

# SYCAMORE GROVES

## Neighborhood Assessment Report

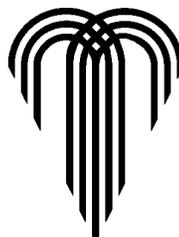
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Neighborhood Workshop Date: June 12, 1999



**FOCUS Kansas City**  
City Planning and Development Department  
City of Kansas City, Missouri

City of Fountains



Heart of the Nation

<b>SERVICE</b>	<b>AGENCY OR CITY DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>PHONE</b>
<b>City Services</b>	<b>Action Center</b>	<b>513-1313</b>
Abandoned Cars on Private Property	Neighborhood and Community Services	871-3800
Abandoned Cars on Public Property	Kansas City, MO Police Department	234-5000
Abandoned Homes	Neighborhood and Community Services	871-3800
Air Quality	Health Department	513-6314
Animal Control	Neighborhood and Community Services	513-2710
Building Permits	Codes Administration	513-1451
Bulky Item Pick Up	Environmental Management	513-3490
Curb Reconstruction	Public Works	513-2590
Dangerous Buildings/ Demolition	Neighborhood and Community Services	871-3800
Housing Code Violations	Neighborhood and Community Services	871-3800
Illegal Dumping Hotline	Environmental Management	513-3485
Neighborhood Assistance/ Services	Neighborhood and Community Services	513-3265
Paint Program	Neighborhood and Community Services	513-3266
Parks and Community Centers	Board of Parks and Recreation	871-5600
Potholes	Public Works	513-2777
Senior Citizens Transportation	Share-a-Fare/ATA	842-9070
Sewers - Problems	Water Department After Hours	513-2180 513-2109
Sidewalks - Repair	Public Works	513-2602
Storm Drains	Water Department	513-2180
Street Light Repairs	Kansas City Power and Light	654-1400
Weatherization Program	Housing and Community Development	513-3015

Underlined phone numbers will change in the next few months.

# THE VISION OF FOCUS KANSAS CITY

We, as Kansas Citians, envision our city as a people-centered community. From economic development to the readability of street signs, we consider people first. Kansas City shapes and guarantees its future by examining first and foremost the impact of every decision on future generations.

We, as Kansas Citians, are full of hope. We demonstrate this hope through our investment in our families, our homes, our neighborhoods, our schools, our businesses and our city.



For more information about **FOCUS Kansas City**:

- call the office at **513-2822**,
- visit **[www.kcmo.org/focus/](http://www.kcmo.org/focus/)**, or
- e-mail **[focus@kcmo.org](mailto:focus@kcmo.org)**.

To reach the Neighborhood Assessment Team, call **513-2909**.

**FOCUS** - **F**orging **O**ur **C**omprehensive **U**rban **S**trategy



# FOCUS KANSAS CITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD ASSESSMENTS

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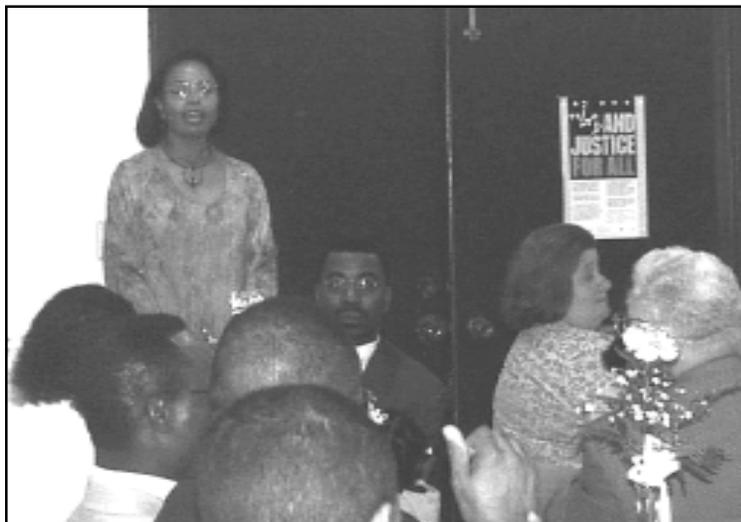


**FOCUS Kansas City**, Kansas City's strategic and comprehensive plan, recognizes that neighborhoods understand best how to direct their own futures. The first initiative in the *FOCUS Neighborhood Prototypes Plan* is a strategic assessment that enables a neighborhood to evaluate its strengths and needs. Through the assessment process, a neighborhood can direct its assets towards its most critical needs. The *FOCUS Neighborhood Prototypes Plan* identifies the assessment format.

There were two objectives for this neighborhood assessment:

1. Self-identify its **neighborhood type** from the *FOCUS Neighborhood Prototypes Plan*.
2. Develop **improvement strategies** that will direct neighborhood improvement, a "To Do" list incorporating participation by the neighborhood, community partners, and the City.

This community conducted the neighborhood assessment workshop with assistance from City staff. Residents, business people and people who work in local institutions provided input. These community members mapped their community, and identified assets and priority issues in their neighborhood.



Sycamore Groves' Board President Beverly Eastwood greets guests at their Annual Scholarship Awards and Dinner meeting.



# NEIGHBORHOOD TYPE

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The *FOCUS Neighborhood Prototypes Plan* recognizes that not all neighborhoods in Kansas City are the same. The character and condition of neighborhoods vary according to their age, history, type of housing and other factors. Each neighborhood has different strengths and opportunities. Each neighborhood has different assets and priorities, driving different strategies. *FOCUS* developed four unique neighborhood types that generally describe Kansas City neighborhoods. The four neighborhood types (assigned the colors Blue, Orange, Purple and Green in the neighborhood assessment workshop) are:

## **Developing      Conservation      Stabilization      Redeveloping**

Each neighborhood type suggests what actions are required for a neighborhood to become or stay healthy. The assessment is a beginning point from which the neighborhood can move forward and achieve quality living environments through a commitment to continuous improvement. The descriptions for these four neighborhood types are contained in the *FOCUS Neighborhood Prototypes Plan, Appendix A, "General Neighborhood Descriptions/Types."*

In the assessment, the neighborhood defined the tools, actions and strategies for improving the neighborhood. The community will use this information to strategically apply public and private resources in a way that is based on the existing conditions, trends, opportunities, strengths and needs. Once other neighborhoods identify their type, then similarly typed Kansas City neighborhoods can connect and partner around common issues and projects and assist each other with developing their organizations.



A young Sycamore Groves resident watches the camera while 'Mom' talks issues with a neighbor.

# IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

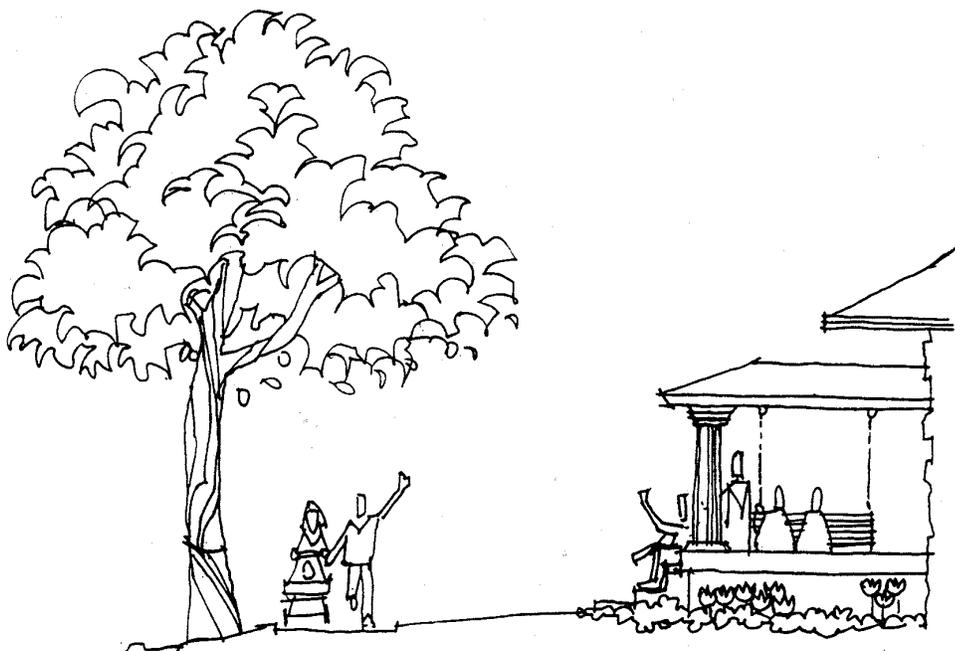
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Members of the Sycamore Groves Neighborhood met Saturday, June 12, 1999 for a neighborhood assessment workshop. The workshop was an opportunity for individuals to look at the connections between where they live, work and socialize. The participants engaged in a neighborhood mapping exercise, they discussed challenges and barriers facing their neighborhood. In addition, they identified the assets in their community and voted on their neighborhood type.

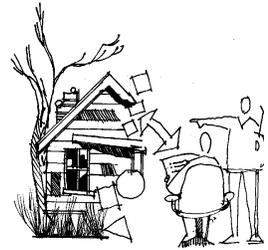
Residents celebrated the family-like atmosphere enjoyed in their community. They expressed a great deal of satisfaction with the Senior Citizen and Block Watchers Programs as well as the Children's Summer Program in which they have participated and sponsored for years. Participants also took great pride in the prestigious list of civic leaders originating from Sycamore Groves. The residents enjoy easy accessibility to public transportation and expressways as well as their close proximity to downtown.

Neighbors brainstormed ideas that would make their community more livable. They would like to experience economic development along Truman Road that would replace used car businesses with retail shopping within walking distance. The residents expressed several concerns with the industrial businesses surrounding them. They would like proprietors of those businesses to be more aware of their environmental responsibility.



# IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES, CONT'D

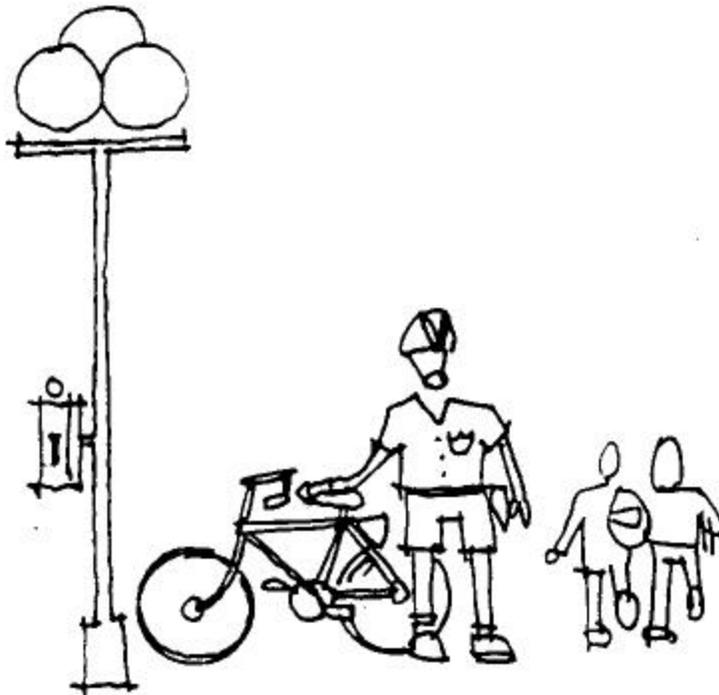
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The Sycamore Groves Development was the brainchild of the Downtown East Community Team consisting of Marvin L. Groves, Irma Groves, Ester Glover, Savannah Roberson and Earnestine Burch. Groundbreaking was held in October, 1975 and the first families established residence in August, 1976. The complex is well maintained with tree-lined walkways and impeccable landscaping. It continues to be model housing for multi-family developments throughout the region and a source of pride for its residents. In 1996 Sycamore Groves Development celebrated their 20<sup>th</sup> year anniversary with the completion of a multi-million dollar renovation project.

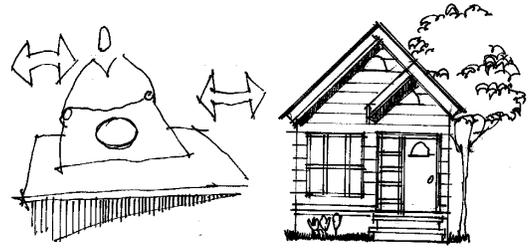
Building on the tremendous success of Sycamore Groves' many programs (children and Youth programs, Senior Citizen and Block Watch activities, etc.), the residents identified one of their top priorities as the need to build a larger community center on or near the complex. Enhancing play equipment in the City's Grove Park was another priority for the participants.

The purpose of this report is to help clarify goals and identify resources. The following page contains a summary of priorities. The report also contains the residents' lists of assets, barriers and ideas for improvements mentioned during the workshop. Finally, a list of frequently used City services is provided.



# PRIORITIES

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The following themes arose as workshop participants' conveyed their ideas to improve their neighborhood:

## Enhance Residents' Strong Sense of Community:

The close knit feeling neighbors have for one another motivates them to seek ways in which to maintain a sense of community, affirming that the neighborhood is a healthy, enjoyable place to live. Actions toward this goal are:

- To identify funding to build a larger community center that can accommodate the increasing number of residents desiring to participate in the plethora of social service programs offered by Sycamore Groves.
- To work more closely with the Apostolic Church located on Benton Plaza to beautify the community.
- To establish and support programs and activities in Grove Park for elders and youth as well.

## Clean up the Environment:

Participants conveyed a strong concern for the safety of their environment. Recommendations include:

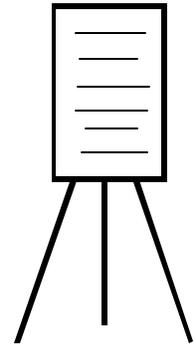
- Seeking assistance from the City and the Environmental Protection Agency to cite the nearby businesses that burn trash and dump chemicals into surrounding sewers.
- Working with the owner of the liquor store on 18<sup>th</sup> and Benton Boulevard on the Board's requests to clean up the establishment and rid it of loiterers. Residents requested that he take more initiative in this regard.



A playful child at the Sycamore Groves Neighborhood Assessment affirms the bright future of the community.

# CHART NOTES

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The Sycamore Groves Neighborhood Self-Evaluation covered the area from Truman Road to 18<sup>th</sup> Street, and from Benton Boulevard to I-70.

## Neighborhood Slogans

The workshop participants began their workshop by listing several slogans to describe their community. The slogans helped the participants to identify how they viewed their neighborhood.

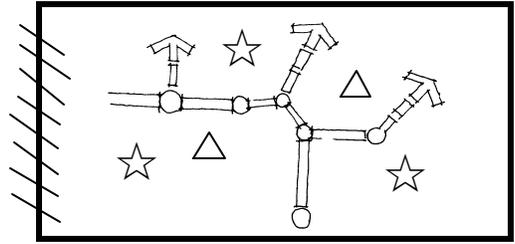
The selected slogan: **The Best Kept Secret In Town**

Other suggested slogans:

- Sycamore Trees
- Heart of the City
- Sycamore Village
- Family Ties
- The Family Community



Many prominent members of the civic community enjoyed themselves at Sycamore Groves Annual Dinner held July 13, 1999.



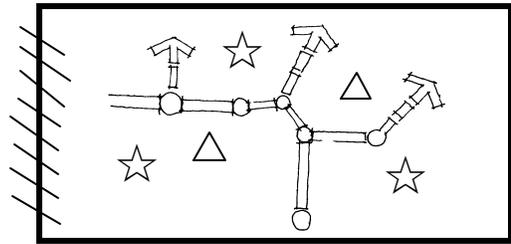
## STEP 1: My Neighborhood Is

Sycamore Groves Residents identified how they experience their neighborhood, and considered those things they want to protect, preserve or enhance in the neighborhood. They thought about the landmarks, paths, activity centers, districts, edges or barriers, and features. These were noted on a wall map.

-  **Landmarks** — significant physical objects, like buildings or signs
-  **Paths** — routes people use to get places
-  **Activity centers** — gathering places to do some activity
-  **Districts** — areas of recognizable character
-  **Edges or barriers** — a limit or boundary that prevents people from enjoying the neighborhood or something in it
-  **Features** — things people like and would like to preserve or enhance



T-Ball players wait anxiously in the dugout for their turn to bat at Grove Park! Workshop participants named the park as one of their most outstanding landmarks.



## Landmarks

- Pioneer Community College
- Former Watkins Brothers Funeral Home, currently Electrical Services Company
- Grove Park
- Doctors' office building at 18<sup>th</sup> and Prospect (Dr. Alfred Davis)
- 24 hour ATM at the new Police Credit Union at 14<sup>th</sup> and Chestnut
- Benton Liquors
- Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ

## Activity Centers:

- Grove Park
- Grove Pool
- Two baseball fields on either side of Grove Pool
- Benton Liquors
- Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ

## Features:

- 24 hour ATM at the new Police Credit Union at 14<sup>th</sup> and Chestnut
- Paved walking path in the complex

## Paths

- Paved walking path from Grove Park across Benton Plaza and through the Sycamore Groves complex
- From Sycamore Groves (south of Benton Plaza) to Prospect bus stop
- Paved walking path with-in the complex
- 18<sup>th</sup> Street bridge that gives access to I-70 over railroad tracks

# SYCAMORE GROVES IMAGES

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Grove Pool and Grove Park are activity centers for the residents of Scycamore Groves and are utilized for community building endeavors.

Pioneer Community College is a landmark in the neighborhood that is a venue to enhance the educational attainment of Scycamore Groves and surrounding communities.



The tree-lined walking path that encompasses the Scycamore Groves Complex is a feature that serves as an asset for the residents.

# SYCAMORE GROVES IMAGES

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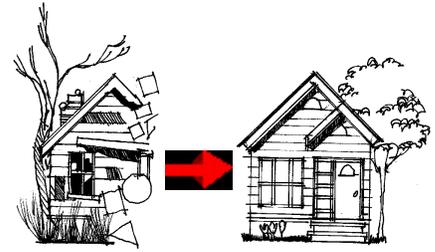
Residents cited concerns about the illegal dumping in sewers nearby. They feel the chemical smell could be a potential health hazard for the community.



Debris-filled catch basin at 18<sup>th</sup> and Benton Plaza.

Residents felt that the discarded pallets left behind the Scycamore Groves Complex are one example of how a business produces hazards in the neighborhood.



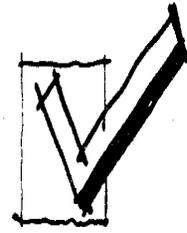


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## STEP 2: If I Could Fix One Thing

In every neighborhood there are some things that need to be changed. These things stop residents from enjoying their neighborhood and from activities they like to do. Below is the list of “fixes” that workshop participants said they would like to see in the Sycamore Groves neighborhood:

- Install a tall flag pole near the office
- Prohibit trash burning at Martin Meredith Company
- Clean up a demolished and a vacant building at 16th & Bellefontaine which are dangerous to children who play there
- Discontinue the dumping of chemical waste by the industrial laundry company. It creates a chemical smell in the sewer
- Clean up trash and debris from Benton Liquor premises and control the automobile traffic there
- Remove dead trees from landscape throughout the complex
- Clean up church area adjacent to Sycamore Groves
- Identify larger space for community center
- Landscape Grove Park, including repairing sink holes in grassy areas, updating the playground equipment, and building a shelter house
- Prune trees throughout Sycamore Groves complex, and in Grove Park
- Install parking barriers at the handicap accessible area of Grove Park to prevent cars from driving onto the grass
- Install a wrought iron fence around Sycamore Groves complex
- Construct an outgoing mail box in area
- Offer Parenting classes within Sycamore Groves complex and encourage residents to attend
- Establish a curfew for youth
- Build a full service supermarket in the area
- Have programs in the park for elderly
- Stop burning of tires at the tire company
- Purchase additional dumpsters with side doors
- Build a mini-mall on Truman Road
- Build shelters at bus stops
- City should educate residents about the importance of participating in the year 2000 Census



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## STEP 3: My Neighborhood's Assets

Workshop participants identified assets that add value to their neighborhood. The assets include places, groups, organizations, equipment, skills, abilities and any other thing that adds value to the neighborhood.

- Social programs
- Senior citizen programs
- Block watchers (30-35 people involved)
- Children's summer programs
- Rosa Mason
- St. Andrew's Lodge is fixing up the former Yeager School
- Sycamore Groves office
- Pioneer Junior College
- Grove Pool
- Mrs. Debbie Johnson, Sycamore Groves' On-Site Manager
- Bus stops
- New Post Office
- Grove park
- Retired teachers who are leaders, like Ms. Aretas P. Jones (30 years)
- I-70 Freeway
- Pleasant and cooperative staff in Sycamore Groves office
- McDonald's
- Papa Lew's Soul Food Restaurant



"Efficiency with a smile" is one reason Sycamore Groves' On-Site Manager Debbie Johnson was identified as an important neighborhood asset

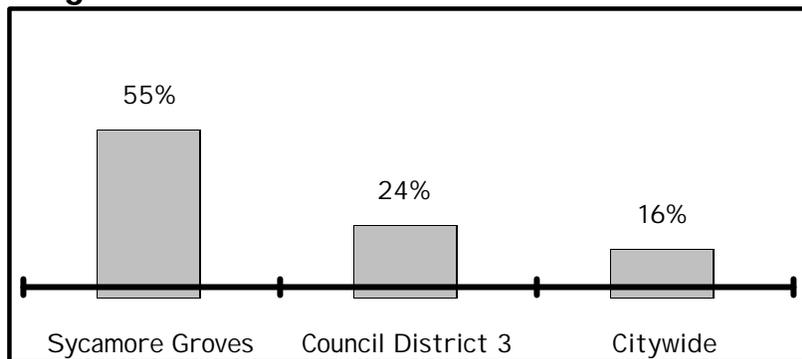


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## STEP 4: Facts About My Neighborhood

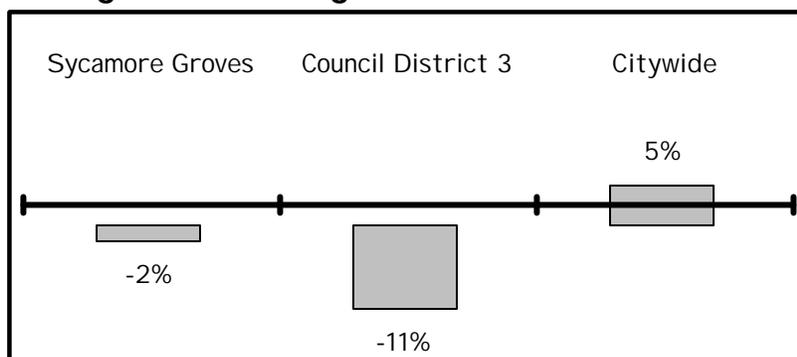
The information presented at the Sycamore Groves neighborhood self-evaluation was from the 1990 U.S. Census, and from 1998 information from the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department and the Kansas City, Missouri City Planning and Development Department. Below are the facts that participants said were surprising. (See the neighborhood assessment workbook for more detail.)

### Single Parent Households



Participants felt the high rate of single parent households could represent a sense of independence, holding the family together and working at the same time.

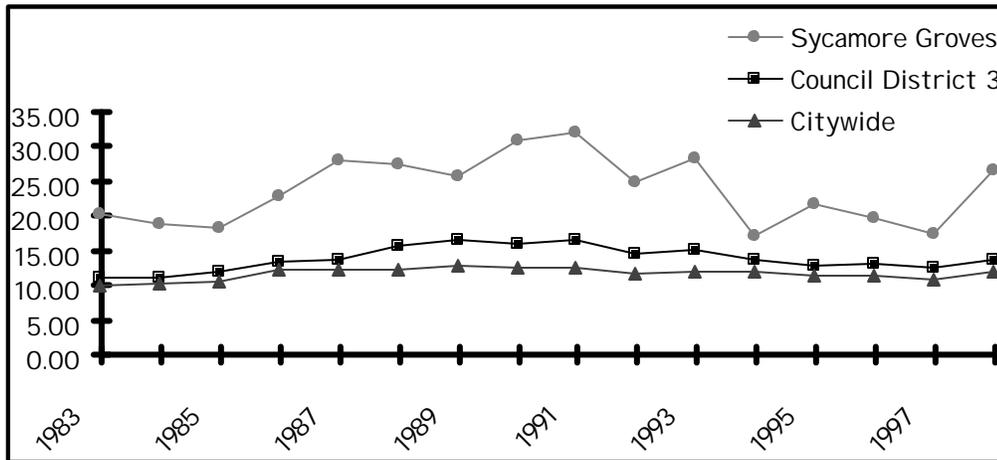
### Change in Housing Units 1980-1990



Residents stated that there has not been a loss of housing units within Sycamore Groves. (The data reflected in this chart also includes the area around the complex.)

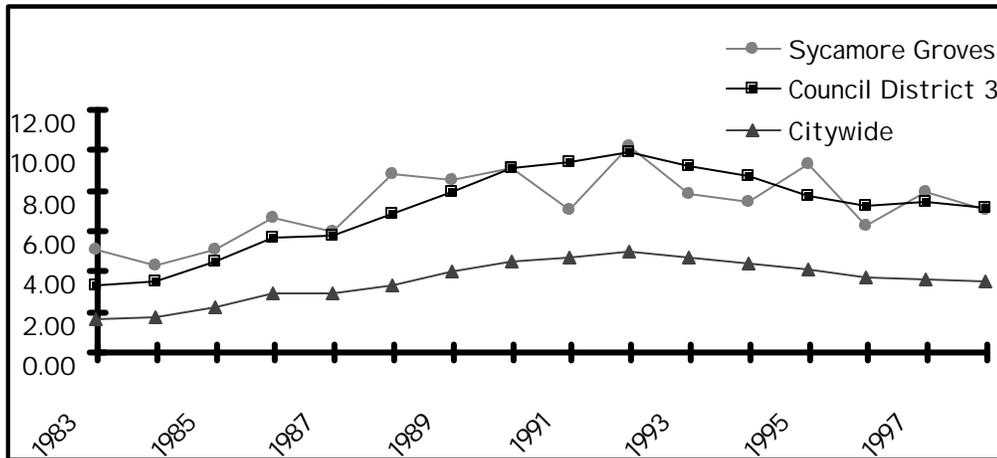


### Non-Violent Crime Per 100 Persons



Crime rates shown seem higher than residents perceive.

### Violent Crime Per 100 Persons



### Rehabilitation Permits 1990-1998

Residential	1
Non-Residential	8

Participant's reasoned the number of residential rehabilitation permits may be low because the federal government counts Sycamore Groves as one unit.



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## STEP 5: Describing My Neighborhood

Those who attended the workshop were asked to vote on the neighborhood type that best described their neighborhood. Their choice was Conservation.

### Conservation

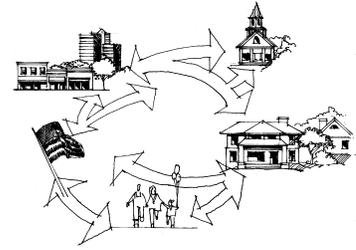
My neighborhood has been developed for some time. Established businesses and institutions are located in the neighborhood. Places of worship, schools, recreational and entertainment facilities, and businesses provide many opportunities near my home.

Tree-lined streets, historic structures or qualities, public art and/or other amenities characterize the neighborhood and give it a sense of place. Most of the houses are occupied. Little demolition has occurred here and vacant land is scarce.

It appears that both public and private areas are well-maintained, although a house or business periodically falls into disrepair from a lack of routine maintenance (painting, yard upkeep, awning repair, etc.). Some infrastructure repairs may be needed to keep the neighborhood attractive. Generally the problems that do come up can be addressed by our neighborhood association, by a call to the City, or through neighbors getting together to help one another.



Beautiful sycamore trees surround the office and small community center.



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## STEP 6: Making My Neighborhood Better

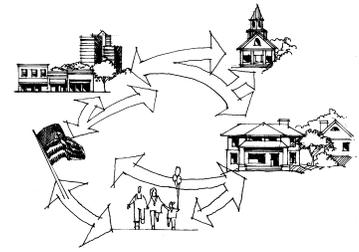
Workshop participants talked about specific actions the community can take to address the issues and challenges identified earlier in the assessment. They brainstormed ideas, concentrating on those actions that can be performed by the community to improve the neighborhood. Here is a list of all the ideas mentioned by workshop participants. They voted on the ideas that they most want implemented to make their neighborhood better.

Things **We** can do by ourselves:

- Encourage parents to teach children to protect property
- Install flagpole (Board of Directors will discuss)
- Write letter to Councilman Troy Nash about the tire burning and sewer smell (organizations in Sycamore Groves work together on letter)
- Replace dead trees within the complex
- Identify and obtain larger space for community center
- Prune trees
- Offer parenting classes, obtain information about "Parent to Parent" program from Project Neighborhood
- Establish an 'in-house' curfew for youth under 18
- Purchase additional dumpsters with side doors



3rd District-At-Large Councilman Troy Nash visits with a long time Sycamore Groves resident.



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

- Work with the EPA to hold area businesses responsible for the environment to cease the burning of old tires, wood pallets, debris, etc.
- Have a discussion with the owner of Benton Liquors to request that he clean up the debris, broken bottles and loiterers on his parking lot
- Work with the pastor of the Apostolic Church on the issues of cleaning up the property, repairing the broken sidewalks, and curtailing late night services at the church
- Identify funding for a new community center
- Identify funding for a wrought iron fence around Sycamore Groves
- Request a drop box from the Post Office for outgoing mail
- Utilize Parade Park's "Rules to Live By" as a guide
- Build a shelter at the bus stop



The new Post Office at Truman Road and Jackson is a feature in the Sycamore Groves neighborhood.



## Neighborhood Assessment Participants

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Ernestine Burch  
Mary Collins  
Timekata Gebrab  
Esther Glover  
Pauline Green  
Irma Groves  
Ophelia Holman  
Debbie Johnson

Aretas D. Jones  
Garnezia King  
Lilian Kurney  
Lillie M. Logan  
Victoria Love  
Argeola Malone  
Ben Owens  
Sephania Pickett

Tmeda Pollard  
Sandra L. Rayford  
Donna Rollo-Leap  
Marian C. Strickland  
Evelyn Thomas  
Ella Tindall  
Ossie S. Williams  
Yvette R. Williams

## Sponsors and Contributors

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Councilwoman Mary Williams-Neal, *Third District*  
Councilman Troy Nash, *Third District-at Large*  
Sycamore Groves / East Attucks Board of Directors  
Debbie Johnson, *On-Site Manager, Sycamore Groves*



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## Acknowledgements:

The Honorable Kay Barnes, *Mayor*  
Robert L. Collins, *City Manager*

### City Council

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The Honorable Ed Ford  
*First District-at-Large*

The Honorable Teresa Loar  
*First District*

The Honorable Bonnie Sue Cooper  
*Second District-at-Large*

The Honorable Paul Danaher  
*Second District*

The Honorable Troy Nash  
*Third District-at-Large*

The Honorable Mary Williams-Neal  
*Third District*

The Honorable Evert Asjes III  
*Fourth District-at-Large*

The Honorable Jim Rowland  
*Fourth District*

The Honorable Becky Nace  
*Fifth District-at-Large*

The Honorable Kelvin Simmons  
*Fifth District*

The Honorable Alvin Brooks  
*Sixth District-at-Large*

The Honorable Charles A. Eddy  
*Sixth District*

### City Planning and Development Department

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Vicki Noteis, AIA, *Director*

Diane Charity, Sharon Cheers, Willie Mae Conway, Suzy Latare, Evalin McClain, Holly Mehl, John Pajor, *Neighborhood Assessment Team*

### City Support

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Irving Blue, *City Planning and Development Department*