

Themes from *Avondale Quality of Life SWOT Analysis*

Increasing Avondale Safety

Residents in Avondale are concerned about the safety and wellbeing of the community. Open air drug trafficking is prevalent throughout Avondale. Residents in senior buildings describe the “dope boys” occupying the entry ways, and even some apartments in the buildings. Large numbers of youth gather and loiter in the areas where this activity occurs. Street fights are pervasive throughout the community. Residents describe people getting “jumped” and several people “jumping in” on fights. Many residents who are not engaged in the fighting gather to watch. Residents relate that often no one calls the police except for one or two people, some state that they don’t call because the police do not show up. Gun fire is a recurrent theme, people reporting hearing shots go off in several areas of the neighborhood, sometimes several times a night. Residents further relate that they have witnessed young men pointing to their guns and showing off the fact that they are carrying weapons.

Residents describe a strained relationship with the police as well as fear of retaliation if they report crime. To that end they have formed a coalition to address this issue and the issues described above. Community members and stakeholders in partnership with CPD have developed a “Good Guy Loitering” plan scheduled to debut at the end of the month. They have further attended two meetings with Captain Mack and stakeholders providing mental health, substance abuse and criminal justice information and intervention. Captain Mack has additionally provided the contact information for the District 4 second shift supervisor to residents.

Sharing Success

Residents are hopeful that current development will provide increased opportunities for access to employment, training, housing and recreational opportunities. Residents are aware of the need for better education and training to prepare for potential job opportunities. Some residents are hopeful that apprenticeships and training through Uptown, The Town Centre and the Urban League are accessible for them however there is a need for stakeholders to better communicate job availability and requirements. There is a concern that the new job opportunities will not be for the Avondale residents but rather for people coming in from the outside.

There is an opportunity here for stakeholders to work with residents to develop a deeper understanding of the various barriers many residents encounter when attempting to access

opportunities. Residents further relate a desire to develop and maintain “Black Owned” or locally owned businesses in Avondale.

Despite the multiple resources for children to engage, there is notable concern over youth with nothing to do but hang out in the streets. Residents state a need for organizations to research the reasons children are not engaging and provide alternatives to existing activities. There is opportunity to increased engagement of youth through sports that are not offered and engagement through the arts.

Finding Strength Together

There is a strong bond among residents in the community. Residents describe coming together in times of need. Despite fears of displacement, crime and economic hardship residents remain resolved to stay in Avondale. One of the neighborhoods many strengths is it’s large and active senior/ retirement population and the multi-generational and extended families who chose to remain in Avondale. Many residents know and have known each other for years and are willing to help each other out in times of need. There are also several organized and thriving Resident Associations in Avondale.

Residents express a sense of pride in Avondale’s history and its status as the largest African American community in Cincinnati. Residents young and old describe a respect for the seniors and their role in preserving the history and passing it down through generations. There is a strong connection to spirituality, in fact several clergy have been identified as leaders in the community and there are a some church leaders that are visible and active in community. Despite these strengths there is a general feeling of apathy and fatigue resulting from years of programs instituted by organizations that have resulted in either little, no or sometimes even negative impact in the past.

Strengthening Partnerships (Community-Institutions)

Though Avondale is surrounded by several major institutions there is a sense of division between residents and these institutions. As stated above many organizations have come into Avondale with “programs” and services that they assume residents want but seldom if ever do they ask the residents if this is in fact true. It is not surprising that residents describe feeling that they have either not been heard or have been ignored by stakeholders who seem to be only focused on their own agenda. There is a hope that stakeholders will recognize the need to effectively connect with the community and consider resident input in future plans.

Shaping the Future

The idea that Avondale is being developed is not pleasant to all. Residents relate that development has already displaced some families that had resided in Avondale for generations. Construction continues to displace residents and interrupt the lives of others. For example, increased traffic and streets being shut down. Residents residing in HUD or other subsidized housing are already seeing rent increases, there are worries that rent will continue to increase as well as market value housing in an effort to gentrify the neighborhood. Meanwhile residents are victim to absentee landlords and substandard living in many rental facilities. Residents fear Avondale will “stop being a neighborhood” as they are seeing more big buildings develop in the neighborhood and less housing that is truly affordable to them.

Residents relate that they welcome the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from the development in Avondale. Residents value the central location of Avondale and there are several institutions that they believe provide value in the neighborhood, among them are: The Library, Gabriel’s Place, The Urban League, Hirsch, ADC, ACC and Churches. Stakeholders might look to partnering with these organizations for ideas on how to connect with the community. Residents would like to have access to improved rental conditions opportunities and realistic affordable housing options. (Stakeholders/developers need a better understanding of the many barriers to home ownership that residents face)

People are hopeful about the potential for new employment and training. Residents relate that they remain hopeful that Children’s, Uptown and the Town Centre will provide opportunities for them to access employment and training opportunities. People see a place for small business and recreational opportunities in the community and express a desire for a chance to pitch their ideas to developers and stake holders.