Northside
A Vision for the Northside Neighborhood, Ithaca, New York
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A Statement of Commitment to Neighborhood-Based Planning

WHEREAS, the quality of life in Ithaca’s residential neighborhoods is critical to the overall health and welfare of the City, and

WHEREAS, livable urban neighborhoods that are close to schools, shopping, services, parks and other amenities can work to limit sprawl and encourage non-automotive transportation, and

WHEREAS, the economic health of small city downtowns, like ours, depends on the support of nearby neighborhoods, and

WHEREAS, healthy, stable, and diverse neighborhoods engender community vitality and civic engagement, and

WHEREAS, the efforts of residents to maintain and improve their neighborhoods are strengthened by organization and communication, and

WHEREAS, a neighborhood-based planning process can empower neighborhood residents by providing the opportunity to deliberate on possible futures, to build relationships and consensus, and to create action plans for neighborhood revitalization, and

WHEREAS, a neighborhood-based planning process can promote coordination of neighborhood residents, community associations, city departments, local stakeholders, and human service providers in efforts to serve neighborhoods, and

WHEREAS, the city has approved and filled two staff positions to work with neighborhood-based groups and residents, and

WHEREAS, the City’s Draft Economic Development Plan calls for the City to “develop and implement an action-based and comprehensive Neighborhood Improvement Plan which includes a strategy for funding neighborhood improvement projects”; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that Common Council directs the Department of Planning and Development to work with residents and other community stakeholders to identify neighborhood strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and to address these with citizen-based goals and action strategies, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the City shall facilitate a neighborhood-based planning process that can build leadership capacity and empower neighborhood groups to implement plans that will increase the quality of life in their neighborhoods, and be it further

RESOLVED, that where neighborhood-based plans are created with high levels of citizen participation, such plans will constitute a representative voice for the neighborhood and shall serve as a prioritized action list for neighborhood improvement, and be it further

RESOLVED, that action steps recommended for implementation of neighborhood goals serve as a guide for determining the work priorities and budgets of City government, and be it further

RESOLVED, that City staff with decision-making authority meet once a month to coordinate on the implementation of neighborhood plans, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Ithaca Neighborhoods Council meet regularly to discuss neighborhood plans, to network and to address issues that transcend the smaller geographic boundaries of individual neighborhoods, and be it further

RESOLVED, that Common Council intends to incorporate neighborhood-based plans as amendments to the City of Ithaca’s Comprehensive Plan.
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The Northside Neighborhood
in partnership with

The City of Ithaca
Mayor Alan J. Cohen

Common Council Members
2000-2001
Paulette Manos
Patricia Pryor
Diann Sams
Tracy Farrell
Susan Blumenthal
Patricia Vaughan
Joan Spielholz
Josh Glassetter
Ed Hershey
Jana Taylor

2002-2003
Paulette Manos
Patricia Pryor
Diann Sams
David Whitmore
Susan Blumenthal
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Community and Rural Development Institute
Tim Cullenen

City of Ithaca Planning Department
Leslie Chatterton, Neighborhood Planner
Tim Logue, Neighborhood Planner

Ithaca Police Department
Christine Barksdale

Mission

P
romote environmentally sustainable development through a comprehensive neighborhood improvement strategy.

S
trngthen the Northside as a socially diverse, mixed-use, mixed-income, pedestrian-oriented neighborhood.

N
urture active resident, business, and institutional involvement in community problem solving, planning, and development.
Residents

- Paul Andrews
- Karen Armstrong
- Ron Belles
- Bonnie Blanding-May
- Cynthia Bond
- Gail Brisson
- Travis Brooks
- CarolAnn Brust
- A. Calahorro
- Erica Carpio
- Yamin Chevallard
- James Connor
- Leslie Connors
- Elizabeth Dissin
- Earl Evans
- Rene Garcia
- Joanna Grady
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- Hugh Hall
- Martha Hall
- Danielle Hautaniemi
- Aileen Heath
- Diane Herbert
- Armin Heurich
- Judith Holliday
- Donna Holt
- Chad Hoover
- Mark Johnson
- Jude Johnson
- Robb Johnsrud
- Sharon Kahkonen
- Jim Karpinski
- Hilda Kirschner
- Jane Koestler
- Adrienne Lampert
- Julie Love
- Michael Love
- Mildred Lovett
- Annie Lovett
- Dinah Maguire
- Annie Martinez
- Marianne Marsh
- Kendall McAdams
- Michelle Menter
- David Mitchell
- Paul Moore
- Anmarie Murray
- Frank Orzino
- Joyce Orzino
- Lacretia Payne
- Anna Perez
- Ann Peters
- Hannah Phan
- Terry Plater
- Harley Quinn
- Juliette Ramirez-Corazon
- Bruce Roebal
- Christine Schepker
- Joan Serra
- David Shapiro
- Lucas Shapiro
- Coista Shopis
- Penny Snow
- Dennis Stein
- Sarah Suong
- Joseph Sweet
- Jill Tripp
- Jessica Vitucci
- Michael Vitucci
- David Whitmore
- Wendy Workman
- Jessie Workman
- Kenneth Wright

Other Stakeholders

- Karen Armstrong
- Pastor Ronald Benson
- Kevin Cuddeback
- Rev. Daris Dixon-Clark
- Nina Hien
- Marcy Hudson
- Lynne Jackier
- Randy Murphy
- Irene Petito
- Tony Pettito
- Flora Sagan
- Lawrence Williams

Students

- Joshua Abrams
- Beth Alshuler
- Joseph Braitsch
- Michael Brown
- Thomas Calahan
- Melissa Carino
- Joanna Canter
- Caitlin Chipperfield
- Sara Erhardt
- Jamecia Finnie
- Wyeth Friday
- Beth Fuller
- Jonathan Harsch
- Ian Hegarty
- Jennifer Hoos
- Chad Hoos
- Laurel Hunter
- Rose-Marie Jerlaianu
- Taafioi Kamara
- Alex Karmen
- Jose Lopez
- Tania May
- Terrance McKinley
- Benjamin McKloskey
- Mitali Nagrecha
- Eric Phillips
- Mike Powell
- Vincent Reina
- Gregory Ricciardi
- Jim Robenalt
- Kunha James Ryu
- Annie Siegel
- Sarah Smith
- Holly Spoth
- Eduardo Valero
- Jacob Yu
Introduction

Purpose of the Report

Neighborhoods change over time. Sometimes these changes reinforce the threads that hold a community together, and sometimes these changes unravel them. Sometimes these changes come from internal forces, and sometimes they come from outside. The key to building healthy, sustainable communities is to direct the forces that cause this change.

The purpose of this report is to ensure that the Northside neighborhood remains a healthy, viable community. This report seeks to build on the strengths and to address the challenges facing the Northside. It lists both general goals and specific projects, or objectives, to accomplish its mission.

Background

In 2003, the City of Ithaca Common Council approved An Economic Development Plan for the City of Ithaca. Development promised to bring needed tax revenue to the city, but it also threatened to bring increased traffic and other problems to older downtown neighborhoods. Residents wanted to be sure that the benefits of the economic development flowed to the neighborhoods most affected. To show support for Ithaca’s neighborhoods, Common Council adopted a resolution stating the City’s commitment to neighborhood-based planning and established a City policy to prepare neighborhood plans.

Shaping the Process

Ithaca’s commitment represents a major shift in the manner in which the City conducts neighborhood planning. The process adapted for the Northside Planning Initiative drew on models in East St. Louis, Illinois, and Rochester, New York. Concepts that distinguish the new initiative are:

- Adherence to resident empowerment and a resident-driven process
- Focus on inclusion, outreach, diversity, and representative participation
- Attention to neighborhood assets
- Collaboration between City Hall and the broader Ithaca community

Mural at the Northside IHA Community Center
Introduction

Stakeholders

Northside: Turning the Corner is the work of hundreds of people. Almost one quarter of the neighborhood has participated in the discussions. A dozen nonprofit groups, including Cornell University, have helped make this possible. Residents and other Northside stakeholders crafted the bulk of the goals and objectives at three large community meetings in fall 2001. (For convenience, the planning group is referred to as “residents” throughout the document.) A steering committee, open to all, refined these documents during the next year. The community met again in summer 2003 to put the final touches on the document before sending it to Common Council.

Organization of the Report

The document is divided into two sections. The first section covers a detailed history of the Northside and the planning process. It explains the conceptual model and summarizes information collected at the meetings, like neighborhood strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The second section, the heart of the Plan, contains goals and objectives organized by subject area. There are nine subject areas: Community Building (page 20), Open Space (page 22), Housing (page 24), Youth Development (page 28), Infrastructure (page 30), Transportation (page 34), Neighborhood-Oriented Retail (page 36), Public Safety (page 38), and Sustainability (page 40).

Major Findings

The Northside has great assets, both physical and social. The housing stock is varied and affordable. Residents come from different backgrounds and bring a wealth of experiences and skills. Beautiful corner garden lots, a quiet creek, and neighborhood-oriented retail add to the vibrancy of the neighborhood. Residents identified physical and social projects that would build on these assets.

On the human side, residents concentrated on social connections, youth activities, and safety. Events that allowed residents to meet one another were clear favorites. Residents also voiced the need for youth activities, especially geared toward teens. The Plan calls for a number of social activities and projects that would increase the cohesiveness of the neighborhood.

The plan envisions several major physical changes to the neighborhood. Increasing the quality of rental housing and improving the overall appearance of the neighborhood are top priorities. The Plan calls for programs to increase home ownership and supports a vision of the owner of the P&C lot to improve the store and add supporting retail. Residents saw several other opportunities, including revitalizing commercial districts.
They also said that, as a gateway to the neighborhood, Third Street should feel more welcoming, with better signage and a more attractive streetscape. It should also be easier to cross Route 13 at Third Street.

The current location of the Department of Public Works yard is a problem. Aside from the visual blight, the heavy truck traffic is a safety hazard. The City should move it and make the land available for redevelopment. A final project, rebuilding a pedestrian bridge over Cascadilla Creek and landscaping the creek, will provide physical and social connectedness between neighborhoods. The need for sustainability influenced the discussions and generated its own list of projects including access to healthy, environmentally-friendly food.

The Future

Plans, like neighborhoods, change. *Northside: Turning the Corner* is the start of a process. The document lays out strengths, weakness, opportunities, threats, and scores of ways to build on the assets of an already strong neighborhood. Undoubtedly, additional projects will surface that fit within the broad goals of the Plan. This document should be viewed as a rough guide to be adapted as needed. The City understands this and intends to update this plan in five years.

In the meantime, the City, residents, and other stakeholders are committed to the goals identified in this plan. Many of the projects can be accomplished by residents without additional resources; others require partners. The City is committed to playing an active role in implementing this plan and will prioritize these projects in future municipal decisions. Working together will ensure that every time Northside turns a corner, the future is a little brighter.

Location

The Northside neighborhood is located in the city of Ithaca, New York, in the downtown area known as The Flats. The neighborhood is triangular, bounded by Route 13 to the West, Cascadilla Creek and Lake Avenue to the Northeast, and Cascadilla Street to the South. Land uses along the stretch of Route 13 adjacent to the Northside neighborhood are a mix of commercial, public, storage (Department of Public Works), and undeveloped land. The Cascadilla Creek bed has been straightened and channeled and, although overgrown, retains evidence of 19th century landscaping. Most of the interior of the neighborhood is medium density residential. More dense residential uses are the Northside complex of the Ithaca Housing Authority (IHA) between Third and Fifth Streets and the Mutual Housing Association of Tompkins County (MHATC) on First Street and Alice Miller Way. In addition to the fringe area close to Route 13, there are commercial areas on the east end of Hancock Street and on Third Street.
The Northside Neighborhood of Ithaca, NY in Context

Northside Neighborhood

Tompkins County

New York State

Ithaca

Tompkins County

Northside

City of Ithaca

METADATA
Created By: Beth Altshuler  On: June 9, 2003  At: GEDDeS Lab, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
State Data Source: StreetMap USA, ESRI  County and City Data: Tompkins County  ITS GIS Division
Ithaca's early settlement was concentrated around the city's downtown. The outlying land that is now the Northside neighborhood was a swampy area traversed by the meandering Cascadilla Creek. Simeon Dewitt, Ithaca's founder, first depicted the Northside's present development pattern in an 1835 map. Northside was Ithaca's first neighborhood to diverge from the rigid east-west grid. The streets were laid out parallel to the planned alignment of Cascadilla Creek, which was straightened in 1836. Around this time, land in what is now the Northside was gradually drained, and the first houses were built on Lake Avenue and Cascadilla Street. The newly-channeled creek bed was landscaped and the prominent boulevards of Lake Avenue and Willow Street were constructed. Despite the early start, however, most of the houses were built between 1890 and 1910, some years after the city incorporated in 1888.

The Northside neighborhood was situated near regional and interstate transportation routes, including the Cayuga Lake Inlet and four major railroads. Most houses are modest, constructed for people employed at nearby manufacturers, which included the Ithaca Glassworks, the Ithaca Salt Works, the Ithaca Gun Factory, and the Ithaca Calendar Clock Factory. In 1895, the City began construction of a sewage pumping station on Franklin Street, which was replaced in 1939 by a new facility in a new location. The old building currently houses the offices of the Water and Sewer Department.

By the turn of the century, the Northside had become a gateway neighborhood, with large numbers of immigrants from countries such as Italy, Hungary, and Russia. These residents brought ethnic traditions like vegetable and flower gardens and small neighborhood markets with foods and goods from the residents' home countries. To help newcomers acclimate, the Social Service League founded the Northside House in 1926 at Third and Madison Streets, which contained a gym, meeting rooms, and a library. Programming gradually became more youth-centered, and in 1967 the Westside and Northside Houses merged. Eventually, they were reconfigured to create the Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC), located just south of the neighborhood.
on North Albany Street. The Northside House was sold to private owners, but the building survives today.

Large state and federal programs of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s had a profound effect on the Northside’s physical and social fabric. The City’s urban renewal program, intended to eliminate blight, resulted in the wholesale clearance of homes at several Northside locations. Continued urban renewal in the 1960s resulted in construction of Hancock Plaza and clearance of homes from the sites now occupied by the Bowl-O-Drome and the Ithaca Housing Authority’s Northside complex. The westward relocation of Route 13 from Cayuga Street to its present location eliminated what had been Sixth and Seventh Streets and effectively severed railroad access that had served industry in the Northside’s northern section. Neighborhood access to Route 13 was limited to a few cross streets. Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services (INHS), a grassroots nonprofit, was organized in the late 1970s to counteract the displacement of residents, promote affordable housing, and preserve housing stock. In the 1980s, the neighborhood gradually transitioned, losing its feel as an ethnic enclave, but retaining its diversity.

The 1990s began with a land-use plan prepared under the City’s direction by the consultant group Trowbridge Associates. The Sciencenter, a children’s science museum, began construction on a new building in 1992 and expanded 10 years later. In the mid-1990s, the Second Street Neighborhood Watch organized to monitor and report on increasing drug activity.

The Mutual Housing Association of Tompkins County (MHATC), a low- to moderate-income housing cooperative, completed its first phase of construction in 1993. Completion of the second phase in 1997 created a total of 28 new affordable rental homes. Mutual Housing is currently pursuing a scattered site housing initiative. And finally, or as a beginning, the 21st century has ushered in the City of Ithaca’s new, resident-driven, bottom-up neighborhood planning initiative. This report, *Northside: Turning the Corner*, is the initiative’s first project.
Northside Planning Process

The Northside neighborhood participatory planning process began with City staff outreach to neighborhood stakeholders, such as residents, business owners, landlords, church leaders, and liaisons from local organizations. Support staff included personnel from the City’s Planning Department, Cornell University’s City and Regional Planning Department, Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County, and the City’s Community Policing program. An exploratory meeting was held on March 28, 2001 to discuss potential neighborhood planning processes and the goals, hopes, and fears of the residents. Following this meeting, support staff and residents began recruiting a steering committee, a process that carried through late May and early June 2001. Steering Committee membership was open to anyone desiring to be part of the planning process. The bulk of the Plan was created in two large Neighborhood Inventory meetings and a Neighborhood Summit.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee’s purpose was twofold. First was outreach to other neighborhood stakeholders. Though the outreach focused on residents, the Initiative made a concerted effort to include businesses, churches, and community service organizations operating in the area. Outreach strategies included a media campaign, door-to-door canvassing, tabling at prominent locations, a press conference, informational flyers, a neighborhood cleanup, an email list, and a web page. One of the more dramatic outreach events involved a sound truck circulating in the neighborhood to broadcast the date and time of the Neighborhood Summit. Another effective strategy was the house meeting, an informal gathering hosted by a resident who invited five to ten nearby neighbors for discussion about the neighborhood’s history and the upcoming planning project.

The second Steering Committee function was to work with staff to refine and customize a participatory planning process. This included establishing neighborhood boundaries, deciding on an organizational and decision-making structure, drafting a proposed mission statement, and discussing the impacts of race and class differences. The Committee, with support from staff, guided the process and agreed upon the process shown on page 15.

The Steering Committee met regularly to craft the Plan. From the first meeting on June 13, 2001, to the meeting on March 19, 2002, the Steering Committee met about 20 times; it continues to meet about once a month. Attendance at meetings varied, but typically included a core group of about 15 people, with a second group of about 15 who attended less regularly.

First Community Inventory Meeting

About 60 residents and a dozen stakeholders attended the first Community Inventory, on September 24, 2001, at GIAC. The meeting centered on small group mapping
activities, including delineating neighborhood boundaries and identifying significant landmarks, assets, resources, and areas of concern. Fifty-six participants received disposable cameras with instructions to document neighborhood conditions—specifically, neighborhood strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats. Northside children drew and presented what they liked, disliked, and wanted to change about the neighborhood.

Second Community Inventory Meeting

The second Community Inventory meeting took place on October 18, 2001, also in the GIAC gymnasium. Again, about 60 people attended, though it was a different group than attended the first meeting. This meeting focused on three activities in small groups. Participants first added historical and personal events to a skeletal neighborhood timeline then sorted the photographs of the neighborhood into four categories: 1) current neighborhood strengths, resources, and assets; 2) current weakness; 3) future opportunities; and 4) future threats and concerns. Next, they sorted the pictures by themes, such as housing, infrastructure, youth, and aesthetics. These themes were then presented to the whole group for addition and correction. During the last part of the meeting, attendees filled in the blanks of a goal-setting and visioning statement and identified projects that would help achieve that goal.

Ithaca’s Neighborhood Planning Process
The Neighborhood Summit

The Northside Neighborhood Summit was held on Saturday, November 10, 2001, at the former PALS retail store on Third Street. Though GIAC worked well for the Community Inventory meetings, Steering Committee members preferred a venue within the neighborhood. In addition to an extensive public notice campaign for residents, representatives from a wide variety of community institutions were asked to participate. These included community foundations, banks, City departments, housing organizations, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Ithaca Downtown Partnership. These resource people provided insight and feedback to residents on potential programs and projects.

Approximately 100 participants attended the Summit, which was scheduled from 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM with morning and afternoon sessions. Some had been involved with the Steering Committee since the beginning; many had not. The first presentation was a neighborhood profile based on information gathered from the two Community Inventory Meetings, a neighborhood survey, and other data sources, such as the U.S. Census and Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services. The morning session ended with a draft goal statement and proposed development objectives being presented for group review and comment. Participants enjoyed a catered lunch and live jazz entertainment by Cornell University students. Afternoon activities resumed with small group planning teams focusing on each of nine development objectives: community organization, open space improvement, infrastructure, housing opportunities and conditions, transportation and traffic, retail development, youth activities, public safety, and sustainable living. Each team brainstormed a list of projects, and the resource agencies provided feedback on feasibility and mechanics. This feedback included an assessment of project complexity, cost, time frame, required organizational capacity, and coordination.

Six to nine priority projects, ranked by the number of team members committed to seeing them through, were selected by each group. Residents categorized projects as short term, medium term, and long term. The day ended with each group presenting their list of ideas and elaborating on the highest-ranked proposals.

Signs were one of the methods used to publicize the Summit.
The Plan

The Summit was an exciting and productive meeting; dozens of ideas were generated for neighborhood improvement projects. Many of the ideas, however, required an additional level of discussion not possible at the Summit. Participants also recognized that the Summit was not well attended by residents from the Ithaca Housing Authority’s Northside complex. The Steering Committee resolved to hold additional meetings to refine the plans and to conduct further outreach, especially at IHA.

On November 15, 2001, about 35 people attended a meeting at the IHA Northside Community Center to review and cultivate ideas generated at the Summit. Participants reviewed and discussed each of the top project ideas within the nine development areas. Some people who were unable to attend the Summit participated in this meeting.

Two weeks later, City Planning staff and residents of IHA hosted a dinner meeting at the IHA Northside Community Center. Residents were encouraged to discuss their experiences living at IHA, what they liked, what they would change, project ideas, and why so few IHA residents chose to attend the Community Inventory Meetings and Summit.

The Steering Committee also held two follow-up meetings to further refine four sections of the plan. The first, on January 29, 2002, dealt with the Housing and Infrastructure sections, while the second, on February 11, 2002, focused on the Youth and Transportation sections. Both meetings included potential project partners. The Housing meeting, for example, included representatives from the Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency (IURA), Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services, Mutual Housing Association of Tompkins County, the Ithaca Housing Authority, Tompkins Community Action Agency, Habitat for Humanity, Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, and the Tompkins County Office for the Aging.

Preparing for the CDBG Application

After the New Year, the Steering Committee began participating with the City of Ithaca’s 2002 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application. On January 15, 2002, the group met with representatives from the IURA for information about CDBG eligibility criteria, scoring, approval process, and schedule. The Draft Plan was reviewed for selection of potential projects. Two additional meetings focused on project selection, sponsorship, and development. On February 26, 2002, the Steering Committee ranked 20 eligible projects, selecting a first tier of five projects and another five fall-back projects. This list was submitted to the IURA for review and discussion.

A smaller focus group of members interested in working on the grant met on March 12th to review and respond to feedback from the IURA. Agency representatives updated the Steering Committee on CDBG progress and listened to resident comments. Final comment by the Steering Committee on the application occurred at the
Planning Process

regular meeting held on March 19, 2002. Staff addressed resident questions about project development, scoring, competitiveness, and drafting the final application. To complete the CDBG process, resident representatives addressed elected officials of the Planning & Economic Development Committee of the Common Council and the full Council in a strong show of support for the 2002 application.

Implementation of the Plan

Since the CDBG application, the Northside Steering Committee has moved towards implementation of Northside: Turning the Corner. A number of projects have emerged as early priorities, and residents, with staff support, have taken leadership roles to see these projects come to fruition. Some of the projects selected for early implementation include: redevelopment of the P&C Plaza, rebuilding the pedestrian bridge over Cascadilla Creek at Monroe Street, outdoor movie nights in Conway Park, door-to-door canvassing for energy efficiency, a monthly newsletter, and a gardeners’ association.

The Steering Committee, in the form of the Northside Neighborhood Association, continues to meet once a month to work on these and other projects. They have written bylaws and will present them to the community soon.
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

At the two community inventory meetings held in fall 2001, Northside participants identified neighborhood strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats:

**Strengths**
- Excellent location
- Neighborhood retail
- Strong housing stock
- Diverse population
- Sense of community
- Pride of ownership
- Natural amenities
- Community-serving institutions
- Readable urban form
- Active neighborhood organizations
- Affordable housing
- Developable space
- Rich history

**Opportunities**
- Business opportunities related to a busier Route 13
- Expansion of neighborhood retail
- Additional affordable housing
- Tourism related to local history
- Mixed-income, mixed-financing housing
- Staffed neighborhood organization
- Redevelopment of Sunny’s Plaza
- Increased diversity
- Space for outdoor events in the P&C lot

**Weaknesses**
- Uneven housing maintenance
- Perception of poor public safety
- Lack of a community gathering space
- Social divisions
- Recent retail losses
- Missing and deteriorated infrastructure
- Resident turnover
- Increasing traffic volume and speed
- Automobile-oriented
- Lack of preteen and teen activities
- Negative neighborhood image
- Incompatible land uses

**Threats**
- Out-migration may reduce home ownership
- Consequences of absentee landlords
- Improvements may lead to gentrification
- Softening of rental market due to increased student housing closer to campus
- Social services overburdened due to the economic downturn
Community Building

The Northside has a long history of welcoming diverse residents. This diversity survives today among residents of many different ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. The varied housing choices also ensure that residents from all social and economic statuses live in the neighborhood. Residents appreciate this diversity.

At the same time, residents do not feel like they know many of their neighbors. While there have been a few activities that have engaged a representative cross-section of residents, this is the exception rather than the rule. Many residents living in rental housing do not interact much with homeowners and vice versa. Even people of similar backgrounds living close by often do not interact.

Throughout the planning process, participants continually remarked how much they enjoyed getting to know one another. Activities provided an opportunity for residents to talk and work together to envision the future. Residents expressed a strong desire for more social activities. These activities should reflect the diversity of the neighborhood and provide opportunities for casual social interaction. These community building activities are some of the highest priority projects for the Northside.

Residents wanted to ensure that the work of the Steering Committee continued. They decided to formalize their organization as the Northside Neighborhood Association and are adopting bylaws. The work continues with a series of both large and small meetings.

GOAL
Increase social opportunities and improve knowledge of community building activities to embrace Northside’s diversity.

1. Objective
Spread the word about existing opportunities for community building.

A. Existing Festivals
Support existing festivals and events, like Celebrate Our Roots, National Night Out, Harvest Fest, and the Latino Civic Association annual celebration.
B. Ithaca Neighborhoods Council
Encourage other neighborhood groups and the City to revitalize the council (a coalition of Ithaca’s neighborhood groups), so that Northside leaders can connect with leaders from other neighborhoods.

2. Objective
Improve communications across the neighborhood.

A. Neighborhood Association
Continue a form of the Northside Steering Committee, with better geographic representation, to work on neighborhood projects and advocate for the whole community.

B. Newsletter
Regularly circulate a newsletter to update people about neighborhood activities. This could build into a broader media campaign.

C. Community Center
Find space for a community center in existing buildings (e.g. Sciencenter) or in a new structure.

D. Kiosks
Add kiosks at strategic locations so neighbors can post flyers.

3. Objective
Create new ways and reasons for people to come together.

A. Block Parties
Organize block parties in the neighborhood to celebrate achievements and events.

B. Beautification
Many residents are interested in cleanup and landscaping projects. To increase resident participation, residents might organize a neighborhood-wide event to clean up, come together, and eat.
GOAL
Improve the appearance and accessibility of open space in the Northside neighborhood.

In the Northside neighborhood, open space includes parks that have been set aside for passive uses, active recreational areas, and undeveloped land that contributes to the area’s visual character. Conway Park, near Fifth Street, and Conley Park, adjacent to Alice Miller Way, are two examples of open space used for active recreation. Thompson Park visitors may pursue either passive activities such as dog walking, or higher intensity activities such as Frisbee. The Alex Haley Memorial provides a small neighborhood refuge for contemplation and conversation. The Cascadilla Creek bed separates the Northside and Fall Creek neighborhoods and provides opportunities for fishing, walking, and reflection. The creek bed also imparts a distinct visual character to this section of the Northside. Some of the green spaces are in poor repair or minimally landscaped, and residents expressed a desire to help with improvements. Residents also suggested that open spaces could be redesigned to provide appealing entranceways to the community.

Over the past five years, Northsiders have gradually adopted a number of streetcorner garden plots, planting showy perennials to create beautiful summertime displays that distinguish Northside from other city neighborhoods. In the summer of 2001, the Ithaca Housing Authority, in cooperation with the Cornell Cooperative Extension’s 4-H program, created a youth horticultural program to involve young people in planting these gardens. This activity demonstrates the role Northsiders have taken in recognizing and enhancing the appearance of Northside’s parks, greenways, and corner gardens.
GOAL

*Improve the appearance and accessibility of open space in the Northside neighborhood.*

1. Objective

*Involve the community in the maintenance of neighborhood open space.*

A. Gardeners’ Association
Create a gardeners’ association to share tools, ideas, and expertise for enhancement of the Northside’s open spaces.

B. Pruners’ Brigade
Train residents to maintain shrubs and trees in tree lawns and other public spaces. Information and training could be provided through Citizens Pruners’ Program conducted by the City Forester.

2. Objective

*Improve the quality of existing open space.*

A. Alex Haley Memorial Park
Improve the landscaping and design of this park in conjunction with the landowner and a landscape architect.

B. Third Street Gateway
Apply a gateway treatment to the small fragment parcel where Third Street, Franklin Street, and NYS Route 13 meet.

C. Third Street Treescape
Add more and varied trees in coordination with the City Forester.

D. Cascadilla Creek
Beautify Cascadilla Creek and the creek bed. Project goals are twofold: to improve visual character of the creek and creek bed, and to improve access to the creek. Residents could adopt a block of the creek to maintain.

E. Conley and Conway Parks
Add outdoor furniture and landscaping to Conley and Conway parks.

*One vision of Cascadilla Creek by the P&C, as seen in the P&C Redevelopment Plan.*
Housing Opportunities and Quality

The Northside neighborhood has a unique variety of housing choices. It is the location of the city’s initial public housing complex, 70 rental units managed by the Ithaca Housing Authority for low-income families. Beyond affordable housing, IHA conducts several human service programs, including the Family Unification Program, the Family Self-Sufficiency Program, and the Three Pillar Foundation, (3PF). The 3PF operates a low-interest rotating loan fund enabling participants to improve their financial status. Additionally, IHA provides services for families and individuals through direct case management.

Absentee landlords own many of the properties in the Northside that some residents classify as being in poor repair. Some of these problem properties sit at prominent street corners and overshadow the many properties that are well kept. In addition to being eyesores, some of these properties have building code violations, which are safety concerns.

Residents mentioned vacant corners as both a weakness and an opportunity. Some see these lots as opportunities for new housing, but others see them as possible locations for a Northside community garden. Because these two ideas conflict with each other, neither project is included in the objectives.

The Northside neighborhood is one of Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services’ (INHS) original target areas, and one in which the organization continues its activity. House Recycling, the purchase, repair, and resale of deteriorated housing, is the most visible INHS program. Another program provides low interest loans and grants to homeowners. INHS also operates a Mini-Repair Program, providing labor to complete small and emergency repairs for low-income, elderly, and disabled people. The First Time Home-Buyer Program offers classes that prepare people to become homeowners and provides affordable financing to homebuyers. Lastly, the organization operates a Rental Housing Program that provides market-rate and below market-rate housing.

Another nonprofit group, the Mutual Housing Association of Tompkins County, offers a type of housing found few places in America. The Association owns the housing units and MHATC residents constitute the Association’s membership. MHATC serves low- and moderate-income families and provides long-term affordable housing with security from displacement. Residents set fees and are involved in all aspects of decision-making and management. Although residents do not build equity as with traditional home ownership, MHATC works closely with residents who want to move towards home ownership.

The Neighborhood Housing Initiative is a City-sponsored, city-wide program intended to increase the number of owner-occupied units by acquiring former multiple unit dwellings and converting them to single family or duplex homes for sale at market rate. Anticipated program benefits include increasing owner-
occupancy rates, promoting mixed income neighborhoods, and improving property appearances and values. This program was recently approved by Common Council and began in the summer of 2002.

**GOAL**
Preserve, protect, and enhance the varied housing stock of the Northside and ensure that it provides a wide selection of housing opportunities for people of all income levels.

1. Objective
**Increase home ownership.**

   **A. Neighborhood Housing Initiative**
   Identify problem rental properties for consideration in the Neighborhood Housing Initiative. These properties will be rehabilitated and sold to owner-occupants of any income level.

   **B. Employer-Assisted Housing Program**
   Create a pilot employer-assisted housing program for participating employers’ staff who choose to live in the Northside. The program could offer mortgage guarantees, low-interest mortgage or rehabilitation loans, and other incentives for investment by potential buyers of all income levels. This program, involving Common Council, Cornell University, Ithaca College, major local employers, and INHS, should include protections against gentrification of the neighborhood.

   **C. Home Business**
   Study the potential impacts of changing zoning regulations to allow home businesses. This change could encourage potential homebuyers to invest in downtown neighborhoods such as the Northside.

   **D. First Time Homebuyer Program**
   Support programs to educate and assist first time homebuyers with below-market financing and opportunities like Individual Development Accounts offered at Alternatives Federal Credit Union.

2. Objective
**Assist low-income property owners with property maintenance and repair.**

   **A. Funding for Homeowner Rehabilitation**
   Secure HOME funds from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development or other lenders to rehabilitate owner-occupied homes in the Northside. This should be done in partnership with local not-for-profit housing organizations.

   **B. Holiday in April**
   Plan and implement this one-day home improvement effort for low-income home owners using volunteer labor and donated equipment to provide both exterior and interior improvements.
3. Objective

**Encourage responsible ownership and management of rental property.**

**A. Problem Properties**
Acquire and rehabilitate problem rental properties in conjunction with existing organizations.

**B. Rental Rehab Program**
Provide assistance to responsible landlords to improve the quality and appearance of affordable rental housing.

4. Objective

**Improve property maintenance and appearance.**

**A. Property Maintenance Ordinance**
Strengthen property maintenance requirements and enforcement of current laws in conjunction with the City Building Department and Common Council.

**B. Capacity for Code Enforcement**
Hire additional code enforcement officers, in association with the City Building Department and Common Council.

**C. Communication**
Improve routine communication between the City Building Department and the neighborhood to follow up on property maintenance complaints.

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**Spotlight**

**A Community Model of Housing**

In 1989 concerned citizens, community activists, and a local housing organization formed the Mutual Housing Association of Tompkins County (MHATC).

This not-for-profit organization takes an unusual approach to housing development and home ownership, based on models of collectively-owned housing in Germany and the Scandinavian countries. The Mutual Housing Association develops, manages, and owns all property in perpetuity.

Residents living in MHATC homes take an active role in the management of their community and the organization. Residents comprise 49% of the Board of Directors and must participate in the Resident Council and committee structure. The Resident Council and committees cover MHATC and community needs: resident selection, community outreach, design and development, grievance and dispute resolution, safety and maintenance, and youth scholarship. Residents are involved in projects as complex as financial management, as exciting as landscaping and interior design, and as challenging as tenant selection. Many MHATC families move on to homeownership.

MHATC has expanded its programming. In addition to housing, MHATC now provides residents with job opportunities and counseling services. MHATC has partnered with local providers to offer free conflict mediation, financial planning, elder care, and other life skills. Residents have the opportunity for employment through a social enterprise subsidiary. MHATC operates 30 housing units and plans to develop another 70 in the next five years through the Scattered Site Housing Initiative. These 70 homes and apartments will be a combination of new construction and substantial rehab to existing housing stock.
D. Target Key Properties for Improvement
Direct resources to properties at key corners. The condition of these properties has a disproportionate impact on perceptions of the neighborhood.

E. Home Maintenance Education
Conduct a sustainable home maintenance education program. This project could be carried out with local housing agencies, the City Building Department, Cornell University, or other appropriate not-for-profits.

F. Renter’s Rights and Responsibilities Education
Educate renters about their rights and responsibilities through a mailing or workshop.

6. Objective
Incorporate environmentally sound and energy efficient building and maintenance practices into all projects.

B. Porch Program
Support a proposal by IHA to construct porches on public housing units to promote greater interaction with the neighborhood.

NYSERDA Grant Application
Acquire a duplex in Northside for NYSERDA demonstration project. Sponsor an energy fair with local not-for-profits.

The Ithaca Housing Authority’s Northside Complex is home to 70 families.
Despite early outreach efforts, the involvement of young people in the Northside Planning Initiative has been limited. The Steering Committee was quick to acknowledge the serious deficiency of youth-oriented activity in the Northside neighborhood, especially for teens. When discussing youth development, adult residents agreed that young people should determine their own needs and should participate in project and program development. A second planning phase targeted at youth is a likely future neighborhood project.

Residents agreed that the shaping of programs for Northside youth must begin with integrating existing city-wide programs. Some of these programs involve a stipend or paid internship, providing modest financial compensation to young people.

**GOAL**

Develop and implement youth-focused programs that foster a sense of leadership and empowerment in the youth population of the Northside, particularly adolescents.

1. **Objective**

   Involve youth in organizing a youth-centered planning process with the assistance of existing youth organizations.

   **A. Youth Activities Catalogue**

   Identify and augment existing lists of available youth activities and services. Post findings on the Northside neighborhood web site.

   **B. Youth Survey**

   Assist young people with conducting a survey of their peers to ascertain the adequacy of existing youth activities. Identify gaps in programming by age group, race, and ethnicity.

   **C. Youth Summit**

   Plan and conduct a youth activities summit. Youth should take leadership roles. The summit could be expanded to encompass all downtown neighborhoods.

   **D. Promote Youth Internships**

   Encourage two or three young Northsiders to seek summer employment with the Youth Bureau as youth organizers. Encourage two Cornell University students to apply for a “Design Your Own” summer internship funding to help Northside youth organize a planning process.

2. **Objective**

   Connect youth with existing programs. These programs include:

   - Touchtones (steel drum band)
   - Learning Web apprenticeships
Youth Development

Youth Employment Services
Big Brothers/Big Sisters
Police Explorers
Youth horticulture apprenticeships through IHA, Cooperative Extension, and 4-H
Sports Teams
Sciencenter activities
After school programs at GIAC and Beverly J. Martin School

3. Objective
Support the planning and development of youth activities.

A. Recording Studio
Create a recording studio operated by youth, working with the Community Police Officer.

B. Mural Project
Establish a youth artisans program, working with the Community Police Officer.

C. Northside HeadStart Program
Work with Tompkins Community Action to locate a facility to replace the former HeadStart Center. The Center's building was determined to be substandard, and the program was closed in spring 2002.

D. Basic Medical and Dental Services
Ensure that all youth have access to basic medical and dental services. Work with the administration of Beverly J. Martin School to support programs that address basic health-care needs at the school.

E. Other Ideas
Identify other opportunities such as a baby-sitting network; clubs, sports, and social activities; an evening reading program involving the colleges, and the community; teen discussions of life skills; a Green Team, bringing youth together for environmental activities; part-time teen employment; camping trips; home schooling connections; and youth-adult connections.

4. Objective
Improve transportation options for Northside youth.

A. Transit Pass Program
Partner with the Community Drug Task Force to maintain availability of subsidized bus passes for youth that need transportation to after school programs. This program is in danger of ending.

B. Safety Education Program
Conduct a bike and pedestrian safety education program for youth, working with the Ithaca Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee to obtain grant funding.
GOAL
Improve the condition, quality, and sustainability of neighborhood infrastructure, including streets, sidewalks, curb cut ramps, bridges, facilities, and water and sewer services.
While the Northside's infrastructure steadily improves, a walk in the neighborhood exposes deficiencies in curbing, sidewalk connections, and street drainage. This may be due to Northside's location adjacent to NYS Route 13, its industrial history, or its construction on drained swampland. In general, improvements have accompanied new development. The new streets, sidewalks, and neighborhood park that accompanied Mutual Housing Association's construction in the 1990s most dramatically demonstrates the improvements that have come from new development. Similarly, the Sciencenter's construction was accompanied by new sidewalks and curbs. These and other recommendations (such as to strengthen the neighborhood's visual character and improve pedestrian and bicycle connections) were laid out in the partially implemented Northside Design Plan, written in 1990 by Trowbridge Associates.

Lingering problems include the lack of an adequate and attractive buffer between the neighborhood and NYS Route 13, missing sidewalk connections, incomplete curbing, and the continued use of land by the City of Ithaca's Department of Public Works (DPW) for storage and maintenance. The neighborhood views the DPW storage yard as particularly incompatible with the Northside's predominantly residential character in light of the equipment traffic and visual impact. The DPW is also incompatible with its next-door neighbor, the Children's Drop-In Center.

Many residents noted as a setback the City’s removal of the pedestrian bridge over Cascadilla Creek. Constructed by the Groton Bridge Company in 1907, the bridge exhibited the company’s characteristic design and detailing. Its absence creates a gap in the neighborhood network of pedestrian and bicycle connections. Perhaps more importantly, it represents the loss of a visually distinctive and significant historic resource. Its replacement is a neighborhood priority.

**GOAL**

*Improve the condition, quality, and sustainability of neighborhood infrastructure, including streets, sidewalks, curb cut ramps, bridges, facilities, and water and sewer services.*

1. **Objective**

*Improve access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and people with disabilities.*

A. **Sidewalks and Curbs**

Identify segments of sidewalks, crosswalks, curbs, and curb cut ramps that need to be constructed, repaired, or replaced. All new projects need to be accessible for people with disabilities.

Residents hope that this bridge, designed by a Northside resident, will span Cascadilla Creek.
Northside: Turning the Corner

B. Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge over Cascadilla Creek

Rebuild the bridge over Cascadilla Creek at Monroe Street to provide a neighborhood link to Thompson Park, the laundromat, the pharmacy, and the dentist on Cayuga Street. This will improve the neighborhood’s link to the anticipated urban trail system and will enhance the visual character of the Northside neighborhood.

2. Objective

Improve the condition and visual character of neighborhood infrastructure in conjunction with new development.

A. Street Design Guidelines

Develop guidelines for improvement or reconstruction of streets targeted in the City’s streets program. Areas of focus could be street widths, curbs, drainage, sidewalks, rights-of-way, lighting, street furniture, stop signs, traffic flow, traffic speed, landscaping, and bike lanes. The guidelines should address energy efficiency, alternative modes of transportation, the pedestrian experience, and sustainable development.

B. NYSEG Fencing on NYS Route 13

Make recommendations to NYSEG on mitigating the adverse visual impact of the chain link fence on the east side of NYS Route 13, at the edge of the Northside neighborhood.

Spotlight

THIRD STREET CROSSING

Every day, 30,000 vehicles pass by Third Street while traveling on Route 13, making this intersection the busiest in Northside and a major entranceway to the neighborhood for both pedestrians and motor vehicles.

Northsiders and other Ithacans cross Route 13 to get to the Ithaca Farmer’s Market, the Community Gardens, the waterfront, and Aldi. Unfortunately, the current arrangement does not do justice to the Northside.

Overgrown weeds welcome visitors to the neighborhood. Pedestrians must hurry across Route 13 because the light is too short. Even worse, walkers cannot easily see the stoplight from the sidewalk so they do not know when they are supposed to start walking.

Residents envision improving the current intersection crossing or building a pedestrian bridge. There are several steps to improve the intersection. Crosswalks, preferably with textured pavement, would signal to cars that pedestrians use the intersection. A Walk / Don’t Walk sign would also help residents know when they have right-of-way. Another possibility is to have a pedestrian island in the middle of the road.

Alternatively, a pedestrian bridge would provide a safe crossing. This would remove pedestrians from the roadway, eliminating conflicts. It must be architecturally consistent with the surrounding environment.

Because of its prominent place in the neighborhood and frequent use, fixing the Third Street and Route 13 intersection is a neighborhood priority.
C. Department of Public Works
Relocate the DPW facilities. Rebuild Franklin Street with curbs, sidewalks, lights, and tree lawns. Adapt buildings, storage areas, and parking to uses more compatible with the neighborhood’s commercial and residential character. This work could begin with a feasibility study and plans for interim screening around the yard to create a more pleasant streetscape.

3. Objective
Investigate and repair deficient water and sewer systems.

Sewage Problems on Fourth Street
Investigate complaints of standing water and sewage smells on Fourth Street, north of Hancock Street. Repair as needed.

4. Objective
Coordinate with and provide input to the Department of Public Works on upcoming street projects.

First Street Reconstruction
Redesign and reconstruct First Street in conjunction with DPW street work planned for the near future. Provide input on design and construction so that traffic moves more slowly and safely.

**Spotlight**

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS YARD**

The two biggest tourist attractions in Ithaca, the Farmer’s Market and the Sciencenter, are connected by Franklin Street in the Northside. Unfortunately, this is one of the least attractive streets in Ithaca.

The Department of Public Works’ Water and Sewer building is located on the street. Bulldozers, massive piles of gravel, and oversized, unused sewer pipes are strewn about as if a young giant forgot to put away his toys. While this was more acceptable when the area was industrial, it is incompatible with the current neighborhood. Heavy truck traffic cannot coexist with a childcare center, tourist attractions, and housing.

Luckily, this is prime commercial land. There may be numerous opportunities to redevelop this two-acre parcel and increase the tax revenues of the city at the same time. Any redevelopment would have to be compatible with the community and ensure that pedestrians and non-motorized vehicles could safely use the street.
Transportation

Northside residents point to the neighborhood’s location near downtown shops, services, and entertainment as a major neighborhood strength. While the location encourages pedestrian, bicycle, and other alternative modes of travel, accommodations for non-motorized transportation are poor. Residents were particularly concerned about Third and Hancock Streets, followed closely by Cascadilla, First, and Second Streets. Neighbors cited four-way stop signs, highly visible crosswalks, and traffic calming devices as methods of reducing the speed of motor vehicles in the neighborhood. They favorably viewed gateway treatments as a way to welcome people to the neighborhood.

Route 13 has the highest volume of traffic in the county. It poses one of the greatest challenges to pedestrians and bicyclists traveling into the neighborhood, and presents even more difficulty to those traveling to destinations on the north and west sides of the road. The five-lane limited access highway has hampered the Northside’s access to the Ithaca Farmer’s Market; Aldi, a discount supermarket; the Steamboat Landing and its surrounding public park; the Cayuga Waterfront Trail, a multimodal recreational trail currently under construction; the Community Gardens; and future retail development anticipated in Carpenter Park.

Northside residents expressed a desire for additional bus stops, shelters, and routes to and from the neighborhood. Cornell University staff and students who reside in the Northside discussed the need for a commuter service or a more frequent and direct route to Cornell. Public transportation users wondered whether additional bus shelters could be installed in the neighborhood. It was noted that the adoption of shelters by the neighborhood could significantly reduce incidents of vandalism.

**GOAL**

Improve multimodal connections and public transportation to and from the Northside neighborhood. Take steps to ensure that safety, convenience, and quality of life are considered in the Northside’s motor vehicle traffic system.

1. **Objective**

   **Improve public transportation.**

   **A. Public Transportation**

   Identify and address inadequacies in bus routes and schedules with Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT). Possible extensions could include a direct route from the Northside to Cornell University or the Elmira Road shopping area.

   **B. Bus Shelters**

   Construct shelters that provide protection from weather and beautify the neighborhood. Bus shelters could include boards for posting information about Northside events.
2. Objective
Enhance the experience of pedestrians, bicyclists, and residents in the Northside by increasing safety and adding amenities.

A. Traffic Calming
Initiate participation in the City’s traffic calming program. Likely locations for traffic calming include First Street, Third Street, and Hancock Street.

B. Bicycle Plan
Work with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Council to implement the Ithaca Bicycle Plan in the Northside and to connect the Northside to the proposed Cayuga Waterfront Trail, possibly by closing the last block of Lake Avenue.

C. Speed Limit
Help restart the Ithaca Neighborhoods Council and join their efforts to gain legislative approval to reduce the city’s speed limit to 25 m.p.h..

D. Stop Sign
Add a four-way stop sign at the intersection of First and Hancock Streets.

3. Objective
Improve the intersection at Route 13 and Third Street to reduce vehicular accidents and to provide safe pedestrian and bicycle access both into the neighborhood and across Route 13.

Option 1 - Redesign Existing Intersection
Increase the ease and safety of crossing Route 13 at Third Street by relocating the walk button and increasing the crossing time. Define the intersection of Franklin Street, Third Street, and Route 13 with construction of curbs, curb lawn, and sidewalks. Consider cross walks and pedestrian refuge islands to increase pedestrian safety. Redesign the pedestrian and bicycle waiting areas on either side of Route 13. Delineate Third Street at Route 13 as a gateway, applying appropriate treatments such as signs, landscaping, paving, and lighting. Propose this project in the context of a larger plan to redesign Route 13 from Dey Street to Cascadilla Street.

Option 2 - Pedestrian Bridge
Partner with Cornell University’s Department of Civil Engineering for assistance with design and cost estimates.

4. Objective
Reduce automobile traffic.

A. Support Campaign to Promote Car-free Days
Provide information on benefits of reduced air pollution, traffic, and noise. Create incentives for those who participate in car-free days. Celebrate achievements with a neighborhood event.

B. Facilitate Neighborhood Carpools
GOAL
Retain and enhance existing retail establishments and support the recruitment of new neighborhood-oriented retail. Encourage new businesses to locate into existing retail centers while paying attention to neighborhood needs and visual compatibility.

There are four commercial plazas in the Northside: the Clockworks plaza, the former Andy’s plaza, the Hancock plaza, and the P&C plaza. Northsiders appreciate that they live in the only city neighborhood served by a full-service grocery store. Additional businesses include the Bowl-O-Drome and Pangea Restaurant on Third Street and Gimme! Coffee on the corner of Cascadilla and Cayuga Streets. Although businesses can present varying degrees of conflict with the residential nature of the neighborhood, like property maintenance and traffic, the neighborhood generally views them as assets. Most Northside residents anticipate the likelihood of additional commercial development on NYS Route 13, but would like to limit future commercial development within the Northside to neighborhood-oriented retail.

Representatives of several Northside businesses participated in the Northside Steering Committee to facilitate the planning process. The Northside Steering Committee continues to work with business owners and in the future may organize a business owner’s focus group. Other partners in this work include the Ithaca Downtown Partnership and the Chamber of Commerce.

GOAL
Retain and enhance existing retail establishments and support the recruitment of new neighborhood-oriented retail. Encourage new businesses to locate into existing retail centers while paying attention to neighborhood needs and visual compatibility.

1. Objective
Retain existing commercial centers and plazas and improve their visual compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood.

A. Retailers’ Meeting
Organize a meeting with local retailers to acquaint and involve them with the Northside Neighborhood Planning Initiative. This meeting could provide a forum to identify mutual goals and objectives and to share ideas and concerns.
B. Third Street Corridor Plan
Create a physical plan to revitalize commercial areas within or adjacent to the Third Street corridor. Such a plan would include a land-use evaluation and design guidelines and may be supported by additional reports such as parking and market studies. Areas include the Hancock Plaza, the former PALS retail store (now Finger Lakes Physical Therapy), the Bowl-O-Drome, and the Franklin Street area. Adjust the zoning to ensure that new developments are neighborhood- and pedestrian-friendly.

C. P&C Plaza
Work with the property owners to improve the visual condition of the plaza, including the appearance and functioning of the parking lot. Support efforts to intensify use of the P&C parcel, possibly including expansion of retail outlets, development of office space, and inclusion of a community center.

D. Codes
Develop adequate commercial building upkeep codes to ensure that businesses and commercial properties are well maintained.

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Spotlight

P & C

The owner of the P&C plaza, a third generation Northsider, was energized by the neighborhood planning process.

At the Neighborhood Summit he responded enthusiastically to residents’ ideas about redeveloping the plaza to better meet the needs of Northsiders. While residents appreciate having access to a full-service supermarket, they have concerns about property maintenance and litter. The owner worked with students for three months to produce a plan to improve the site. The plan calls for new stores, landscaping, and renovations. One block of Lake Avenue would be replaced with a landscaped pedestrian walkway and an outdoor patio and eatery.

The plans are currently on hold because of financial uncertainty at the P&C, but the property owner hopes to break ground in fall 2003.
In the early 1990s, the Northside neighborhood organized the Second Street Neighborhood Watch. The group coordinated with the Ithaca Police Department’s (IPD) Community Policing Unit for a foot patrol officer to be assigned to the Northside beat. Neighbors were concerned with a rise in open-air drug dealing and associated fears of violence and neighborhood decline. This partnership worked well in terms of reducing the level of observed activity and increasing the sense of safety and control over the situation. The late 1990s brought changes to the community-policing program resulting in the rotation of officers into the unit. Some residents felt that this shift undercut gains made under the earlier arrangement and weakened the communication link with the IPD.

Other residents are less enthusiastic about the direct campaign on the perceived drug problem. Many do not see public safety as a predominant neighborhood weakness and are concerned that such a focus could present a negative perception of the neighborhood. Still others are concerned that focusing on perceived criminal activity could lead to discrimination on the basis of class, culture, or race. The Steering Committee had several frank discussions centered on these differing views. Members have agreed to continue discussions and to consider sensitivity training to increase the effectiveness of outreach, communication, and future planning within the neighborhood and among the smaller group.

**GOAL**
Promote public safety and strengthen the reality that the Northside neighborhood provides a good environment in which to live, purchase a home, and raise a family.

1. **Objective**
Acquire a firsthand understanding of the level and type of illegal activity in the neighborhood.

   **A. Neighborhood Block Watch**
Organize a neighborhood block watch program with assistance from the Ithaca Police Department.
B. Crime Reporting
Initiate a system for regular reporting by the Ithaca Police Department to neighborhood block watch leaders to review crime reports, arrests, and emergency call data.

C. Security and Safety Survey
Conduct a survey to identify security and safety concerns such as prevalent locations and predominant types of illegal activity.

D. Community Safety Education
Organize and sponsor an educational program to provide residents and business owners with information on the involvement and procedures of the Police, Fire, Public Works, and Building Departments in addressing public safety concerns.

E. Substance Abuse Information
Conduct a program involving law enforcement, the Ithaca Drug Court, local treatment providers, and Northside neighbors to provide information about resources available to individuals at risk for or involved in substance abuse or chemical dependency.

2. Objective:
Prevent illegal activity with appropriate security measures.

A. Group Buying Program
Organize a program for the bulk purchase of needed security and safety equipment, such as door locks, exterior lighting, and antitheft devices.

B. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
Undertake a study of the Northside neighborhood to reveal physical changes that individual property owners and the City might make to enhance residents’ and business owners’ ability to monitor the neighborhood and deter criminal behavior.
During the planning process, a number of residents expressed an interest in working on projects to enhance neighborhood sustainability. Their thinking is broad, but directed. Sustainability is viewed as an overarching planning theme to be considered in each of the other development objectives. A broad interest, for example, is to present community members with an expansive view of sustainability that includes both environmental and social components. Specific projects range from showcasing green construction techniques to connecting city residents with locally-grown produce. Residents have teamed with the Center for Religion, Ethics, and Social Policy (CRESP), a Cornell-affiliated organization that is currently developing a program to identify neighborhood sustainability indicators.

**GOAL**

*Increase the awareness and application of sustainable living practices in the Northside.*

1. Objective

*Infuse housing and construction activities with sustainable practices.*

A. Energy Conservation Activities

Design and implement an Energy Efficient Homes program that includes activities to raise awareness, such as hosting an energy fair and conducting energy audits. Develop methods and seek funding to help residents and landlords meet energy audit recommendations, possibly including tax incentives.

B. Energy Conservation Demonstration Center

Seek funding to incorporate energy efficient techniques into one of the neighborhood’s rehabbed multifamily units.

C. Green Build Exposition

Organize an annual event for area consumers, builders, bankers, etc., to learn about and encourage more environmentally responsible construction, design, and rehabilitation.

D. Energy Efficient Co-Housing

Explore an urban co-housing complex as a choice that would be highly energy efficient and socially integrated by race, class, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

2. Objective

*Educate Northside and City residents about sustainability.*

**Sciencenter Sustainability Exhibit**

Assemble a sustainability program in cooperation with the Sciencenter.
3. Objective

Improve neighborhood access to locally-grown food.

**A. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)**

Aggressively promote CSA options to improve nutrition, support area family farms, reduce transportation of food products, and connect Northside food consumption to local food production.

**B. Youth Program**

Organize area youth to participate in community gardening/organic business, possibly modeled on the Food from the Hood program, or partner with Cooperative Extension’s Garden Mosaics program.

The Sciencenter is a welcome addition to the neighborhood.

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**Spotlight**

**Northside Food Network**

Northside Neighborhood Association (NNA) residents developed a growing interest in equal access to healthy food in their community.

They took action by acquiring a grant from the NY Hunger Action Network to implement programs that address these concerns. The Northside Food Network (NFN) is a multi-organizational collaboration between the NNA and Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) designed to bring quality, locally produced food to more low-income residents of Northside Neighborhood.

The Northside Food Network seeks to connect Northside residents, area growers, community gardeners, neighborhood gardeners, farmer’s market vendors, nutrition educators, and existing social networks in the following new ways:

**Northside Community Supported Agriculture** - Membership is offered at low rates.

**We-Pick Days** - Free field trips to area farms to pick fruits and vegetables with a follow-up cooking or food preservation workshop with CCE Staff.

**Northside Afternoon Market** - A discount vegetable market at the IHA with produce from participating Ithaca Farmer’s Market vendors.

**Grow a Row** - A collection system to bring surplus from the Ithaca Community Garden and other neighborhood gardens to the food pantry at the Baptized Church of Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith on First Street.

**Community Meals** - Free neighborhood meals for the neighborhood, by the neighborhood, and in the neighborhood.
### Northside Community

**Community Building**
- Increase social opportunities
- Continue newsletter
- Develop neighborhood

**Open Space**
- Organize a Gardeners Association and Pruners’ Brigade
- Improve landscaping at Haley Park

**Housing**
- Increase communication between neighborhood and code enforcement
- Identify properties to include in the Neighborhood Housing Program
- Support NYSERDA energy grant

**Youth**
- Develop youth activities catalogue
- Conduct youth survey

**Infrastructure**
- Address NYSEG fencing issue

**Transportation**
- Reduce automobile traffic
- Support the Ithaca Bicycle Plan
- Support the effort to reduce the speed limit

**Neighborhood-Oriented Retail**
- Hold retailers’ meeting

**Public Safety**
- Organize a block watch
- Conduct a security and safety survey

**Sustainability**
- Encourage energy efficiency
- Increase food security
- Promote community supported agriculture
- Organize youth to participate in gardening
- Explore options of co-housing
- Develop an energy conservation demo center

### City

**Community Building**
- Find space for community center

**Open Space**
- Organize a Pruners’ Brigade
- Improve Cascadilla Creek
- Make Third Street a gateway

**Housing**
- Study possibility of home businesses
- Increase code enforcement
- Strengthen property maintenance ordinances
- Better connect IHA to rest of the neighborhood and vice versa
- Support the Porch Program at IHA

**Youth**
- Improve transportation options for youth
- Conduct a safety education program

**Infrastructure**
- Add a pedestrian bridge over Cascadilla Creek
- Coordinate with the DPW on reconstruction of First Street
- Add sidewalks where necessary
- Address water drainage and sewage concerns
- Create new street design guidelines
- Relocate the DPW and Water Department facilities

**Transportation**
- Reduce automobile traffic
- Initiate traffic calming
- Improve the intersection of Third Street and Rt. 13

**Neighborhood-Oriented Retail**
- Develop the Third Street corridor

**Public Safety**
- Develop data reporting and police procedure info
- Develop a group buying program
- Study physical environmental design for safety improvements

**Sustainability**
- Organize a "Green Build" exposition

### Other

**Open Space**
- Organize a Gardeners Association and Pruners’ Brigade

**Housing**
- Assist first-time home buyers
- Identify funding for home rehabilitation
- Carry out Holiday in April
- Provide assistance for low-income rental rehab

**Youth**
- Develop a youth activities catalogue
- Conduct a youth survey
- Hold a youth summit
- Provide youth internships
- Develop more youth activities
- Provide basic medical and dental services to youth

**Infrastructure**
- Coordinate with the DPW on the reconstruction of First Street

**Transportation**
- Identify opportunities to expand bus service
- Construct bus shelters
- Reduce automobile traffic

**Neighborhood-Oriented Retail**
- Redevelop the P&C Plaza

**Public Safety**
- Develop information about substance abuse resources

**Sustainability**
- Work with the Sciencenter to develop activities about sustainability