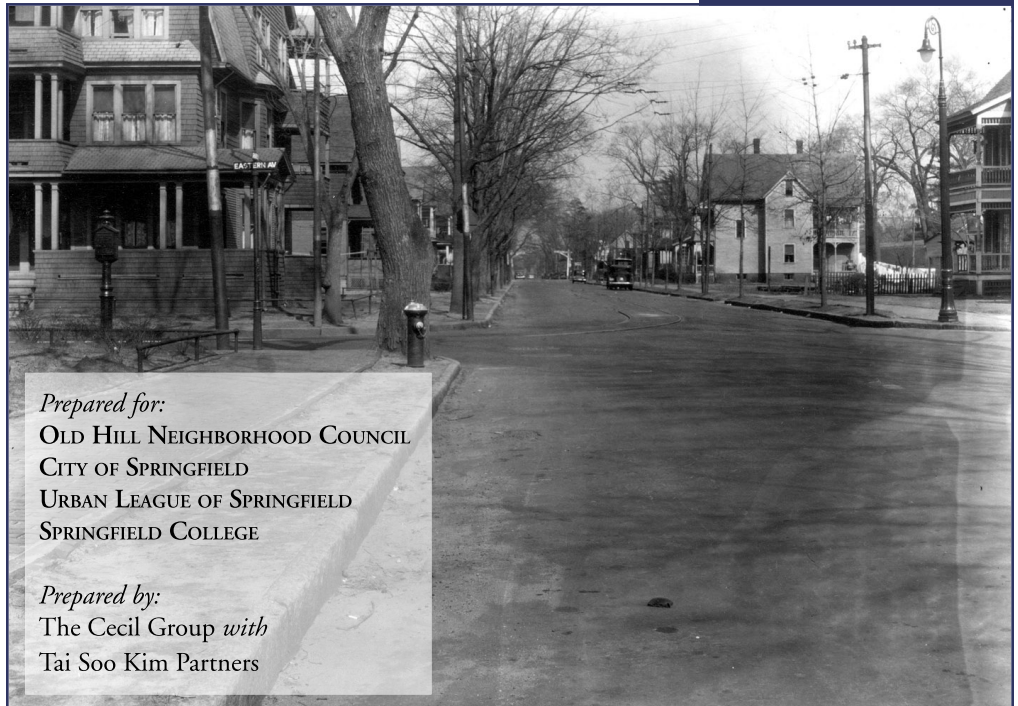

OLD HILL NEIGHBORHOOD MASTER PLAN



Summary Report



Prepared for:
OLD HILL NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
CITY OF SPRINGFIELD
URBAN LEAGUE OF SPRINGFIELD
SPRINGFIELD COLLEGE

Prepared by:
The Cecil Group *with*
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PARTNERSHIP FOR THE
RENEWAL OF OLD HILL

99 Eastern Avenue
Springfield, MA 01109

Old Hill Neighborhood Master Plan

Summary Report

April 30, 2004

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This Summary Report has been prepared, in part, for the City of Springfield and its Planning Department as part of its neighborhood master plan process. This report has also been prepared, in part, for a group of organizations and institutions that compose the Partnership for the Renewal of Old Hill, including the Old Hill Neighborhood Council, Springfield College, and the Urban League. The report has also been prepared for all of the citizens of Old Hill, its institutions and the businesses found there. Their active interest, support and ideas have contributed immensely to the findings and recommendations within these pages.

This work has been partially funded as part of a grant to the City of Springfield from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as part of the Executive Order 418 Program, administered through the Department of Housing and Community Development.

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DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,
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1. INTRODUCTION

Overview

The City of Springfield, Springfield Public Schools, Springfield College, the Urban League of Springfield and representatives of the Old Hill and surrounding neighborhoods have come together to initiate a Community Development Plan for one of the oldest and most historic neighborhood areas in the City. The commitment from the City, College and Urban League has included significant financial resources as well considerable time and effort. The goal of this initiative is to develop a new strategy for neighborhood improvements that will aide in the process of revitalizing and rejuvenating this community and the living environment. The geographic extent of planning recommendations includes the Old Hill Neighborhood. However, the planning study has considered the relationship between Old Hill and surrounding areas.

The recommendations contained in this report focus on three aspects of Old Hill in which major improvements can be made that will help transform the neighborhood economically, physically, and in terms of the quality of life for everyone. First, much of the future emphasis should be placed on expanding high quality housing opportunities, including a much greater proportion of home ownership. Secondly, the area can benefit from a coordinated approach to institutions in the area, expanding the positive relationships between schools and other community service resources that distinguish this area of Springfield. Thirdly, Old Hill's infrastructure needs substantial improvements to provide a safe and attractive future.

Framework for Planning

In addition to the groups identified above, financial commitment for this planning process has been supported by a planning grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under Executive Order 418. The EO418 initiative is administered by the Regional Planning Council and is based on an agreement and commitment of several State agencies to provide cities and towns in Massachusetts with financial resources to study and plan for improvements to their communities. These State agencies that have committed resources to this process include:

- Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
- Department of Housing and Community Development
- Department of Economic Development
- Executive Office of Transportation and Construction

The focus of these State agencies is to have a planning process established that provides positive future direction for housing, open space, economics and transportation needs. The City of Springfield retained the services of The Cecil Group, a planning and design firm, to orchestrate the planning process and to develop the overall planning strategy. The Cecil Group has worked with cities and towns through out New England to assist in future visions for community and neighborhood revitalization. Tai Soo Kim Partners, architects and planners have worked closely with The Cecil Group and the community on the planning

effort with a particular focus on educational institutions. Together with the City of Springfield's Planning Department, the consultants have reviewed and analyzed data on existing conditions, developed an overall strategy for improvements and have created a series of recommendations for future initiatives within the neighborhood.

Context of the Study

The map below illustrates the geographical extent of the planning area included in this initiative. Based on a careful review of the overall context boundaries, it was determined that a more detailed analysis of a portion of the planning area would result in the most effective method for reviewing data, analyzing information, making recommendations for improvements. For this specific planning effort, the planning area includes the following:

- The Old Hill Neighborhood
 - North to State Street
 - West to Walnut Street
 - East to the rail line
 - South to Watershops Pond
 - Springfield College

While the planning area defined a specific geographic zone for further detailed investigation and analysis, it did not limit the overall perspective of potential planning issues for the entire neighborhood and community as defined within a larger area, indicated by the "study area" boundary. Because the Upper Hill Neighborhood did not have a formal, organized neighborhood council during the time of the planning effort, it was decided that this specific effort would concentrate on the Old Hill Neighborhood, while considering potential improvements that would also benefit surrounding area. Once the Upper Hill Residence Council is formed, the City has requested that the components of the plan in the Upper Hill be finalized in a similar neighborhood plan. This study area is also indicated on the map, and includes:

- Portions of the Upper Hill Neighborhood
 - North to Wilbraham Road
 - West to the rail line
 - East to Massachusetts Avenue
 - South to King Street



The Situation Today

Within the study area, past renewal efforts and initiatives for community improvements have not been able to sustain a healthy overall framework for the neighborhood in and around Old Hill. Many properties are vacant and many more existing residential structures are not maintained due to absentee landlords. Many properties have been abandoned and a number of them are now City owned due to tax delinquencies. Parks and open space are not well maintained. During hot summer days, some parks are overcrowded. Current efforts to provide affordable housing opportunities and market rate home ownership are noble but have not made a “dent” in the deteriorating conditions throughout the neighborhood. Criminal activity including drug use and distribution is an ongoing problem and has obvious impacts to the overall quality of life within the neighborhood. Once thriving neighborhood streets are in poor condition and also provide a negative perception of the area.



While the Old Hill Neighborhood continues to struggle to maintain its vitality, there are many unique and valuable qualities of Old Hill, and one of the efforts of this planning process has been to maximize positive aspects and elements of the neighborhood and build on such momentum. It will be critical to take advantage of these positive aspects of the neighborhood in order to build momentum, change attitudes and to show short-term real change. In the end, it will be the residents themselves who will have the opportunity to be involved with the process for a improved way of life in and around the Old Hill.

Other positive aspects of the neighborhood that have been identified as part of the fabric of the community include the following:

- Neighborhood groups and committed residents
- Academic institutions adjacent to the neighborhood
- Numerous religious organizations within the neighborhood
- Supportive neighborhood businesses
- Community centers
- Public schools and facilities
- Companies and businesses adjacent to the neighborhood
- Springfield College

Many of the residents of Old Hill have participated over the last several months in a series of public workshops that have explored the range of options and opportunities for improving the neighborhood. These individuals have contributed their time in order to provide critical input and feedback on a range of topics related to the single goal of establishing a new upward direction for the Old Hill Neighborhood. We applaud all of those residents who have participated in the process to date and we look forward to additional participation and dialogue, as the planning strategy is refined.



2. REPORT SUMMARY

Over a nine month period, a team of planning consultants, City Departments, community organizations, neighborhood groups and interested citizens have been involved in a collaborative planning process that has focused on the re-investment and revitalization of the Old Hill Neighborhood in Springfield. The planning effort considered the context of surrounding areas including the Upper Hill Neighborhood and urban corridors such as State Street and Walnut Street. The Old Hill Neighborhood of Springfield is in fact one of the City's oldest neighborhoods and has seen many changes of the last several decades. Unfortunately, many of the changes in the last thirty to forty years have resulted in negative impacts to the quality of life within the community. This master planning process has developed a clear vision and strategy for future steps that can be implemented in order to turn the tide and begin a process of physical, social and economic change to the neighborhood and its surroundings.

A major component of the neighborhood community is Springfield College. Founded in 1885, Springfield College is best known for its long relationship with the YMCA and as the place where the game of basketball was invented. More importantly, Springfield College has educated thousands of people over the past 100 years. Today the College is a well-respected institution and a major ally in the initiative for neighborhood renewal.



Process

In April of 2003, the first of a series of public workshops was held at the William N. Deberry Middle School in the heart of the Old Hill Neighborhood. This first public workshop was the culmination of many hours of background work with City officials, neighborhood groups and key public officials. The initial process included extensive research and analysis of neighborhood

conditions. The initial stages of the planning process included interviews with several individuals, groups and organizations including:

- Church leaders and other faith based organizations
- Community Center leaders and other support facilities
- City School Department officials and local school principals
- Representatives from several City Departments
- Springfield College representatives
- Past City Mayor and Director of Community Development
- Old Hill Neighborhood Council
- Representative from local Affordable Housing Organizations

Throughout the entire planning process, the City of Springfield Planning Department, the Springfield College Office of Community Relations and the Old Hill Neighborhood Council provided major assistance and guidance.

The overall framework for the planning effort included several phases of work including: data collection, site investigation, planning options and the master plan. Each phase of the work coincided with a key workshop so that information and data could be shared and discussed in an open forum. The timing of the workshops allowed the community to give critical input and the consultant team the opportunity to review input, analyze data and refine ideas. Each workshop meeting included general presentations, breakout groups and overall summary sessions to discuss findings. The topics of the workshops included:

- Visioning
- Existing Conditions Review and Input
- Site Analysis and Investigation
- Planning Strategies
- Master Plan Program and Principles

Each of the agendas for the workshops have been included in the appendix of this summary report and copies of the PowerPoint presentations for each workshop can be made available through the City of Springfield's Planning Department

Issues

The basis for discussion of any issues that exist today in the Old Hill Neighborhood should be framed in the context of economic conditions. The quality of life for these residents are greatly impacted by economic factors playing out at the national, state and local levels. Any considerations for improving the neighborhood and addressing the issues listed below will need to be carefully evaluated from the bigger economic picture. The impacts of employment and state aid on neighborhoods that struggle to thrive are enormous. As cities and towns across the Commonwealth struggle to maintain adequate services and capture key portions of state aid for numerous programs, it is important to realize that the residents in neighborhoods like the Old Hill are also struggling.

Key issues included:

- **Housing and Home Ownership:** today the neighborhood is very fragmented due to numerous vacant lots and abandoned houses. This condition is exacerbated by the lack of substantial home ownership.



- **Transportation and Infrastructure:** traffic volumes are excessive on many of the major streets that run through the neighborhood. In addition, the quality of sidewalks, signage, lighting and signalization is poor. Streets appear neglected and show no sign of investment.



- **Open Space:** open space is in general disrepair throughout the neighborhood and often is utilized more for illegal activity than for neighborhood children.

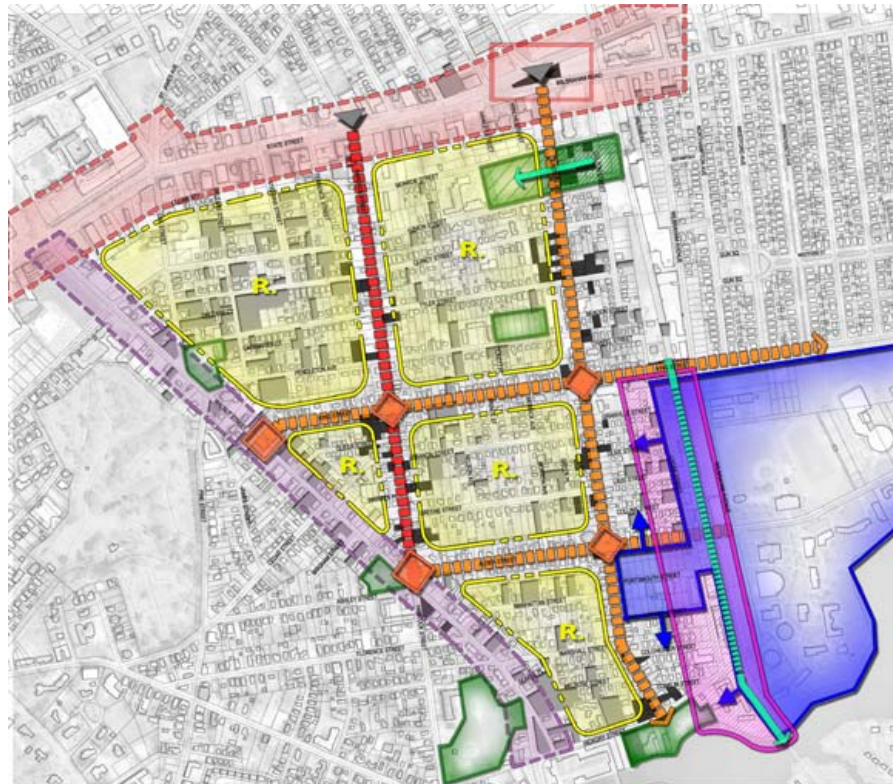


- **Neighborhood Edges:** the community is also confined by the edges within which it exists. Today several of the edges around the neighborhood have negative aspects that impact the quality of life. For example, the edge conditions along State Street include large parking lots, service loading zones and the backsides on numerous commercial buildings.



Planning Strategy

As part of the planning process, the consultant team has developed a physical framework for implementing changes to the neighborhood context as development opportunities arise. The planning strategy framework is not a definitive “blueprint” for the future, but rather it is a guide to creating the detailed studies, discussions and decisions that will determine the final shape of future improvements. As opportunities for redevelopment arise, much more detailed design work is necessary to prepare a comprehensive master plan for this area. The diagram below begins to suggest the most appropriate overall planning strategy for physical change to the Old Hill Neighborhood.



The three major themes associated with the planning strategy diagram include: substantial **housing revitalization**, strengthening the relationships with the area’s **institutions**, and major **improvements to infrastructure**.

Recommendations

Along with the planning strategy, several key recommendations have been established which should guide future development initiatives in and around the community. The recommendations below are organized around the major themes as defined in the planning strategy.

Key Recommendations

- **Housing:** new initiatives should be established that focus major attention and financial resources on

providing more opportunities for home ownership within the neighborhood.



- **Institutions:** Take advantage of the existing fabric of institutions in and near the neighborhood to provide for a mutually beneficial relationships that will provide a better future for everyone, including providing for appropriate redevelopment of underutilized areas, creating an attractive relationships among residential, institutional, park and recreation areas.



- **Infrastructure:** Upgrades to the streets, roadways and general public right-of-ways throughout the neighborhood would make a major impact on the overall quality of life in the neighborhood. An initiative to provide aesthetic, safety and functional upgrades to the streetscape would go a long way in creating a strong sense of pride and ownership with all residents.



Investing in the Future

Good intentions and good ideas alone will not insure a brighter future for the Old Hill Neighborhood. A grass-root effort needs to be established that can begin a process of leveraging funding sources at the City, State and Federal levels to further study more detailed opportunities for change and the means to begin implementation. This process of leveraging resources should also be initiated within the private sector. The future of the Old Hill Neighborhood also impacts surrounding businesses and institutions.

3. ANALYSIS OF CONDITIONS

A major goal of any effective community based planning process should be focused on understanding the perspective of the users themselves. The planning consultants worked very hard to provide numerous opportunities for concerned citizens to get involved in the process and provide insight and input. All the information provided by residents has been enormously helpful in both framing and understanding the problems in the neighborhood. This effort to establish a strong working dialogue with the community has been a key to success and will continue to be important as the process moves from the planning stage to implementation.

Community Perspective

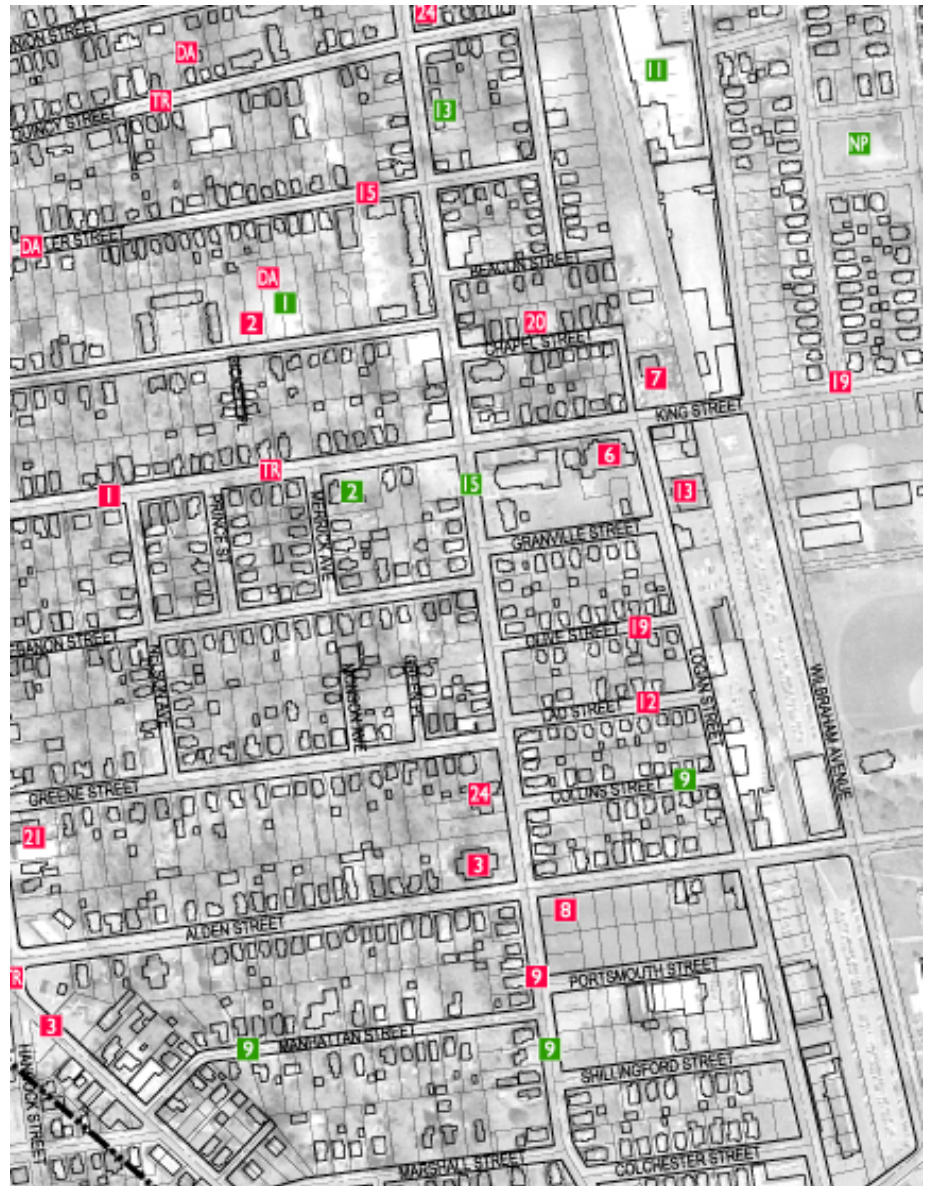
The community based interactive workshops provided a wonderful opportunity to understand the users perspectives on numerous issues. These early welcoming sessions provided valuable insight and detailed information on both existing conditions in the neighborhood and associated issues. The following maps were prepared in response to several working group breakout sessions during the early workshops. As can be seen from the map on this page, all the comments were cataloged, “placed” and reviewed in a follow-up workshop session. Red squares represented problem areas and green squares represented positive characteristics or opportunities within the neighborhood. In general, the users identified the following “pros and cons” within their community:

Pros:

1. People are generally good and kind, family oriented community with a strong older generation base.
2. Lots of churches and community centers
3. The neighborhood is small enough to easily walk around
4. Lots of corner stores
5. Homeowners take pride in property appearance
6. Zoning changes for the good of the community
7. Acknowledgement of historic neighborhood
8. Many daycare centers for family support

Cons:

1. Poor lighting conditions through out the neighborhood
2. Numerous vacant lots and abandoned houses
3. Lack of home ownership
4. Speculators are pushing up land values which pushes people out
5. Very few responsible landlords
6. No nice eateries or restaurants
7. Lack of security and police presence
8. Lack of affordable housing and home ownership opportunities
9. No political representation of the Latino community
10. Lack of support of public schools in the neighborhood
11. Many stray dogs and cats
12. Lack of maintenance in parks and open space
13. Trash and litter pick-up are not good
14. No neighborhood supermarkets or grocery stores
15. Too much traffic and too fast



Demographics

Demographics in the neighborhood have changed over the decades. Today the community is predominately African-American and Hispanic. The demographic data has been incorporated from the 1990 and 2000 US Census. The following charts provide additional demographic data. Please note that in that the Race table, “other” includes Hispanics.

Population	1990	2000
Old Hill	5,103	4,557
City of Springfield	156,983	152,082

Race	White	Black	American Indian	Asian or Pacific Islander	Other	2 or more Races
1990						
Old Hill	673	3,336	14	61	1019	-
City of Springfield	107,626	30,064	333	1636	17,324	-
2000						
Old Hill	797	2,501	25	40	967	227
City of Springfield	84,878	31,472	590	2,859	25,269	6,924

Age	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80+
1990									
Old Hill	1,130	918	998	697	468	305	305	165	117
City of Springfield	25,306	22,633	29,019	24,759	15,918	11,277	13,127	9,811	5,133
2000									
Old Hill	1,011	919	656	598	568	322	248	150	85
City of Springfield	24,551	24,847	22,583	21,952	20,069	14,433	9,281	8,969	5,397

Employment Type	Managerial and Professional	Service	Sales and Office	Production, Craft and Repair	Farming and Fishing	Operators, Fabricators, Laborers
1990						
Old Hill	195	492	307	100	18	276
City of Springfield	14,966	11,438	21,125	6,443	456	10,846
2000						
Old Hill	211	371	337	50	0	416
City of Springfield	16,441	13,075	15,905	4,277	177	10,776

Influences from the Past

The following photographs provide a glimpse of the past character of the Old Hill Neighborhood and some of the physical features that should be considered for incorporation into new initiatives.



Hancock Street at Pendleton Ave, November 1933. Photo from the Connecticut Valley Historical Museum.



Walnut Street, May 1924. Photo from the Connecticut Valley Historical Museum.



Northwest corner of Hancock and Tyler Street, October 1937. Photo from the Connecticut Valley Historical Museum.



Alden Street, April 1937. Photo from the Connecticut Valley Historical Museum.

Assets

It is important to identify and celebrate all that is good about this neighborhood. The majority of the residents are committed to their neighborhood and their community. Neighborhoods are more than houses, streets, schools, business and parks. The basis of any good neighborhood is the people who live there. This is the greatest asset of all for the community. This analysis of the neighborhood allows us to identify positive aspects that need to be reinforced and negative aspects that need to be remedied. Positive aspects of the neighborhood to build upon include:

- The people and their associations, including The Old Hill Neighborhood Council

- Springfield College and other institutions of higher education
- The City of Springfield (Planning Department/political support)
- Faith based institutions
- Community centers and organizations
- Community schools and school department
- Housing organizations
- Local businesses

Individually, these organizations, groups, agencies and citizens can and do bring a positive attitude toward a better living environment for the Old Hill Neighborhood. Individually, however, their ability to impact real change is limited. Their true measure of success, renewal for the neighborhood, may be best achieved if resources are pooled together in order to create a more formidable opponent to line up against the pressures of economic, social and cultural decline. The ability to put in place a structure and mechanism to channel all these skills and resources will be a critical goal for the overall master plan.

Liabilities

Throughout the planning process the consultants and community have identified numerous issues that impact the overall quality of life within the Old Hill Neighborhood. Every one of these issues most certainly comes back to economic conditions and how they impact the Neighborhood. The impacts of an economic downturn, which we have faced nationally, regionally and locally over the past several years, have been heightened in communities such as the Old Hill Neighborhood. This is true for several reasons including:

- Improved employment opportunities have decreased and as the cost of living increases, homeowners are overburdened with expenses that often cannot be maintained. Often times, the bread winner of a family will need to take on additional employment in order to provide adequate minimal comforts for their family. This often results in children having less supervision than might be appropriate in the home while one or both parents are having to work long hours to make ends meet.
- State and City aides and services have decreased and such decreases have negative impacts on social services, after school programs, city police, fire and other necessary services. Other opportunities at the state and federal level for financial support of education and affordable housing have also dwindled. In already economically challenged neighborhoods like the Old Hill, such financial impacts can be devastating.

Housing



Records show that home ownership is on the decline in and around the Old Hill Neighborhood. The result of this trend can be seen on a few different levels. First, as you walk through the neighborhood today and do a visual inspection of homes, you can clearly observe which houses are owner occupied and which are not. Often the owner occupied property is maintained to a higher level and is much more attractive. As fewer homes are owner occupied, the less attractive the neighborhood becomes. In addition, it is typically the homeowner who takes the greatest pride in the neighborhood and if he or she sees or hears adjacent activity that is cause for concern, they probably would call the police to have it checked out. As homeownership decreases, criminal and illegal activity will likely increase.

Many houses have been abandoned and are in great disrepair. Such boarded up properties are not only an eyesore but also provide an environment for illegal activities. Many more properties have been vacated and many others have been taken over by the City due to tax delinquencies. These properties too, left in disrepair and in many cases in an overgrown state, have a very negative impact on the overall quality of life in the community.

Affordable housing opportunities are often limited because not-for-profit housing organizations do not have the financial resources to purchase blocks of property that may come up for sale. In recent examples, local “developers” have outbid these organizations on property sales and the result is often more rental property that over time is typically not maintained and falls into disrepair.

Residents, namely homeowners, often have conflicts with renters who do not have personal ties and commitment to the neighborhood. Many of these

conflicts that have occurred in the past have related to student rentals for Springfield College students. The College itself is in need of more and better housing for its students in the future. Homeowners also have taken issues with many local businesses that either do not promote safe neighborhood conditions or have focused on buying out parcels of residential land within the community in order to expand their business practices.

Transportation and Infrastructure

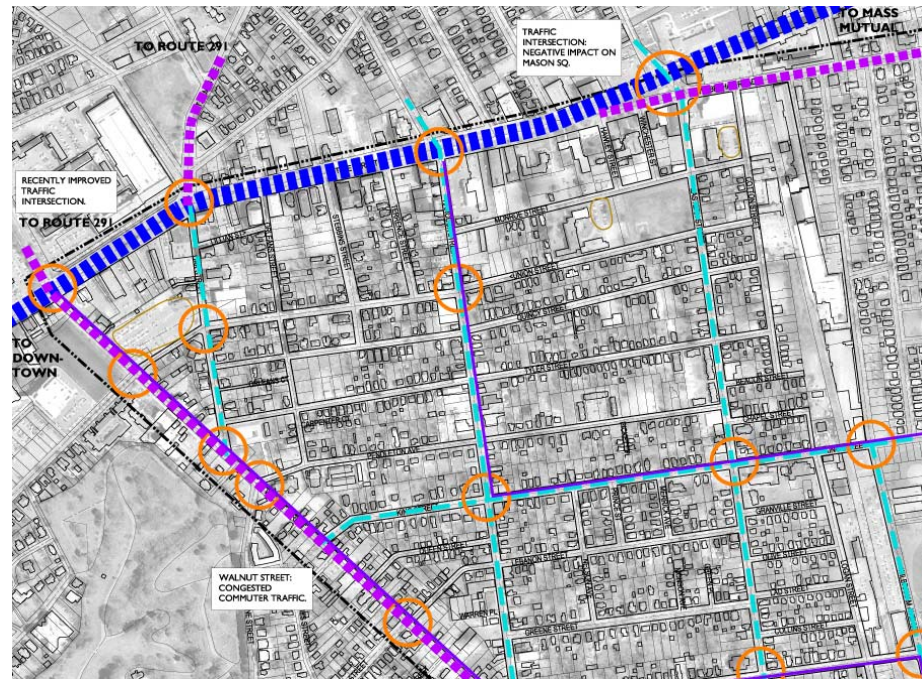


Traffic volumes and speed on several of the major streets within the neighborhood are excessive and have had a negative impact. Most of these vehicles are utilizing the Old Hill Neighborhood as a “cut through” route in order to get to some other destination. These traffic problems are exacerbated by the fact that many of the high traffic intersections are not signalized or signal conditions are outdated. This results in unsafe conditions for residents walking.

The Circulation Analysis Plan identifies specific conditions and situations that exist today within the neighborhood that have a negative impact on the overall quality of life. Overall, the analysis work identifies a series of conditions that have put significant emphasis on the automobile and lack of consideration for pedestrians. Pedestrian conditions today are very poor throughout the neighborhood and result in an unsafe and unattractive condition. The Circulation Plan includes the following key information:

- **State Street**
 1. Emphasis on cars, service trucks and big parking lots
 2. Physical barrier for pedestrian circulation
 3. Issues with noise and air pollution
 4. Poor organization of commercial uses
- **Walnut Street**
 1. Narrow street with many pedestrian conflicts
 2. Physical barrier for users into/out of neighborhood
 3. Noise and air pollution
 4. Not utilizing the most appropriate land uses

- **Neighborhood Roads including: King St., Alden St., Hancock St., and Eastern Avenue**
 1. Utilized as cut-through route/ by-pass regional system
 2. High traffic volumes, adds to illegal activities
 3. Conflicts between bus routes, cars and pedestrians
 4. Vehicle speeding places pedestrians in real danger
 5. Noise and air pollution
- **On-Street Parking**
 1. Limited based on time of day
 2. Narrow streets conflict with two-way traffic
 3. Many sidewalks not designed for on street parking



Sidewalks, street lighting and signage are all out of date in the neighborhood and result in unsafe and unattractive conditions. Historic photographs have shown that this section of Springfield once had beautiful tree belts along major roadways with majestic elm trees. Perception is very powerful, and today, as a visitor to the neighborhood drives down one of the main avenues, they may likely decide not to stop because it looks unattractive and unsafe.

Open Space



Is urban open space a good thing? This question has come up early in the planning process for the Old Hill Neighborhood. Some residents suggested early on that several vacant lots could be redeveloped into small local parks. This is exactly what you don't want to do. Open space in urban areas that are struggling economically most often end up as a haven for drug deals and other illegal activity. In addition, the maintenance for open space can be significant and many times municipalities cannot afford to maintain parks. This has certainly happened in the Old Hill Neighborhood. Currently, City funding has not been able to provide the appropriate levels of support to maintain these open spaces to acceptable standards. In the summer time, many of these spaces are overcrowded in the daytime due to demand. At nighttime, safety has been an issue. The lack of police presence in the neighborhood has been raised several times throughout the planning process.

While Watershops Pond historically has been a tremendous environmental resource for the neighborhood and the City, today the Pond is in poor condition and requires extensive study to define hazardous conditions and strategies for rejuvenation.

Neighborhood Edges

The condition of the Old Hill Neighborhood is also impacted by its surroundings. Today, its surroundings and edges are not having a positive impact on the overall quality of life within the neighborhood. As improvements are made within the neighborhood over time, future focus should also consider edge conditions.

The section of State Street, along the northern edge of the Old Hill Neighborhood has evolved overtime into a mix of strip mall style businesses that are accessed only by the automobile. Mason Square historically was a vibrant node of activity with a appropriate mix of uses and users. Today, the square is characterized by parking lots, intersections and traffic signals. This area of State

Street is much more a barrier to the neighborhood than a commercial district supporting the overall quality of life.



The section of Walnut Street, along the western edge of the Old Hill Neighborhood has evolved overtime into predominately commercial service industries that do not necessarily compliment the vision for the Old Hill Neighborhood's future. Measures should be taken to consider future land use and zoning within this area so that development is oriented with appropriate scale and neighborhood commercial need.

The abandoned *Highland Division Rail Line* is another critical edge condition that greatly impacts the character of the neighborhood. Vacant lots are unsightly and provide locations for illegal activity. Today the rail line corridor acts as a barrier between the Old Hill and the Upper Hill Neighborhoods.



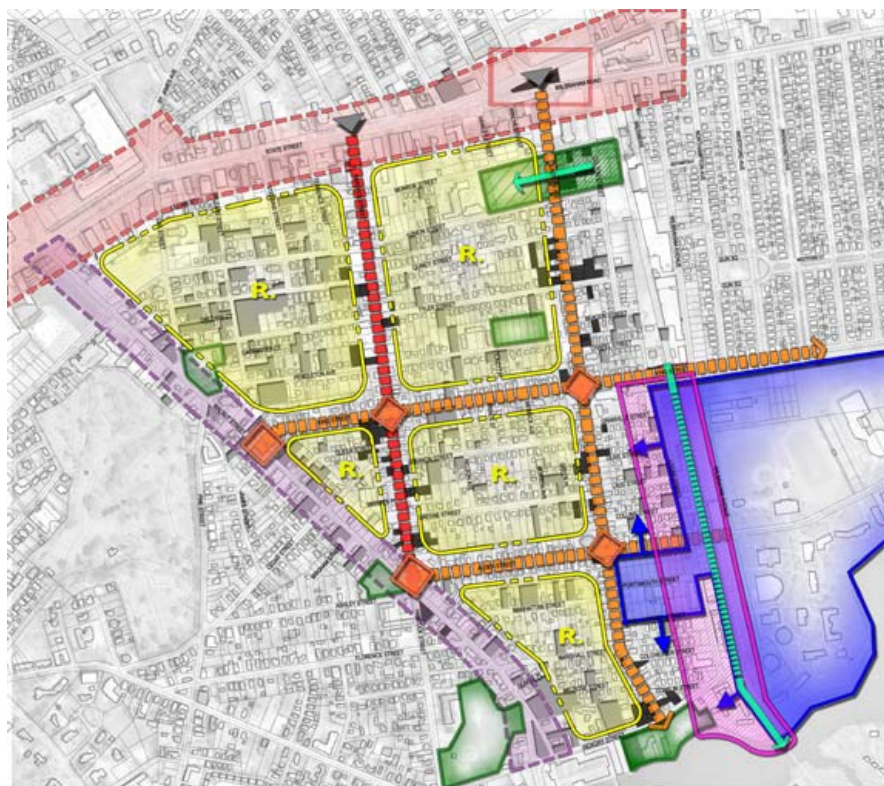
5. THE PLANNING STRATEGY

Overview

The planning strategy for the Old Hill Neighborhood has developed in response to the planning process that considered community assets, liabilities, opportunities for reinvestment and constraints on redevelopment. The planning strategy is not a mandate, but rather a physical guideline that can give design direction as initiatives for the neighborhood are realized. Because the plan is not a final design, as initiatives are implemented and certain parameters change, so too can the plan evolve and become more refined to directly respond to current situations and future plans. The planning strategy diagram has been presented in a preliminary fashion at a number of public workshops and has been refined based on community input.

As additional studies for redevelopment in and around this area of the City of Springfield are undertaken, strong consideration should be given to the physical organization of improvements suggested in the planning strategy. As improvements are considered in the Old Hill, they need to be coordinated with improvements planned for the State Street corridor and the Walnut Street blocks adjacent to this particular neighborhood.

Planning Strategy



Over the life of the planning process, certain themes have evolved that have given clues and directions to a particular physical planning framework for the neighborhood. These physical changes proposed would be in concert with specific recommendations and provide a general design direction once implementation begins.

The three major themes associated with the planning strategy diagram include: **housing revitalization**, the creation of a **Learning Corridor**, and major **improvements to infrastructure**. For each of these major themes, a series of design principles have been developed that will compliment any planned renewal projects. These principles include the following:

- **Housing Revitalization**
 1. *Reconfigure Perimeter edge conditions* to better buffer the housing stock and to assist in creating a separate identity for housing areas vs. commercial areas.
 2. *Integrate Internal Spines* so that neighborhood uses can be linked in a thoughtful and meaningful way.
 3. *Establish neighborhood-housing infill* in order to decrease vacant properties and increase home ownership.
- **Institutions**
 4. *Initiate Desirable Land-use Patterns* that reconnect the fabric of the neighborhood elements. Emphasize facilities for education.
 5. *Use institutional improvements and needs to help reuse areas* that have been left in disrepair and introduce uses to rejuvenate the area.
 6. *Introduce Appropriate Open Space* that balances size, locations and program within the context of the adjoining neighborhood.
- **Infrastructure Improvements**
 7. *Improves Streetscape Conditions* with a focus on safety, function and aesthetics.
 8. *Evaluate Traffic Patterns* so that reasonable recommendations can be made that take pressure off small-scale neighborhood streets.

Physical Framework

The planning strategy diagram can be easily organized into several categories that have responded to appropriate planning principles and specific recommendations for the Old Hill.

Categories include the following:

CORRIDORS

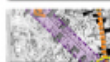
KING ST., WILBRAHAM AVE, HANCOCK ST., EASTERN AVE, ALDEN ST.



STREETSCAPE TREATMENT



STATE STREET CORRIDOR STUDY
COMMUNICATION



RECOMMEND WALNUT STREET CORRIDOR
STUDY

LINKAGES

NEIGHBORHOOD, INSTITUTIONS, GATEWAYS



CORRIDOR GATEWAY



PARK CONNECTION

NEIGHBORHOOD COHESION

EDGES, INFILL, OWNERSHIP



PRIORITY HOUSING



HOUSING INFILL FOCUS



COLLEGE EDGE CONDITION AND
GROWTH PRESSURE



KEY INTERSECTIONS: IMPROVED USES

CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

SAFETY, ATTRACTIVENESS, PROGRAMS



PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

STEP BY STEP IMPLEMENTATION

CATALYSTS, MULTI-PRONGED ATTACK, STRATEGY.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR INSTITUTIONAL
COOPERATION



RE-ENERGIZE MASON SQUARE

Recommendations

Based on the proposed planning strategy and themes for redevelopment, specific recommendations for housing, the learning corridor and neighborhood infrastructure are defined below.

Housing



- *Housing rehabilitation in and around the neighborhood should be identified as a high priority and mechanisms should be put in place to assist both private development and publicly assisted development with new housing starts.*
- Programs should be identified, utilized, and in some cases created, that *provide assistance for home ownership.*
- *Support the conversion of tax-delinquent properties that are obtained by the City into affordable home ownership opportunities through the well-coordinated efforts of non-profit housing redevelopment institutions, as part of the overall housing strategy.*
- The idea of creating housing infill within the fabric of the neighborhood is a key aspect of redevelopment that will make the single biggest impact on improving the overall quality of life for residents. The magnitude of new housing starts envisioned is not ten, twenty or fifty, but more in the range of one to two hundred new and rehabilitated homes.
- *Create a clean and safe neighborhood initiative* provides an identifiable organization made up of citizens and city officials that supports those issues related to public safety and an attractive neighborhood. Much like a “neighborhood watch group”, this initiative over time can work with community members and the Old Hill Neighborhood Council to pin point problems and work

quickly with City officials to bring resolution and conclusion.

Institutions



- *Create coordinated institutional plans that find mutual benefit* among the City of Springfield, Springfield Public Schools, Old Hill Neighborhood, Upper Hill Neighborhood, Springfield College, and the broader Springfield community.
- *Pursue expanded educational, job training, social service and recreation opportunities* by supporting appropriate expansion and development, including:
 - Morris Professional Childcare Center
 - Family Resources Center
 - MCDI
 - Performing Arts Center
 - Leadership Development Center
 - Recreation Fields parking zones

Infrastructure



- *Implement a series of streetscape improvements over time that will provide a more safe and attractive environment within the neighborhood. As part of these improvements, incorporate an appropriate signage and wayfinding system that provides pride to the neighborhood and assistance to visitors. In addition, appropriate street lighting design should be implemented that provides safe light levels and adds to the overall attractiveness of the area. Historic “period” fixtures might be a wonderful way to pay tribute to some of the past character of the Old Hill Neighborhood. All sidewalks and crosswalks should be designed to meet codes and guidelines relative to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).*
- *A traffic Planning Study should be performed in order to understand and assess traffic impacts in and around the neighborhood. Based on such a study, clear and concise recommendations could be made for implementing appropriate traffic calming measures.*

Strategy for Investment

Due to the economic conditions at the Federal, State and local levels, a major part of the plan for improving the neighborhood must focus on a proactive strategy for reinvestment. This strategy should focus on all aspects of creating a funding mechanism that can be utilized to generate redevelopment opportunities throughout the neighborhood and should include funding for housing, business, education and infrastructure improvements.

As part of the strategy for investment and redevelopment in the neighborhood, specific projects should be identified that can begin the process identifying change for the community. These initial key projects may include a significant number of new housing construction starts geared for home ownership and the support of new businesses that are geared toward providing neighborhood goods and services.

6. NEXT STEPS

In order to make the planning process successful, it is critical that a system be established that can build on the momentum created to date. This report should not represent a conclusion to the master planning process, but rather, it should signify a beginning of the rejuvenation of the neighborhood. A system for maintaining and building momentum should exist within the context of the newly created organization called, “Partnership for the Renewal of Old Hill”.

Partnership for the Renewal of Old Hill

The Partnership for the Renewal of the Old Hill should create a formal mission statement, specific short and long term goals, agenda items and action items that can help to keep this redevelopment strategy in the community forefront for the next several years as financial opportunities become available to actually implement positive change in the neighborhood. A specific structure may include

- *Neighborhood Renewal Committee:* Made of eight to ten individuals from the neighborhood, the College, the City, other organizations and businesses. This Committee should hold meetings on a monthly basis to review progress and address any and all issues that may impact the master plan and development plans.
- *Steering Group:* The Neighborhood Renewal Committee should establish a series of Steering Groups within the neighborhood that focus on very specific issues that impact the day-to-day quality of life in the neighborhood. Steering Group themes might include: housing, traffic, safety, business, etc. Each Steering Group would report monthly to the Committee and agenda items would be added accordingly. The Steering Groups would have very direct access to stakeholders through out the neighborhood and could bring pertinent issues to the table in a timely fashion.

One major goal of the Neighborhood Renewal Committee should be to work with the City, State and local businesses and organizations to secure additional funding sources to study more detailed opportunities for renewal. In addition a process should be established that incorporates the resources of local business enterprises. Together, the Old Hill neighbors, the broader community and the entire City of Springfield need to come together to establish a major new initiative for change based on the key recommendations called for in this master planning report.

Timeline for Action

With any new planning initiative, it is important to set action items and to define critical milestones relative to an overall schedule. The scenario below

represents a timeline that can be considered by the Neighborhood Renewal Committee as a starting point.

Issue the Summary Plan Report	May 2004
Identify Potential Planning and Design Resources	June to September, 2004
Identify Neighborhood Renewal Committee and Steering Group Membership	July 2004
Finalize Funding Strategies	July 2004 to June 2005
Enlist Additional Public/ Private Support	July 2004 to June 2005
Advance Special Studies Committee Agendas	July through Sept. 2004
Identify Funding Sources	Oct. through Dec. 2004
Initiate Detailed Study for Short Term Projects	Oct. through Dec. 2004
Secure Construction Funding Support	Nov. through Feb. 2005
Implement Short Term Initiatives	Nov. through Feb. 2005
Detailed Planning for Future Programs	Nov. through Feb. 2005
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7. APPENDIX

While this planning process has certainly been a group effort over the past several months, it is still important to thank a few specific individuals within the Springfield community who have worked tirelessly and have given their time and energy to help sustain momentum and keep the process on track and moving forward. Linda Petrella, City of Springfield Planning Director, Omega Johnson, President of the Old Hill Neighborhood Council, Dale Lucy-Allen, Director of Community Relations, Springfield College, Jennifer Kearney, Office of Housing and Neighborhood Services City of Springfield and Glenn Davis, Sr. V.P. of Economic Development for the Urban League of Springfield have gone beyond the call of duty to make sure that this process is successful.

We applaud their efforts and we look forward to assisting the future.

Acknowledgements

In addition to the individuals identified above, there have been countless other people who have contributed to the planning effort. Rather than try and list all individual names, we thought it would be better, and a little easier to list all the organizations, agencies and groups that have participated to date. This list is made up of the following:

- *The many active residents of the neighborhood and broader community at large*
- *The Office of the Mayor, City of Springfield*
- *Superintendent of Schools*
- *Several City departments including: the Planning Department, the School Department, Traffic Department, Housing and Neighborhood Services Department*
- *The Office of the President, Springfield College*
- *Urban League of Springfield*
- *Old Hill Neighborhood Council*
- *Local School Principals*
- *MCDI*
- *Habitat for Humanity*
- *Pioneer Valley Project*
- *HAP*
- *The Council of Churches of Greater Springfield*
- *Local Church Leaders*

Meeting Agenda

(attached)

Workshop PowerPoint Presentations

(available from the Planning Department, City of Springfield)

Graphic Information

(attached)