challenge Program was collecting supporting data and providing strategic planning throughout the MOF and NIP. Conversations with residents and city officials, along with data collected through the Community Challenge Property Inventory helped establish several priority concerns and from those priority concerns, priority designations were given to certain areas. Priority concerns are as follows: Health and Safety, Proximity to Schools or other Neighborhood Assets, Corridors and Concentration of Blight. A set of 10 priority areas were identified using these categories to establish a priority order. The Harding-Northeast area falls into one of these priority areas.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal: All residents should feel safe in their neighborhood

Demolition (Short Term) - Continued

Moving forward, these priorities should continue to inform the strategies for demolition in the City of Warren. When an overwhelming safety concern exists, the property should be immediately demolished with available funds. If no such overwhelming concern exists, then the second consideration should be the currently established priority area designations used by the Trumbull County Land Bank. Remaining properties should be evaluated to see if they are near to significant assets, corridors (or other major thoroughfares), or if they are within pre-existing concentrations of blight. The diagram on page 26 illustrates the flow of these considerations.

The NIP program is currently demolishing houses through Ohio's County Land Banks. The Trumbull County Land Bank secured 3.2 Million dollars through this program to demolish blighted properties throughout the county, with a focus on Warren City. These properties must be blighted tax foreclosures that enter Land Bank ownership. Many properties will be eligible for this program, but some properties do not meet the tax foreclosure requirements and will therefore not be able to be demolished with these funds. The Northeast neighborhood falls outside of the priority areas for the NIP demolitions. Consequently if demolitions should be needed in this area additional funds will be needed for these and any non-tax delinquent property.

We recommend that the city consider creating a demolition fund, to be

Policy Recommendation:

As different municipalities consider creating funds for demolition, Warren officials and residents should be participating in state and local government conversations about demolition funding. Warren should keep an eye out for successful models in Ohio, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, where many legacy cities are facing the same challenges.

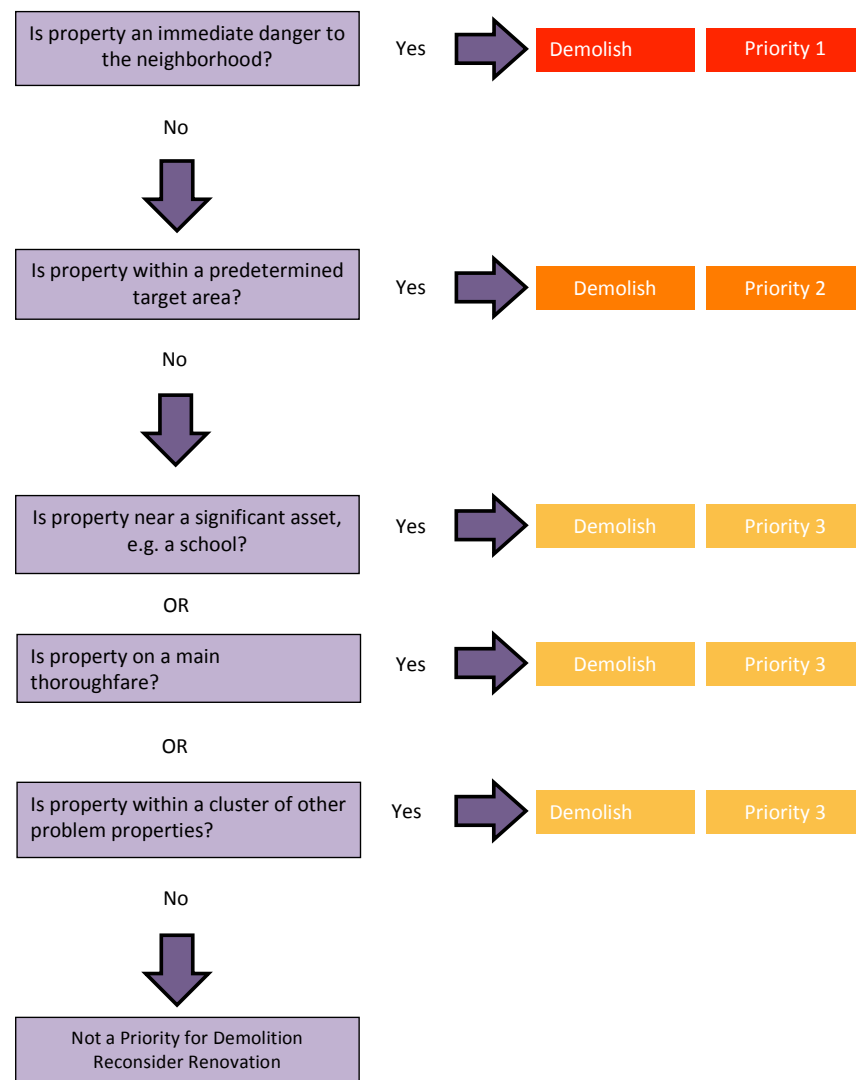| Objective	Expected Outcome	Implementation
Secure all vacant properties	Decrease in criminal activity	TNP COCS Program and Volunteers
Strategic Demolition of tax delinquent properties through the Trumbull County Land Bank	Increased property values, improved safety and stability of neighborhoods	In 2015-2016 utilize NIP funding to complete necessary demolitions. Following the expenditure of those funds, seek additional funding for land bank demolitions
Strategic Demolition of non-tax delinquent properties	Increased property values, improved safety and stability of neighborhoods	City of Warren
Demolition Fund	Faster Demolition of problem properties	City Council should allocate funding for demolitions.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal: All residents should feel safe in their neighborhood

Demolition Guidelines Decision Tree

used on properties which are not eligible for NIP. Even a small amount of money could mean the difference between a stable block, and a blighted one. Because the Land Bank currently has money to demolish land bank owned properties, the city should prioritize properties that are non-salvageable, but are not tax delinquent. We further recommend that the City Health Department create a priority list, above and beyond the current "Board Ordered Demolition List" that addresses homes that pose the most significant risk to health and safety.

Is property an immediate danger to the neighborhood? — Yes → Demolish — Priority 1

No ↓

Is property within a predetermined target area? — Yes → Demolish — Priority 2

No ↓

Is property near a significant asset, e.g. a school? — Yes → Demolish — Priority 3

OR

Is property on a main thoroughfare? — Yes → Demolish — Priority 3

OR

Is property within a cluster of other problem properties? — Yes → Demolish — Priority 3

No ↓

Not a Priority for Demolition Reconsider Renovation

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal: All vacant green spaces should be productive and beneficial to the community

Side Lots (Short Term)

High Priority for Improvement Neighborhoods: Austin-Starlite and Northwest
Medium Priority for Redevelopment Neighborhoods: Amvets

Where possible, vacant lots should be sold to adjacent property owners through the Trumbull County Land Bank and the City of Warren Land Bank. This program is more successful in more stable neighborhoods, Healthy and Improvement neighborhoods, where residents are likely to desire to own and care for their new properties. This should also be pursued in the Amvets neighborhood, though it may be less likely to be successful given the high demolition need and low homeownership of the area.

If a property is tax delinquent, it should be foreclosed on so that it may enter the Trumbull County Land Bank. If a property is not tax delinquent, an effort should be made to contact the current property owner and attempt to broker a sale of the lot or surrender into the Trumbull County Land Bank. Residents in each community should be made aware of the process to have a property taken over by the Trumbull County Land Bank. This information should be made readily available on the health department page of the city's website. When complaints are made regarding a property, this information should be shared between the City of Warren health department, TNP, The Trumbull County Land Bank, and the relevant neighborhood group.

The maintenance of vacant property within the City of Warren needs to be a shared responsibility. If a vacant property is left too long without being cared for, it becomes more difficult to fix. Trash and debris can create obstacles for mowing, as can larger vegetation. Community members should attempt to maintain vacant property where possible.

The city could assess fees for mowing properties onto the tax bill; this would assist in foreclosure proceedings so that the property may be taken in by the land bank and transferred to a responsible owner. Additionally, the city should explore possibilities for assessing fees for maintenance even when that maintenance is performed by a neighborhood association or community group.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal: All vacant green spaces should be productive and beneficial to the community

Lot Greening (Short Term)

Studies, including "More Than Just an Eyesore: Local Insights on Vacant Land and Urban Health" published in J Urban Health (Garvin et al.), have shown that greening of vacant lots reduces property crimes and makes resident feel safer in their communities. Given the already high concentration of vacant land in the Amvets neighborhood, the high need for demolition, and the low property values and sales in the neighborhood, greening spaces will become an important aspect to creating safer neighborhoods. These strategies can also be used in other areas of the Northwest as necessary.

One place this has already been successful is at the Dickey Community Garden. This community garden, located on the former site of Dickey elementary, provides a spot for community members to gather and grow their own foods. Central to the Amvets neighborhood, this is a key piece of property.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal: All vacant green spaces should be productive and beneficial to the community

Lot Greening (Short Term) - Continued

Currently, through the Neighborhood Initiative Program being run by OHFA, there is money available for the greening of vacant lots following demolitions. Using this money is a critical way to ensure that newly vacant lots do not contribute to falling property values or crime in the neighborhood. TNP has organized the use of these funds through the Lots to Love Program.

The Lots to Love Program should be actively utilized by residents in the Northwest, particularly in the Amvets neighborhood. This program provides for the installation of greening projects including, but not limited to, gardens, pocket parks, recreation spaces, and rain gardens. Through the program, residents agree to be responsible for the maintenance of the lots, in exchange for the investment of the installation. As more residents begin to see the value of these community spaces, that will encourage continued investment.

Policy Recommendation:

To protect current community gardens and other green spaces, and to encourage further development of such spaces, the City should adopt an urban agriculture/green space land use.

Objective	Expected Outcome	Implementation
Place vacant lots back on tax roll through ownership	Increased tax revenue, blight elimination	Greater publicity of Land Bank and related efforts
Increase number of vacant lots that are "greened"	Improved safety and stability of neighborhoods	TNP Lots to Love program
Increase number of community gardens	Increased property values, improved safety and stability of neighborhoods	TNP GROW Program
Urban Agriculture Zoning	Improved access to funding for urban agriculture, simplify procedures for urban gardeners	Create urban agriculture land use designation and garden district

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal: All neighborhoods should have involved residents who can assist in finding solutions to community concerns

Increase Neighborhood Engagement (Short & Long Term)

High Priority for All Neighborhoods

Raymond John Wean Foundation

Neighborhood SUCCESS and Leadership Program Emerging leaders from Neighborhood SUCCESS will build fundamental leadership skills with an intentional focus on Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and understanding the dynamics of race, class, power, gender and age. Visit www.rjweanfdn.org for more information.

A common concern during our public engagement process was that many residents were apathetic and unlikely to become engaged. In the Northwest there is one very active neighborhood association, the Northwest Neighborhood Association (NWNA). NWNA has regular meetings, events, and a block watch. Austin-Starlite had a neighborhood association, but it no longer meets. The Amvet's neighborhood does not have a neighborhood association, and is also not covered by the NWNA block watch. Austin-Starlite would benefit from a revitalization of their neighborhood association. Amvets would benefit from the creation of a Neighborhood Assocation. Residents of Austin-Starlite and Amvets should consider taking advantage of local leadership training that would assist them in learning how to create and sustain a group like a neighborhood association.. NWNA can be a resource for its close neighbors in how to create a vibrant neighborhood association.

During the public engagement process the vast majority of attendees were over 50 years of age. It is critical that a younger population become engaged to support the neighborhood. TNP, Neighborhood Associations, and MVOC should plan events with specific youth focus or youth elements. Additionally, youth should be given leadership responsibilities and help in decision making for groups.

Many attendees at the Community Challenge outreach meetings were unaware of the neighborhood associations in their own neighborhoods. These meetings were a great opportunity to help connect people with their neighborhood associations, but greater effort should be made to improve the visibility of the neighborhood associations. TNP should seek to continue public engagement efforts and to work with neighborhood associations to help increase attendance. The Warren Neighborhood Leadership Council has stopped meeting regularly, which inhibits neighborhood groups from finding out what is going on in other neighborhoods. This group should reorganize and continue to meet, so that the neighborhood associations can assist one another.

Objective	Expected Outcome	Implementation
Improve Leadership	Engage more people on an ongoing basis in the community	Wean Foundation Neighborhood SUCCESS and Leadership Program, MVOC and OOC Leadership Trainings
Engage more young people	Increased capacity for neighborhood groups	Plan youth oriented events, engage youth in decision making
Increase visibility of Neighborhood Organizations	Increased capacity for neighborhood groups	Revive WNLC, host networking evenings

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal - All neighborhoods should have housing that is well maintained

Vacant Property Registration and Foreclosure Bond

High Priority for All Neighborhoods

The City of Warren enacted vacant property and foreclosure bond legislation that has, up to this point in time, been underutilized. The legislation mandates that owners of vacant property register the property within 30 days of it becoming vacant. It further mandates that banks who foreclose on a property put up a $10,000 bond to be available to the City of Warren should any steps need to be taken to maintain or secure the property, up to and including demolition of the property. In other cities this type of legislation has been successful and has provided a cushion of available funding for many foreclosed properties. Warren has not been able to commit the necessary time towards making this legislation effective.

The City of Warren needs to review the process for securing the bonds associated with the legislation. One person in the health department or Mayor's office should be responsible for contact with Banks and securing appropriate paperwork. The bond registry should be updated monthly. Banks who have not complied should be notified monthly.

Owners of any properties that are brought to the attention of the City via regular inspections, complaints, or partnerships with neighborhood associations should be notified quarterly that they are in violation of the vacant property registration.

In Ohio, the City of Youngstown has been the most effective at enforcing their foreclosure bond legislation. The City of Warren should work with Youngstown to understand best practices for enforcement and increase compliance with the law.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal - All neighborhoods should have housing that is well maintained

Code Enforcement Part 1 (Short Term)

High Priority for All Neighborhoods

Example:

The City of Arvada Colorado trains "Citizen Inspectors" to understand the code compliance process and those citizens are allowed to "patrol" the neighborhood for code violations and begin the compliance process

The city, neighborhood associations, and community organizations should work together to enhance code enforcement efforts within the City of Warren. While complaint-driven, reactive code enforcement techniques function well in areas with low vacancy and majority well-maintained property, proactive approaches to abate code violations are necessary in areas with high vacancy and low maintenance standards.

Given limited resources, efforts to improve code enforcement should take advantage of the presence of engaged neighborhood associations and community members.

The city has a great resource on their webpage called "Whose Job Is It in The City of Warren" This flyer shows who to call when various problems arise in the community. Many neighborhood associations already share this information, but more should make this flyer available and should make sure that new residents have this information as well.

During the public outreach process, many residents expressed concerns that they do not feel that reporting problems results in action taken. A potential solution to this problem is to involve the community in patrolling for and or reporting code violations in an organized manor or to identify an intermediary organization to assist with basic code enforcement. Some communities have taken to allowing citizens to begin the compliance process through sending notices. Only after these notices are ignored do the citizens then need to refer the case to code enforcement officials. The City has done an excellent job providing Community Policing training to community members; code enforcement training could operate in much the same way.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal - All neighborhoods should have housing that is well maintained

Code Enforcement Part 1 (Short Term) - Continued

Public shaming is another tactic used by many cities, particularly to encourage compliance by notorious slumlords within the city. Many cities have brought together a variety of community stakeholders to identify the most notorious owners of derelict or noncompliant investment properties (slumlords). Then they develop agreements with the judicial branch, federal agencies like HUD, and banks, to participate in aggressive enforcement of code violations. The "Most Wanted" list is circulated via the press, the city website, and other entities. Every department with the authority to inspect the property then does so within a short timeframe and all aggressively cite violations. Findings and progress are reported to the press.

When dealing with owner-occupants of properties it is likely that code violation results from a lack of knowledge about repairs, rather than a willful desire not to fix the problem. The city should consider creating a "resource guide" to be provided to code violators with information on how to fix the violation. This could include listings of lawn and tree service companies, towing services, junk removal, property maintenance procedures, etc.

Example:

The City of Toledo "Dirty Dozen" The City of Toledo identifies 12 property owners that are contributing to blight in a neighborhood. They then used targeted enforcement of as many agencies as possible to cite violations. Location, picture, and name of owner are provided to the media and placed on the city's website. Funding was provided by Department of Neighborhoods, The Department of Economic Development, The Nuisance Abatement Trust Fund, and other federal agencies.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal - All neighborhoods should have housing that is well maintained

Code Enforcement Part 2

High Priority for All Neighborhoods

Another concern expressed by residents and an issue the came up during the research process for the Community Challenge Project is a lack of modernization in the procedures for addressing code violations and for getting information regarding rental registry, condemned and boarded ordered property. The City currently works with New World Systems, using their LOGOS.net software in several departments. This company provides an excellent Community Development software package that would allow for different departments to work together and share information quickly and easily. This software also has the option for community access to certain information. Through this software citizens would have the opportunity to see, for example, if a citation had been issued to a specific property owner, if that property was either condemned or board ordered, etc. The city should purchase and utilize this software for better internal and external communication. As an added bonus, the information from this Community Challenge property survey could be integrated into the software, so that city officials could see the data alongside their own. The data collected includes ratings of various aspects of housing, from the porch to the roof. Ratings of C or lower indicate a potential code violation. This data can be used as a basis for an efficient windshield survey or similar effort to quickly obtain a list of violators from whom to encourage compliance.

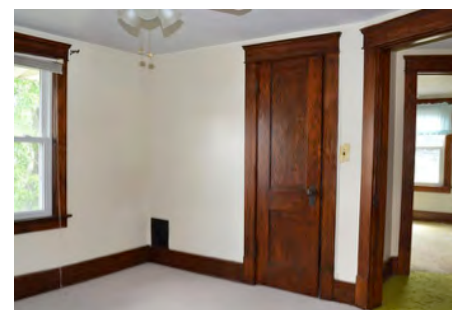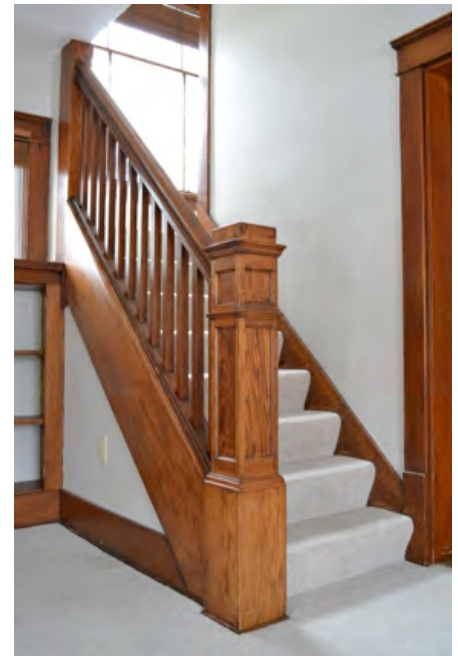| Objective	Expected Outcome	Implementation
Increase Community Involvement In Code Enforcement	Reduce burden on City, increased compliance	Train citizens in code enforcement and establish procedure for citizen citation of violations
Create High Visibility of Repeat Violators	Increase compliance by repeat violators	Create a "Most Wanted" list: aggressively cite properties, publicize owner names, etc.
Improve Knowledge and Ability to Fix Violations	Increased compliance	Create and distribute "resource guide."

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal - All neighborhoods should have housing that is well maintained

Rehabilitation (Long Term)

High Priority for All Neighborhoods Long Term

When possible, properties that are salvageable and marketable should be preserved and renovated. In the relatively strong neighborhoods of Northwest and Austin-Starlite, renovation should be the first priority for all properties that have not received and unsalvageable designation. In the Amvets neighborhood, more close attention needs to be paid whether or not the cost to renovate will outweigh the eventual sale price of the property. In all neighborhoods, if property cannot be sold for renovation to an owner occupant or responsible investor, demolitions should be considered. The Trumbull County Land Bank already operates with distinct attention paid to the ability of the purchaser to renovate the property and with preference for owner occupants. Other programs, if established, should also operate under these parameters to avoid negligent investors.

Rehabilitation in the Amvets neighborhood must currently be considered on a case by case basis. Many of the properties in this area will not be able to be sold for more than the cost of their renovation. For this reason, rehabilitation is a long-term goal for Amvets. Over the next two years, the demolition and greening of the neighborhoods will help to stabilize the neighborhood property values. Rehabilitation of property is much more likely to be successful following these efforts, and will become a stronger priority as the neighborhood becomes more stable.

Objective	Expected Outcome	Implementation
Increase homeownership	Increased tax base, improved neighborhood vibrancy	Prioritize and incentivize owner-occupants
Renovate and sell tax-foreclosed properties	Increased tax base, improved neighborhood vibrancy	Land Bank facilitates sale to owners with agreement for complete renovation of property
Renovate and sell all vacant properties	Increased tax base, improved neighborhood vibrancy	Demolition and greening of worst properties to stabilize neighborhood, increase viability of investments