

# EAST AKRON NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PLAN

A strategic plan to guide investment efforts  
addressing short and long term land use



*Prepared for the:*



**East Akron Neighborhood  
Development Corporation**

550 S. Arlington Street  
Akron, OH 44306  
(330)-773-6838

by



**Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative  
Kent State University**

1309 Euclid Avenue, Suite 200  
Cleveland, Ohio 44115  
(216) 357-3434

January 2013

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW .....	4
Acknowledgements .....	5
Executive Summary .....	6
Illustrative Plan .....	8
PROJECT CONTEXT .....	10
Public Engagement Process .....	12
Project Study Area .....	14
Goals & Objectives .....	16
Existing Conditions .....	18
VACANT LAND REUSE PROPOSALS .....	20
Site Selection Criteria .....	22
Street Edge Improvements .....	24
Neighborhood Pathways .....	28
Community/Market Gardens .....	32
Vendor Stalls .....	36
Orchards .....	40
Rain Gardens .....	44
Side Lot Expansion .....	48
Infill Development .....	52
PRIORITY PROJECTS .....	56
5th Avenue Corridor .....	58
Minordy Plaza .....	64
IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES .....	70
Project Phasing .....	72
Partnerships & Long-Term Stewardship .....	74
Cost Estimates .....	76

# OVERVIEW



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The East Akron Neighborhood Revitalization Plan was made possible with generous funding from the City of Akron and NeighborWorks America.

The East Akron Neighborhood Development Corporation would also like to thank the many residents, business owners, city officials, and organizations involved in the planning process. Special thanks is extended to the individuals that committed their time to participate on the steering committee, including Ken Jones, Greg Partridge, Frank Comunale, Oswald Gordon, Melford Elliott, Sylvia Brown, Pam Gibson, Brother Ken Haders, Mark Cole, Rita Hosch, Carl Swan, Charles Jones, Dr. Diana Swoope, Helen Tomic, and Jason Horringer.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The East Akron Neighborhood Revitalization Plan was initiated to create a detailed and implementable response to vacant land in East Akron. East Akron is a stable residential neighborhood that has benefitted from housing rehabilitation activities and economic development initiatives lead by East Akron Community Development Corporation over the past 30 years (EANDC). EANDC manages and maintains 600 housing units, is dedicated to making homes more environmentally healthy and energy efficient, and brought Middlebury Market Place to the neighborhood, the first inner-city retail center in Akron to open in four decades.

Although EANDC is making great strides, the neighborhood is facing unprecedented challenges due to building demolitions and vacant sites. It is estimated that there are over 400 vacant lots in the East Akron neighborhood. Most of the vacant lots are on residential streets, but many are located along the neighborhood's commercial corridor, South Arlington Rd. The adverse effect on adjacent home owners and negative experience for visitors travelling along Arlington Road created by vacant lots significantly impact the economic value and public perception of the neighborhood.

Supported by funding from the City of Akron and NeighborWorks America, the East Akron Neighborhood Development Corporation selected Kent State University's Cleveland Urban Design

Collaborative to lead a public engagement process for the creation of the East Akron Neighborhood Revitalization Plan. The Neighborhood Revitalization Plan is a strategic response to vacant land management and reuse that stabilizes vacant sites in the short term and identifies priorities for future land reuse.

The community engagement process included the involvement of a steering committee comprised of a diverse mix of local stakeholders and included three public meetings held at the centrally located Robinson Community Learning Center. Attendance grew with each public meeting and culminated with roughly 30 attendees at the final meeting.

Input gathered from the six-month community engagement process led to the recommendations in this report, which reflect the priorities of residents, business owners, and other stakeholders involved in the process. One of the initial tasks completed after the first public meeting was to define the study area for the process. East Akron's political boundaries are quite large, so it was agreed that the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan should focus on certain areas where existing assets could serve as anchors for new investments. Robinson Community Learning Center, Hoban High School, and the East Akron Community House were recognized as the primary anchors, but several churches also serve as important centers of community life.

The recommendations developed in the plan include the following types of vacant land reuse proposals:

- (8) Street Edge Improvements
- (18) Neighborhood Pathways
- (3) Community Gardens
- (4) Market Gardens
- (3) Vendor Stalls
- (2) Orchards
- (4) Rain Gardens
- (1) Public Plaza
- Various Side Lot Expansions

The three different forms of infill development proposed include:

- (44) Single-family homes
- (21) Units of Intergenerational Housing
- (2) Mixed-Use Developments

A total of 107 residential units are proposed in the plan, which are supported by improved neighborhood livability provided by the land reuse projects.

The various proposals have been divided into 3 phases for implementation, based on the priorities

articulated by attendees at the public meetings. The Phase 1 projects are mostly located along 5th Avenue, but also include the creation of Minordy Plaza. The estimated cost for Phase 1 is \$274,000 and requires many partnerships for successful implementation. Phase 2 expands the scope beyond 5th Avenue, including 20 units of single-family housing and three intergenerational housing structures, for an estimated cost of \$134,500. The final Phase 3 includes additional greening strategies and two mixed-use development projects, for an estimated cost of \$63,000. It is important to note that none of the phasing cost estimates include the costs for housing and mixed-use development, which will significantly increase the total financial investment necessary. Not including the single-family housing, intergenerational housing, or mixed-use development, the total estimated cost for all three phases is \$471,500. Although the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan will require significant resources and effort, EANDC is committed to supporting the recommendations and is focused on transforming vacant lots from burdens into assets.












*Robinson Learning Center*

*East Akron Community House*

*Hoban High School*

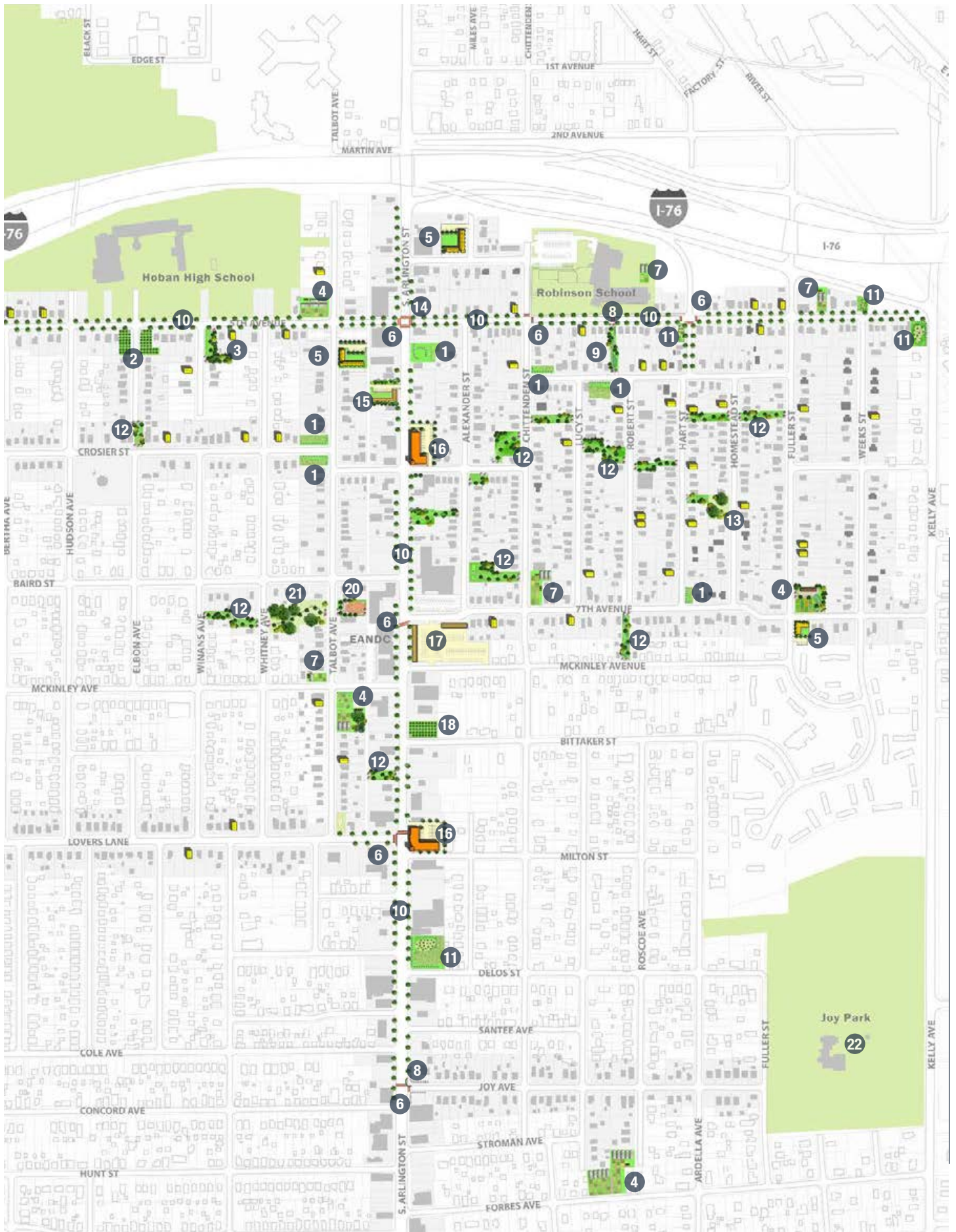
# ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN

- 1 **Street edge improvement**  
Trees, flowering plants and concrete “lot blocks”
- 2 **Hoban High School Orchard**  
To produce fruit trees, tended by Hoban students
- 3 **Pocket park and pathway**  
To enhance vacant lots and corner conditions
- 4 **Market garden**  
To serve public farmer’s markets with fresh produce
- 5 **Senior/Intergenerational housing**  
To better integrate generations and provide quality housing
- 6 **Enhanced crosswalk and decorative paving**  
To improve pedestrian safety
- 7 **Community garden**  
To be used by the community for personal gardening
- 8 **Vegetated curb extensions**  
To increase pedestrian safety and slow traffic at intersection
- 9 **Neighborhood pathway across the street from Robinson School entrance**  
To better connect Robinson school to the community
- 10 **Street tree plantings**  
Intended to enhance and define street edge
- 11 **Raingarden with street edge improvement**  
Intended to catch excess rainwater from the street
- 12 **Neighborhood pathway**  
To enhance connections between parts of the community
- 13 **Homestead Park (existing)**  
Small park between Homestead and Hart Streets
- 14 **Storefront improvements for businesses at the intersection of South Arlington and 5th Avenue**  
To create a more aesthetically pleasing commercial corridor
- 15 **Curbside vendor stalls**  
To increase entrepreneurship and sell locally made goods
- 16 **Mixed-use development (16,000 SF / 2 floors)**  
To introduce new retail and residential space
- 17 **Vendor stalls located along the edges of the Arlington Church of God parking lot, creating a flexible event venue**  
To sell food produced in the market gardens and other goods
- 18 **Fruit tree orchard**  
To grow produce for personal use or the farmers’ markets
- 19 **Neighborhood park and pathway**  
Enhancing vacant lots for community use
- 20 **Minordy Plaza year-round public space**  
To better activate the alley behind East Akron Community House
- 21 **Green space and pathway (existing)**  
Existing link in the neighborhood pathway chain
- 22 **Recommended improvements to Joy Park**  
To create a more user-friendly park experience

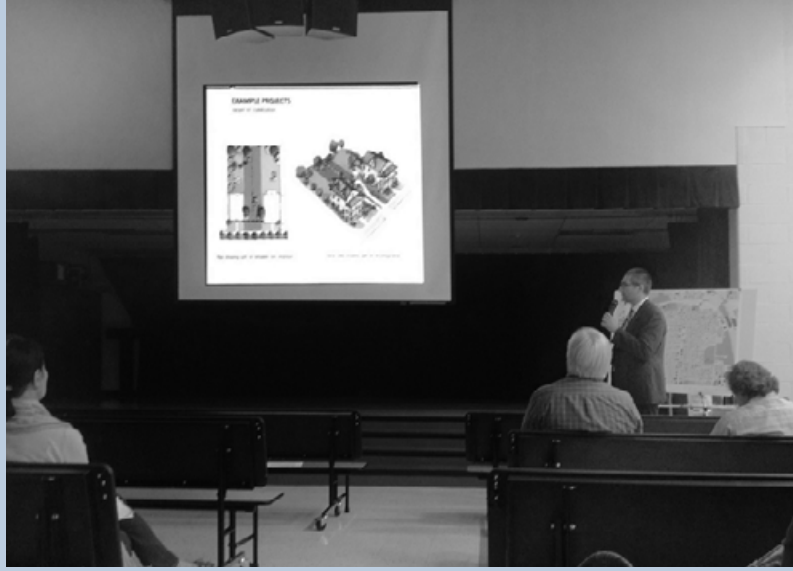
- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  Robinson Homes                |  Neighborhood Pathway    |
|  New Single-Family Homes       |  Orchard                 |
|  New Mixed-Use Development     |  Raingarden              |
|  New Intergenerational Housing |  Community/Market Garden |
|   |  Vendor Stalls           |



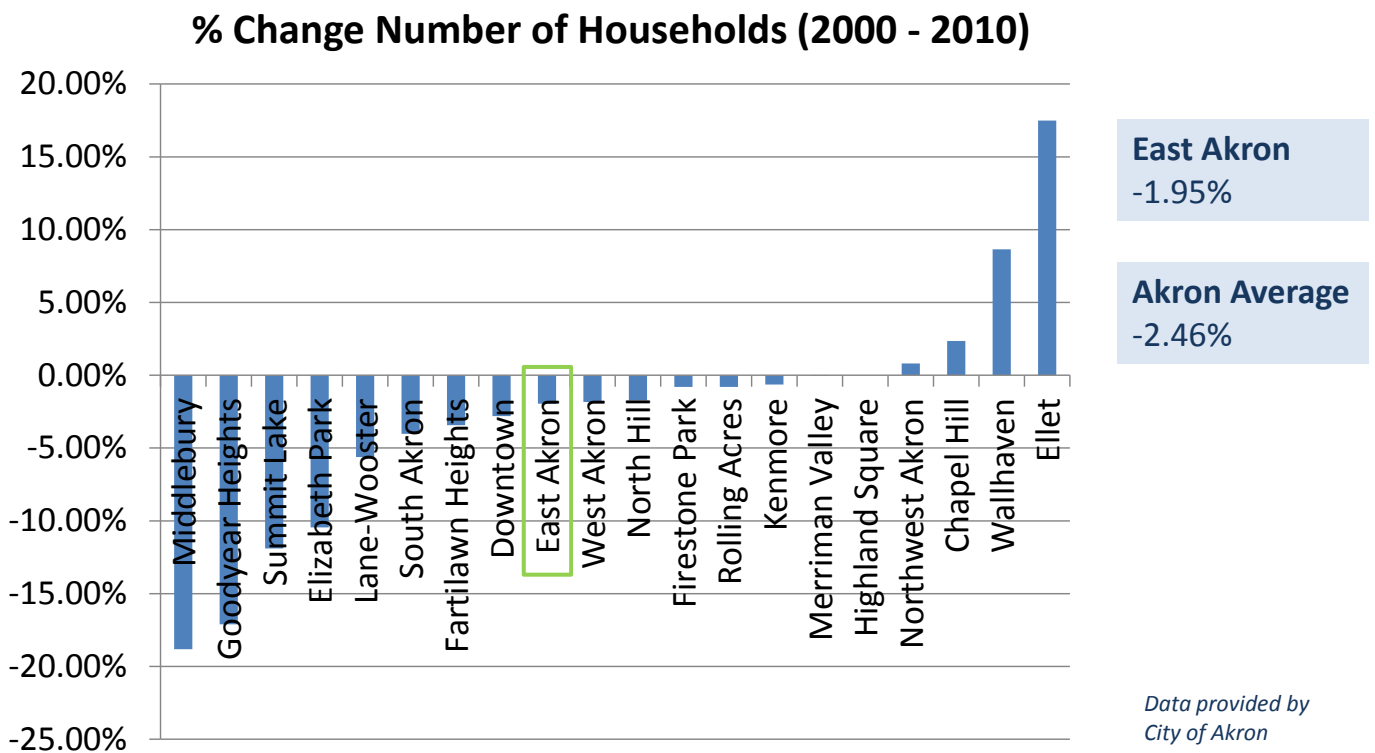




# PROJECT CONTEXT



Depopulation and vacancy have impacted many cities like Akron across the country. But these issues have affected neighborhoods within Akron differently. East Akron is in the middle of the pack in relation to other neighborhoods in Akron in terms of change in the number of households between 2000 and 2010. As indicated by the chart below, East Akron had a slightly smaller decrease in the percentage of households than Akron’s average. This finding, supported by other data assembled throughout the planning process, indicates that East Akron has a relatively stable population, which could benefit greatly from targeted investment. Stabilization of vacant lots through a variety of strategies could compliment the new housing investments already made by EANDC and set the stage for future development projects in the neighborhood.



# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS



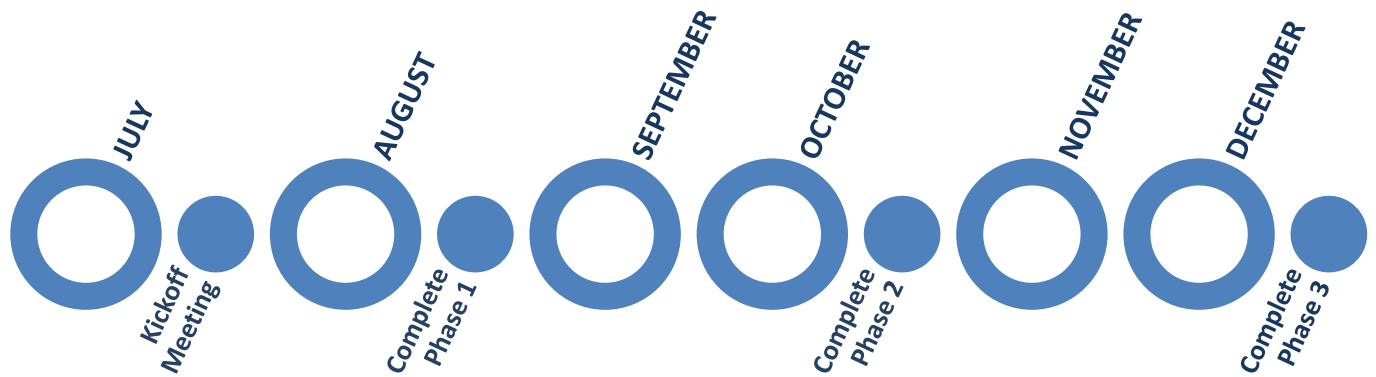
In order to develop a feasible and meaningful vacant land reuse plan, the development process required insights and experiences from a broad range of community members. In partnership with EANDC, the Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative engaged the public throughout the planning process to define the Project Study Area, establish Goals & Objectives, identify Existing Conditions, and develop Vacant Land Reuse Proposals.

The planning process was divided into three phases: Phase 1 *Taking Stock*; Phase 2 *Defining a Plan*; and Phase 3 *Detailing the Plan*. The phased process allowed the design team to incrementally review new ideas before taking the concepts to full design development. Ideas receiving favorable response from the public were developed further and unpopular ideas were either reworked or removed from the plan.

In addition to a public meeting at the culmination of

each of the three phases of the project, the process also included the involvement of a steering committee, comprised of local residents, EANDC staff, school representatives, and church pastors. As shown in the graphic on the opposite page, the project took shape over a six-month process, which began in July 2012 and concluded with a final report in December 2012.

The public meetings were graciously hosted by principal Charles Jones at the Robinson Elementary School, conveniently located in the heart of the East Akron neighborhood. Attendance increased with each meeting, drawing approximately 30 attendees at the final public meeting. Representing a wide geographic area across East Akron, attendees voiced their hopes and concerns for many parts of the neighborhood, listed in the Objectives & Goals. Attendees were able to provide their input on the plan through Q&A sessions following the presentations, moderated small group discussions, and via comment cards provided at each public meeting.



*The two graphics above illustrate the six month planning process, which took place between July and December 2012.*

# PROJECT STUDY AREA

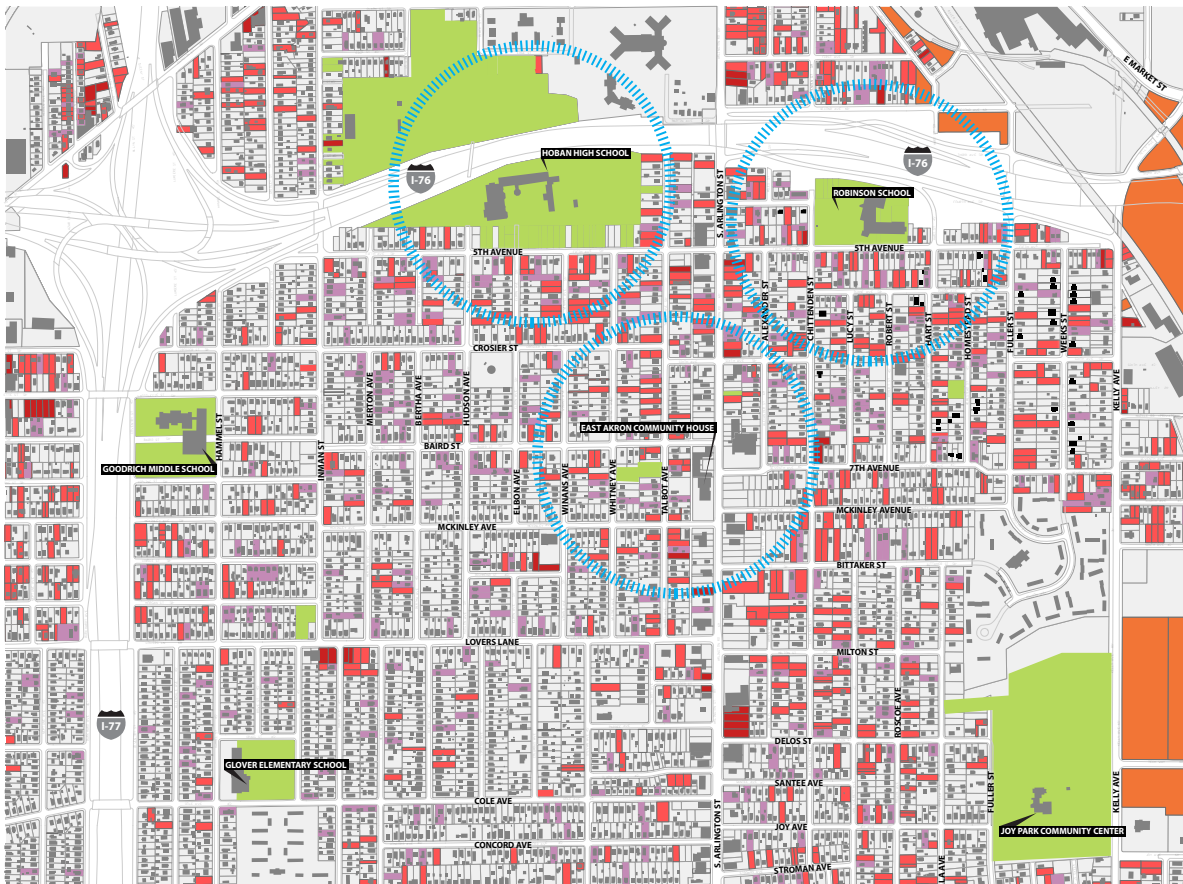


One of the initial outcomes from working with the public was the definition of the project's study area. There is no shortage of vacant lots in need of attention in East Akron, but it was necessary to prioritize where initial vacant land reuse projects should be tested. The impact of initial investments will be assessed, then these projects can be replicated and expanded over time throughout the entire neighborhood.

Based on feedback gathered at the first public meeting, consensus arrived at focusing initial vacant land proposals and infill development in close proximity to the neighborhood's cultural anchors. These anchors were defined as the Robinson Learning Center, Hoban High School, and the area surrounding East Akron Community House, which includes Arlington Church of God. It is important to note that although resident interest was concentrated on the previously mentioned focus areas, public comments also stressed the importance of addressing vacant properties along S. Arlington Road, areas north of I-76, and streets near Joy

Park. So, the effective Study Area for the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan extends north to Johnston Street, south to Joy Avenue, west to I-77 and east to Kelly Avenue.

In response to the residents' interests, the Vacant Land Reuse Proposals address all parts of the Project Study Area, not just the three focus areas. For example, all vacant properties outside of the focus areas should be considered for side lot expansion. This strategy enlarges the size of individual properties, resulting in lower density areas, but also channels new development pressure to the focus areas best suited for higher density. Streets with public transit lines and within a five minute walk of neighborhood anchors are best suited for higher density residential and mixed-use development. Community support is a critical ingredient for the success of all proposed projects, so residents should be encouraged to organize together and propose a project in any part of the neighborhood.



**Study Area**  
 The map indicates the extents of the area within East Akron defined by the public for the planning study. A blue circle surrounds each of the three cultural anchors prioritized for reinvestment efforts. Vacant land and abandoned buildings are also shown, indicating the opportunities for land reuse proposals and new infill development.

- Legend**
- Vacant / Abandoned Buildings
  - Vacant Land - Residential
  - Vacant Land - Commercial
  - Vacant Land - Industrial
  - Open Space



**Street Hierarchy & Gateways Diagram**  
 The thin dashed lines indicate the streets prioritized for infill development and the asterisks locate the intersections that function as key gateways into the neighborhood. These streets and gateways define the arrival experience for residents and visitors into East Akron. The larger dotted circle shows the potential "town center" of the neighborhood, which could be the hub of resident social and commercial activity. The vacant land reuse proposals were designed to reinforce this unifying framework.

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES



In order to guide the development of the vacant lot reuse proposals, a set of Goals & Objectives was created early in the planning process. Attendees at the first public meeting were encouraged to provide their desires for the neighborhood, which were collected by the design team through meeting notes and comment cards. A list of nine Goals & Objectives was distilled from the comments by the design team and the final list was agreed on at the second public meeting. The Goals & Objectives address a wide range of resident desires for the neighborhood and charges each vacant land reuse strategy with multiple functions.



## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Improve arrival experience into East Akron.

Support new development and neighborhood livability with a variety of vacant lot strategies.

Grow interest and opportunities for local food.

Introduce housing options designed for seniors and intergenerational families.

Increase neighborhood safety.

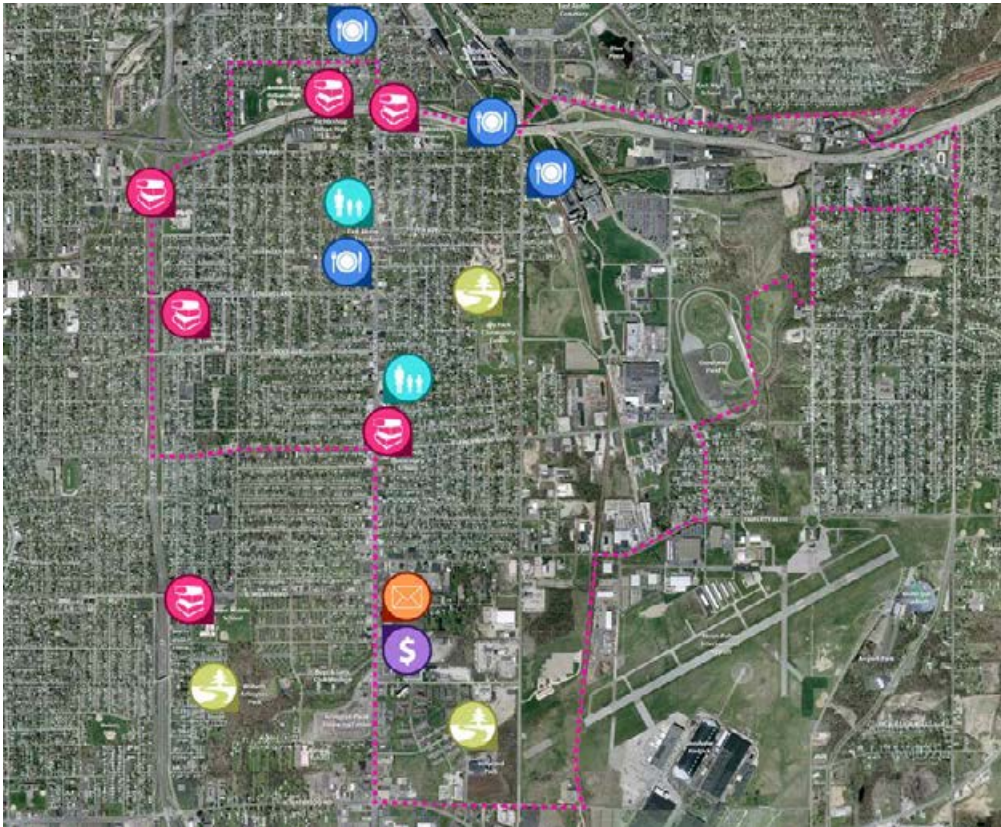
Build sense of community through attractive social spaces and events.

Reinforce EACH, Robinson Learning Center, and Hoban High School as cultural anchors of the neighborhood.



Expand social and home improvement programs available to support current residents and homeowners.

Encourage entrepreneurship and local businesses.

# EXISTING CONDITIONS



The map on the left shows the locations of key neighborhood amenities in relationship to the political boundaries of East Akron, indicated with a dotted line. The map legend is shown below.

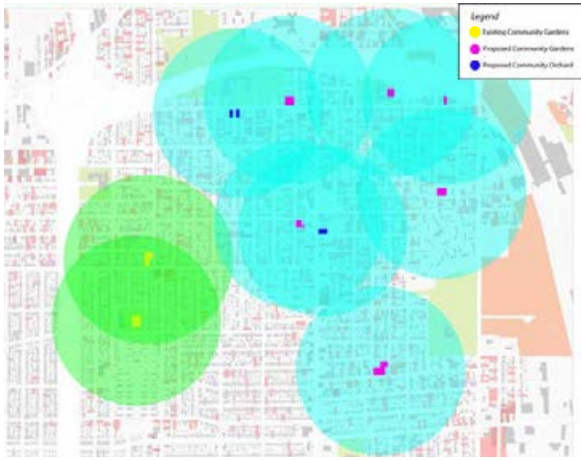
-  Schools
-  Grocery
-  Child Care
-  Parks
-  Banks
-  Post Office

Existing conditions analysis was conducted by the design team before the vacant land reuse proposals were developed. The type and location of the proposals were derived from a careful study of the existing conditions and are intended to respond to the main needs found in the neighborhood. The existing conditions analysis was conducted through personal site visits, discussions with local stakeholders, documentary photography, and mapping. A variety of maps were created, investigating the geographic dispersal of key neighborhood amenities, existing land use, ecological systems, transportation routes, and vacant land availability.

The clustering of key amenities along S. Arlington Street and in close proximity to the neighborhood anchors reinforced the public's definition of the project study area. The geographic isolation of some current amenities, such as community gardens and recreation areas, indicated a need for more of these amenities in underserved parts of the neighborhood. The maps helped the design team and local stakeholders to

visualize what amenities were needed to supplement existing conditions and where these new additions should be located. For example, the two maps at the top of the opposite page indicate existing and potential locations for neighborhood amenities based on the desire for all residents to be within a five-minute walking radius of the various amenities. Once general suitability areas were determined, the map of available vacant land was used to select specific parcels for the proposed amenities.

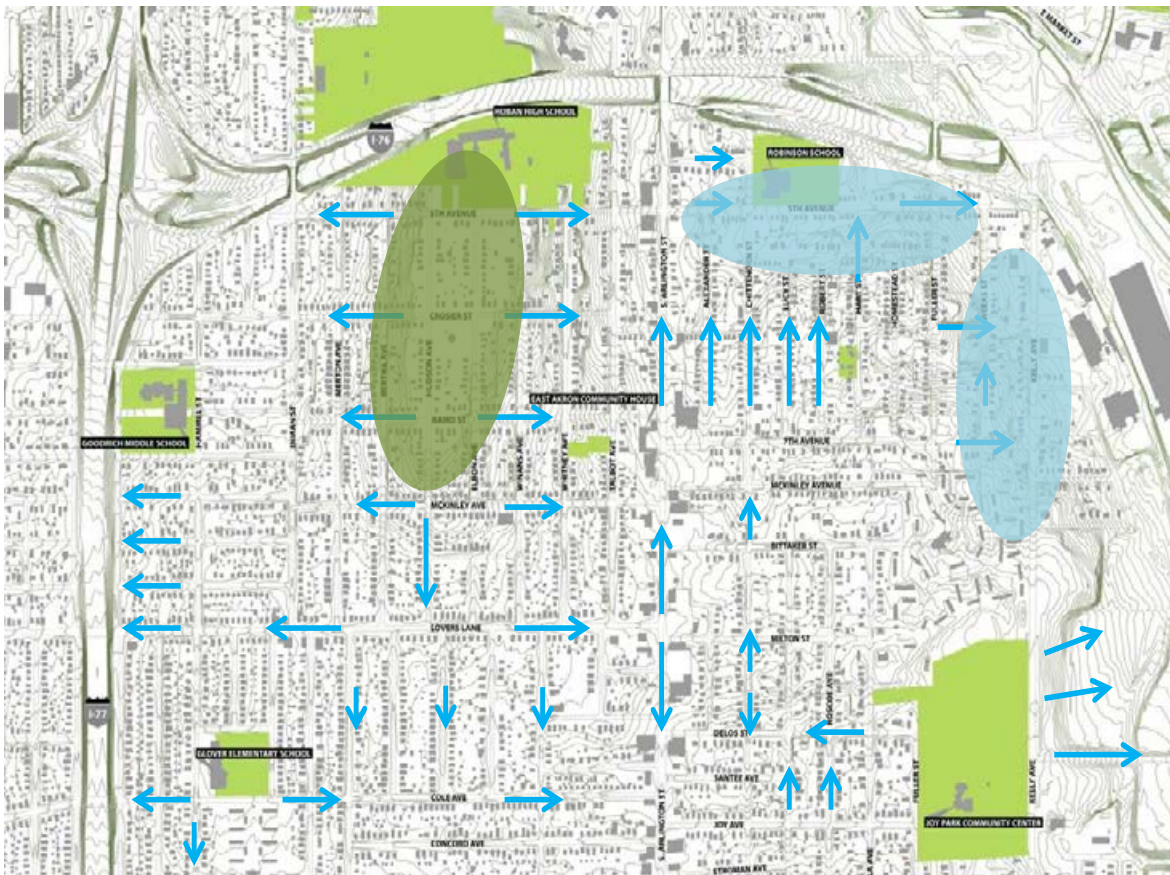
The longest blocks in the neighborhood were found east of S. Arlington Street between 5th Avenue and 7th Avenue. These blocks, well over 600' in length, create long circuitous routes for residents walking through the neighborhood. In order to shorten the block lengths, thereby improving walkability and connectivity, back-to-back vacant lots on these blocks were selected for reuse as neighborhood pathways. The existing conditions analysis was the basis for the development of the neighborhood pathways and other proposals.



The two maps on the left indicate the geographic dispersal of existing and proposed neighborhood amenities. The proposed sites were selected with the goal of providing a community garden and recreation space within a 5 minute walking radius of every resident.



Several examples were found along Arlington Rd. where businesses extended their commercial activities onto vacant or underused spaces. The vendor stalls proposal intends to support local businesses on vacant land.



The map illustrates an analysis of neighborhood topography to determine the direction of rainwater flows and areas best suited for particular stormwater absorption strategies. The dark green bubble indicates the high point in the neighborhood where the tree canopy should be expanded to capture rainfall with street trees and orchards. The light blue bubbles show the areas of lowest elevation, where flooding is most likely. Raingardens and other ground-level stormwater capture strategies should be prioritized on vacant lots in these areas.

# VACANT LAND REUSE PROPOSALS



The following Vacant Land Reuse Proposals section of the report includes not only detailed descriptions of the various proposals, but also includes the site selection criteria used to locate the proposals. Although the proposals are shown on currently vacant and potentially available lots, future circumstances may require the selection of alternate sites. The Site Selection Criteria are included to convey the thinking behind the site selection process, so other suitable sites may be chosen, if necessary. There are many vacant sites in the neighborhood that were not specifically selected for interventions, so finding alternate sites should be possible in most cases.

The proposed vacant lot reuse projects span a wide range in terms of cost, size, and intended duration. Some proposals, such as the street edge improvements are both low cost and short-term interventions, whereas the infill development projects require significant initial investments and are considered to last for a long time. Despite their variety, all proposals are intended to produce a return on their investment, either directly or indirectly. The returns may be financial (higher property values), environmental (increased stormwater retention), social (increased neighbor interaction), or in the best cases, all three.



*One of the few existing community gardens in East Akron is located at Glover Elementary School.*

# SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

What should I become?



The following Site Selection Criteria articulate the thinking behind the site selection process. In other words, these are the general rules for deciding where the various vacant land reuse proposals should be located. More specific criteria and considerations for each proposal are described in the following pages of the report.

For projects that require long-term community stewardship, a primary consideration is to select sites where partnership commitments have been established with residents, block clubs, churches, or other groups.

While each of the vacant land reuse proposals may have some unique site criteria, there are common issues to consider when selecting sites for all land reuse projects. These common issues include:

## 1. *Access to land*

Determine who owns the property. If the property is privately owned, contact the owner for permission to access the site. If the property is owned by the City of Akron or the Summit County Land Reutilization Corporation, then the

project leader may be able to purchase or lease the property.

## 2. *Soil conditions*

Investigate the previous uses of the site to determine if there may be pollutants, debris, or compacted soil underground. Also, contact the Ohio Utilities Protection Service (OUPS) to check for underground utilities before digging.

## 3. *Access to water*

Plan ahead regarding water access for new plantings and gardens. Arrangements with the City of Akron may be established for access to fire hydrants or adjacent building owners for access to rain barrels.

Although there are many vacant lots in East Akron, some parcels are better suited than others for particular reuse proposals. A vacant lot's size, proximity to nearby amenities, and level of neighbor involvement are all factors that can impact a project's success. The following ten Site Selection Criteria summarize the main location considerations for each reuse proposal:

## SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

- 1 Use contiguous vacant lots between parallel streets to create **neighborhood pathways** on blocks over 600' long. Create a chain of neighborhood pathways to connect key local destinations.
- 2 On residential streets, prioritize vacant corner lots for greening options, rather than **infill housing**. Corner lots on main arterial streets, such as S. Arlington, are preferred for new **commercial development**.
- 3 Use **street edge improvements** as short-term interventions on vacant lots where development may occur in the future.
- 4 Focus new **infill development** on vacant lots in density priority areas, primarily along 5th Avenue, 7th Avenue, and the areas surrounding Robinson School, East Akron Community House, and Hoban High School.
- 5 Locate **intergenerational and senior housing** on vacant lots in close proximity to elementary schools, bus routes, and community gardens.
- 6 Locate **vendor stalls** along streets with high car traffic and visibility, such as S. Arlington Street. The vendor stalls and associated parking lots should be located at a reasonable distance from residential units and buffered with trees.
- 7 Introduce higher **density and mixed-use development** in the core of East Akron along S. Arlington Street.
- 8 Encourage **side lot expansion** and lot splits on vacant parcels outside of density priority areas.
- 9 Prioritize continuous **tree canopy** and **orchards** in areas with higher elevations and **rain gardens** in areas with low elevations or large impervious surfaces.
- 10 Multiple adjacent parcels of over 6,000 SF total, which are unlikely to be developed in the future, are best suited for a **market garden**. A **community garden** is generally much smaller and is best located near an elementary school, senior living facility or homes with small yards. Agricultural sites should also have abundant sunlight available, where the southern exposure is clear of tall buildings and trees.

## STREET EDGE IMPROVEMENTS



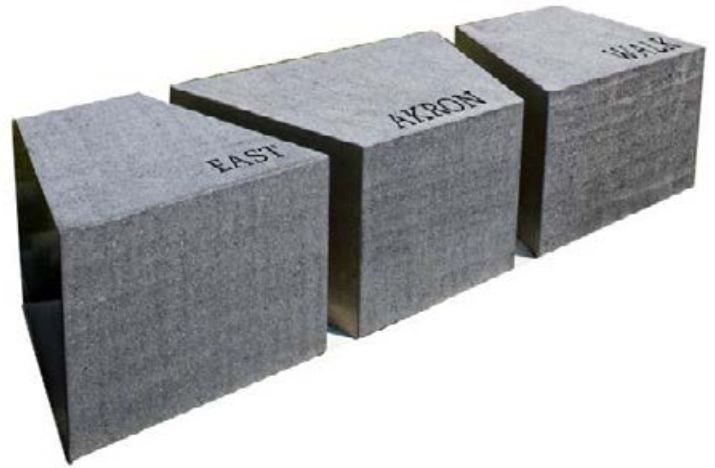
Vacant lot re-use with “lot blocks” arranged along the street edge

*Street edge improvements include plantings, trees, and concrete “lot blocks” intended to improve the appearance of vacant lots while preventing dumping and other forms of lot degradation. These relatively low cost enhancements can be used as temporary measures on vacant lots where development may occur in the future.*

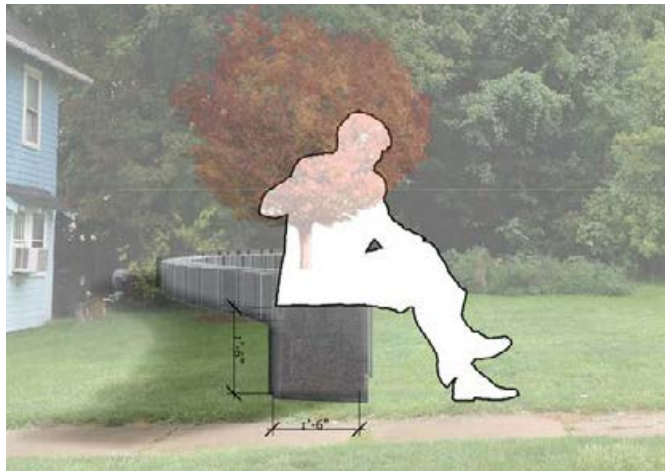


## “Cues to Care”

Although the dangers of an abandoned building may be removed through demolition, the vacant parcel that remains may continue to adversely affect the neighborhood. Untended vacant lots are often regarded as blight, because they can signal a lack of care in the neighborhood. According to Joan Nassauer, professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Michigan, the perception of a landscape can be improved by providing “cues to care.” Essentially, “cues to care” are interventions in a landscape that communicate to people that someone is caring for the site. Relatively small scale interventions, such as fencing, planters, colorful flowers, bird boxes, trimmed trees, and crisp edges on a site can be very effective “cues to care.”



*Proposed “lot blocks” shown with East Akron logos*



*Human scale proportions of edge blocks*



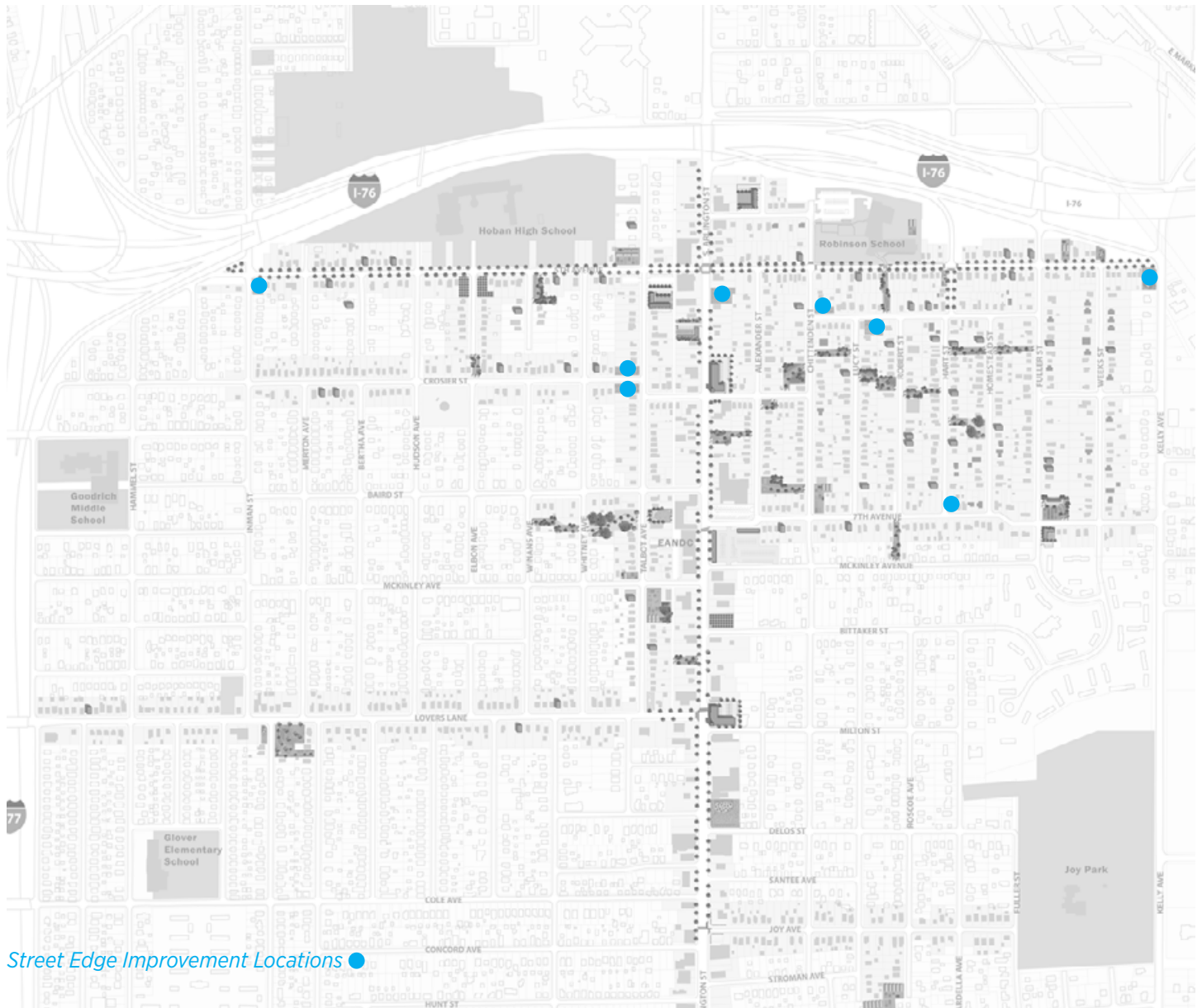
*Vacant lot edge improvement in Philadelphia, which involves a mowed lawn, tree plantings, and a simple wood fence, implemented by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society.*

## Vacant Lot Edge Options

The Street Edge Improvements recommended in this proposal are intended to provide “cues to care” on sites that are best served by low-cost, temporary interventions. For example, these sites may be slated for infill housing within the next five years, so there is simply a need for a short-term aesthetic improvement on the site. The considerable investment required for other reuse proposals, such as a market garden, would not be a wise choice for these sites. Residents may grow fond of other vacant land interventions, such as pathways or orchards, so it may be unpopular to replace those interventions with new infill development. The Street Edge Improvements provide a valuable and flexible option in the range of Vacant Land Reuse Proposals.

The Street Edge Improvements can take a number of forms, including fences, planters, or attractive blocks. The renderings on the opposite page and this page illustrate a concrete block concept, which allows for a number of applications and configurations. The distinctive blocks can serve as barriers or seating, and can be formed with a visible East Akron logo. The blocks should be large enough to discourage theft, but designed to be transported to other sites, if needed.

# STREET EDGE IMPROVEMENTS

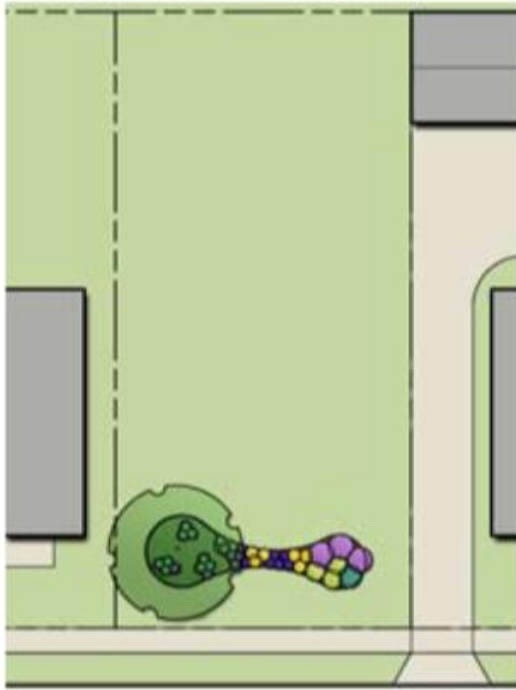


Street Edge Improvement Locations ●

## Location Selection Strategy

The proposed locations for the Street Edge Improvements were selected as sites of high visibility, not well-suited for other, more permanent vacant land reuse options. A few of the sites selected for Street Edge Improvements (shown on the map above) may be desired for infill housing development or community gardens in the future. The sites in close proximity to the Robinson Learning Center may be of particular interest for future development.

Regardless of the choice of Street Edge Improvement, whether concrete blocks or plantings, the edge treatments provide an opportunity to create a unified aesthetic in the neighborhood. By using similar treatments on all vacant sites, not only will the costs of the Street Edge Improvements be reduced, but the multiple interventions will introduce a noticeable visual cohesion and perception of care throughout East Akron.




Option 1

-  BLUE CADET HOSTA
-  ROZANNE GERANIUM
-  BLACK-EYED SUSAN
-  DWARF FOUNTAIN GRASS
-  SEA GREEN JUNPER
-  PAUBIN DWARF LILAC
-  GALAXY MAGNOIA
-  MYRTLE



Option 2

-  ANTHONY WATERER
-  SEA GREEN JUNPER
-  MAIDEN GRASS
-  GALAXY MAGNOIA

*Plans showing the layouts for streetedge improvement options; prepared by Plan it Green Designs LLC, from the Re-Imagining Cleveland Ideas to Action Resource Book.*



Option 1



Option 2

*Streetedge improvement options; prepared by Plan it Green Designs LLC, from the Re-Imagining Cleveland Ideas to Action Resource Book.*

# NEIGHBORHOOD PATHWAYS

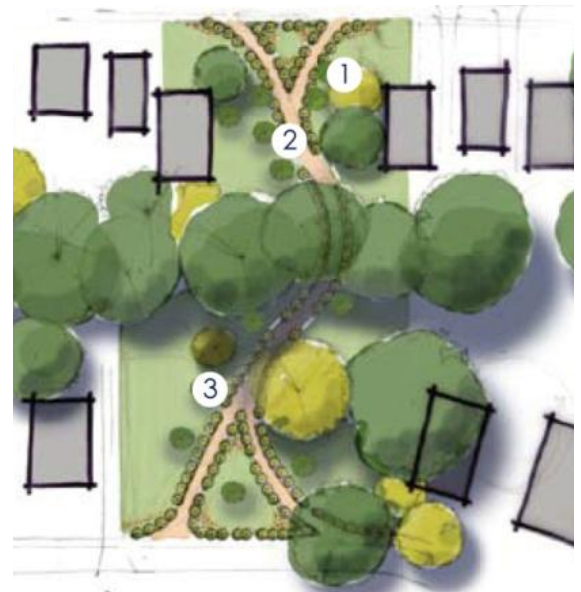


*Rendering of a proposed neighborhood pathway from the Robinson Learning Center on 5th Avenue through to Duane Avenue.*

*Neighborhood pathways are reused strings of vacant lots, creating safe and efficient walking and bicycling connections for residents. These pathways are intended to link not only streets and homes, but important community assets, such as the Robinson School, East Akron Community House, Hoban High School, parks, and churches.*



*Aerial rendering and plan showing a typical example of a neighborhood pathway.*



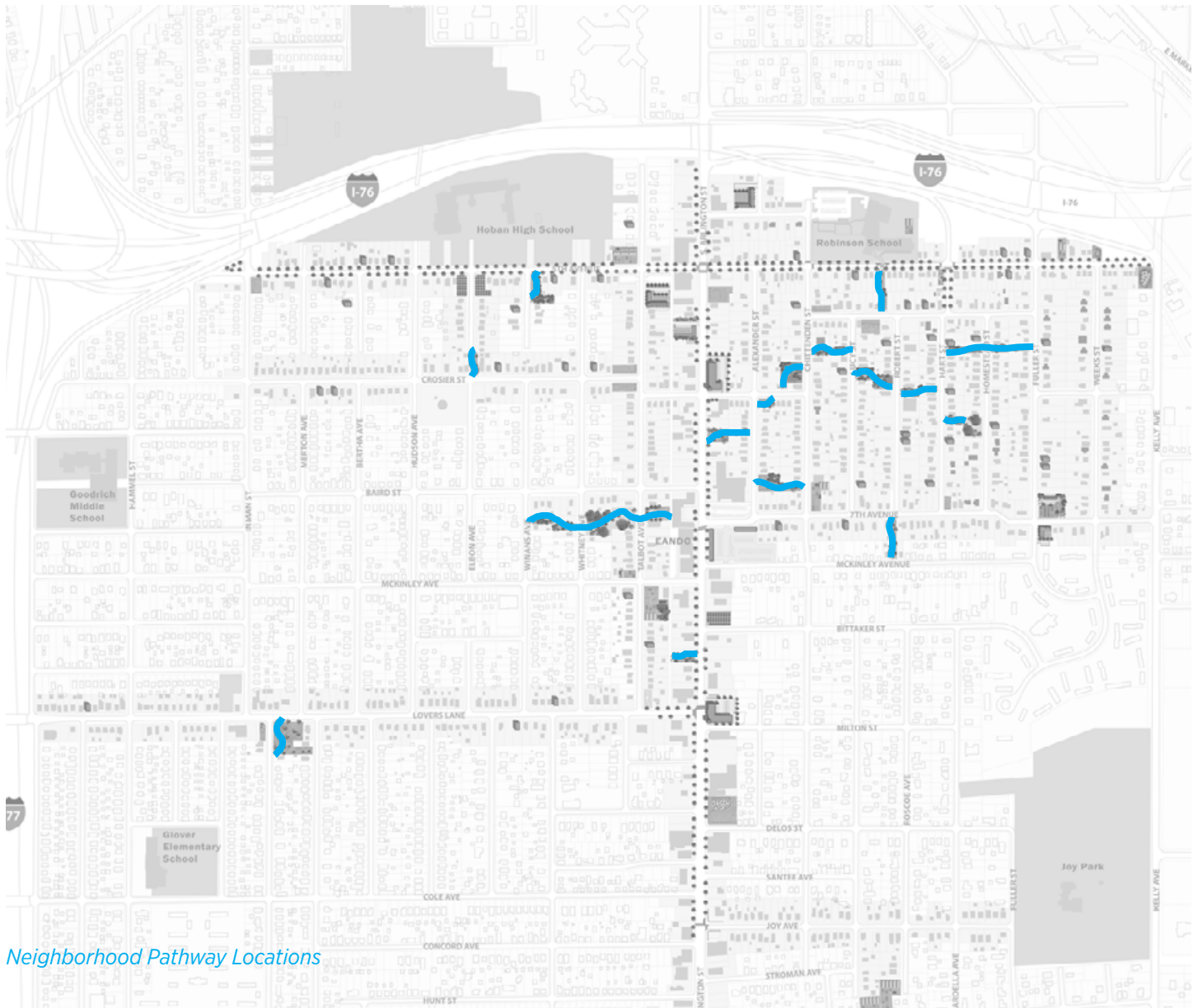
### Attractive, Efficient, and Safe Routes

Neighborhood pathways provide attractive and more efficient routes for residents through formerly unattractive and unsafe vacant lots. In many cases, people already use the vacant lots as cut-throughs, so the neighborhood pathways formalize the routes, turning them into valuable amenities. At least one neighborhood pathway already exists in East Akron - between Whitney Avenue and Talbot Avenue, just south of Baird Street. This pathway and integrated small park provide a useful greenspace for residents and could be a model for other sites, where the pathway could connect key destinations through multiple

blocks. The pathways could connect schools to home for children walking or riding their bikes and link community parks to residents two or three streets away.

The neighborhood pathways are intended to act as attractive features for adjacent property owners, adding value to their homes, and useful amenities for all residents, improving the livability of the neighborhood as a whole.

# NEIGHBORHOOD PATHWAYS



*Neighborhood Pathway Locations*

## Location Selection Strategy

As shown in the map above, the locations of the neighborhood pathways were selected to create useful routes through the neighborhood connecting important local destinations. A beneficial new route can be created by simply adding a path through a single long block or by linking pathways through multiple blocks creating a green space chain.

An example of a single-block route that can provide a significant benefit is the neighborhood pathway proposed between 5th Avenue and Duane Avenue. This

pathway is proposed on a pair of vacant lots directly aligned with the entry sidewalk to the Robison Community Learning Center. Combined with a new crosswalk and vegetated curb extensions, the new pathway provides a more direct walking route between home and school for students, as well as a clear sign to passersby that the school is an integrated component of the neighborhood. Based on public feedback at the public meetings, the Robison Community Learning Center pathway was chosen as a priority project to complete within the first phase of implementation.

## Design and Implementation

The design of the neighborhood pathways will be critical to their success as attractive, efficient, and safe routes. As mentioned often by residents throughout the planning process, new interventions must be designed to maximize safety. The key design considerations for the neighborhood pathways include the following:

- Curving paths provide visual interest and relief from the linearity of surrounding streets. (See example on top right and bottom of this page from Brooklyn Centre neighborhood pathway in Cleveland.)
- Vegetation and other objects should not block a person's line of sight from one end of the pathway to the other. Visual openness is an important safety consideration.
- Lighting should be provided for safety, but should be directed away from the homes of next door neighbors. If possible, locate solar lighting in locations not in the shadow of trees or homes. (See example to the right of this page from the Tremont neighborhood pathway in Cleveland. The metal sculptures are topped with square plates embedded with solar LED lights.)
- Consult with adjacent property owners about the need for vegetated buffers between their homes and the pathway.

This project requires a high level of teamwork during installation and committed stewardship after construction. Plants will need to be watered, litter collected, and some maintenance, so long-term responsibility commitments should be established with a block club, church group, or community development corporation.

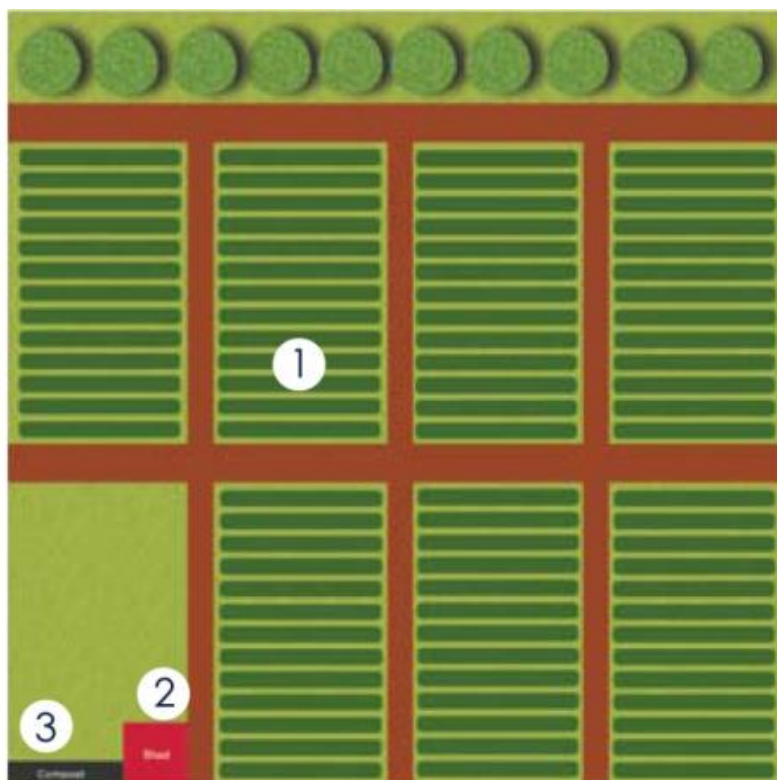


## COMMUNITY/MARKET GARDENS



*To support the growing desire for healthy food and community involvement in the neighborhood, a number of community gardens and market gardens are proposed in East Akron. Community gardens provide fresh produce to neighbors and market gardens are generally larger and designed to sell the produce for a financial return.*





*Plan showing a typical market garden layout; prepared by Urban Growth Farms*



- 1 planting beds
- 2 shed
- 3 compost

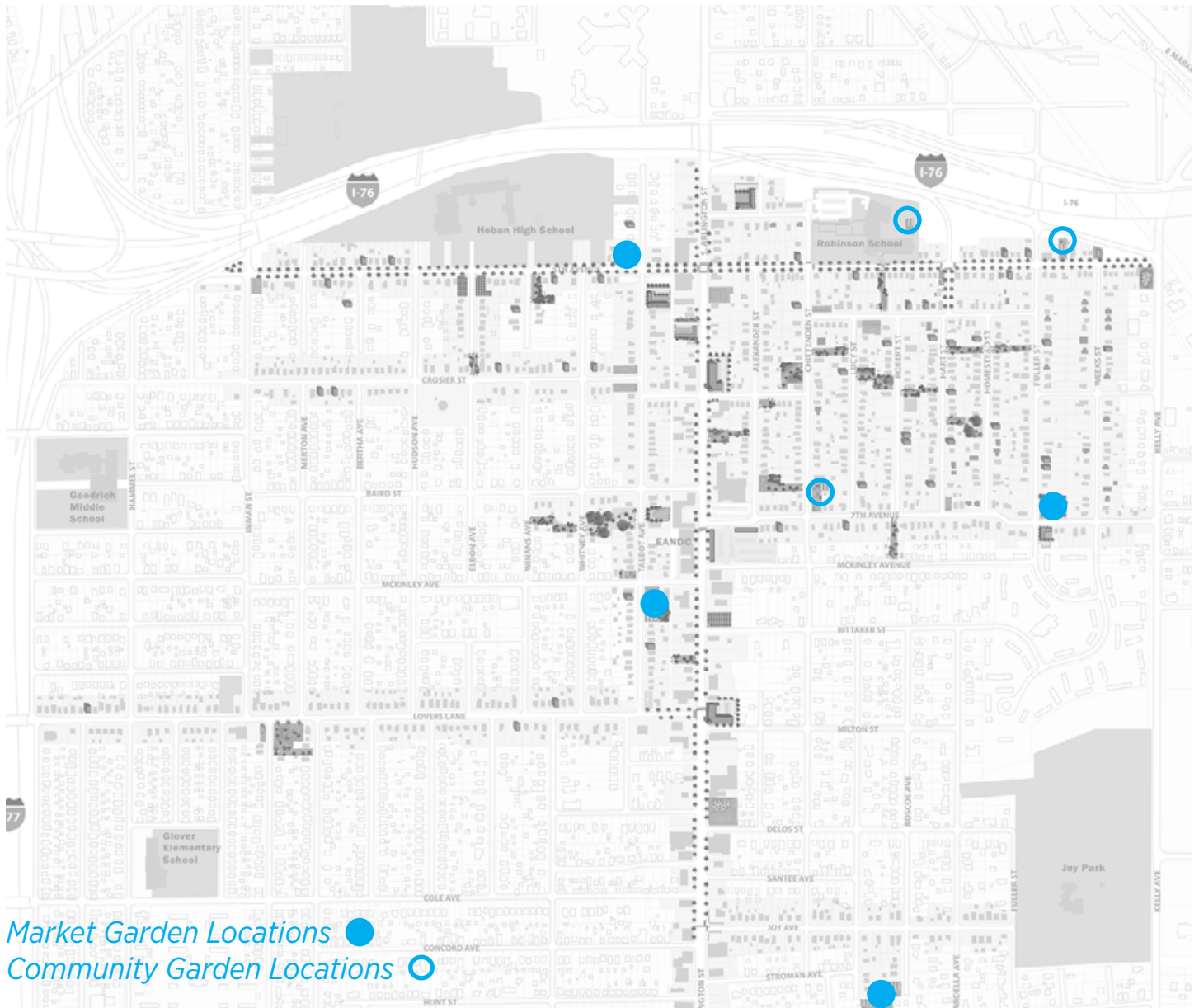
## Community Gardens & Market Gardens

One of the findings from the public meetings was that residents thought more of their neighbors would be interested in urban agriculture, if their neighbors knew more about it. Currently, East Akron is home to only three community gardens, so residents have little personal contact with urban agriculture. One of the goals established for the vacant land reuse plan is to increase the “interest and opportunities for local food.”

The cultivation of local food can be increased in the neighborhood through two types of agricultural gardens: community gardens and market gardens. The functional distinction between the two boils down to financial return - market gardens are intended to make money and community gardens are not. In terms of physical differences, the goal of financial return generally requires market gardens to be larger, in order to maximize efficiency, and the produce grown in the market garden is carefully selected to yield the highest profits. Market gardens are typically over 8,000 SF and community gardens can be much smaller. Although community gardens may not provide financial returns, they can grow strong social bonds between neighbors.



# COMMUNITY/MARKET GARDENS



*Market Garden Locations* ●

*Community Garden Locations* ○

## Location Selection Strategy

As shown in the existing conditions diagrams on page 19, the locations of current gardens were mapped and 1/4 mile radii were drawn around these sites to determine the best locations for additional gardens. The underlying intention was to provide a market or community garden within a five minute walk of each resident in East Akron. The locations of the proposed gardens shown in the map above reflects this logic of supplementing existing locations.

The market gardens require larger sites, assembled

from multiple vacant parcels, which were found mostly south of 6th Avenue. The smaller community gardens are shown along 5th Avenue, where the gardens will be in close proximity to existing schools and proposed senior housing developments. The ideal locations for community gardens are within walking distance of elementary schools, senior living facilities, and residential units with small yards. Market gardens would also benefit from being located near farmers' markets or other points of sale, which in the case of East Akron, may be the proposed vendor stalls along S. Arlington Rd.

## Garden Design

The first step in the design of a community or market garden is to determine the desired size of the garden. The size of the garden should be based on the number of committed participants willing to tend the garden. Although it is difficult to estimate exact numbers of participants required per square foot of garden, it is generally accepted that a few workers will be needed to spend 5 hours per week to tend to a 5,000 SF community garden during the growing season. A market garden will be larger and may require more intensive labor than a community garden, so project leaders should plan accordingly. Sites should also be selected which have access to water (possibly fire hydrants or rain barrels) and have ample southern sun exposure.

Before planting, it is important to test the soil for potential contaminants. Soil samples can be easily collected and sent to the University of Massachusetts for testing, which costs between \$10-\$15. Raised beds may also be used on sites with poor soil, which have the added benefit of easy access for the elderly and persons that are physically disabled.

In addition to planting beds, the garden sites may include fencing to deter vandalism, which could be securely locked or simply define the site's boundaries. A securable tool shed and compost bins are also commonly found onsite.



*Potential market garden site at the intersection of Fuller St. and 7th Ave.*

## Stewardship

During the growing season, it will be necessary to assign leadership responsibilities to several individuals to coordinate logistics and maintenance activities. Maintenance may include watering, litter removal, harvesting produce, repairing stakes, and weeding. Community gardens could involve school children, parents, block clubs, church groups, local businesses, and the community development corporation. If the site is owned by the City of Akron, a lease agreement may be required to assure long-term use of the site and permit access to fire hydrants.



*EcoVillage market garden in Cleveland's Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood*



*Compost bins at the EcoVillage market garden*

# VENDOR STALLS



*Aerial model showing the relationship between the Stalls and the surrounding proposals.*

*Vendor stalls are simple roof structures located along major roads, which provide an attractive and functional space for local residents and businesses to sell their goods. The stalls can be located on vacant lots or parking lots, replacing the need for vendors to bring their own shelters and improving the visual quality of current outdoor displays.*

## Support Outdoor Vendors

During the initial existing conditions analysis, it was observed that several parcels in the neighborhood were being used for outdoor displays of merchandise. Some of the sites were used by adjacent businesses to extend their showrooms outside, as in the image to the right, but other sites appeared to be occupied by individuals selling homemade items. For instance, two elderly women were selling baked goods under a pop-up tent located on a vacant corner lot. Most of these informal commercial uses of land were found along S. Arlington Street, which are logical locations given the high volume of street traffic. The vendor stall proposal is intended to support these existing commercial uses and grow the potential for more consistent and profitable financial exchanges. If the selected site is in a residential area, ample visual and sound buffering of trees should be provided between adjacent homes and the vendor stall sites.



*Current business in East Akron with outdoor display of merchandise.*

## Vendor Stall Design

Existing vendor displays in the neighborhood can be found on grassy vacant lots and parking lots, so the proposed vendor stalls are designed to fit within both of these contexts. Since some parking lot owners may not want to remove parking spaces, the vendor stalls are designed to fit on top of parking spaces, with columns spaced at the width of a parking space. This configuration allows the stall to be used as a vendor booth during market events and provides a covered parking spot at all other times.

The design of the stall can take a number of forms, based on available materials, costs, and aesthetic preference. But, the stalls should use a consistent visual language, even if installed on different sites, in order to provide a unifying appearance along the street edge. A main benefit of the vendor stall is its flexibility; it creates a physical separation between the sidewalk and parking lots, which can adapt to changing uses.

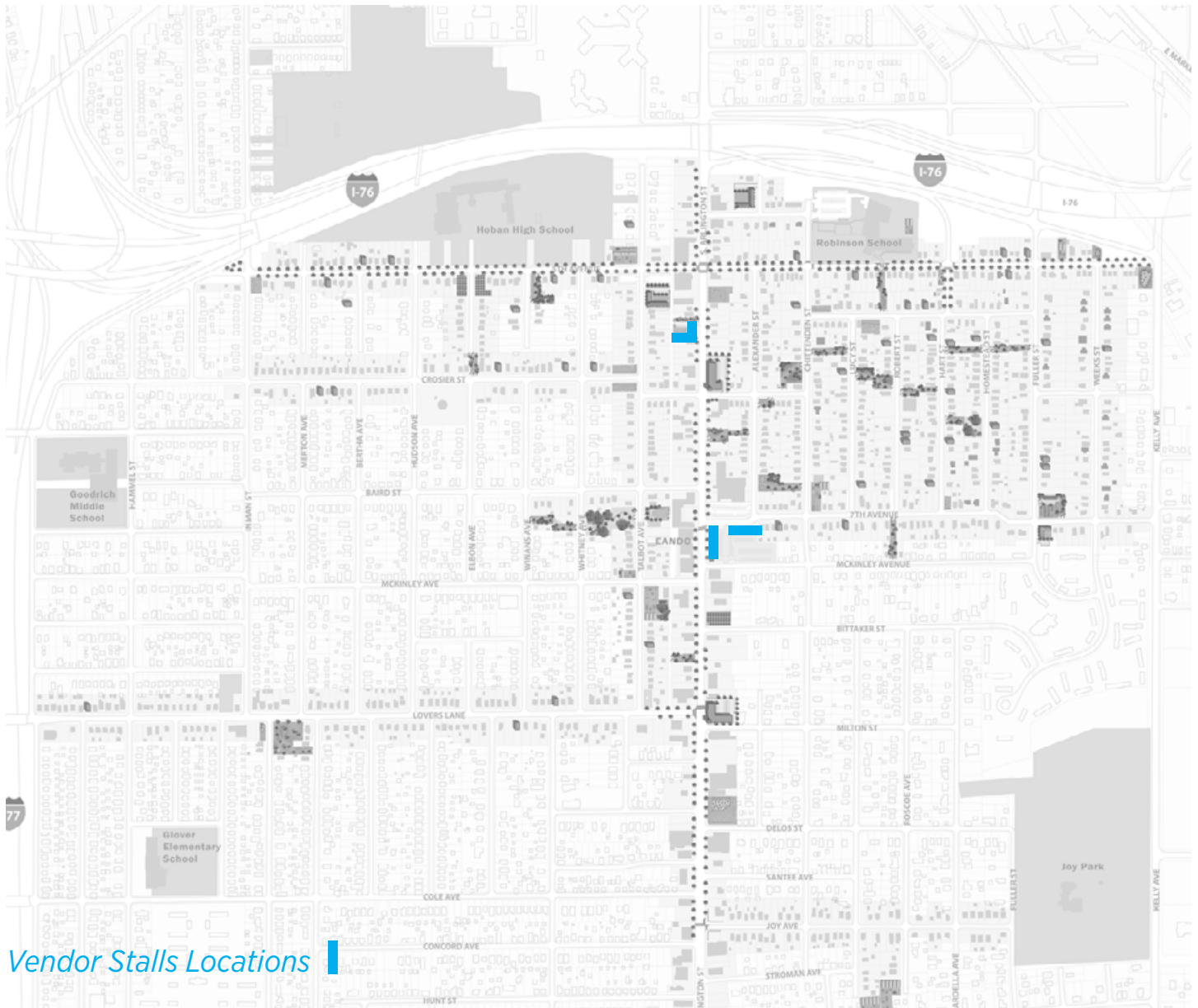


*The roof slope of the vendor stall could be designed to collect rain and divert water to nearby planters.*



*The spacing of the vendor stall columns should allow cars to easily pull through, possibly at a 10' distance between each column.*

# VENDOR STALLS



*Vendor Stalls Locations*

## Location Selection Strategy

All of the vendor stall locations proposed in the plan are along S. Arlington Street, since this is the street corridor with the most car traffic. The vendor stalls are intended to act as clear visual signals to pedestrians and drivers that they are welcome to stop and shop. Current informal tents and temporary roadside table displays may not have the high visibility and reassurance of formality that the vendor stall can provide.

The parking lot for the Arlington Church of God is proposed as a potential site for the vendor stalls, because the parking lot is in a prime location for

community events and the stalls will not remove parking spaces. The intersection of S. Arlington and 7th Avenue, where the parking lot is located, is the geographic center of the neighborhood and should be reinforced as the activity hub of East Akron.

A second location selected for the vendor stalls is on a cluster of vacant parcels along S. Arlington Rd., just south of 5th Avenue. Although only two sites have been selected thus far, more locations could be added, if the vendors stalls are found to be successful.

## A New East Akron Market

One of the comments heard most frequently during the public process, was the desire to build stronger social bonds between neighborhoods. Community events, such as outdoor markets, are good places for neighbors to meet, have informal conversations, and draw visitors into the area. The vendor stalls can be a physical element in a larger strategy to start a new public market in East Akron. The market could include antique and furniture vendors, like the Brooklyn Flea shown to the right, or could focus on local foods grown in the neighborhood. The market doesn't have to be large, it can start off small with a couple vendors. But, a good location will be critical to its success.



*The Brooklyn Flea is a very popular open-air flea market held every weekend in Brooklyn, NY in various locations, including parks and large parking lots.*

Considering the Arlington Church of God's strong presence in the neighborhood and with East Akron Community House right across the street, the church's parking lot provides an ideal location for a public market. Of course, permission from the church will be necessary and the market schedule should prioritize the church's needs for the parking lot.



*The Gordon Square Farmers' Market in Cleveland's Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood. More info at: [gordonsquare.wordpress.com](http://gordonsquare.wordpress.com)*

## Shared Use Arrangements

There are numerous precedents for the type of shared use arrangements proposed for the public market on the Arlington Church of God parking lot. For example, the Gordon Square Farmers' Market in Cleveland, shown to the left, takes place Saturday mornings on the parking lot of the Bethany Presbyterian Church. The church's entire parking lot is used for vendor tents during the four hour market, then after the market closes, cars resume parking for Saturday evening services. The Gordon Square Farmers' Market is a non-profit organization, which assumes liability during the hours of the market, reducing the risk placed on the church. Organizers of the market should similarly engage with the church leadership to discuss possible use arrangements.

## ORCHARDS



*Orchards are proposed for certain vacant lots, which could grow a variety of fruit trees for harvesting or street trees to be replanted where needed in the neighborhood. Since orchards require dedicated attention, the orchards sites are located in close proximity to organizations that can serve as active stewards of the projects.*





The blue circle indicates the location of the orchard proposed at S. Arlington Street and Bittaker Street.



The blue circle indicates the location of the orchard proposed at 5th Avenue and Elbon Avenue, near the entrance to Hoban High School.



Photographs of the hole digging, sapling watering, and ribbon cutting at the Brooklyn Centre Orchard in Cleveland.

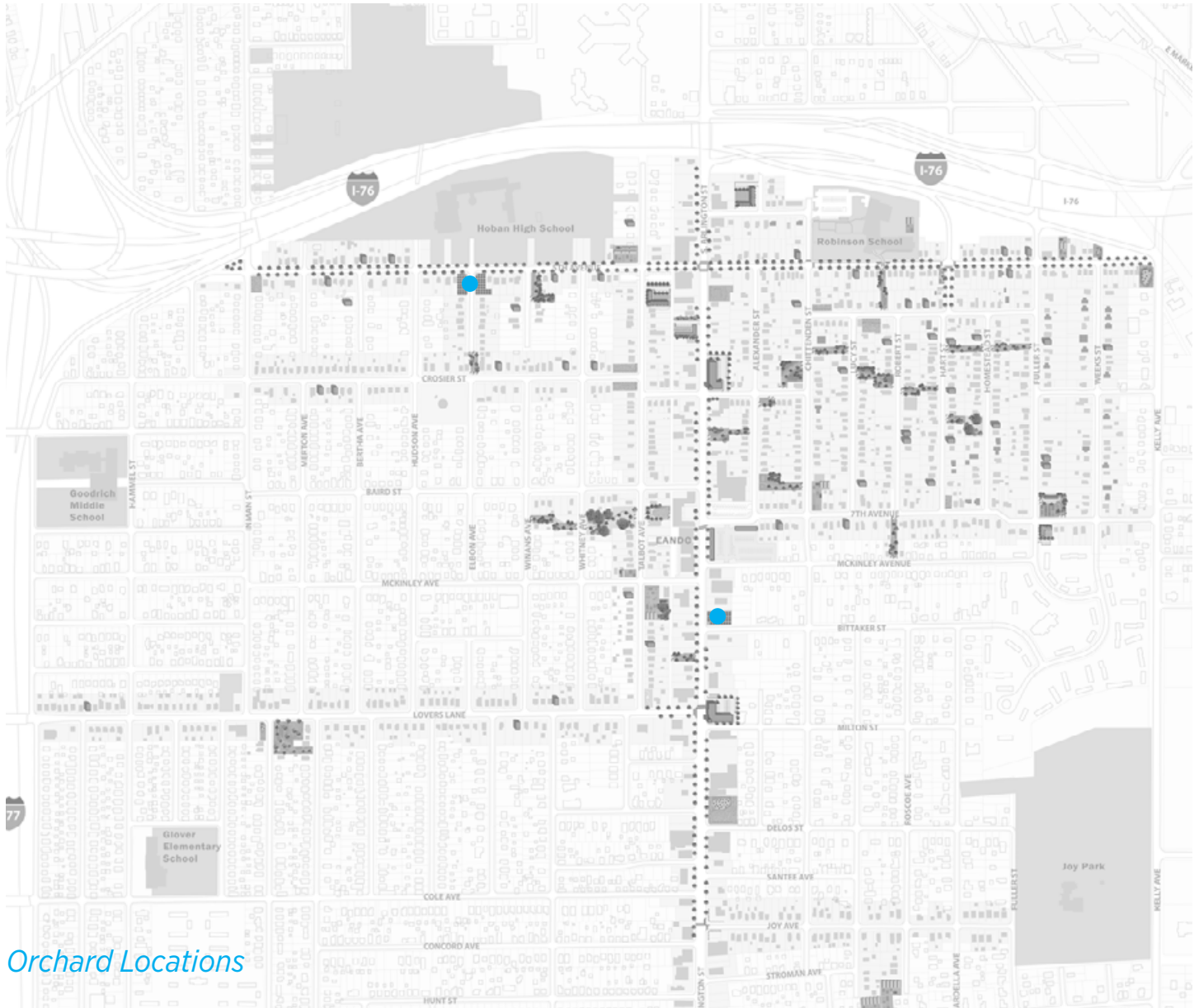
## Shared Use Arrangements

Orchards are great vacant land reuse option, because they not only produce tasty fruit, but they also introduce a visually striking feature into the urban environment. Ordered rows of attractive fruit trees can be an unexpectedly delightful discovery for visitors to a neighborhood. Although orchards offer many benefits, they can require a fair amount of maintenance, so a committed steward is needed for each project.

Two orchard sites are proposed in the plan - one across the street from Hoban High School and the second is next to a church at the intersection of S. Arlington Street and Bittaker Street. The Hoban High School site is actually comprised of two parcels at the southwest and southeast corners of 5th Avenue and Elbon Avenue. This intersection is the main entrance to the high school, so the orchard is intended to create an attractive welcoming experience for students, parents, and visitors to the school. Not only will the orchard provide visual beautification, but it can also serve as a learning environment for classes on ecology and agriculture. The harvested fruit could be given to students or canned and sold as a fundraising opportunity.

Similar to the Hoban High School site, the S. Arlington Street orchard location could be a project undertaken by the nearby church and provide fresh fruit to its members. The highly visible location along S. Arlington Street will also provide a great opportunity to improve the perception of the neighborhood for drivers along the corridor.

# ORCHARDS



*Orchard Locations*

## Location Selection Strategy

Orchard sites for the plan were selected, which are in very close proximity to the potential stewards of the orchards. It will be easier to keep an eye on the site and visit the orchard on a regular basis, if the property is within easy walking distance. In addition to steward proximity, ideal orchard sites should be a minimum of 8,000 SF in size and should not have plans for development in the future. Orchards are

long-term investments, not temporary interventions. Similar to community gardens, the best orchard sites receive direct sunlight throughout most of the day. Orchards also thrive best when located on high ground, where trees can avoid frost and freezing conditions. Fortunately, the Hoban High School site is located within the highest part of the neighborhood, as can be seen in the existing conditions map on page 19.

## Orchard Benefits & Maintenance

As previously mentioned, an orchard not only provides fresh fruit, but it is also a place that can cultivate relationships between neighbors. The orchard can be designed as a space to accommodate small gathering and events, possibly to celebrate the harvest and fruit canning. The long-term investment expected for an orchard can create an experience that is passed down through multiple generations. Current students of Hoban High School may walk through the orchard years from now with their own children, surrounded by the same fruit trees.

Depending on the level of public access desired by the orchard owner, the site can also facilitate engagement between the operating organization and the surrounding community. Some orchards have fences around the perimeter, restricting access to individuals with a key, while other orchards have varying degrees of openness. Defying common expectations, the Vineyards at Chateau Hough, shown on the right, has no fence and does not experience theft or unwanted trespassing. The success of the inner city vineyard is a testament to project leader Mansfield Frasier's desire to engage local youth in the project.

Based on northern Ohio's climate, some of the most successful fruit trees are apple, cherry, pear, and paw paw, but may also include bushes of strawberry, raspberry, and blackberry. The berry bushes can be used to visually soften the fencing with vegetation. In addition to the trees themselves, the orchard may also have a gazebo, picnic tables, outdoor artwork, or games, such as a horseshoe pit or outdoor chess set. Ornamental gates, carved signs, and pathways are details that can significantly improve the overall appearance of the property.

Fruit trees require annual spraying and pruning, so it is recommended to have someone with tree care experience to consult on the project. On-going maintenance includes litter pick-up, lawn mowing, and watering during the first year.



*The Vineyards of Chateau Hough was started in 2010 by Mansfield Frasier, in the Hough neighborhood of Cleveland. The vineyard is comprised of 294 vines and will produce a usable yield of Frontenac and Traminette grapes by 2013.*

# RAIN GARDENS



View showing the raingarden proposed at the intersection of 5th Avenue and Hird Street.

*Rain gardens are planting beds designed to absorb rainwater into the ground. The plants used in a rain garden are often native species, which can survive on the naturally occurring level of rain and do not require supplemental watering. Rain gardens provide significant ecological benefits compared to conventional flower gardens.*



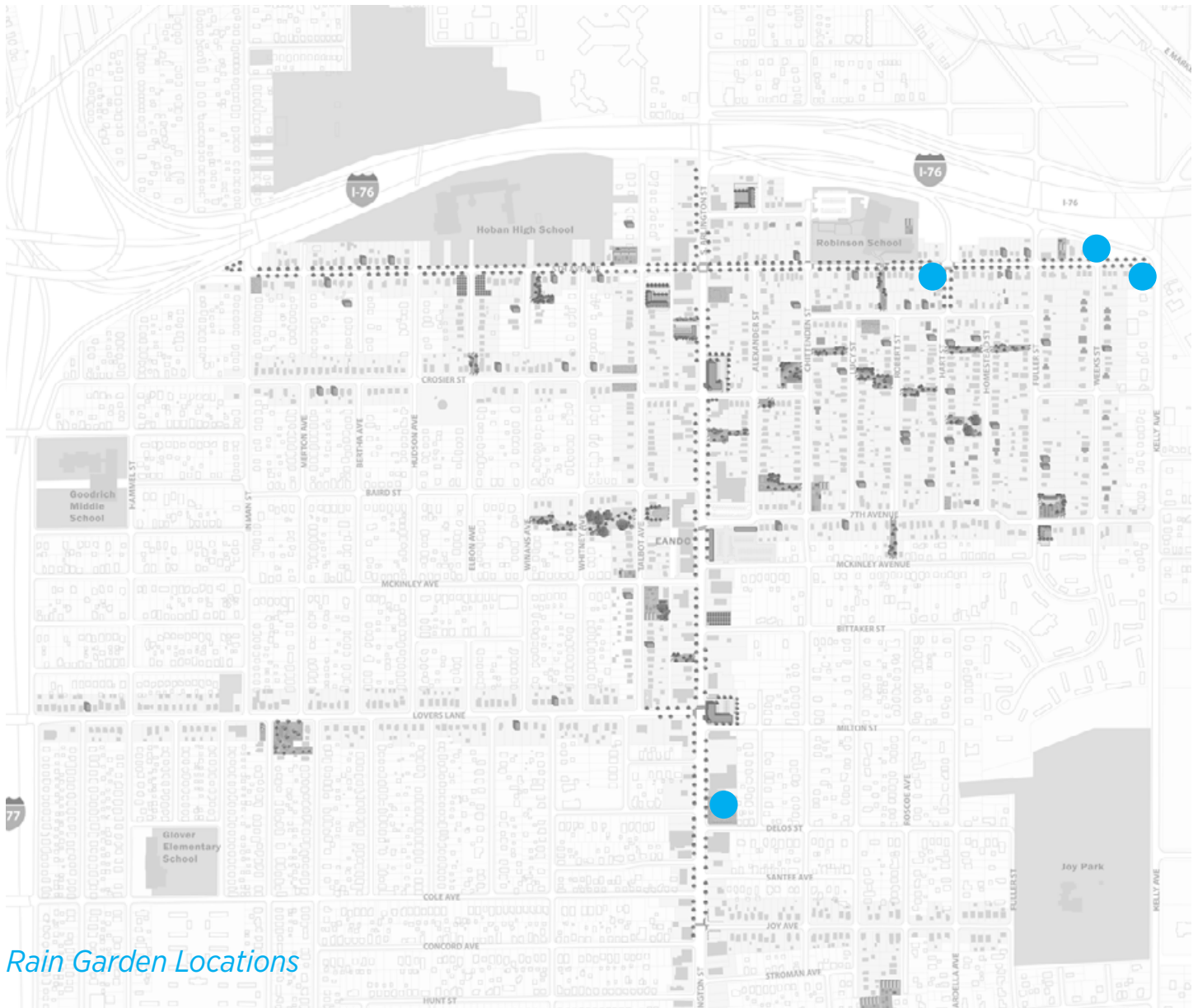
*Typical example of a rain garden on a vacant lot between two homes*

## Rain Garden Benefits

As many other older cities in the United States, Akron has to deal with the legacy of its combined sewer system. In a heavy rain, the pipes in a combined sewer system cannot handle the full volume of raw sewage and rainwater, so the pipes overflow directly into the Cuyahoga or Little Cuyahoga Rivers. “Green infrastructure” elements, such as rain gardens, can help this overflow problem by absorbing some of the rainwater into the soil, instead of draining into the sewer pipes. Applied on a large scale, these small landscape interventions can have a big environmental and economic impact.

Rain gardens should be carefully located to capture runoff stormwater from impervious surfaces, such as parking lots, streets, roofs, and compacted soils. Rain gardens located on vacant lots next to houses or commercial buildings can soak up water from the property and may also count toward a reduction in the property owner’s sewer fee. A rain garden not only provides stormwater and financial benefits for property owners, but also create a habitat for beneficial birds and insects.

# RAIN GARDENS



*Rain Garden Locations*

## Location Selection Strategy

Based on the existing conditions map, shown on page 19, the proposed rain gardens are concentrated in the part of the neighborhood with the lowest elevation. The low parts of the neighborhood are assumed to have the highest risks of flooding, so the rain gardens offer an additional benefit of reduced stormwater damage. Although one particular area in the neighborhood was targeted for the first phase of raingardens, many other sites in the neighborhood could be a good locations for a raingarden. Basically, any vacant lot with a neighbor

willing to divert their downspouts into the rain garden is a good candidate. The adjacent neighbor could have a residential property, commercial building, or parking lot - any impervious surface can have its water runoff directed to the rain garden. The rain garden can also serve as an element within a larger green space design, complete with a path, benches, and signage explaining the stormwater absorption process. School properties can be wonderful locations for a raingarden, which could serve as an outdoor learning environment.

## Installing the Rain Garden

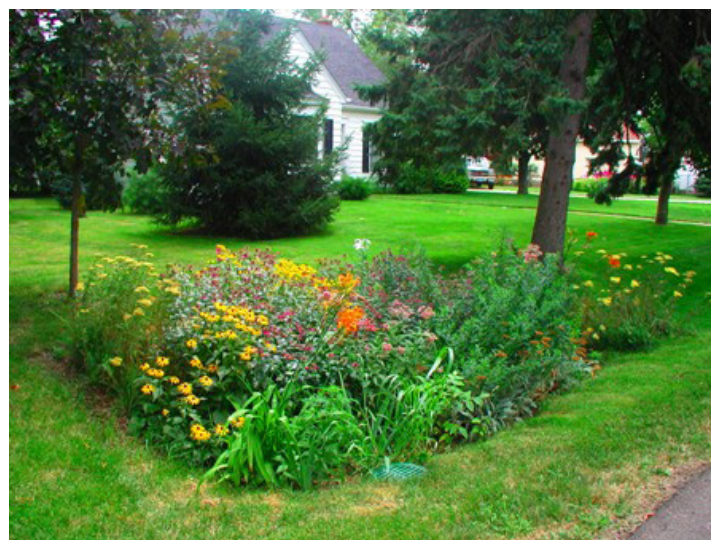
When properly installed, a rain garden can provide a tremendous benefit by absorbing stormwater that has been diverted from the sewer system. But, it is important to note that an improperly constructed rain garden may cause yard flooding or water damage to a structure's foundation. For this reason, it is advised to consult with a rain garden expert before beginning a new project. Numerous manuals are also available online with detailed instructions for creating a rain garden, including the *Rain Garden Manual for Homeowners* (<http://www.cuyahogawcd.org/PDFs/RainGardenManual.pdf>).

Although a rain garden should be designed to respond to the particularities of each site, there are a few “rules of thumb.” First, a residential rain garden should be more than 10’ away from a home or commercial building. Since the garden requires some digging, be careful to avoid trees, thick roots, and underground utilities. Second, a rain garden should not be located where rainwater naturally pools in a yard. The rain garden should be located slightly uphill from the flooding spot in order to capture water before it reaches the larger depression. Lastly, the size and depth of the rain garden is based on the drainage surface area and slope of the site, respectively. For example, a site with sandy soil should use a ratio of 5:1 when determining the area of the rain garden. So, if the drainage surface area of a roof is 500 square feet, then the rain garden should be 100 square feet. Sites with more compacted soils should use a ratio of 2:1. So, in this case, a roof of 500 square feet will require a rain garden of 250 square feet. The depth of the rain garden can range from 3 inches to 12 inches deep, based on the slope of the site. But, the site's slope should not be greater than 12%, otherwise the rain garden could be washed away.

Generally, a residential rain garden may take 6 to 10 volunteers to install the garden by hand in one day. Since rain gardens are planted with native species, the level of maintenance and watering required is relatively low.



*Volunteers working on the construction of a raingarden*



*A flowering rain garden designed to absorb road runoff*

## SIDE LOT EXPANSION



*View showing a side lot expansion between two neighbors where a vacant lot has been split in half, expanding the side yards of both neighbors.*

*Of the various vacant lots in East Akron, many have the opportunity to become ‘split.’ This means that the owners of the properties on either side of a vacant lot will purchase one half and tend it as an extension of their own yard. This can be a very successful way of keeping these lots well maintained.*





*Plan showing a lot split between two neighbors*

## Side Lot Expansion Benefits

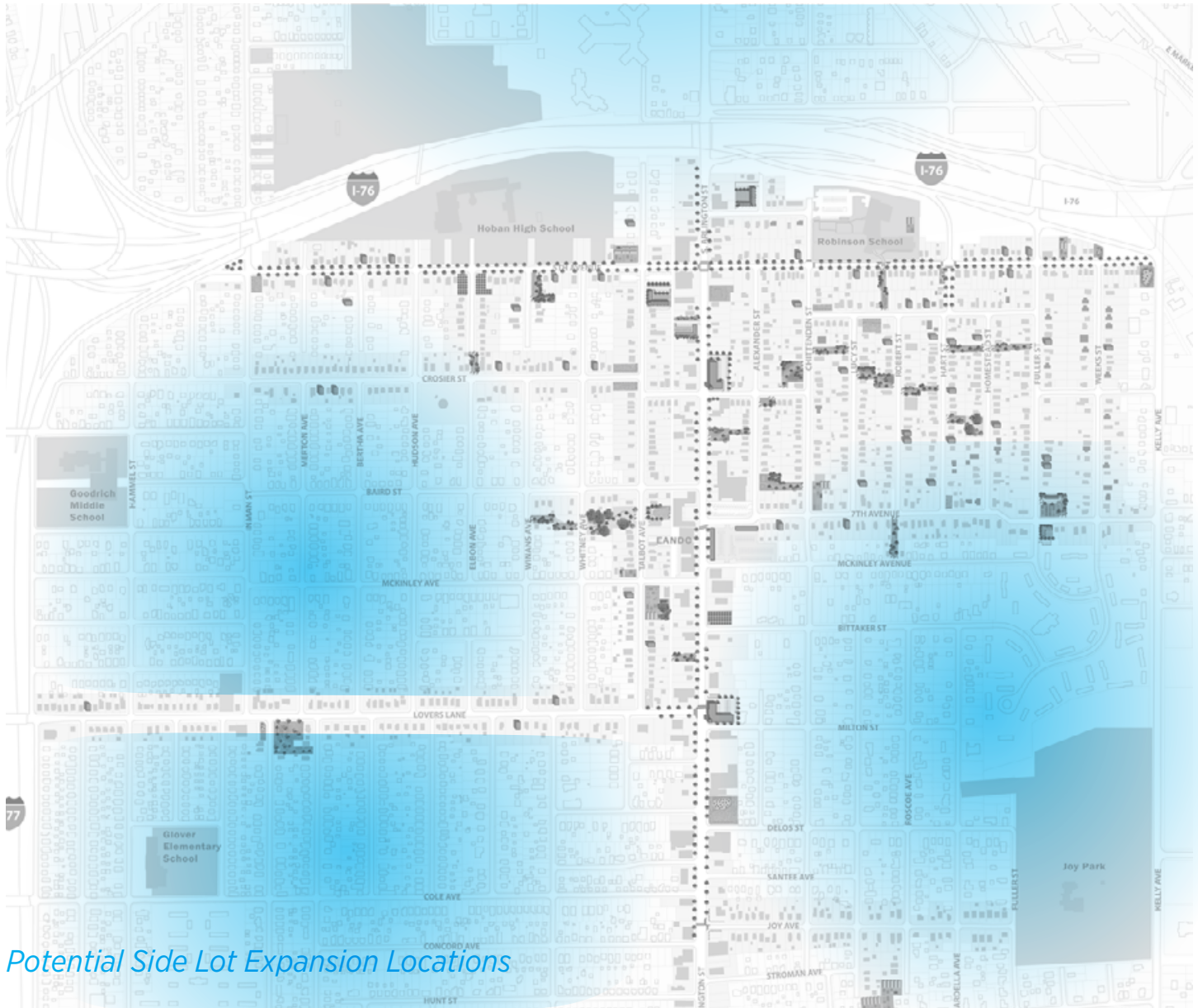
The side lot expansion is a vacant land reuse option that can be applied on many properties, usually at very low cost. Basically, the concept involves the incorporation of a vacant lot into the private property of adjacent property owners. A single adjacent property owner may annex the entire vacant lot or two adjacent owners may choose to split the lot and each take a half. The latter option is usually referred to as a “lot split.”

It is often the case that when a lot remains vacant for a number of years, a next door neighbor will begin to

maintain the appearance of the site, even though it is not officially their property. Side lot expansions benefit these neighbors by providing a means of legally protecting their investments and benefit the neighborhood by providing a well-maintained lot.

Since some side lot expansions may effectively eliminate a developable parcel, it is advised that the side lot expansions are only encouraged in areas where de-densification is appropriate. Streets where housing density and a consistent building frontage are desired should not be targeted for side lot expansions.

# SIDE LOT EXPANSION



*Potential Side Lot Expansion Locations*

## Location Selection Strategy

Side lot expansions are best located in areas where densification of housing is appropriate or on particular sites that have little potential for future development. The general areas determined to be suitable for side lot expansions are shown in blue on the map above. Based on the public input process, certain parts of the neighborhood, mainly surrounding key cultural anchors, were determined to be priority zones for new

infill development. These areas include the S. Arlington Street corridor, 5th Avenue, and Lovers Lane. Assuming that parcels in these areas may be used for infill housing or commercial development, they are not best suited for side lot expansions. Therefore, the areas shown in blue generally contain more vacant parcels suitable for side lot expansion.

## Lot Expansion Process

The first step in the lot expansion process is to identify the owner of the adjacent property. If the owner is a private individual or business, then it is advised to receive consent from the owner before using the lot. Property owner information can be found on the Summit County Fiscal Office website at: <http://fiscaloffice.summitoh.net/index.php/property-tax-search>

If the parcel is owned by the City of Akron or the Summit County Land Reutilization Corporation (Summit County land bank), it may be possible to purchase the property for a relatively low cost. Once the lot is purchased, it is advised that the lot should be consolidated with the owner's existing property. Doing so will ensure that the property will be treated as a single parcel in the event of a future sale or other financial transactions.



*A side yard expansion project could look like this example, although it is unclear what exact arrangement is place on this particular site. The yard adjacent to the house may have been a separate property at one time, but now appears to be fenced and maintained as part of the house's property.*



*The expanded side yards could incorporate a number of options to visually connect the yard to the adjacent home, including plantings or fences.*

## Additional Considerations

A common disincentive for property owners to purchase adjacent vacant lots is the cost of tax liens that may be tied to the lot. The taxes owed on the property may be much higher than the value of the land itself, so it is often necessary for the City or County to clear the title before the neighbor can purchase the property. This is where the land bank can play a critical role by acquiring properties that could be made available for side yard expansions.

Although it may seem more desirable to have any neighbor acquire an adjacent property, rather than allow it to remain vacant, it is important that the individual taking ownership has the interest and resources to maintain the property. In many cases it is also required that the individual taking ownership is current on all property taxes and has no code violations.

A main benefit of the side lot expansion option is the relatively small cost and low level of community involvement required to stabilize the vacant lot. Once legally consolidated into the adjacent property, the lot only requires typical yard maintenance.

# INFILL DEVELOPMENT



*Mixed-use development proposed for the intersection of S. Arlington Street and 6th Avenue*

*Infill development proposals identify opportunities for new built structures on vacant lots in East Akron. The infill development proposals consists of three types of projects: intergenerational housing, mixed-use development, and single-family homes. Other vacant land reuse proposals are meant to support infill development.*

## Setting The Stage for Development

Although the development pressure in East Akron is not high enough to drive new construction on all the vacant lots, some development opportunities exist in the near and long term. EANDC plans to construct 100 affordable and homeownership housing units in EANDC's service area by 2015. The construction is planned to begin in January 2013 with 30 housing units near the Robinson School. The Revitalization Plan anticipates a need for additional housing units and potential for mixed-use development in certain parts of the neighborhood.

One of the goals articulated during the process was the desire to support new development with a variety of vacant lot strategies. In other words, the infill development projects and the landscape based vacant land reuse proposals are intended to support one another. Beautification of vacant land and improved livability through community gardens and pathways are benefits that can add value to surrounding built structures. Increased resident socialization and involvement made possible through attractive outdoor spaces can enhance the appeal of a neighborhood. In this sense, transforming vacant lots into productive green spaces can set the stage for future development in the area.

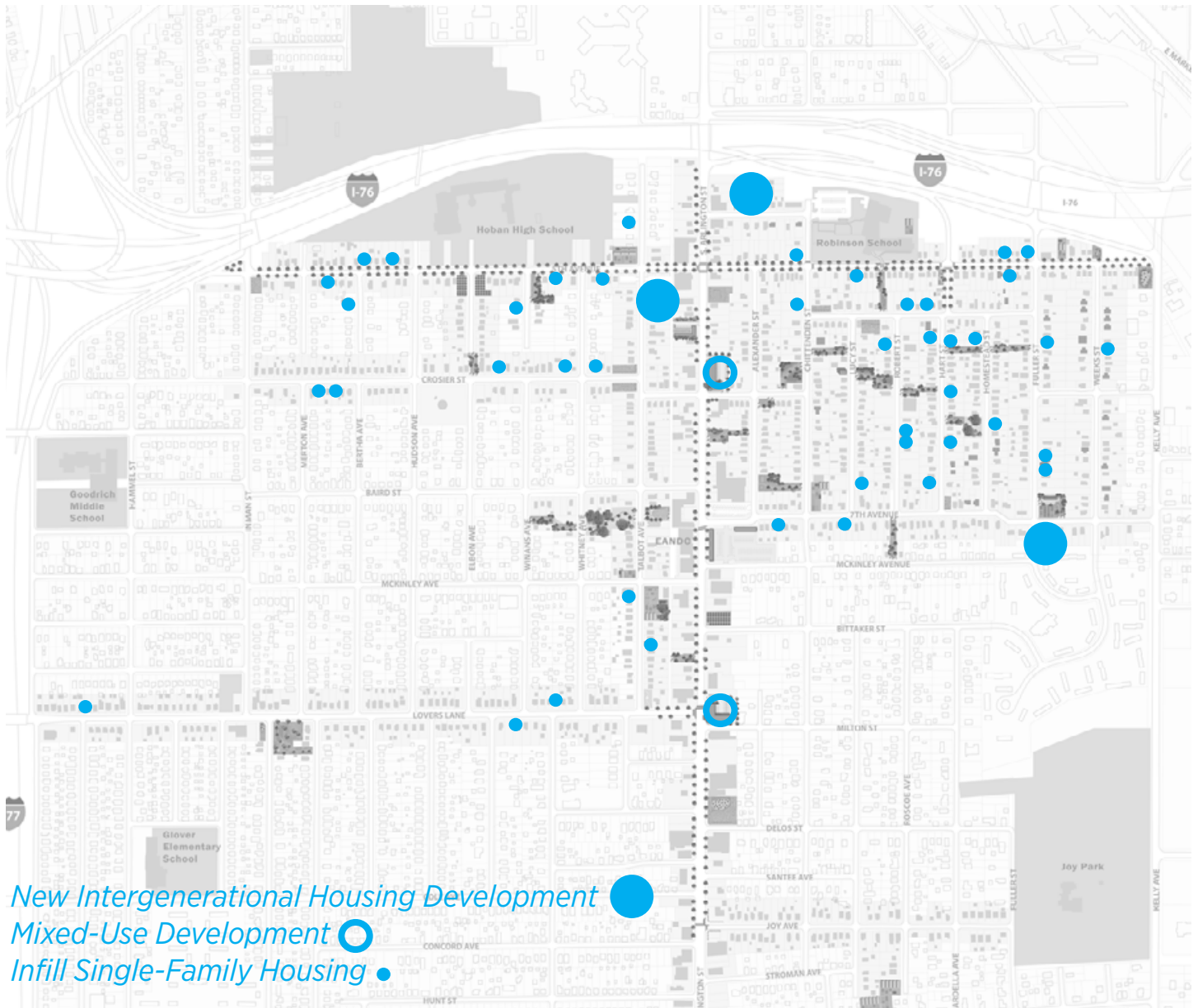
In order to expand the housing stock, increase the diversity of housing options, and improve the commercial activity in the neighborhood, three different types of development are proposed in the plan. As shown on the map to the right, the three development options are 1. intergenerational housing, 2. single-family housing, 3. mixed-use development. Intergenerational housing refers to residential buildings designed to accommodate the needs of elderly grandparents that live with and take care of their grandchildren. Single-family housing units are detached homes, each on a single parcel, which could be sold to homeowners or developed as lease/option properties. Along S. Arlington Avenue, two mixed-use developments have been proposed, which provide first floor retail and apartment housing above, on the second floor.



*The plan detail above illustrates the three types of infill development proposed in East Akron:*

- 1 Intergenerational Housing
- 2 Single-Family Housing
- 3 Mixed-Use Development

# INFILL DEVELOPMENT



*New Intergenerational Housing Development* ●  
*Mixed-Use Development* ○  
*Infill Single-Family Housing* ●

## Location Selection Strategy

As can be seen in the map above, the infill development proposals are scattered, but have higher concentrations in some parts of the neighborhood. Following the intention to focus initial investments around key cultural anchors, the development proposals have been prioritized to locations that can produce maximum benefit. The intergenerational housing is located on sites large enough to accommodate at least five contiguous units and are in very close proximity to schools, community gardens, and public transit routes. The two mixed-use developments are located on large assembled parcels along S. Arlington Street, where high

traffic volumes are required to make retail storefronts viable. The mixed-use development proposed at the intersection of S. Arlington Street and Lover's Lane can also create an inviting visual gateway to drivers travelling east on Lover's Lane toward S. Arlington St. The single-family housing is focused around Hoban High School, Robinson School, and East Akron Community House on streets deemed most suitable for a higher density of houses. The concentrated focus of various development options and landscape projects can initiate a noticeable transformation that can spread out to the rest of the neighborhood.



The rendering above shows a potential arrangement for the intergenerational housing. The multistory units are designed to maximize first floor living options for the elderly and provide easy wheelchair access from the outdoors. The buildings are configured to wrap around a central private green space, where grandchildren can play safely under the watchful eye of their grandparents. More info on Fairfax project: <http://www.cmha.net/realestate/fairfaxinitiative.aspx>

## Development Targets

The total number of housing units proposed between the three types of development totals 77 units, including homes and apartments:

- 44 single-family homes
- 21 intergenerational housing units
- 12 mixed-use second floor apartments

Combining the 77 proposed units with the 30 Robinson Homes planned for construction in early 2013 results in 107 units, which aligns with EANDC's target to develop 100 units by 2015. The construction of all development proposals may not be feasible in such a short timeframe, in which case, there may be a need to adjust the distribution of unit types to achieve the target. The intergenerational housing and mixed-use development proposals may require additional market research to ensure viable demand and available financing, so should be considered for longer term implementation, if necessary.



EANDC could introduce needed types of development into the neighborhood, such as intergenerational housing and mixed-use development, as it did with Middlebury Market Place.

# PRIORITY PROJECTS



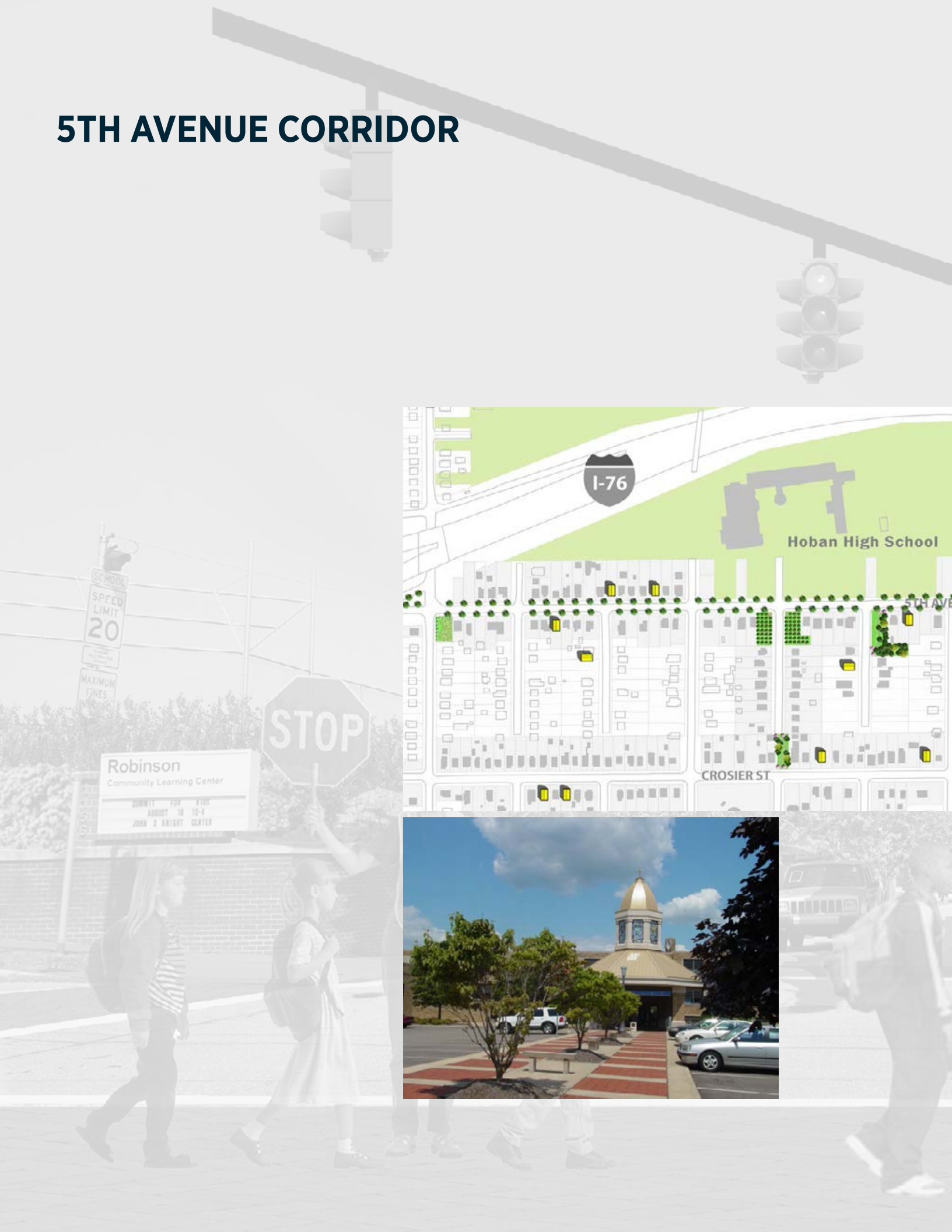
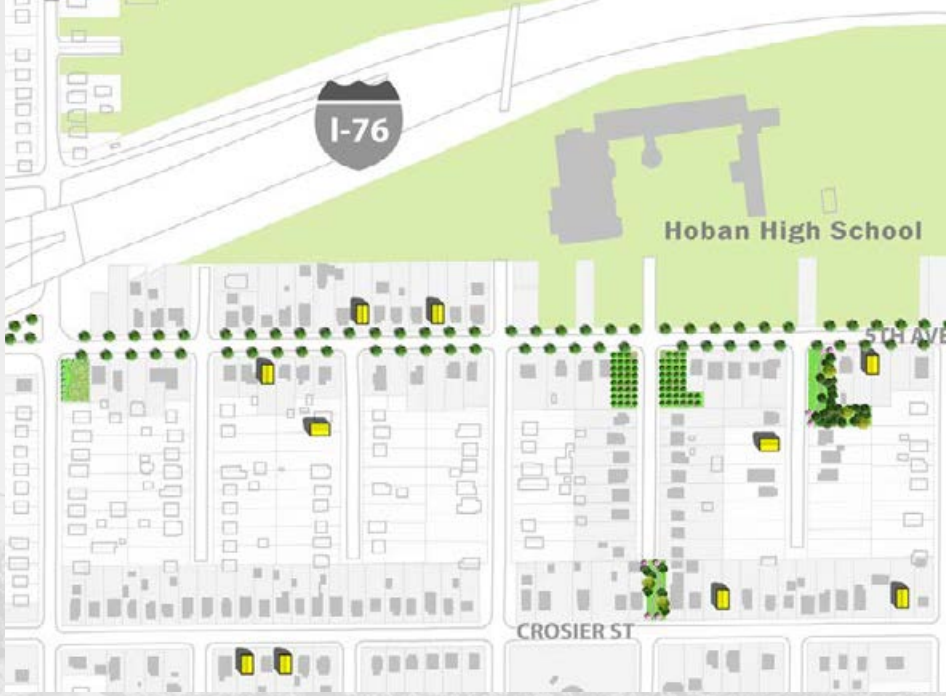


The following projects were selected during the public process as priorities for implementation. Each of the two projects are actually assemblages of smaller projects located within two geographic areas. The first priority area is along 5th Avenue, connecting the Robinson Community Learning Center to Hoban High School. The second priority area is Minordy Place, which includes a proposed public park, aptly named Minordy Plaza.

The elements within the following priority projects are all included in the Cost Estimates, but not all of these elements correspond to the vacant land reuse projects previously mentioned in the report. Therefore, the priority projects section delves into more detail on the full range of recommendations for these focus areas.



# 5TH AVENUE CORRIDOR





# 5TH AVENUE CORRIDOR

The projects proposed along the 5th Avenue corridor were deemed to be high priorities for implementation. 5th Avenue serves several important roles for the neighborhood, so initial investments on this strategic corridor may create a positive ripple effect throughout the rest of East Akron.

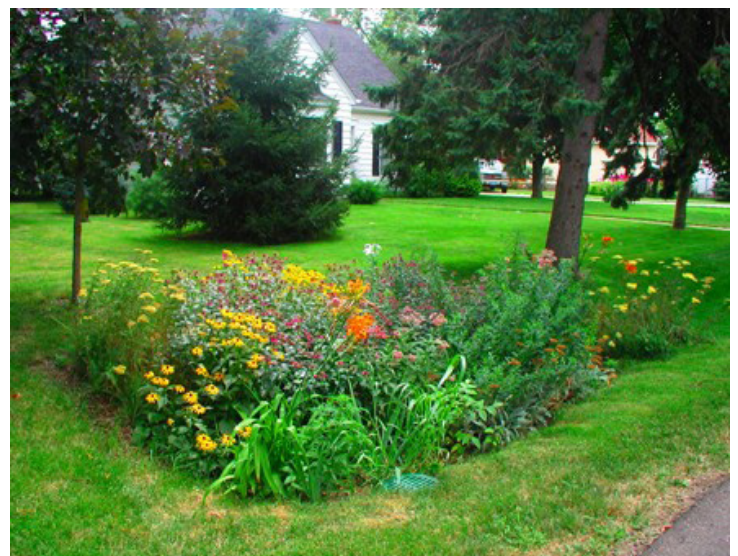
Two of the neighborhood's three key anchors are located along 5th Avenue: Robinson School and Hoban High School. This main east-west street defines the arrival experience for children and parents travelling to both schools, and for some parents, 5th Avenue creates their main impression for the entire neighborhood.

In order to make the street more attractive and safer for children travelling to school, several vacant land reuse projects and street improvements are proposed. Distinctive street trees should be planted along the entire length of 5th Avenue, establishing a strong visual connection and providing needed shade for walks on hot days. The location, size, and species of the street trees should be determined with the guidance of a local tree expert to insure proper planting space and that the trees do not interfere with above power lines. Decorative crosswalks, made from stamped concrete, are proposed at 5th Avenue's intersections with S. Arlington St., Chittenden Street, and Hart Street. Attractive wayfinding signage directing visitors to schools and nearby destinations should be located at key intersections.

5th Avenue's intersections with Hart Street and S. Arlington Street are also two of the most important gateways into the neighborhood. Hart Street and 5th Avenue is the first view of East Akron for drivers coming off the I-76 highway ramp and it currently does not create a very welcoming experience. As can be seen in the "current" and "proposed" images on the opposite page, improvements include a rain garden on the southwest corner, street trees, decorative crosswalks, low brick wall, and wayfinding signage. The proposals along 5th Avenue intend to send a clear signal that schools are a vital part of the community.



*The proposed rendering of the 5th Avenue and Chittenden Street intersection shows the various enhancements recommended to improve the safety and comfort for students and residents. These corridor long enhancements include stamped concrete crosswalks, wayfinding signage, and distinctive street trees.*



*A rain garden, similar to the one shown above, is proposed for the southwest corner of 5th Avenue and Hart Street.*



Current

A high priority for attendees of the public meetings was to visually enhance the intersection of 5th Avenue and Hart Street. This intersection serves as a main gateway into East Akron from I-76.



Proposed

# 5TH AVENUE CORRIDOR

In addition to street improvements within the public right-of-way along 5th Avenue, proposals in the area also include reuses of nearby vacant lots. A vacant lot reuse proposal that received strong public support was a neighborhood pathway between the Robinson School and Duane Avenue, through two currently vacant lots. As shown in the image to the right, the location of the vacant lots aligns precisely with the current walkway leading from the sidewalk to the school's main entrance. The proposed neighborhood pathway can extend this walkway across 5th Avenue deeper into the residential neighborhood. Residents at the public meeting were supportive of the pathway, but requested the addition of lighting for safety reasons. The cost of lighting may significantly increase the cost estimate of the pathways, based on the type of lighting used. Small solar lighting fixtures (as shown in the example from Tremont on the lower right of this page) will be less expensive, since they do not require underground electrical wiring, but lamppost fixtures will increase costs, because of hardware and underground electrical requirements. If solar lighting is used, it is important to keep the solar panels in direct sunlight during the day in order to fully charge the lights.

A new decorative crosswalk is proposed mid-block between Chittenden Street and Hart Street to allow children and parents to more efficiently walk to school. A vegetated curb extension is proposed on both sides of the mid-block crossing, which will slow down car traffic and create a buffer for children waiting to cross the street. The curb extensions allow buses and cars to continue parking along the north side of 5th Avenue, while providing a shorter distance for pedestrians crossing the street. Openings are provided at the corners of the curb extensions to allow stormwater to flow into the planting beds, providing an important ecological benefit for the street. The plants used in the curb extension should be hardy local species to withstand winter salt and survive during low rainfall. The City of Akron has already installed curb extensions on streets downtown, so the 5th Avenue project may follow similar specifications.



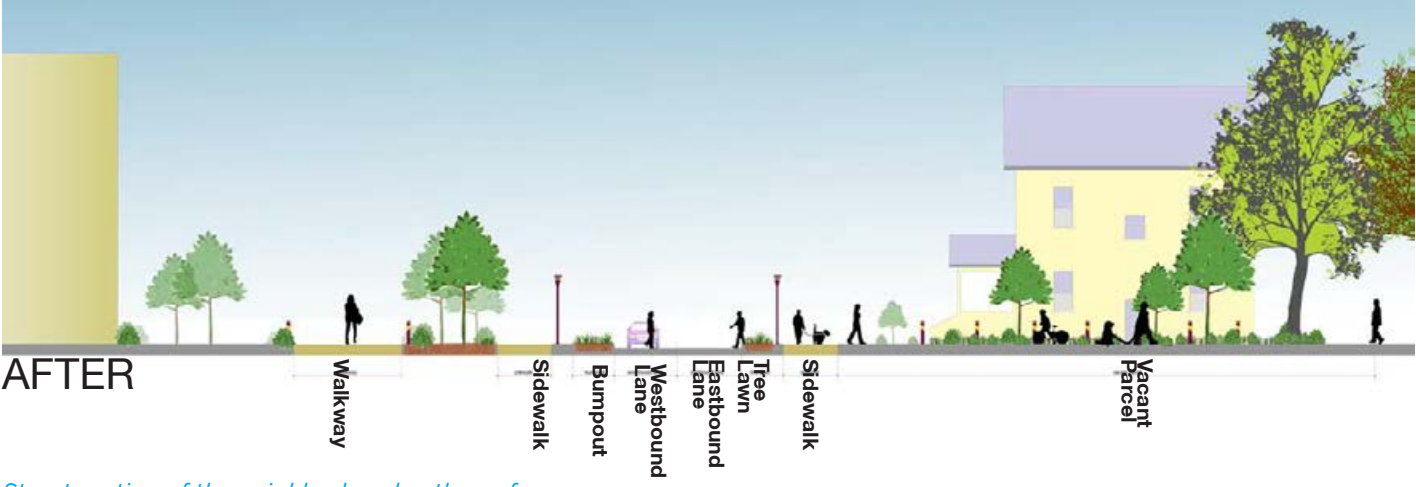
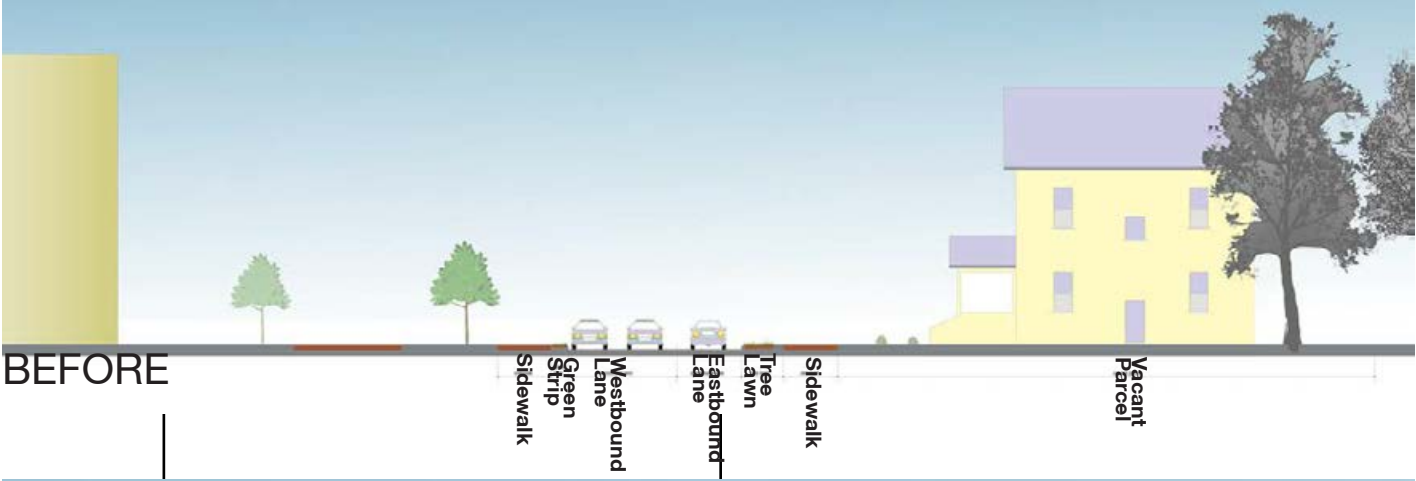
*The bird's eye rendering shows the proposed location of a neighborhood pathway connecting the Robinson School to Duane Avenue through two currently vacant lots. On the bottom left corner of the image can be seen a street edge improvement employing multiple decorative concrete blocks.*



*A neighborhood pathway project in Cleveland's Tremont neighborhood includes small benches, gravel path, and metal sculptures topped with square plates embedded with solar LED lights.*



Rendering of the proposed crosswalk and vegetated curb extensions along 5th Avenue in front of the Robinson School. The openings in the curbs allow stormwater to enter the vegetated curb extensions, sustaining the native plants. Interpretive signage placed within the plantings inform the students on the project's ecological benefits.



Street section of the neighborhood pathway from Robinson School, across 5th Avenue, to Duane Avenue.

# MINORDY PLAZA







# MINORDY PLAZA

At the first public meeting in the planning process, several attendees' comments articulated a desire to improve the perception of Minordy Place. Currently, the narrow alley just west of S. Arlington Street is perceived as a desolate, unsafe street that most residents wouldn't feel comfortable walking at night. But, the corridor has the potential to act as a convenient walking and biking path with low traffic connecting East Akron Community House to 5th Avenue to the north and Lover's Lane to the south.

As a step towards achieving this vision of enhancing the long four block stretch of Minordy Place, a few design projects are proposed to draw more activities to the alley. These initial ideas include a neighborhood pathway, community gardens, and a new public gathering space. Residents articulated a clear need for more gathering spaces in the neighborhood, where community events of various size could take place. Arts & crafts fairs, holiday parties, or neighborhood music festivals are the types of community events that allow neighbors to meet each other and build stronger relationships.

A potential site for a smaller community gathering space was identified along Minordy Place, behind the East Akron Community House (EACH) building. The site's close proximity to EACH, adjacent parking lot, and park space across the street help tie the site into the neighborhood. The public gathering space is located on a 10,000 square foot set of parcels, on one of which currently stands a vacant house that may be in need of demolition. If the house is removed, then the contiguous parcels could serve as a prime location for the construction of a community event space, possibly named Minordy Plaza.

The proposed Minordy Plaza could serve residents and visitors of East Akron as a year-round outdoor venue for small events. Much larger events may be held in nearby church parking lots, which would require permission from Arlington Church of God. The scale and potential noise of the events would have to consider the fact that residential units are located on both sides of the site. So, programming of the space should be carefully managed by EANDC or another reputable organization.



*Rendering of the proposed Minordy Plaza during the summer.*



# MINORDY PLAZA



*Minordy Plaza can be used at night for a community events, such as music performances.*

In order to maximize the value of the investment to create Minordy Plaza, it is recommended that the space is designed to accommodate events during the daytime and at night. It was important to the community members at the public meeting that the event space and Minordy Place have ample lighting to deter criminal activity and promote a perception of safety. Lighting could be provided through solar light fixtures in some spots and underground wired light poles where needed.

A low brick wall could separate the adjacent parking lot from the event space, providing a safety barrier, but also a long seating amenity. A small elevated stage,

possibly concrete or stone, could be placed to one side of the space for use during music performances or other presentations. In order to maximize the use during events and minimize the maintenance of grass, the majority of the ground plane could be a durable hardscape material that can be easily plowed, such as large brick pavers or stamped concrete. Securable electrical outlets should also be placed as necessary near the stage to provide a source of electricity for needed music equipment or temporary lighting. The western back wall of the EACH building may also serve as a large canvas for an artistic mural, serving as an iconic backdrop for Minordy Plaza events.



*Outdoor community activities can continue through the winter season at Minordy Plaza with appropriate design considerations.*

Although it is often dismissed as a time for indoor activity, winter can be an exciting season for children and adults to play outside. When well designed, an outdoor space can encourage the creation of delightful and long-lasting memories. Minordy Plaza could be the site for a temporary skating rink, holiday fair, or simply as a safe place for families to build snowmen together.

Several actions could significantly improve the space's appeal during winter weather. Firstly, designing the

space to easily allow snow plow trucks or smaller plowing vehicles to enter and avoid damaging edges will facilitate usage of the site after snowfall. Bright, colorful lighting should also be used during times of the year when sunset arrives early. Holiday banners or other seasonal ornamentation can also make the winter time seem special and will invite people to enter the site. During special events, gas heaters and enclosed tents may be rented and installed on the site to warm up attendees, along with vendors selling warm beverages.

# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES



The following section outlines key considerations for phasing implementation, long-term stewardship, and estimated costs of the proposals. The suggested project phasing is based on feedback provided during the public meeting and steering committee meetings. A Project Phasing map indicates the geographic location of three implementation phases. Partnerships & long-term stewardship are critical to the success of the projects, so these relationships should be cultivated early to build community support. The cost estimates provide rough approximations for implementing various projects, based on cost estimates found in the *Re-imagining a More Sustainable Cleveland Ideas to Action Resource Book*. More accurate cost estimates should be generated before implementation of each project, using detailed site conditions and specific design elements desired to be incorporated into

the project. For example, parcel acquisition and soil grading may increase the cost of implementing proposals on certain sites and the use of higher quality materials will also significantly impact construction costs. It is recommended that a landscape professional or knowledgeable contractor is consulted before implementation of the design proposals.

In order to effectively coordinate the implementation of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, a staff member within East Akron Neighborhood Development Corporation should be dedicated to managing the project. The individual should have project management experience, strong communication skills, and the ability to coordinate designers, city officials, property owners, and volunteers to implement the overall plan.



# PROJECT PHASING



A phasing plan was created for the various vacant land reuse proposals based on conversations with the steering committee and feedback provided from the public meetings. A color-coded map of the geographic location of the phased projects can be seen on the opposite page. The three phases of implementation are:

- Phase 1: *less than 2 years*
- Phase 2: *2-4 years*
- Phase 3: *over 4 years*

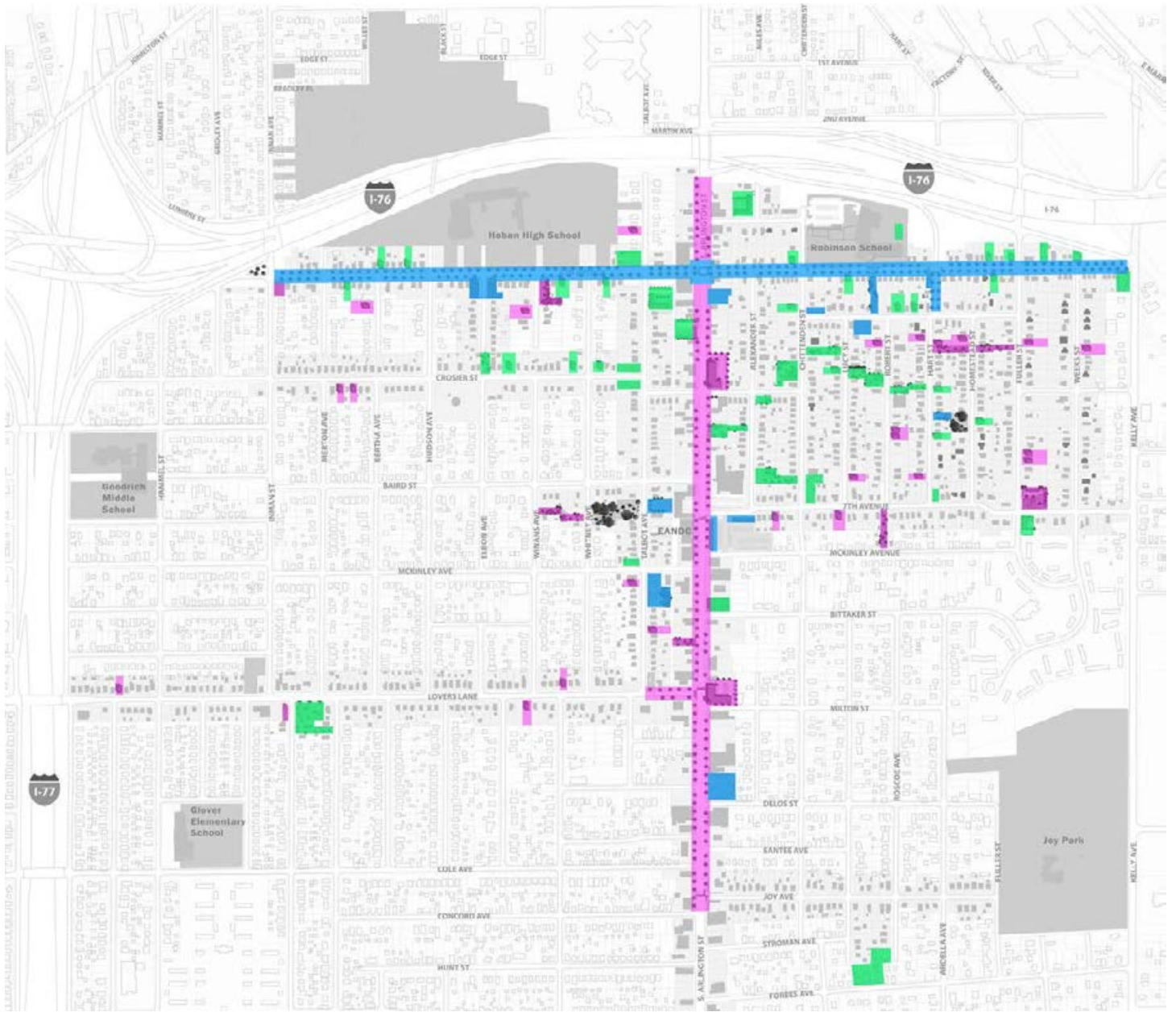
In response to the community's desire to target initial investments around key anchors, the projects in the first phase of implementation are located primarily along 5th Avenue and S. Arlington Street, near the Robinson School, Hoban High School, and East Akron Community House. Phase 1 of the implementation strategy includes a range of projects that can be undertaken by several entities. For example, the roadway improvements along 5th Avenue will require involvement from the City of Akron, the vendor stalls can be created in partnership with Arlington Church of God, the orchards planted by Hoban High School, and other green space transformations led by EANDC. The spreadsheet on the

Cost Estimates page includes a full list of projects and project partners organized by implementation phase.

This diversity in project type and lead agents in Phase 1 provides the opportunity to test a few pilot projects, which can be replicated in other parts of the neighborhood, if found to be successful. If the projects are found to be unsuccessful or in need of adjustment, then necessary changes can be made before additional projects are implemented in Phase 2 and Phase 3.

As previously mentioned in the Infill Development section, 77 total units are proposed between the single-family housing, intergenerational housing, and mixed-use development projects. Combined with the 30 Robinson Homes slated for construction in 2013, a total of 107 new housing units will be built by Phase 3. EANDC has a stated goal of constructing 100 new housing units by 2015, which may require some proposed housing units to move into Phase 1 in order to meet the goal. The proposed phasing plan should be assessed in light of other organizational objectives and adjusted as needed.





Implementation Phasing Plan for Vacant Land Reuse Proposals

- Phase 1: *less than 2 years*
- Phase 2: *2-4 years*
- Phase 3: *over 4 years*

# PARTNERSHIPS & LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP



## Cultivating Partnerships

Strong partnerships and committed leaders will be necessary to ensure successful vacant land reuse projects. Some of the proposals may be initiated and maintained by EANDC, while other projects may remain under the stewardship of the City, residents, or other local organizations. Based on the lessons learned from the Reimagining Cleveland pilot projects, a variety of arrangements can all lead to favorable outcomes.

The maps on the opposite page show the geographic locations of some of the community partners that should be engaged in the development and long-term stewardship of the projects. Potential community partners include block clubs, churches, public and private schools, local businesses, and committed individual residents. It is generally most effective to engage community stewards that are located in close proximity to a particular green space project, which makes it easier to keep an eye on the site and conduct needed maintenance.

Projects can also be initiated by residents with a good vacant lot reuse idea. Although a proposed project may not be included in this report, it may fit within the Goals & Objectives and have strong resident support, which makes the project worth pursuing. The following steps outline the process for a community member to create a successful project:

## Steps to Create a Successful Community Project

### 1. Identify vacant land in your neighborhood, research and analyze the site.

- Research site ownership, existing soil conditions and adjacent plans
- Contact EANDC for assistance

### 2. Host a Visioning Session.

- Pick a time and location that will allow most people to attend
- Ask visioning questions like: What challenges can we begin to solve in our neighborhood using vacant land strategies?

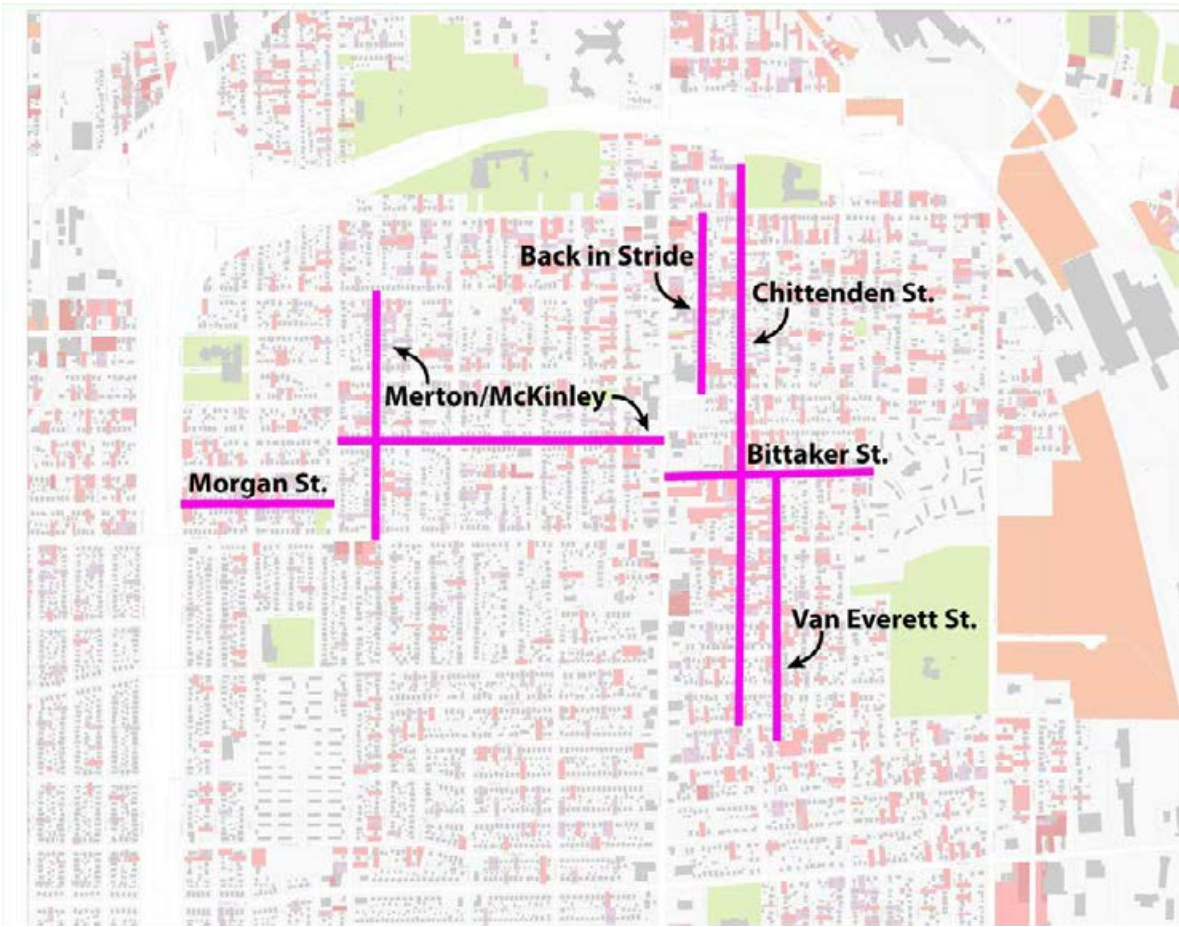
### 3. Hold a follow up meeting to plan all the details of the project.

- Seek technical assistance from resource organizations
- Develop a budget and seek funds for the project
- Create a plan for construction and ongoing maintenance

### 4. Carry out your plan and keep neighbors involved in the process.

- Circulate design plan to neighbors and ask for volunteers and donations
- Organize mini-events leading up to project work day to build a “buzz”
- Hold a volunteer work day and carry out regular maintenance

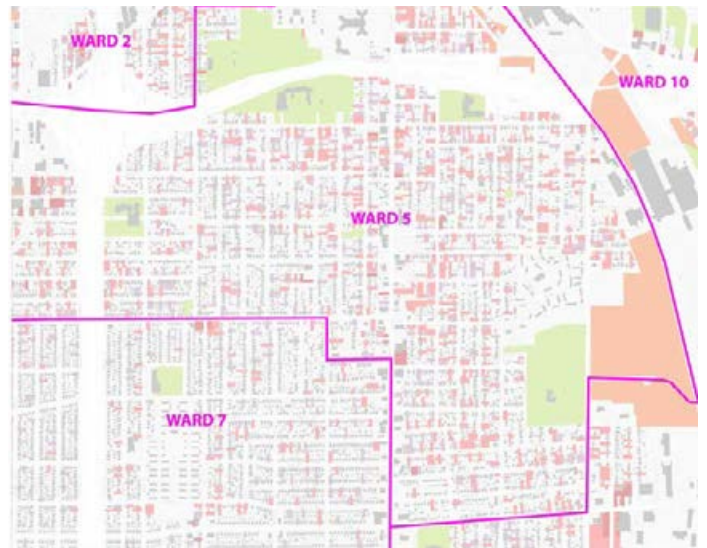
- adapted from *Re-imagining Cleveland Ideas to Action*



Map showing East Akron block clubs and nearby green space proposals. Block clubs can be important partners in the design and long term stewardship of vacant land reuse projects.



Map of existing churches in the East Akron neighborhood.



Map of City of Akron ward boundaries in the area.

# COST ESTIMATES

The following cost estimates spreadsheet categorizes the various vacant land reuse proposals according to their respective implementation phase. All the individual projects are planned to be completed within one of three phases beginning in 2013: Phase 1 (less than 2 years), Phase 2 (2-4 years), Phase 3 (over 4 years). The Phase 1 projects were selected based on feedback from the public meetings. These projects were the highest priorities for residents and other stakeholders.

The first phase carries the highest cost for implementation and the cost for each subsequent phase drops slightly. The subtotal for Phase 1 is \$274,000, Phase 2 is \$134,500, and Phase 3 is \$63,000. The grand total for the completion of all three phases is \$471,500. The cost estimates were based on sources used for the *Reimagining a More Sustainable Cleveland* project, which can be downloaded from the CUDC website here: [http://www.cudc.kent.edu/projects\\_research/research/reimagining\\_cleveland.html](http://www.cudc.kent.edu/projects_research/research/reimagining_cleveland.html)

Although the cost estimates are carefully researched, actual costs may vary significantly according to availability of volunteer labor and donated materials. The costs shown in this report use the median estimates between professional construction costs, which are

higher, and volunteer-based costs, which are lower. More accurate cost estimates must be developed for each project before implementation, since particularities of the site may add to demolition costs and the cost of materials may change over time.

Two important notes must be made in regards to the Grand Total. First, the costs for construction of the intergenerational housing, mixed-use development, and single-family housing are not included, but they are shown in their anticipated phasing. The development costs will be significant, and will most likely more than double the overall cost of the implementation plan. Secondly, the costs for all of the non-development projects are included in the Grand Total, even though these projects will be the financial responsibilities of multiple entities. For example, a few of the projects are proposed on private property, where the property owners are expected to cover the costs of implementation. It is intended that the property owner will see the value in making the investment, which will benefit their own property and the surrounding neighborhood. So, the responsible party for each project cost must be identified before calculating the total cost for which any one organization is responsible.

PROJECT	LOCATION	PARTNERS	QUANTITY	EST. COST
<b>Phase 1 (&lt;2 years)</b>				
Street Tree Plantings	5th Ave. between Inman & Kelly Ave.	City of Akron Keep Akron Beautiful Hoban High School Akron Metropolitan School District	120 @ \$150/each + Labor	\$ 25,000.00
Robinson School Pathway	Between 5th Ave. & Duane Ave.	City of Akron Keep Akron Beautiful Akron Metropolitan School District	10,000 SF	\$ 15,000.00
Minordy Plaza	On Minordy Place near E.A.C.H.	EANDC EACH	10,000 SF	\$ 50,000.00
Vegetated Curb Extensions	On 5th Ave. near Robinson School	City of Akron	2 concrete curb extensions and raingarden plantings	\$ 16,000.00
Storefront Enhancements	Intersection of S. Arlington & 5th Ave.	City of Akron		\$ 40,000.00
Homestead Park Pathway	From west side of park to Hart St.	City of Akron EANDC	4,000 SF	\$ 6,000.00
Enhanced crosswalks	5th Ave. at Arlington, Chittenden, Robinson School, and Hart St.	City of Akron	3 intersections and 1 mid-block	\$ 70,000.00
Hoban Orchards	Intersection of 5th Ave. & Elbon Ave.	Hoban High School	2 @ 7,200 SF each	\$ 5,000.00
Vendor Stalls	Arlington Church of God parking lot	Arlington Church of God EANDC	300 linear feet	\$ 8,000.00
Market Garden	Southeast intersection of McKinley Ave. & Talbot Ave.	Hoban High School EANDC McKinley Block Club	15,000 SF	\$ 15,000.00
Street Edge Improvements	Various	City of Akron Keep Akron Beautiful EANDC	4 sites	\$ 4,000.00
Wayfinding signage	Along 5th Avenue and S. Arlington St.	City of Akron EANDC	10 signs	\$ 20,000.00
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>				<b>\$ 274,000.00</b>
<b>Phase 2 (2-4 years)</b>				
Robinson Neighborhood Pathways	Areas south of 5th Ave. and east of South Arlington.	City of Akron Keep Akron Beautiful Local Block Clubs	17 parcels	\$ 50,000.00
Orchard	Bittaker St. & S. Arlington St.	Living Stone Apostolic Church EANDC	12,000 SF	\$ 2,000.00
Rain Gardens	East end of 5th Ave.	EANDC City of Akron	1 @ 9,000 SF 1 @ 2,000 SF	\$ 5,000.00
Street Edge Improvements	Various sites	City of Akron Keep Akron Beautiful EANDC	3 sites	\$ 3,000.00
Market Gardens	5th Ave. & Talbot Ave. Forbes Ave. & Roscoe Ave.	Van Everett Street Block Club Local Churches EANDC	1 @ 12,000 SF 1 @ 23,000 SF	\$ 35,000.00
Community Gardens	7th Ave. & Chittenden St. Talbot Ave. & McKinley Ave. 5th Ave. @ Rocky's Market	Chittenden Street Block Club Arlington Church of God EANDC	1 @ 8,000 SF 1 @ 4,000 SF 1 @ 6,000 SF	\$ 18,000.00
Robinson School Garden	On Robinson School property	Akron Metropolitan School District EANDC	1,500 SF	\$ 1,500.00
Single Family Homes	Various sites surrounding Robinson School and EACH	EANDC	20 homes	TBD
Intergenerational Housing	3 sites	EANDC	1 @ 8 units 1 @ 8 units 1 @ 5 units	TBD
Vendor Stalls	S. Arlington St. & Minordy Place	EANDC Local Businesses	18,000 SF	\$ 20,000.00
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>				<b>\$ 134,500.00</b>

# COST ESTIMATES

<b>Phase 3 (4+ years)</b>				
Neighborhood Pathways	Various sites	City of Akron Keep Akron Beautiful EANDC	7 parcels	\$ 20,000.00
Street Tree Plantings	S. Arlington Ave. (where possible)	City of Akron EANDC Businesses along S. Arlington St.	100 @ \$150/each + Labor	\$ 21,000.00
Street Edge Improvements	Various sites	City of Akron Keep Akron Beautiful EANDC	6 sites	\$ 6,000.00
Market garden	7th Ave. & Fuller St.	EANDC Local Church	12,000 SF	\$ 12,000.00
Rain Garden	Northeast intersection of Delos St. & S. Arlington St.	EANDC City of Akron Local Business	8,000 SF	\$ 4,000.00
Single Family Homes	Various sites	EANDC	24 homes	TBD
Mixed-Use Development	6th Ave. & S. Arlington St. Lover's Lane & S. Arlington St.	EANDC	2 @ 8,000 SF/floor	TBD
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>				<b>\$ 63,000.00</b>

**GRAND TOTAL** \$ 471,500.00  
 (Not including single-family, intergenerational, and mixed-use developments)



MR. ERST AKKON  
**Art Minson**

I'VE NEVER MADE A POETRY,  
AND I'LL NEVER MAKE ONE NOW,  
BUT IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER,  
BECAUSE I'M HAPPY ANYHOW.  
AS I GO ALONG MY JOURNEY,  
I'M BEARING BETTER THAN I'VE SUFFERED.  
I'M DRIPPING FROM THE BRUCKER,  
BECAUSE MY CUP WAS OVERTURNED.

*Prepared for the:*



**East Akron Neighborhood  
Development Corporation**  
550 S. Arlington Street  
Akron, OH 44306  
(330)-773-6838

by



**Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative  
Kent State University**  
1309 Euclid Avenue, Suite 200  
Cleveland, Ohio 44115  
(216) 357-3434

January 2013