

OAK MEYER GARDENS ASTOR PLACE HOLMES PARK

Neighborhood Assessment Report

Neighborhood Workshop Date: January 22, 2000



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

City of Fountains



Heart of the Nation

SERVICE	AGENCY OR CITY DEPARTMENT	PHONE
City Services	Action Center	513-1313
Abandoned Cars on Private Property	Neighborhood and Community Services	513-9000
Abandoned Cars on Public Property	Kansas City, MO Police Department	234-5000
Abandoned Homes	Neighborhood and Community Services	513-9000
Air Quality	Health Department	513-6314
Animal Control	Neighborhood and Community Services	513-9800
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	513-9000
Housing Code Violations	Neighborhood and Community Services	513-9000
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	513-7500
Potholes	Public Works - Street and Traffic	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

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/**, or
- e-mail **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

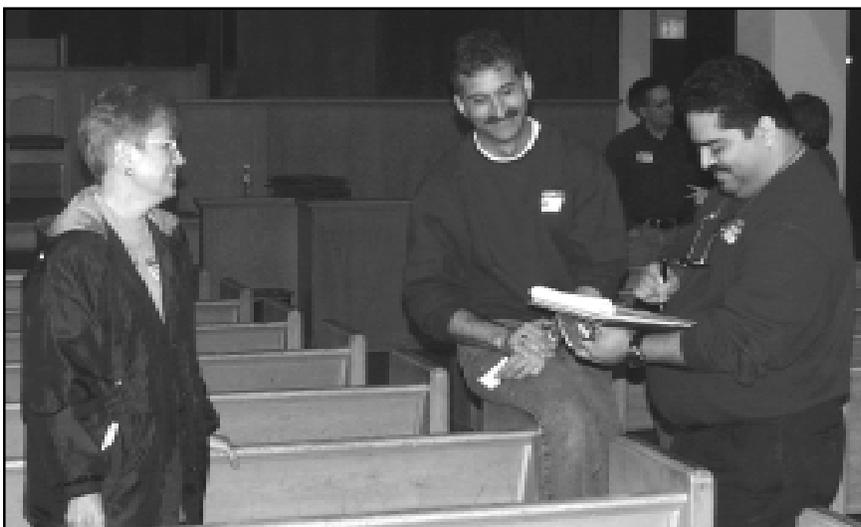


FOCUS Kansas City, Kansas City's strategic and comprehensive plan, recognizes that neighborhoods understand best how to direct their own futures. The first initiative in the *FOCUS Neighborhood Prototypes Plan* is a strategic assessment / evaluation that enables a neighborhood to evaluate its strengths 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 during the self-evaluation:

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

People from Astor Place, Holmes Park and Oak Meyer Gardens conducted their neighborhood evaluation workshop with assistance from City staff. Residents, business people and others who work in local institutions provided input. Participants mapped their community, and identified assets and priority issues in their neighborhood.



Neighborhood residents in the assessment workshop

THE OAK MEYER GARDENS/ASTOR PLACE/HOLMES PARK PERSPECTIVE

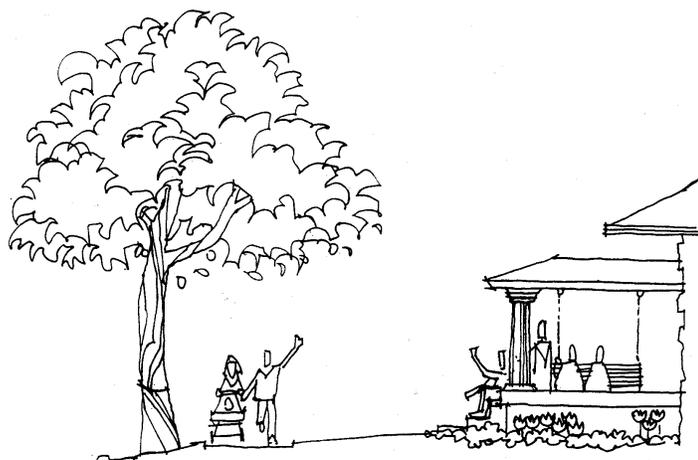


On Saturday, January 22, 2000 a group of people from the Oak Meyer Gardens, Astor Place, and Holmes Park neighborhoods participated in a FOCUS Neighborhood Assessment workshop. The meeting was held in the auditorium of the Cleveland Chiropractic College. The assessment area is bounded by 61st Street on the north, Gregory on the south, Oak Street on the west and Troost Avenue on the east. All three neighborhoods share a common connection to 63rd Street, a primary east/west arterial.

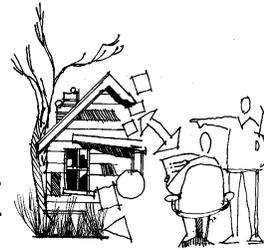
In many ways these neighborhoods offer people some of the best aspects of urban life in Kansas City. All three neighborhoods were developed during the period of the late 1920's to early 1930's and feature attractive, well built homes. Residents can find many goods and services close to home, particularly at the intersections of Gregory and Oak, 63rd and Oak and all along 63rd Street and Troost Avenue.

The neighborhoods are also centrally located within the City and offer convenient access by car or bus to downtown, The Plaza and the Brookside shopping district. Crime is relatively low and there are a number of institutions and organizations that serve as community anchors for the area. A short list of those entities include Baptist Medical Center, Cleveland Chiropractic College, Meyer Boulevard United Methodist Church, St. Peter's Catholic Church/School, Temple B'nai Jehudah, The Oak Meyer Gardens and Astor Place homes associations and the Southtown Council.

Over time the physical assets of the area have served as a framework for the development of a local culture; a network of people, businesses and institutions that sustain each other and can claim their own sense of identity. One workshop participant grew up in the area and moved away after she reached adulthood. She commented that when it came time to raise her own family she moved back to the neighborhood because it just felt like home.



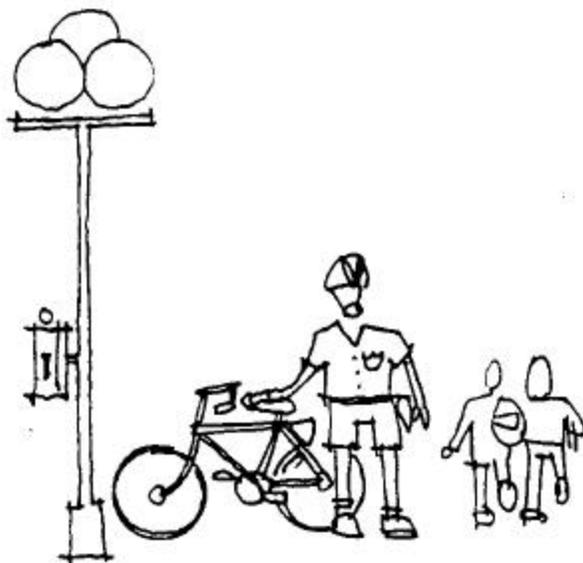
THE OAK MEYER GARDENS/ASTOR PLACE/HOLMES PARK PERSPECTIVE



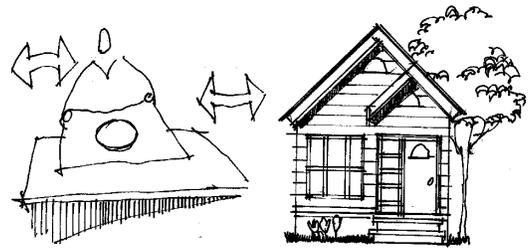
What are some of the qualities that make these neighborhoods feel like home? If you live in Astor Place it might be the convenience of being able to walk to Café Maison for a cup of coffee, or the sense of pride the neighbors have when they see the sixty or more young trees they planted to beautify the City right of ways. Oak Meyer Gardens can enjoy the entry markers and statuary that decorate their neighborhood common areas or the annual social events hosted by their association. Holmes Park residents can count on finding a good movie at SRO Video, taking in lunch at The New York Bakery and Deli or using the new outdoor roller blade rink in their neighborhood park.

Workshop participants identified these three communities as conservation neighborhoods; areas that have been fully developed for some time, are well maintained and can claim the physical, social and economic characteristics already mentioned.

Conservation neighborhoods offer residents a good quality of life and offer merchants the potential for strong commercial activity. That equilibrium is maintained through a healthy network of partners who are willing to continually re-invest in their neighborhood. The participants who attended this workshop engaged in a vigorous discussion to identify critical improvement strategies for their community. The following section titled Priorities contains a summary of those ideas. This report also contains a record of the flip chart notes recorded during the meeting, a neighborhood map, photographs of people and places in the community and finally, a list of telephone numbers for frequently used City and agency services.



PRIORITIES



63rd Street

The Southtown Council is sponsoring a study to improve 63rd Street between Wornall and Prospect. The following are some of the ideas people shared during the workshop. Page 20 contains a complete list of their thoughts on this topic.

- Implement flood control measures
- Increase the visual appeal and pedestrian friendliness through streetscaping and landscaping
- Focus economic development on the intersection of 63rd and Troost with a particular emphasis on the renovation/replacement of the Landing Shopping Mall

Infrastructure

Area neighborhood organizations have been successful in securing funds through the Public Improvements Advisory Committee (PIAC) towards repair and/or replacement of deteriorating systems. There are many additional areas where the need for maintenance is evident:

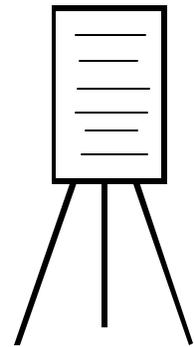
- Fix the sections of sidewalks that create a barrier to pedestrians
- Identify resources and a strategy for installing sidewalks on the streets or sections of streets where there are none
- Inventory and prioritize a list of the deteriorating streets and curbs and implement a plan for maintenance and/or replacement
- Invite input from residents on a plan to improve Holmes Park with an emphasis on upgrading the playground equipment and the possible installation of a walking trail

Schools

Workshop participants emphasized that a healthy neighborhood needs a combination of strong public and private schools. They recommended the following actions:

- Support the renewal of the Kansas City School District by voting in school board elections
- Engage the public, private and charter schools in the area through activities like tutoring, contributing to fundraising activities and attendance at student events
- Advocate for a productive use of the vacant J.C. Nichols school

CHART NOTES



The Oak Meyer Gardens/Astor Place/Holmes Park Neighborhood Assessment covered the area from 61st Street to Gregory Boulevard, and from Oak Street to Troost Avenue.

Neighborhood Slogans

The attendees listed several slogans to describe their neighborhoods. The slogans helped the participants to identify how they viewed their community.

The selected slogan:

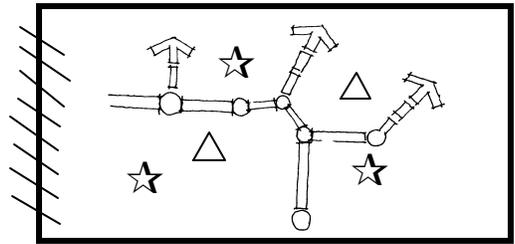
Small Town in the Big City

Other suggested slogans:

- Tree Town
- Heartbeat of KC
- Rock Solid
- Sweet Gum City



These shops at Gregory and Oak provide space for local businesses. They are one of the elements that give the neighborhood a small town feel.



STEP 1: My Neighborhood Is

Workshop participants 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



Distinctive, well built homes like this one are one of the trademark features of the area.

OAK MEYER GARDENS/ASTOR PLACE/HOLMES PARK IMAGES



Landmark: St. Peter's Church on Meyer Boulevard and Oak Street



Activity Center: A mother and child playing in Holmes Park



Landmark: Baptist Medical Center on Rockhill Road

OAK MEYER GARDENS/ASTOR PLACE/HOLMES PARK IMAGES



Landmark: The J.C. Nichols School at 6903 Oak was built in 1926. The structure is for sale by the Kansas City, Missouri School District

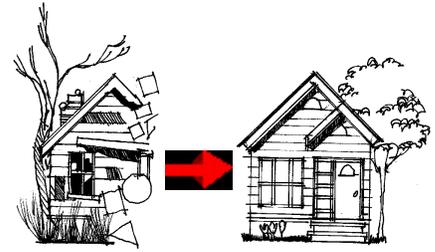


Feature and Activity

Center: Students and their P.E. teacher at the Academie Lafayette at the outdoor roller blade rink in Holmes Park



Path: A view of Rockhill Road looking northeast from Oak Terrace



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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 issues can inhibit residents from enjoying their neighborhood and from doing the things they like to do. Below is the list of “fixes” that workshop participants said they would like to see in the Oak Meyer Gardens, Astor Place and Holmes Park neighborhoods.

If I Could Fix One Thing

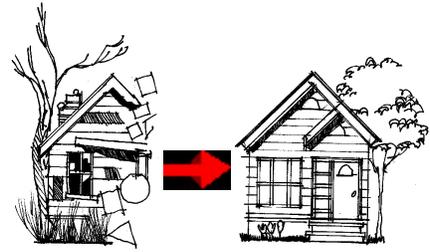
- Re-surface streets
- Stop the flooding along 63rd Street Corridor
- Upgrade the 63rd Street Corridor
- Eliminate the speeding on Holmes north of the Rockhill/Holmes junction
- Install a four way stop at 61st and Holmes
- Repair/replace the curbs and sidewalks on Rockhill Road and throughout the neighborhood
- Replace the dead or missing trees on Holmes
- Create a strong downtown - it supports the whole City
- Reduce the burgeoning crow population - bird droppings are unsightly and a health concern
- Find a good owner for the abandoned house at 6130 Locust
- Repair and replace the catch basins throughout the neighborhood



An uprooted sidewalk on the east side of Rockhill Road between 62nd and 63rd streets.



A broken catch basin on the northeast corner of 63rd and Harrison.



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If I Could Fix One Thing, cont'd.

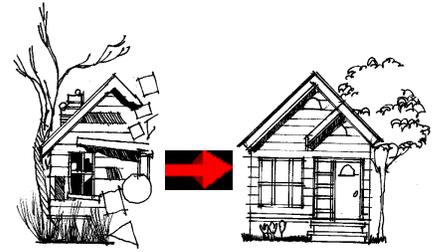
- Fix the flooding at 65th and Holmes
- Upgrade the play equipment in Holmes Park
- Build a walking trail in Holmes Park
- Increase the percentage the City pays for sidewalk improvements (currently 20%)
- Replace or renovate the Landing Mall
- Persuade residents to clean up after their pets
- Target the Oak Street/Rockhill Road intersection for snow removal
- Install additional speed bumps on streets around schools and parks
- Remove dead and diseased trees in the city easements
- Eliminate the sweet gum trees that drop their seed pods everywhere



The Landing Mall at 63rd and Troost



Sweetgum balls present a hazard to people walking in the area



STEP 3: My Neighborhood's Assets

Workshop participants identified assets that make their neighborhood a good place to live. These qualities include places, groups, organizations, equipment, skills, abilities and any other feature that adds value to the neighborhood.

- Many locally owned businesses
- The Trolley Trail Run
- Brookside St. Patrick's Day Parade
- The Astor Place and Oak Meyer Gardens neighborhood associations
- Sidewalks
- Neighborhood parks
- Mature trees
- The Trolley Trail
- KCPD Metro Patrol
- St. Peter's School
- Great housing stock that is affordable
- Strong property values
- Folks who take care of their homes
- The Brookside Art Fair
- Proximity to Brookside shops
- Small shops at Gregory and Oak
- Southwest Charter School
- Academie Lafayette
- Cafe Maison
- Churches, synagogues and places of worship nearby
- We know our neighbors
- Helpful neighbors
- New street lights
- New pavement on Holmes
- Location, location, location
- We go the opposite way of traffic when we go to work
- Good access to buses
- Good emergency services
- Landscaped common areas
- The elderly and retired people in the neighborhood provide a sense of security because they are home and they look out for their neighbors
- The ornamental statuary at the entrances to the Oak Meyer Gardens neighborhood
- Tile street names in the sidewalks

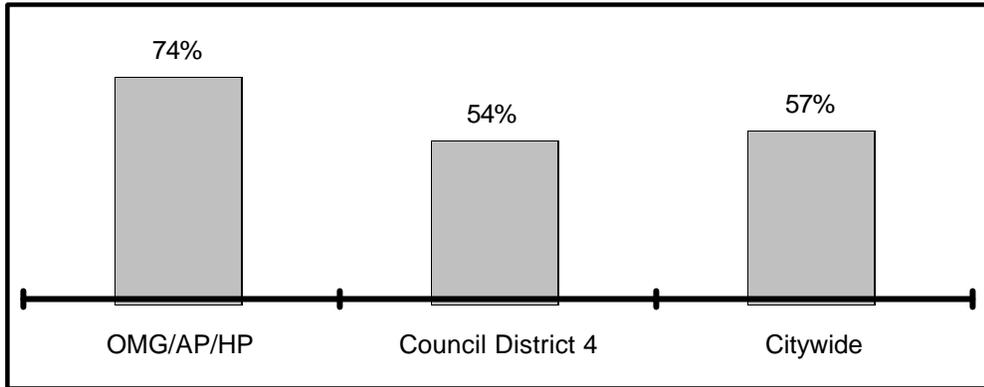


The annual Brookside Art Fair attracts artists from all over the country and thousands of visitors to the area.



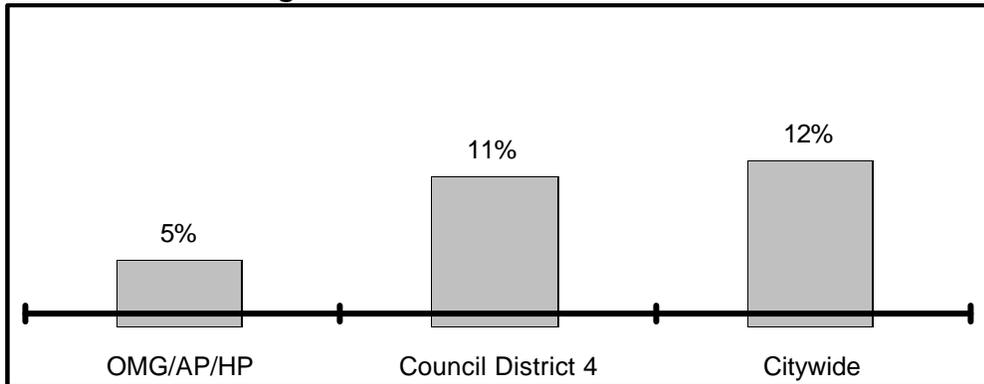
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Owner Occupied Housing



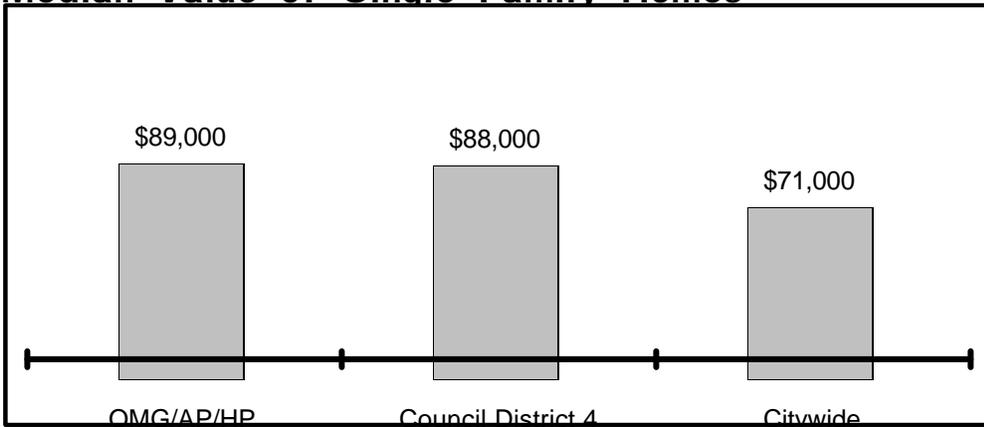
Residents felt there has been a decrease in rental properties and an increase in owner occupied housing.

Vacant Housing Units



Participants said houses in the neighborhood do not stay vacant for long.

Median Value of Single Family Homes



Residents believe that the value of homes has increased.



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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

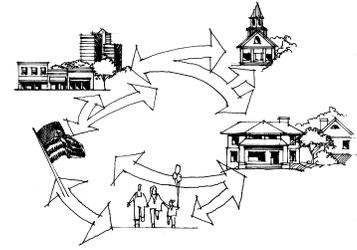
My neighborhood has been developed for some time. Established businesses and institutions are located in the neighborhood. Places of worship, schools, recreational and entertainment facilities, and businesses provide many opportunities near my home.

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.



This home in the Oak Meyer Gardens neighborhood is located on a street that recently received curb and sidewalk improvements.



STEP 6: Making My Neighborhood Better

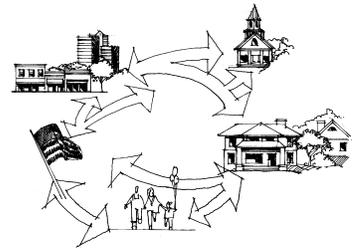
Workshop participants spoke about specific actions their community can take to address the issues and challenges identified earlier in the assessment. They brainstormed ideas, concentrating on those actions that can be performed by the community to improve the neighborhood. Below is a list of all the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

Things we can do **Ourselves**:

- Fight the expansion of the check cashing/payday loan outlets in the neighborhood
- Support an ordinance that would require landlords to be licensed
- Submit a PI AC request to develop a walking trail in Holmes Park
- Fight the addition of new liquor licenses in the area
- Organize a neighborhood association in the Holmes Park Neighborhood
- Invite neighbors to join the newly formed Southtown Neighborhood Council
- Submit PI AC requests to repair the existing sidewalks
- Establish a recycling program in the Holmes Park Neighborhood
- Vote in school board elections



Father and child at the assessment workshop.



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Thinking about 63rd Street

At the end of the workshop, residents took some time to consider ideas relative to the upcoming 63rd Street Corridor Plan. (The boundaries of this study are from Wornall Road to Prospect Avenue.) The expected results of this plan include a detailed study of area data, an Action Plan for the corridor, and a sense of direction related to land use, urban design, priority development/redevelopment areas and implementation tools.

The policies that come out of this planning process will correspond to the objectives of the FOCUS Kansas City Plan. They are expected to be a guide for desirable development/redevelopment proposals while providing a supportable defense against projects inconsistent with the plan. Residents suggested the following:

- Improve the walkability/pedestrian access along 63rd street
- Create an attractive streetscape
- Address the flooding problem
- Bring the pedestrian friendliness of Brookside further east
- Place unsightly utility lines underground
- Improve the “campus like” feel with more trees and landscaping
- Encourage façade improvements to existing businesses
- Improve traffic mitigation/pedestrian safety
- Re-direct traffic from 63rd Street to Meyer
- Re-locate the drive-up mailboxes from in front of the 63rd Street post office (the mailboxes slow traffic and in some cases cause accidents)
- Build a community center on 63rd Street between Oak and Paseo
- Design incentives for the creation of new local businesses
- Increase parking for the Cleveland Chiropractic students
- Maintain the uniqueness of the area – limit chain stores
- Replace the Landing Mall with a new businesses or a new community center
- Develop more green space
- Create a more impressive presence for Cleveland Chiropractic College
- Develop an alternative public transportation system other than buses
- Expand the neighborhood festivals (St. Patrick’s Parade, Brookside Art Fair) to make them more regional events
- Support the creation of neighborhood friendly fence and billboard ordinances
- Retain houses in residential areas
- Enforce codes on businesses along corridor and encourage building owners to make a their structures more attractive
- Build a small hotel and restaurant **at the intersection at 63^d and Bruce R. Watkins Drive**

Astor Place/Holmes Park/Oak Meyer Gardens Neighborhood Assessment Participants

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Sponsors and Contributors

- Astor Place Neighborhood Association
- Cleveland Chiropractic College
- Oak Meyer Gardens Neighborhood Association
- Southtown Council

Getting Involved

For information about the Oak Meyer Gardens, Astor Place or Holmes Park neighborhoods, call the Southtown Council at 816-523-5553, or check out their web site at www.southtown.org.





Acknowledgements

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

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The Honorable Ed Ford
First District-at-Large

The Honorable Teresa Loar
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The Honorable Bonnie Sue Cooper
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The Honorable Kelvin Simmons
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The Honorable Charles A. Eddy
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- Michael Herron, *Parks and Recreation*
- Tony Nasser, *Public Works/Streets and Traffic Division*
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