



# NORTH END NEIGHBORHOOD PLATFORM



2025



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## Introduction

NECIC is happy to unveil this North End Neighborhood Platform that summarizes the community and economic aspirations of the residents and stakeholders of the North End. This document serves as the executive summary of the plan. Since 2010, NECIC has used these Community Economic Development Plans to guide its work, while employing an asset-based approach.

Since our inception, we have seen amazing results thanks to the guidance of residents, and the collaboration of strategic partners that include residents, volunteers, nonprofit and faith-based organizations, schools, colleges and universities, and local, state and federal government.

Please read this document with a hopeful eye, and see it as we do, not as impossible or unlikely tasks, but as series of SMART goals in the areas that impact the quality of life within the North End neighborhoods. This summary of recommendations are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, and Time-bound goals working toward NECIC's vision of the North End being the leading engine of economic vitality, positive youth development, arts and civic engagement.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Matthew Benko-Scruggs".

Matthew Benko-Scruggs  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
North End Community Improvement Collaborative, Inc.



## **What is a Community Development Corporation?**

A Community Development Corporation (CDC) is a non-profit organization that focuses on the improvement and revitalization of a specific community or neighborhood. Typically established at the local level, a CDC works towards addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges within its target area. Its primary objectives include promoting sustainable development, enhancing the quality of life for residents, and fostering economic opportunities.

The North End Community Improvement Collaborative, Inc. (NECIC) is a CDC focused on revitalizing Mansfield's North End neighborhoods. Since 2007, NECIC practices asset based community development to identify, connect, and support resident led initiatives in its role as transformative convener.

Through strategic planning, resource mobilization, and collaboration, NECIC strives to empower the North End community, build social capital, and create a more inclusive and prosperous environment for residents. NECIC's work is grounded in the principles of community economic development, community engagement, social equity, and long-term sustainability.

## **Neighborhood Platform Purpose**

In response to the challenges faced by the neighborhoods that make up Mansfield's North End, this document presents a comprehensive set of recommendations and strategies aimed at revitalizing the community. Developed by the North End Community Improvement Collaborative (NECIC), this platform is grounded in extensive resident input, ensuring that the voices and aspirations of the community are central to the proposed solutions.

Addressing critical priorities including Land Use, Housing, Economic Development, Education, Community Spaces, Public Infrastructure and Transit, and Health and Safety, this document offers a roadmap for transformative change. NECIC employs an approach rooted in asset-based community development and community economic development, leveraging the strengths and resources inherent within the neighborhood itself to drive sustainable progress.

By fostering collaboration, innovation, and empowerment, NECIC seeks to not only address current challenges but also to cultivate a vibrant, inclusive, and thriving North End community for generations to come.



## Policy Priorities

A resident driven community revitalization approach in the North End will improve conditions and the quality of life for residents. The following recommendations represent a guide for policy makers, entrepreneurs, educators, and anyone else who wants to know what North End residents care about and their vision for the future.



## Overarching Values

All of NECIC's work is shaped and informed by six overarching values. NECIC will:



**Build individual, family and community capacity**  
in order to achieve improved quality of life outcomes for residents.



**Focus organizing efforts on creating systems change**  
to address the inequitable distribution of resources and unfair policies that affect the North End.



**Leverage local and regional assets** to fulfill the strategies outlined in the North End Community Economic Development Plan.



**Be a central hub**  
for community engagement activities, community pride, and neighborhood history.



**Address barriers to African American quality of life.**  
NECIC serves all North End residents, but data shows that the African American community faces disproportionate economic, educational and health related barriers.



**Recognize youth as a valuable community asset**  
and incorporate youth development in each of its focus areas, programs and initiatives.

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## Key Concepts

**Community Economic Development (CED)** is a collaborative and inclusive process where local communities work together to enhance their economic well-being and overall quality of life. It involves engaging community members, building local capacity, fostering entrepreneurship, providing job training, and leveraging existing assets. CED emphasizes sustainable practices, social inclusion, and partnerships with various stakeholders to create a resilient and self-sufficient local economy. The goal is to address both economic and social factors, promoting long-term prosperity and reducing disparities within a specific geographic area.

**Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)** is an approach to community development that focuses on identifying and leveraging the existing strengths, resources, and assets within a community. Rather than emphasizing deficiencies or needs, ABCD recognizes and builds upon the community's positive attributes, including its people, skills, institutions, and cultural richness. This approach encourages local residents to take an active role in shaping their community's future by harnessing their collective capabilities, fostering collaboration, and promoting sustainable development from within.

**Transformative Convening, Organizing, and Leadership Development.** Transformative convening and organizing means bringing people from all segments of the community together, people with diverse sets of assets, experience, and expertise, to collectively solve problems in the North End and throughout the City of Mansfield and Richland County. NECIC's resident driven North End CED Plan guides all of these interactions. Leadership development amongst North End residents means that we are empowering and supporting the next generation of entrepreneurs, citizens, voters, public servants, and neighborhood advocates.



## Priority 1: Land Use

Land use within the North End is varied, ranging from parcels zoned low density residential to industrial. In most cases, the Mansfield Codified Ordinances mandate building standards to protect residents from incompatible land uses and dictate design standards to ensure consistency with past/current architecture (e.g. building heights). However, in some cases, due to pre-code constructions, there remain areas of the North End where the quality of life of residents is directly impacted by siting commercial and industrial operations adjacent to neighborhoods. Overall, flexibility will be required moving forward to respond to changes in the city's demographics, housing needs, and employment trends. Balancing the need for zoning ordinances that simultaneously protect the health, safety, and property rights of residents and business owners, and that are dynamic and flexible enough to encourage innovation, entrepreneurship, and community economic development.



## Land Use Recommendations

- Update antiquated zoning ordinances to facilitate future development.
  - Continue to improve the public information process.
  - Create mixed-use, housing/commercially zoned districts.
  - Continue to prohibit environmentally harmful commercial enterprises from locating in residential neighborhoods.
- 



**Continue targeted demolitions.** Demolitions such as this property at 502 Woodland Avenue improve the look of a neighborhood and make way for new development.

One of the first things residents told us is that they wanted to see vacant and blighted housing removed from their neighborhoods. Not only were these homes eyesores and safety hazards, residents felt that the existing housing stock was built too closely together. That's why in NECIC's first CED Plan from 2010 a Land Use Recommendation was to "Decrease Housing Density."

To help address the deteriorated housing stock on the North End, NECIC conducted multiple housing assessments to assist city and county officials to identify and prioritize homes for demolition. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in the period between 2000 and 2020, 844 homes were demolished on the North End (1,146 if you include census tract 31).

These demolitions decreased housing density immensely and now the community is left with opportunities to build new housing for the North End's next generation.



As a transformative convener NECIC continues to bring residents and public officials together to improve the public information process regarding land use or any other topic of resident concern.



## Priority 2: **Housing**

Access to stable, affordable housing cultivates a sense of belonging, encourages social engagement, and bolsters economic vitality. Furthermore, adequate housing conditions are integral to promoting health and safety, addressing disparities, and enhancing overall well-being. By prioritizing housing as a policy imperative, communities can leverage this fundamental asset to strengthen social cohesion, support economic growth, and improve quality of life for residents. In essence, recognizing housing as a policy priority aligns with the principles of asset-based community development, acknowledging its pivotal role in building vibrant, sustainable communities.



## Housing Recommendations

- Increase the availability of quality affordable and market rate rental housing.
  - Increase housing code enforcement.
  - Reduce land speculation.
  - Develop affordable and mixed-income housing.
  - Continue targeted demolitions.
  - Demolitions conducive for future affordable and mixed-income development.
  - Increase the availability of housing related educational resources for residents.
  - Increase the capacity of local housing practitioners.
  - Address the root socio-economic causes of homelessness, especially amongst school aged children.
- 



***Develop affordable and mixed-income housing.*** An example of new housing constructed on the North End.

As mentioned above, from the very beginning of NECIC, North End residents expressed concerns about the condition of homes on the North End. In 2010, residents said they wanted to see vacant and blighted housing removed from their neighborhoods. NECIC recommended targeted demolitions as a good first step. In addition to the housing assessments and 844 subsequent demolitions described above under “Land Use”, NECIC partnered with the Richland County Land Bank to acquire a portfolio of vacant lots, not just to prevent land speculation, but to prepare for future construction of affordable housing.

By NECIC’s second CED Plan in 2017 resident focus started to shift from demolition to future construction of new homes. Despite the overall necessity of removing the older housing stock, residents were once again left feeling that something was being taken away from them. North End residents want to see new homes constructed in their neighborhoods. However, great care must be taken to maintain affordability so that current residents are not displaced and to prevent gentrification.





## Priority 3: **Economic Development**

The economic base of the city is intrinsically tied to the livability of the neighborhoods. Strengthening this base will improve the housing stock, attract new residents, increase school success, reduce crime and contribute to the health of children and families.

As the city moves beyond its history as a major industrial hub of mid-Ohio, new strategies for increased economic development are emerging. From small businesses to health care related industries, increased resources are becoming available to support growth in these sectors. Through collaboration among community economic development organizations and the public and private sectors, the city can once again become a hub of economic activity within the region.



## Economic Development Recommendations

- Development efforts should focus on the following:
    - More locally owned and operated businesses
    - Businesses that create living wage jobs
    - More African American owned businesses
  - The creation of businesses that provide affordable recreation options for kids of all ages (i.e., roller skating rink, bowling alley, movie theater, etc.)
  - More businesses within walking distance
  - Continue to prioritize workforce development, including returning citizens.
  - Continue to redevelop vacant commercial properties and land.
  - Continue to encourage small business development especially among minorities, women, and veterans.
  - Support arts and food driven entrepreneurship.
  - Develop commercial nodes in well-traveled intersections, and target areas.
- 



**Returning citizens learn skills** growing food and second chances at the RiCi Farm.



**Join a cooperative** of local growers growing food on residential lots.



**Support investment** in reopening a neighborhood grocery store, hiring local people, and selling produce grown around the corner.



**Workforce Development:** Get a job or recruit your next super star.



**Buy or sell fresh produce** at the North End Farmers Market.



**Food and jobs** are grown at the NECIC Urban Farm.



## Priority 4: Education

A community's school system and educational infrastructure are key components to the local economy. Schools are sources of community pride that are responsible for training and preparing the next generation of citizens, entrepreneurs, and workers. Furthermore, the quality and effectiveness of a community's school system directly affects a region's desirability and competitiveness as a location to attract new businesses and talent.

School systems are microcosms of the greater community and are affected by the factors that influence the neighborhood. The educational recommendations speak to the need to bolster success for students, with specific approaches in place to address the unique needs of students from families with ongoing financial instability, and students of color. In particular, the challenges impeding the future success of African American male students require very targeted and specific interventions.



## Education Recommendations

- Address the root socio-economic issues that impede learning.
  - Address systemic barriers to equity in education by adopting the strategies presented in the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) "Opportunity Youth Playbook."
  - Increase resident financial literacy.
  - Increase access to local foods related educational programming.
  - Increase resident civic engagement.
  - Increase after-school programming for young people.
  - Increase mentor opportunities for young people.
  - Increase entrepreneurial training.
- 

From its inception NECIC has always focused on young people in the community. From the effects of closing schools in neighborhoods to maximizing partnerships to improve educational outcomes for children. Our focus has always been on improving Mansfield for the generations to come.



### NECIC Current Youth Work:

- Empower Me with NECIC – group mentoring
- Summer Manufacturing Institute – career exploration
- Hoop houses at Malabar Intermediate and Mansfield Senior High Schools
- Secondary education partnerships – OSU, NCSC, Central State

President Obama launched the My Brother's Keeper initiative to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color and ensure that all young people can reach their full potential. Through this initiative, the Administration has joined businesses and foundations, cities and towns like Mansfield to connect young people to mentoring, support networks, and the skills they need to find a good job or go to college and work their way into the middle class.

### My Brother's Keeper Milestones:

- Getting a Healthy Start and Entering School Ready to Learn
- Reading at Grade Level by Third Grade
- Graduating from High School Ready for College and Career
- Completing Post-Secondary Education or Training
- Successfully Entering the Workforce through Increased Engagement in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM)
- Successful Development of Social Emotional Competencies







## Priority 5: Public Infrastructure/Transit

The built environment is only as good as its foundation. Well maintained streets, sidewalks, public utilities, transportation routes and public right of ways are the building blocks for sustainable development. The natural environment that supports the foundation must also be in good health to promote sustainable growth.



## Public Infrastructure/Transit Recommendations

- Improve and maintain streets, sidewalks, and fire hydrants.
  - Prioritize the replacement of portions of the North End's aging sewer system.
  - Connect the B&O bike Trail to the Urban Farm.
  - Increase bicycling and walkability of neighborhoods.
  - Increase public transportation options.
  - Increase local match dollars to increase the federal support for public transit.
  - Prioritize a flood mitigation strategy such as the Upper Touby Run Dam Project.
  - Prioritize Brownfield remediation i.e., removal of underground gas tanks.
- 



In 2010 residents expressed concerns about the aging infrastructure on the North End. Since that time NECIC has recommended updating and replacing portions of the sewer system, especially in places where new development is likely to occur. In recent years the City of Mansfield has undertaken massive sewer upgrades not just in the North End, but throughout the city.

Another issue of importance to residents is the condition and lack of sidewalks in large areas of the North End. Sidewalk repairs should be prioritized to beautify and improve the walkability of the neighborhoods.



North End residents want the B&O Bike Trail connected to the NECIC Urban Farm and Farmers Market. Preliminary conversations are underway to make this a reality.





## Priority 6: Community Spaces

The spaces in which residents gather, whether it is a park, business district or community center define the character of an area and create a sense of belonging among people who may not normally interact. On the North End, a wealth of assets exists for citizens to take advantage of, including Johns, North Lake and Middle parks, Kingwood Center, the public library, historic downtown, Oak Hill Cottage, the Mansfield Memorial Museum, the NECIC Teaching Garden, the Friendly House, Buckeye Imagination Museum, the Renaissance Theatre, and the Imagination District. There are also opportunities available to re-utilize vacant commercial properties and vacant lots for additional communal and recreational spaces. The loss of the Ocie Hill Neighborhood Center was a tremendous blow to the community, and should be replaced with a newly constructed, state of the art, multipurpose community center.



## Community Spaces Recommendations

- Prioritize the creation of a multipurpose community impact center.
- Maintain the natural environment.
- Prioritize cleanliness and maintenance of parks and facilities.
- Prioritize the facilitation and creation of spaces for public art projects.
- Prioritize beautification.



Generations of North End residents, especially kids, were affected by the wide variety of programs, institutions, and organizations that were at one time or another housed at the Ocie Hill Neighborhood Center, also known as Creveling School, Bowman Street School, and M.O.I.C. It was a social, educational, and recreational oasis in the neighborhood. The center's closure in 2020 was an immeasurable loss to the community and underscores the importance of building a state-of-the-art multipurpose Community Impact Center to replace what was lost.

Back in 2010, North End residents told NECIC to “create community centers in vacant publicly owned buildings.” A significant portion of the recommendations described in this document will be addressed by the North End Community Impact Center, being the culmination of over fifteen years of community engagement and planning.



**PROJECT FEATURES**

|                                                                                                             |                                                                                                         |                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <br>Financial Assistance | <br>Recording Studio | <br>Business Development |
| <br>Boxing Ring          | <br>Art Studios      | <br>Podcast Studio       |
| <br>Blackbox Theatre     | <br>Basketball Gym   | <br>Esports Lab          |

- 486 Springmill Street, Mansfield
- 36,000 square feet
- Serving residents of all ages in Mansfield and Richland County

### Partners in the Community Impact Center building will include:

- Third Street Family Health Services
- Community Action Commission
- Park National Bank
- FiELD9 Architecture
- A Beautiful Mind
- Mid-Ohio Civic Opera





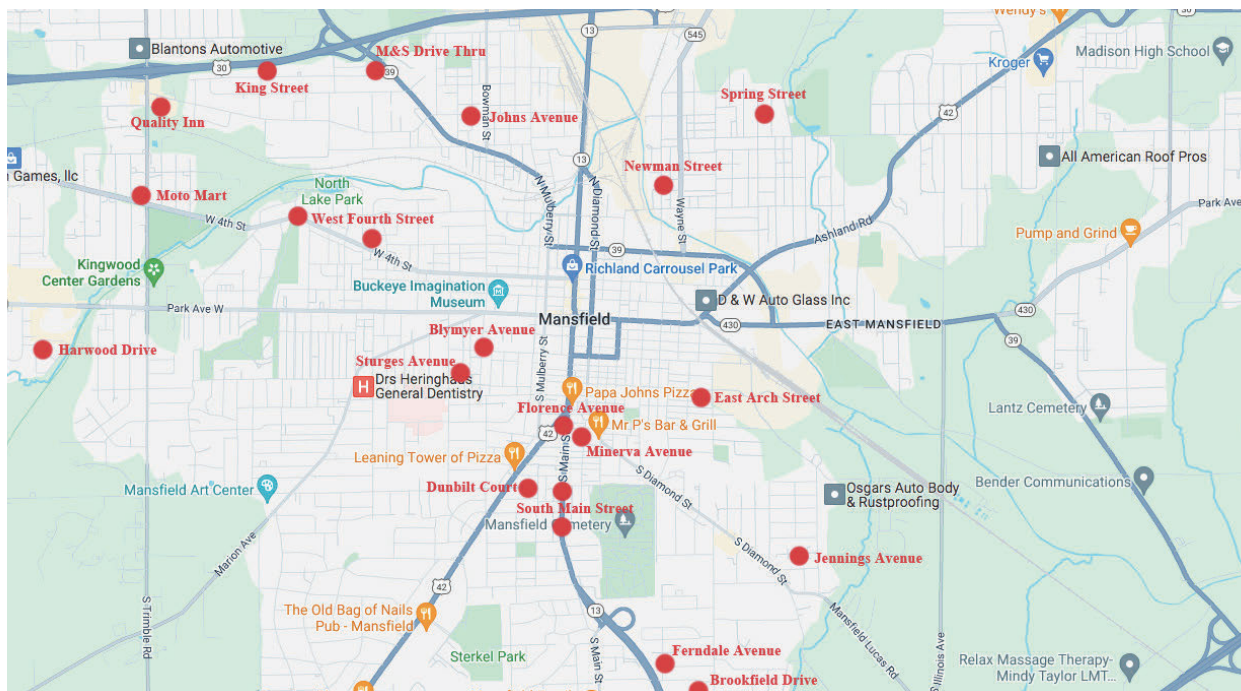
## Priority 7: Health & Safety

Health and safety are key components to quality of life. From the food people eat, to where they live, work, worship, and recreate, the social, cultural, and economic environment of a community all affect a person's overall health and wellbeing.



## Health & Safety Recommendations

- Prioritize violence reduction, especially gun violence, and its traumatic impact on residents.
- Increase the availability and access to medical and behavioral health care services.
- Prioritize continued efforts to provide education, resources, and tools for the remediation of housing related health and safety issues.
- Prioritize decreasing minority health disparities.
- Address racism as an issue of public health.
- Address drug addiction as an issue of public health.
- Ensure that North End residents have the most efficient and timely responses from emergency providers.



***Since 2021, there have been 21 shootings in Mansfield that have resulted in 24 fatalities.*** The red dots on the map above show where these shootings occurred. Clearly, this is not just a North End issue. Gun violence, particularly amongst young people is overwhelmingly the number one Health and Safety concern of North End residents.

Again, acting as transformative convener NECIC has brought together residents, stakeholders, and public officials to actively address the issue. For example, NECIC and partners have recently developed the Empowering Youth for a Brighter Future initiative, a multifaceted approach to helping young people avoid violence.



**North End Community  
Improvement Collaborative**

134 North Main Street  
Mansfield, OH 44902  
(419) 522-1611

**Community Outreach Center**

486 Springmill Street  
Mansfield, OH 44903

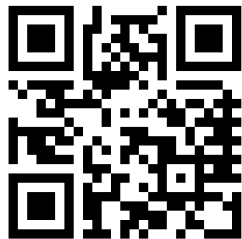
**NECIC Urban Farm**

311 Bowman Street  
Mansfield, OH 44903

**NECIC/RiCI Urban Agriculture Site - Flourish Farm**

1155 S Olivesburg Road  
Mansfield, OH 44905

**NECIC**  
**[www.necic-ohio.org](http://www.necic-ohio.org)**



**NECIC Staffing**  
**[www.necicstaffing.org](http://www.necicstaffing.org)**

