



# **West End Revitalization**

**R O C K I S L A N D , I L**

**3-Year Implementation Plan  
March 2024**

[mlkcenter.org/westend](http://mlkcenter.org/westend)

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The following sections are included for each strategic objective:

- Strategic Objective Targets
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  - Medium-term Targets (Five Year)
- Background, justification, and description of impact area strategic objective
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# Strategic Objective 0: Cross-cutting Goals

## Strategic Objective Targets

Below are targets that are anticipated to be achieved in the short term (three years), with the full implementation of the Action Plan and those that are anticipated to be achieved in five years, with the continuation of the strategies in the action plan and the addition of new strategies to advance the goals.

### Short-term Targets (Three Year)

- The West End CDC is fully operational with staff, an office, established partnerships, and is implementing actions in the plan.
- Franklin Field is acquired with development partners and plan in place.
- West End Special Service Area is created.
- West End community stakeholders are regularly engaged and play key roles in moving the Action Plan forward.
- Partner organizations and institutions are leading and supporting actions in the plan.
- Diversified funding has been secured and a West End Revitalization funders roundtable has been established.
- West End stakeholders know the purpose, progress, and goals for the West End Revitalization initiative and how to get involved.

### Medium-term Targets (Five Year)

- Franklin Field is redeveloped based on a vision informed by West End community stakeholders.
- SSA is generating \$500,000 a year and those being taxed are happy with the investments it is seeding and maintain.
- West End CDC has diversified and sustainable funding streams, has acquired numerous properties in the West End for redevelopment in alignment with West End Revitalization goals.
- West End residents are organized and empowered to make change in their community; they are seen by city officials, Chamber of Commerce, and others as an important and influential constituency in the city.

## Background, justification, and description of impact area strategic objective

These cross-cutting actions support multiple impact areas and actions.

### Priority Actions

- **Action 0.1** Create a West End Community Development Corporation
- **Action 0.2** Explore and support partnerships to redevelop Franklin Field
- **Action 0.3** Explore the creation of a West End special service area (SSA) designation
- **Action 0.4** Cultivate community engagement and ownership
- **Action 0.5** Develop and deploy a partnership engagement strategy
- **Action 0.6** Mobilize resources to implement the Action Plan and sustain the West End Revitalization initiative
- **Action 0.7** Develop and deploy a communications strategy

## Three-Year Plan by Priority Action

### Action 0.1: Create a West End Community Development Corporation (CDC)

#### Description and key considerations

Creating a West End CDC is among the highest priorities in the Three-Year Action Plan. So much so, that the entire plan is focused on actions most relevant for a West End CDC to lead and support. As such, it will be crucial to prioritize creating a high-functioning West End CDC. Recognizing even with this prioritization it may still take 6-12 months for the West End CDC to become operational, the Martin Luther King Center (MLK Center) will temporarily take on some of the functions of a future West End CDC.

A West End CDC would function as a non-profit organization focused on asset-based community development opportunities to support and revitalize the neighborhood. Though CDCs often focus on the development of affordable housing or public/cultural facilities, they can also lead and support a wide range of community activities that meet local needs such as small business and workforce development, commercial corridor revitalization, and other social programs. CDCs typically grow out of local groups like civic associations and churches and their boards are usually comprised of at least one-third by community members in the CDC's target area. They are often funded by philanthropic foundations, local government, and through state and federal grants, such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). They can also apply for funding through intermediary organizations that receive federal resources and then allocate them to community groups. Some CDCs have sought to diversify their funding by owning their own affordable rental properties or running for-profit construction companies. Community trust and buy-in of the West End CDC will be critical, as any work that is being done without the trust, leadership, and collaboration of residents runs the risk of perpetuating existing harms to the West End. The formation and operations of the West End CDC will require robust community representation in the visioning body and board of directors, as well as inclusive decision-making processes, policies, and procedures.

#### Milestones over Three Years

- West End CDC Visioning Committee convened.
- West End CDC goals and mission statement documented.
- Written agreement between MLK Center and West End CDC documented.
- Small-scale, volunteer-led activities implemented.
- Funding secured for all or portions of Years 1 to 3 actions steps.
- West End CDC Board established.
- 501 (c)3 status granted.
- Strategic plan, staffing plan, budget developed.
- Stand-alone operations achieved and fiscal sponsorship ended.
- Office space/facilities leased or acquired.

#### Action Steps

##### Year 1 Action Steps

- Develop a seed-funding request to key philanthropic partners to resource the West End CDC's initial operations.
- Hire staff, engage contract or pro bono consultants for technical functions like accounting and legal services, and engage young people in supporting the West End CDC through paid internships, AmeriCorps VISTA program, etc. Staff will initially be hired by the MLK Center, with the expectation that they will transition to the West End CDC once it is operational in Year 2.

- Establish a Visioning Committee that may consist of members from the West End Revitalization working group and Steering Committee, or other West End champions. The Visioning Committee may want to start by gathering lessons learned from other local CDCs such as Project Now! and the Moline CDC to inform its work. The committee should also set regular meetings and communications structure.
- The Visioning Committee should develop its goals for the West End CDC, based on the original West End Assessment Report and this Action Plan. This should include outreach to West End residents and other key stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive and community-informed picture of priority needs and opportunities.
- MLK Center develops a written agreement to serve as the fiscal sponsor of the West End CDC as well as defining other aspects of its incubation support, e.g. providing office space, administrative functions, etc. and at what cost to the fledgling CDC (e.g. a percentage of funds the West End CDC raises). Consult an attorney (preferably pro bono) to assist with drafting this agreement.
- Develop a detailed 6- to 12-month action plan based on the mission and goals and this document.
- Outreach, education, and advocacy to key stakeholders to explain the purpose of the West End CDC and how this new venture may achieve long-term desired outcomes (and how it differs from, complements, and does not duplicate existing efforts).
- Select one to two small-scale projects that align with the West End CDC's goals and that it can feasibly implement in a few months, with volunteer-support, crowdfunding from the community or minimal support from local businesses or philanthropy. Activities may include weekly neighborhood clean-ups, demolition of an unsafe structure, minor home repair, beautification projects, block parties featuring local businesses and civic associations, etc. The West End CDC doesn't need to be incorporated or have full-time staff before you can get to work in the community. In fact, implementing small-scale activities can produce numerous benefits, including:
  - Demonstrating to residents, funders, and others a commitment to this work and an ability to make things happen;
  - Generating momentum and investment from the CDC Visioning Committee and other key stakeholders like residents and funders;
  - Learning about and building capacity to do the work; and
  - Positioning the group to successfully apply for more and more substantial funding for more and more substantial projects.
- Establish a West End CDC Board. The Board is responsible for ensuring that the CDC becomes operational and sustainable. The Board should consist of a mix of individuals, including at least one third of members who are residents and reflective of the diversity of the West End. Early on, the Board will need to establish bylaws, select officers, open a bank account, and file incorporation documents with the State of Illinois. They should identify pro bono legal support to assist with these efforts.
- File for 501 (c)3 status and determine a transition plan from incubation and fiscal sponsorship from the MLK Center to stand-alone operating status.
- Develop a strategic plan that articulates the West End CDC's longer-term vision and goals while mapping out concrete, shorter-term goals drawing on this Three-Year Action Plan.
- Develop a staffing (including consultants, contract-based work, part-time, interns, etc.) plan to implement the strategic plan and Three-Year Action Plan.
- Determine what sort of facilities are needed by the West End CDC to implement its Action Plan and Strategic Plan (e.g. will it need facilities to provide services or programming) and by when.
- Determine West End CDC facility needs for the next three years.

- Develop a budget needed to implement the Three-Year Action Plan and corresponding staffing and facilities plan.
- Raise additional funds in alignment with the budget needs. Each action in this plan provides recommendations of potential sources of funding to guide this step.

#### *Year 2 Action Steps*

- Transition staff dedicated to West End Revitalization from MLK Center staffing to West End CDC employees. As needed, and in alignment with the staffing plan and budget, hire more staff, engage contract or pro bono consultants for technical functions like accounting and legal services, and engage young people in supporting the West End CDC through paid internships, AmeriCorps VISTA program, etc.
- Identify property that meets (or could meet) programmatic and operational needs and is supported by funding raised. This step could provide a good opportunity for the West End CDC to develop its capacity to acquire and rehab a property. In Year 2, the focus would be on acquiring the property.
- Implement actions targeted to the West End CDC identified in this Three-Year Action Plan for Year 2.

#### *Year 3 Action Steps*

- If relevant, rehab and move into property to serve as West End CDC office and programmatic facilities.
- Implement actions targeted to the West End CDC identified in Three-Year Action Plan for Year 3.
- Continue building capacity including by applying for opportunities like HUD’s Section 4 Capacity-Building Grants and Enterprise Community Partners Equitable Path Forward.

### Funding: Needs and Sources

#### *Needs*

The funding need range below is based on the following assumptions:

- Year 1 through 3 there are four full-time paid staff members dedicated to the establishment and initial operations and actions of the West End CDC as described in the Action Plan, who will also provide key “backbone functions” for the West End Revitalization initiative, as described in Actions 0.4 Cultivate community engagement and ownership, Action 0.5 Develop and deploy a strategic partnership engagement strategy, Action 0.6 Mobilize resources to achieve Strategic Objective 0: Cross-Cutting Goals actions and actions, and Action 0.7 Develop and deploy a communications strategy. There is one paid intern to support actions in Year 1 and 3-5 paid interns or AmeriCorps volunteers in Year 2-3. The MLK Center serves as the fiscal sponsor to the West End CDC and provides office space, back-office administrative support, for an agreed upon fee. Legal support is provided pro bono.
- There are direct costs, in addition to staffing, associated with West End CDC actions, such as materials for meetings, stipends for sustained community leadership in task forces/committees, etc.
- In Year 2, Back-office administrative functions are contracted out and some technical services (e.g. legal) are provided pro bono.
- In Year 3 West End CDC chooses to lease space or acquire and renovating space could significantly impact the funding needs. This is why the range for Year 3 is much wider than Years 1 and 2.

The below estimates do not reflect what the West End CDC’s total budget and costs will include in Year 2 and 3 when it begins implementing many of the actions described in this Three-Year Action Plan that will draw on project or program specific funding opportunities. Those funding needs are captured in other parts of the plan.

### Three-Year Estimated Budget as Described Above:

- Four Full-Time Staff: \$400,000
- Three to five paid, part-time interns: \$150,000
- Contract support: \$150,000
- Other Direct Costs: \$100,000
- Site Acquisition and Renovation of Office Space: \$300,000
  - Or Two-Year Office Lease: \$60,000

*Total Estimated Budget for Three Years: **\$1,160,000***

### Sources

- Local and regional philanthropy will be vital. However, philanthropic funding may continue to be an important source for the West End CDC for all three years.
- Bridge Investment, a local CDFI
- CDBG from the City of Rock Island
- HUD Section 4 Capacity Building Grant
- AmeriCorps, which provides grants to support a portion of the costs of AmeriCorps VISTAs

### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – The City of Rock Island will be essential to ensuring that the West End CDC has allies when it needs them and that it can leverage any support or resources that the City could potentially provide (e.g. funding opportunities, capacity building, relationship building with public sector and other critical partners).
- *Private sector* – Legal support be needed for actions like incorporating as a 501(c)(3), filing the necessary IRS paperwork for tax-exempt status, drafting governance documents, and other functions. Legal support would also be needed to ensure that the West End CDC’s activities are permissible for a 501(c)(3) organization. Some attorneys will be able to offer initial services on a pro bono basis.
- *Nonprofit sector* – Nonprofit organizations will be key partners in implementing the strategies and achieving the goals the West End CDC establishes.
- *Philanthropic sector* – Philanthropic foundations will likely be the most viable source of early funding and could continue to be important funding sources following establishment of the CDC.

### Additional Resources

- Case studies
  - Examples of CDCs that are building civic capital and rehabilitating homes include:
    - [Organizing Neighborhood Equity \(ONE\) DC](#) – Washington, DC
    - [Quitman County Development Organization](#) – Alabama
    - Southern Mutual Help Association - Louisiana
    - [Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership, Neighbors Together Initiative](#) – Georgia
  - [Moline CDC](#)

- [Starting a Community Development Corporation](#) – Case study sharing lessons learned from CDCs in Austin, Texas as they consider next steps once established
  - [Equity & Inclusion - NKCDC](#) – North Kensington CDC in Philadelphia provides an example of how a CDC can integrate racial equity into its own design and operation
- Toolkits, etc.
  - [Overview of Community Development Corporations](#), The Democracy Collaborative.
  - [Designing & Directing Neighborhood Change Efforts: How to Be More Intentional and Effective](#), Community Development Strategies
  - [Community Development Corporations: Diverse Practices Across North and South Carolina](#) (Case Study) – shares approaches and practices of CDCs in the Carolinas from the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond
  - [How to Start a Nonprofit in Illinois](#)
  - [Diversity on Nonprofit Boards](#) – Short article on constructing nonprofit boards with racial diversity
  - [12 Practical Steps A Nonprofit Can Take To Diversify Its Board](#) – Forbes guide to diversifying the board for a nonprofit
  - [Fiscal Sponsorship for Nonprofits](#) from the National Council of Nonprofits provides a good overview of what this is and resources on how to do it.
- Important Documents
  - [Form NFP 102.10 Articles of Incorporation](#), Illinois Secretary of State Department of Business Services – form needed to incorporate a non-profit organization in Illinois

## Action 0.2: Explore and support partnerships to redevelop Franklin Field

### Description and key considerations

During the West End Community Assessment, Community Conveners voiced strong desire for the development of a large, community-serving facility that can help meet multiple needs in the neighborhood—from more space for community services, activities, and groups, to the provision of much-needed amenities. The Phase 1 report also indicated that there remains a need for safe quality affordable housing and improved access to healthy food and other needed amenities and services. Though some of these issues can be addressed through the rehabilitation of existing residential and commercial properties, single or assembled vacant lots in the West End can be an opportunity for a future West End CDC to address multiple community goals for a transformative impact.

Franklin Field, located at 1251 9<sup>th</sup> Street, is an approximately four-acre parcel of land owned by the Rock Island Board of Education that could be redeveloped to fulfill these unmet neighborhood needs. It is likely the largest lot remaining in the West End that does not currently have a structure on it and is not being actively occupied. The future West End CDC and its partners have the opportunity to redevelop the site in alignment with the goals and vision of West End residents themselves, with the support of the City of Rock Island, the partner organizations with the West End Revitalization, and funders who are prepared to make the community’s vision a reality. If the community can successfully make the case to the school district to initiate a property transfer, Franklin Field could be redeveloped by the community and for the community.

### Milestones over Three Years

- Exploratory committee established.
- Franklin Field is acquired from the school district.



- The West End CDC and its partners work with the community to identify goals for the Franklin Field site and select primary uses.
- A developer or co-developer partner for the site is selected.

## Action Steps

### *Year 1 Action Steps*

- First and foremost, an exploratory committee of the MLK Center and its partners will need to begin meeting with Rock Island-Milan School District to gauge whether there is any interest in selling or donating the property, and what would be the potential terms of a property transfer. The MLK Center and its partners will likely want to be prepared to share some potential ideas for the site to make the case for the property transfer. Negotiations between the MLK Center, its partners, and the school district could be a lengthy endeavor depending not only on the school district's interest in transferring the property, but also on the school district's land disposition policies.
- Should discussions with the school district be moving in a positive direction, the MLK Center and its partners will also want to contemplate to whom the property will be transferred. Franklin Field could be transferred to the newly formed West End CDC, the City, another entity altogether, or a newly formed LLC depending on what structure will be most beneficial to the community and aligned with the intended use of the property.
- There is also pre-acquisition due diligence that the MLK Center and its partners should complete to confirm that the property can reasonably, financially, environmentally, and legally be acquired and redeveloped **prior to acquisition**. The MLK Center may need to contract with a consultant to provide technical expertise for pre-acquisition due diligence tasks, which include:
  - Verifying accurate legal descriptions,
  - Obtaining surveys and/or plat maps,
  - Searching for any title issues like tax liens or judgements (unlikely because the property is owned by the school district),
  - Confirming access to utilities and check easements,
  - Reviewing mineral, oil, and gas rights,
  - Asking the school district for any past environmental or engineering reports that have been completed for the property, and
  - Environmental site assessment.
- The MLK Center will want to engage with potential funders to identify funds to cover anticipated expenses related to site control i.e. insurance, holding costs, etc. and a project manager.

### *Year 2 Action Steps*

- Continue negotiations with the school district as needed and acquire the site.
- The West End CDC should hire a project manager to lead the redevelopment project.
- After site acquisition is confirmed, the West End CDC should lead a community visioning effort. Some key decision points that could be identified through a community visioning effort are:
  - Goals of redeveloping the property, desired outcomes, and who will be served by the redevelopment of the property;
  - Desired uses for the property (residential, commercial, mixed-use, recreational, etc.);
    - If housing, what types of housing (affordability levels, single family, multi-family, rental, homeownership, etc.)
    - If commercial or mixed-use, what types of businesses and/or services

- Visual aspects, features, and high-level design elements; and/or
- Characteristics of a developer partner.
- Once a vision for Franklin Field is established, the CDC and its partners will need to:
  - Develop an RFP for a co-developer partner with relevant experience,
  - Identify a short-list of potential co-developers to shop the RFP around to, and
  - Begin the process of reviewing RFP responses and selecting a co-developer
- Connect with the City of Rock Island ASAP to flag any regulatory items like re-zoning related to the desired use (identified during visioning) and gain a better understanding of the city’s development requirements (impact fees, permitting process, etc.)
- Ideally, the CDC or target entity would have site control by the end of Year 2.

*Year 3 Action Steps*

- Once a co-developer is selected and a developer agreement is negotiated and executed, the West End CDC, its partners, and the co-developer will want to select a development team and scope out a development budget. If the co-developer is locally based, they may already have a roster of trusted development partners, like architects, engineers, cost estimators, contractors, and others, that the group can establish contracts with.
- The development team can then begin drafting plans and design specifications.
- The CDC should host ongoing public information sessions on the development progress and key development decisions.

Funding: Needs and Sources

*Needs*

The funding sources for redeveloping Franklin Field will depend largely on what the property will be used for, i.e. affordable housing, mixed-use development, community facility, commercial development, etc. Recent affordable housing developments in nearby Moline and Davenport cost upwards of \$15 million to \$40 million, but these expenses are usually financed over a 30-year loan term. For the first three years, the West End CDC and its partners will need to secure funding to begin the process, i.e. to cover costs for pre-acquisition due diligence, any holding costs that the school district may request, and funds to cover a project manager.

For the first three years, the CDC could expect to need around \$200,000 for personnel (project manager salary and fringe costs plus any other project staff time) and \$50,000-\$75,000 to cover due diligence expenses, for a total of approximately **\$275,000** for the first three years. More information will be needed from the school district, however, to determine if they would have any expectations on holding costs or would be amenable to not charging the West End CDC and its partners during the negotiation period.

Below are just some of the examples of funding sources by use that will ultimately need to be explored further once future use is determined. Keep in mind that many of these funding sources are administered by the City of Rock Island or state agencies and require plans allowing their use or application processes. Philanthropy can also be layered with public funding sources to fund the acquisition, development, and operations/future uses of the Franklin Field site.

*Sources*

- Affordable Housing or Mixed-Use
  - [Community Development Block Grants](#) (CDBG)\* administered by the City of Rock Island

- [HUD Section 108\\*](#) – A loan guarantee from HUD for which the City of Rock Island would need to apply and agree to commit their CDBG funding as collateral.
- [Low-Income Housing Tax Credit](#) – Tax credits administered by the Illinois Housing Development Authority that a private developer, nonprofit developer, or public housing authority can apply for.
- Commercial Use (exclusively)
  - [New Markets Tax Credits](#) (NMTC) – Certified community development entities (CDEs) can apply for these funds from the CDFI Fund. Can be used to finance businesses in low-income communities.
  - [Illinois New Markets Development Program](#) – State-based version of the NMTC program.
- Community Facility
  - [Community Development Block Grants](#) (CDBG)\* administered by the City of Rock Island
  - [New Markets Tax Credits](#) (NMTC) – Certified community development entities (CDEs) can apply for these funds from the CDFI Fund. Can be used to finance businesses in low-income communities. Examples of community facilities include job training centers, community health clinics, and grocery stores.
  - [Illinois New Markets Development Program](#) – State-based version of the NMTC program.

\* If Section 108 or CDBG becomes a funding source, the City of Rock Island would need to become the lead partner that allocates funding to a developer partner like a CDC.

#### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – The CDC will first and foremost need to come to an agreement with Rock Island-Milan School District in order to acquire the Franklin Field site. Building a strong relationship with the school district will enable the CDC to acquire the land with favorable terms. The City of Rock Island, in particular, can support—or impede—the successful redevelopment of the site, as the site may potentially require rezoning depending on the use, as well as city approval of site plans, building permits, and certificates of occupancy. Additionally, whether it is the City of Rock Island, the State of Illinois, or federal agencies, the public sector can be a key funder of acquisition and redevelopment, particularly for land in LMI census tracts.
- *Private sector* – Private banks may also be a source of gap financing that can be layered on to public and philanthropic funding. Should the community envision commercial uses and specific types of businesses that they'd like to occupy the site, the CDC and its partners will want to engage the Quad Cities Chamber, other business organizations, and small businesses who commercial space should be marketed to. The group may consider setting aside a certain percentage of commercial space for small businesses owned and operated by West End residents.
- *Nonprofit sector* – Depending on the envisioned use, nonprofit organizations can provide services to the future occupants of the Franklin Field site, whether that is housing counseling to prospective homeowners or renters of housing developed on site or small business coaching to West End businessowners. The development team could even set aside certain portions of the site or a percentage of the mixed-use space for nonprofits to co-locate their offices on site. Organizations like Development Association of Rock Island (DARI) could also offer thought partnership or local expertise on the market and land development in Rock Island.

- *Philanthropic sector* – Philanthropic organizations can provide gap funding for the acquisition and redevelopment of Franklin Field. They may also provide seed funding to businesses or organizations that end up using the site. As a key funder, they should be included in conversations about the future use of the site.

#### Additional Resources

- Case studies
  - [Lawrence CommunityWorks](#) – In addition to operating a financial opportunity center, workforce development services, youth enrichment, network organizing, and wraparound services for worMLK families, this CDC revitalizes and redevelops underutilized properties “into the positive, valuable and beautiful community assets called for by residents”. This [link](#) showcases their completed projects, which include development for homeownership, affordable rental, and community or commercial space.
  - [Community Based Development in Rideau Heights: The Case for a Community-Driven Storefront Initiative](#) – Though this is a case study from Canada, it highlights several approaches to asset-based community development and capturing the vision of residents to develop their own solutions to community challenges. It also showcases a “Storefront model” in which a resident-led board, with the support of capacity building nonprofits, would make key decisions about the services and amenities provided in community-owned storefronts.
  - [Resident-led Design at Friendship Court: Piedmont Housing Alliance, Charlottesville, VA](#) – This case study showcases a nonprofit housing developer and manager that “worked with a resident-elected Advisory committee to redesign their future neighborhood and provide a diverse array of neighborhood infrastructure to support the immediate community.”
  - [Whittier Lyndhurst Washington Contributes to Eco-District in Boston’s Codman Square](#) – Case study from the Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation (CSNDC), which over the decades has facilitated resident-led community planning that has resulted in properties revitalized into mixed-use affordable housing with commercial spaces for minority-owned businesses.
- NeighborWorks’ [Community Building & Engagement Program](#) & [Community Leadership Institute](#) trains community and resident leaders in community development, and also awards funding for community-based projects.

### Action 0.3: Explore the creation of a West End special service area (SSA) designation

#### Description and key considerations

A Special Service Area (SSA) is a property-taxing mechanism that can be used to fund a wide range of special or additional services and/or physical improvements in a defined geographic area within a municipality or jurisdiction. This type of district allows local governments to establish such areas without incurring debt or levying a tax on the entire city. SSAs are financing tools used to support and implement a wide range of support services, infrastructure improvements, and land and building improvements. One of the key benefits is that stakeholders in the defined geographic area get a more direct say in how the additional tax dollars are invested in their area. Additionally, it provides a source of funding that can help sustain and maintain services and projects over time; it’s not just a one-time investment. The SSA is an important cross-cutting action because it contributes to multiple impact area objectives, strategies, and actions. For instance, the development and

continued management of the SSA, including the robust and ongoing community engagement it requires, provides an important opportunity to build civic capital in the West End (Impact Area Objective 1). It can also serve as a sustained (but not sole) funding source to support several actions, such as placemaking (Action 5.3) and an opportunity to experiment with participatory budgeting (Action 1.2) among others.

#### Milestones over Three Years

- Funding secured to explore and advance the creation of the West End SSA.
- Community support is demonstrated (e.g. with signatures) for the West End SSA.
- Goals, activities, and boundaries of the West End SSA determined.
- Budget developed and maximum tax rate and duration of SSA determined.
- Ordinance proposed and adopted.
- West End SSA budget approved and tax levied.
- West End SSA launched.

#### Action Steps

##### *Year 1 Action Steps*

- Establish a West End-led governing body to manage the SSA creation strategy, including planning, research, community & stakeholder engagement, and SSA creation.
- Identify a funding source to support these initial efforts to create an SSA.
- Determine which functions need additional professional support from a consultant, draft and RFP and select a consultant.
- Conduct a feasibility study including gathering data on the number, value, and owners of property in the West End.
- Determining who would manage the SSA if created or a process to identify and select this person or entity.
- Conduct community engagement, outreach, and education to build community support and identify the desired goals and activities and defined boundaries of a potential SSA and to define the boundaries.

##### *Year 2 Action Steps*

- Continue conducting community and stakeholder engagement, outreach and education as needed.
- Determine the costs/budget to achieve the desired goals and deliver the activities.
- Determine the maximum tax rate and duration for the SSA.
- Identify a City sponsor.
- Propose the ordinance.
- Release public notices and conduct public hearing(s).
- Adopt the ordinance.

##### *Year 3 Action Steps*

- Approve budget and levy.
- Launch the West End SSA.

## Funding: Needs and Sources

### Needs

The City of Rock Island used the remaining **\$250,000** from the expiring downtown TIF to contract the Chamber of Commerce to conduct all of the initial steps from planning to the adoption of the Downtown SSA in the City budget, which took approximately two years from the time the contract began to the adoption of the budget. This funding amount provides a good estimate of would be needed for Years 1 and 2.

### Sources

- Any remaining funds from the recently expired 11<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor TIF, which includes portions of the West End.
- Philanthropic support.

### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – Ultimately, City Council and Mayor will need to lead on proposing and approving the ordinance, developing the City budget that includes the SSA, and levying the tax. They are also key stakeholders in the development of the proposed SSA.
- *Private sector* – Local businesses in the defined potential SSA will need to engage in conversations to define the boundaries, goals, and desired activities of the SSA. Additionally, the Chamber of Commerce may serve as a partner in the development and management of the SSA, considering the similar roles in plays with other SSAs in the region.
- *Nonprofit sector* – Local nonprofit organizations will have stake in the goals and desired activities of the SSA and could therefore serve a role in the planning process.
- *Philanthropic sector* – As needed, primarily as a funder during the exploratory phase.

### Additional Resources

- [A Resource Guide to Special Service Areas](#), SBFriedman
- [Guide to starting a Special Service Area](#) – While this guide is specific to the process for establishing an SSA in Chicago and is from over a decade ago, it does provide some useful guidance to consider.
- [Rock Island Downtown Alliance](#) was founded in 2023 as a joint effort between the public and private sectors to strengthen livability and quality of place in downtown Rock Island. It is an affiliate of the Quad Cities Chamber, who partnered with the City of Rock Island to staff, manage, and implement Downtown Special Service Area programs.

## Action 0.4: Cultivate community engagement and ownership

### Description and key considerations

One of the core responsibilities of a “backbone organization” in cross-sector or collective impact collaborations will be to cultivate community engagement and ownership in the West End. While the West End CDC will ultimately serve as the backbone organization for West End Revitalization, the MLK Center intends to continue with this role until the West End CDC is created and operational to take on these functions.

The backbone organization’s role in cultivating community engagement and ownership includes:

- creating a sense of urgency and articulating a call to action,
- supporting community member engagement activities, and
- producing and managing communications (see more on this in Action 0.7 Develop and deploy a communications strategy).

In addition to communicating out to community members, engagement activities can also create opportunities for West End Community members to meaningfully influence or implement the work. There are (and already have been) formal opportunities for West End community members to engage and own the West End Revitalization, such as a Steering Committee and Working Groups. It will be important to continue creating varied engagement and ownership opportunities for West End community members that fill a real need in moving the work forward.

Additionally, the West End Revitalization initiative is based on an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach, which focuses less on engagement and more on ownership. The five key questions of ABCD are:

1. What can residents best do by themselves,
2. What do they need some help from organizations to do, and
3. What do organizations do best?
4. What can we stop doing because people can do it by themselves?
5. What can we offer to community to support their actions?

Considering these questions in the implementation of this Action Plan will also foster ownership of the Action Plan by West End community members.

### Milestones over Three Years

- West End community members, as a whole and especially target stakeholders, have a sense of urgency and a clear call to action to advance West End Revitalization.
- A community engagement and ownership strategy and plan is drafted.
- Community engagement and ownership strategy and plan is implemented.
- West End community members are meaningfully engaged in and feel ownership of and contribution to the vision, goals, objectives, and or actions of the West End Revitalization initiative.

### Action Steps

#### *Year 1 Action Steps*

- For the immediate term, create a plan, develop materials, and implement actions designed to convey a sense of urgency and a call to action for West End Revitalization to West End community members. Include at least one to two concrete ways community members can get involved in the action—what is the offer or request?
- To enable longer-term strategic engagement, develop a community engagement and ownership strategy. Start by revisiting and expanding on the stakeholder analysis, overall for the West End Revitalization, and by each action area within this plan. Questions to consider: Who are the intended beneficiaries? Families or neighbors of beneficiaries? Civic or faith leaders? Service providers? Potential volunteers? General public? What unique contributions can they make? Why do they care about this work? How will the benefit from participating? Who are your priority stakeholders to engage? By each of these groups, consider: what do they care most about? What are they most concerned about? Why

do they care about the West End Revitalization goals? How have you engaged them to date? How engaged are they? What do you want them to do? What barriers might they face to engaging with you? What would enable their engagement? What is the best way to engage them?

- After updating and documenting the stakeholder analysis, use it and the results of the ABCD exploration to develop a community engagement and ownership plan. The plan may include the following types of topics or sections:
  - Project background/overview;
  - Community engagement and ownership objectives: what do we want them to know, decide, do, etc.;
  - Selecting where on the spectrum of engagement—ignoring, informing, involving, collaborating, empowering—your strategy will target, which may be different at different points or for different stakeholders;
  - Stakeholder analysis summary: target stakeholders, issues they most impact or are most impacted by, history of engagement, barriers and assets to engagement, history of engagement, etc.;
  - Outreach and engagement methods tied to stakeholder and objective;
  - Approach to synthesizing input and reporting back findings, decisions, and progress;
  - Schedule, budget, staffing, resources, operational details; and/or
  - Engagement and ownership evaluation plan.
- Consider roles community members can play as leaders and partners in your efforts. For instance, review the community engagement and ownership plan and the Three-Year Action Plan and consider the five key questions from ABCD to determine where and how West End community members can meaningfully own, lead, or support actions. This may require additional outreach and engagement with community members to answer these questions. There are additional tools to support this review and the ABCD approach more generally mentioned in the Additional Resources section below.
- Engage priority stakeholders by meeting them where they are, engaging their assets, and overcoming barriers to participation, as articulated in the engagement and ownership plan.
- Monitor, evaluate, and adapt the engagement and ownership plan.

#### *Year 2 Action Steps*

- Learn from the engagement to adapt the engagement and ownership plan and/or the Three-Year Action Plan. Consider what may need to slow down or trade-off to advance goals and what early wins can be achieved and communicated.
- Continue implementing engagement and ownership plan, adapted as needed based on findings from evaluation.
- Grow the number and capacity of community members to lead engagement.

#### *Year 3 Action Steps*

- Continue, learn from, and adapt community engagement and ownership activities, ensuring a strong feedback loop to the implementation of the West End Revitalization Action Plan.

### Funding: Needs and Sources

#### *Needs*

Funding will be needed to staff this work and for other direct costs, including but not limited to:



- Those related to enabling participation from community members (e.g. stipends, childcare care, transportation, etc.)
- Materials (flyers, meeting materials, etc.)
- Contract consultants (e.g. graphic design of materials)
- Travel costs
- Space rental

The expected budget for the above for the first three years is reflected as part of the budget delineated in Action 0.1 Create a locally run West End Community Development Corporation (CDC). It is not pulled out here separately to avoid duplication of funding requests.

#### Sources

- Primarily local and regional philanthropic support.

#### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – Support, promote, and participate in engagement activities, as identified in the community engagement and ownership plan.
- *Private sector* – Support, promote, and participate in engagement activities, as identified in the community engagement and ownership plan.
- *Nonprofit sector* – Nonprofit partners can be key in facilitating community engagement and distributing and publishing resources and materials.
- *Philanthropic sector* – Primary funder of this action. Support, promote, and participate in engagement activities, as identified in the community engagement and ownership plan.

#### Additional Resources

- [Building a Community Engagement Strategy](#), Collective Impact Forum – This webinar provides an overview of the collective impact approach to community engagement, introducing the audience to a set of tools that can be used for this purpose. This includes a comprehensive [Community Engagement Toolkit](#) complete with activities and implementation guidance.
- [Engaging People with Lived/Living Experience: A Guide for Including People in Poverty Reduction](#) – This resource guides community development practitioners in how to prepare and implement a community engagement plan that centers the experience and voices of those impacted most directly by poverty. It combines tools, practical recommendations, and place-based case studies from across Canada to illustrate outreach and community leadership strategies in action.
- [The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership](#) – This tool is designed to help community-based organizations and public sector partners evolve their community engagement approach towards practices that share and cede power to community members. It emphasizes the roles that professionals from various sectors can play in strengthening community capacity and creating the conditions for strong community leadership.
- [Asset-Based Community Development Toolkit: Participatory Community Building Guidebook](#) – This comprehensive guidebook, based on an ABCD framework, provides high level guidance and detailed instructions for several exercises aimed at building community capacity through participatory practices.

- [Participatory Budgeting Project & Democracy Beyond Elections: Participatory Policy-Making Toolkit](#) – This toolkit applies some of the principles and practices of participatory budgeting to the context of policymaking. The eight-part process described here can help inject democratic practices into any policy or program development effort, and the toolkit offers recommendations on how to resource and sustain such an effort.

## Action 0.5: Develop and deploy a partnership engagement strategy

### Description and key considerations

No single organization or sector can achieve the goals and objectives of West End Revitalization or implement all of the actions in this plan. So while this Three-Year Action Plan is written with the West End CDC (and the MLK Center until the West End CDC is established and operational) as primarily responsible to move forward the success of the actions, objectives, and goals for West End Revitalization, this work will necessarily require the MLK Center and the West End CDC to collaborate and coordinate with a variety of partners. Like community engagement and ownership, it will be important to develop a comprehensive partner engagement strategy, especially since some partners may (need to) be engaged across multiple actions in the plan. Some of the approaches to stakeholder identification, analysis, and engagement strategy outlined in Action 0.4: Cultivate community engagement and ownership can also be adapted to developing a partnership engagement strategy.

### Milestones over Three Years

- Partnership engagement strategy drafted.
- Partners engaged in advancing the Action Plan.
- Infrastructure for partnership coordination, collaboration, and sustainability in place.

### Action Steps

#### Year 1 Action Steps

- Identify and assess potential partners. Consider which partners are already working on achieving results in the Action Plan, which partners are already working with the intended beneficiaries in the Action Plan, and which partners are most trusted by the intended beneficiaries in the Action Plan. What unique contributions can they make? Why do they care about this work? What are they most concerned about? How will they benefit from partnering? How have you engaged them to date? What do you want them to do? What barriers might they face to engaging with you? What would enable their engagement? What is the best way to engage them? Who is the best person (or people) to engage them?
- Develop a partner engagement strategy and plan. The plan may include the following types of topics or sections:
  - Project background/overview
  - Partner assessment summary: priority partners, history of engagement, barriers and assets to engagement, history of engagement, etc.
  - Purpose and objectives for engagement by partner
  - Engagement approach and methods
  - Ongoing partnership structure(s)
  - Schedule, budget, staffing, resources, operational details

- Engage partners and update Action Plan based on engagement.
- Create ongoing partner collaboration structure(s) as needed and defined in plan.

#### *Year 2 Action Steps*

- Explore opportunities to deepen partnership beyond tactical achievement of individual actions in the plan and whether a collective impact approach to West End Revitalization is desirable and feasible with priority partners.

#### *Year 3 Action Steps*

- Continue and deepen partner engagement.

### Funding: Needs and Sources

#### *Needs*

Funding will be needed to staff this work and for other direct costs, including but not limited to:

- Meeting and outreach materials
- Contract consultants (e.g. graphic design of materials)
- Travel costs to meet with partners

The expected budget for the above for the first three years is reflected as part of the budget delineated in Action 0.1 Create a locally run West End Community Development Corporation (CDC). It is not pulled out here separately to avoid duplication of funding requests.

#### *Sources*

- Primarily local and regional philanthropic support.

### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – To be confirmed in the partner engagement and in updates to the action plan.
- *Private sector* – To be confirmed in the partner engagement and in updates to the action plan.
- *Nonprofit sector* – To be confirmed in the partner engagement and in updates to the action plan.
- *Philanthropic sector* – Funder of the partner engagement actions. To be confirmed in the partner engagement and in updates to the action plan.

### Additional Resources

- [Fundamentals of Partnerships](#) – Strive Together’s online course will teach collective impact organizations how to identify partnership roles, build staff capacity, and implement communications strategies that will help sustain multi-stakeholder systems change efforts. The course material can be completed at any time, though a live Q&A session will be held on May 13, 2024.
- [Backbone Starter Guide](#), FSG and Collective Impact Forum – This “starter guide” draws from FSG and Collective Impact Forum’s extensive work supporting collective impact efforts around the world. It provides a concise overview of the “backbone” role in equity-focused collective impact efforts, with an emphasis on fostering and sustaining effective partner relationships and maintaining alignment towards systems change.

- [Backbone Organizations: A Field Guide](#), CollaborateUp – This resource details 27 effective practices for backbone organizations to use as they convene and coordinate multi-sector collaboratives. Recommended practices are organized in response to six common gaps in the vision or execution of multi-stakeholder efforts.

## Action 0.6: Mobilize resources to implement the Action Plan and sustain the West End Revitalization initiative

### Description and key considerations

Monetary support like grants, financing, donations, and other investments as well as non-monetary support like volunteers will be needed to implement the actions in this plan and sustain the work of the West End Revitalization initiative beyond the Three-Year Action Plan. It will be important that the MLK Center (and later the West End CDC) has a clear focus on identifying, actively pursuing, generating, and coordinating resources. Moreover, while partners will be involved in mobilizing resources, it will be helpful to have a single entity coordinating efforts at a high-level, across individual actions and with an eye beyond the Three-Year Action Plan.

### Milestones over Three Years

- Funding secured to create the West End CDC, including the “backbone” functions described in the funding needs sections of Action 0.1
- Priority funding secured to resource specific actions in the plan.
- Fundraising plan drafted.
- Funder roundtable convened.
- Funding sources diversified.
- Volunteer base built and management structure in place.

### Action Steps

#### *Year 1 Action Steps*

- Review the Action Plan and summarize the resource needs and potential sources to move the plan forward, including cross-cutting or “backbone” actions like community and partner engagement.
- Prioritize resources and funding opportunities to pursue. For instance, there are some funding opportunities that are time-limited or others that could help build the foundation and infrastructure needed to move the work forward and catalyze multiple actions.
- Create a tool to document and track key information about resource opportunities (e.g. eligibility criteria, requirements, and components to apply for the funding opportunity, etc.), the plan to pursue them, and the status.
- Engage with potential funders as appropriate and based on the partner engagement strategy.
- Draft proposals for priority funding opportunities, with a focus on time-limited state and federal funds (e.g. funds created under the Inflation Reduction Act) and resources that can build the infrastructure to move the action plan forward across a variety of actions (see, for instance, the funding needs in Action 0.1 Create a West End CDC).
- Secure resources as described in Action 0.1 funding needs.
- Develop a fundraising plan, including strategies to diversify and sustain funding for the West End CDC.

### *Year 2 Action Steps*

- Secure resources to move other actions in the plan forward.
- Convene a funders roundtable.
- Should the CDC decide to acquire (and, if necessary, renovate) a site for its offices, consider implementing a capital campaign.
- Consider hosting fundraising events, in alignment with the fundraising plan.
- Recruit and manage volunteers to support discrete actions in this plan and West End Revitalization initiative.

### *Year 3 Action Steps*

- Implement fundraising plan.
- Secure additional resources to sustain and grow the work of the West End CDC and the actions in the plan.
- Continue and grow volunteer recruitment and management.
- Advocate to public and private funders to align their resources to achieve West End Revitalization objectives.

## Funding: Needs and Sources

### *Needs*

Funding will be needed to staff this work and for other direct costs, including but not limited to:

- Contract consultants (e.g. grant writer)
- Supplies, materials, space, etc. for fundraising events

The expected budget for the above for the first three years is reflected as part of the budget delineated in Action 0.1 Create a locally run West End Community Development Corporation (CDC). It is not pulled out here separately to avoid duplication of funding requests.

### *Sources*

- Primarily local and regional philanthropic support.

## Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – Fund actions in the plan. Encourage other funders to resource the actions and/or align their funding to achieve West End Revitalization goals. Convene a funders table.
- *Private sector* – Fund actions in the plan. Encourage other funders to resource the actions and/or align their funding to achieve West End Revitalization goals.
- *Nonprofit sector* – Not applicable to this action.
- *Philanthropic sector* – Support the MLK Center (and later the West End CDC) with unrestricted funding to move actions forward, including “backbone” functions like community and partner engagement. Fund actions in the plan. Encourage other funders to resource the actions and/or align their funding to achieve West End Revitalization goals. Convene a funders table.

## Additional Resources

- [Securing Funding for the Collective Impact Backbone Role: Lessons from the Field](#), Collective Impact Forum
- [How Funders of Collective Impact Can Build Trust](#), Stanford Social Innovation Review – While geared towards funders, rather than backbone organizations themselves, this article can provide insights into what funders look for as they are considering their support for a collective impact effort, especially those that approach their work through an equity lens.
- [Coalition Building I: Starting a Coalition](#) and [Coalition Building II: Maintaining a Coalition](#), University of Kansas Community Toolbox – These two chapters lay out the basics of coalition-building, including tactics for recruiting coalition partners and an assessment tool to help determine the strengths and weaknesses of an existing coalition.
- [How to Partner for Impact: The Nuts and Bolts of Aligning Collective Impact Efforts](#), Collective Impact Forum – This article offers suggestions to backbone organizations navigating the delicate process of coordinating peer organizations and getting them aligned around a common goal.

## Action 0.7: Develop and deploy a communications strategy

### Description and key considerations

Ensuring that stakeholders—including community members, funders, the City of Rock Island, and others—have awareness of the work that is being done to revitalize the West End is critical to the sustainability of the overall effort. Building off of Actions 0.4 (Cultivate community engagement and ownership) & 0.5 (Develop and deploy a strategic partnership engagement strategy), the backbone organization will need to strategically disseminate information to these stakeholders for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to:

- building awareness of efforts to revitalize the West End,
- remaining transparent about the progress towards implementing the Three-Year Action Plan,
- ensuring that those that are most impacted by the implementation of the Action Plan (resident of the West End) are informed, engaged, and empowered to take ownership of revitalization efforts,
- highlighting quick wins,
- delivering clear calls to action to the public and relevant stakeholders, and
- making the case that these efforts should be supported and sustained because of their impact.

The MLK Center can get a head start on this by developing a communications strategy that the West End CDC can take over and deploy once staff are operational.

### Milestones over Three Years

- Information on the purpose, urgency, and a call to action for the West End Revitalization is communicated to the community.
- Templates for expected channels of communication developed.
- West End CDC is in the practice of drafting quarterly communications plans for what messages and information get disseminated to stakeholders.
- West End community members have a strong understanding of the progress towards revitalization because of routine information sharing through the communications strategy.

## Action Steps

### Year 1 Action Steps

- Identify a communications lead, ideally a staff member of the newly formed West End CDC (temporarily filled by an MLK Center staff member in the interim), who will be responsible for coordinating with partners.
- Create a short-term communications strategy to share information and key messages to priority audiences, West End residents, and the general public about the completion of the Three-Year Action Plan. Use these communications as an opportunity to articulate the urgency of and a call to action for this work. Consider press releases to local news organizations, posting on MLK Center website and social media platforms, and providing communication materials to partners to share through their channels.
- Develop key and consistent talking points about this work for anyone engaging partners and community members, including opportunities to get involved.
- Develop a strategic communications plan, including elements such as:
  - priority audiences (refer to the stakeholder analysis done as part of Action 0.4: Cultivate community engagement and ownership),
  - how these audiences typically receive information. Are these effective communication channels, or are there other mediums of communication that should be considered?
  - key messages and information that need to be shared by audience, i.e. quick wins, progress updates, the status of specific actions, opportunities to get involved, etc., and
  - the frequency this information needs to be disseminated.

### Year 2 Action Steps

- Draft a plan by first identifying topics or specific messages for routine communications. These topics would ideally align with the various milestones laid out in this action plan, but specific content should be informed by routine check-ins with partners or a monthly communications call with the comms teams at partner organizations. The plan should ideally be updated on a quarterly basis in response to shifts in the implementation of the broader Three-Year Action Plan and how the public is reacting to communications efforts as well as input from community engagement efforts. A matrix like the one seen below may be helpful.

Audience	Content	Format/ Media	Timing	Resources to leverage	Metrics for Measuring Response

Source: Adapted from Preskill, H. (2006). *Communicating and Reporting Evaluation Processes and Findings*. Presentation at the AEA/CDC Summer Evaluation Institute

- Create a template for expected communication methods, such as newsletters, fliers, press releases, social media etc. This should include a language and branding guide for how the initiative should be spoken or written about and can be supported with the help of a graphic designer who can design communications mockups as needed.
- The communications lead also needs to develop a roster of contacts from channels that would ideally play a role in disseminating information, informed by the specific audiences, content, and format of communications needed. This roster will require identification of contacts and relationship-building with these contacts. It should include individuals from local news stations, newspapers, churches, the City of Rock Island's communications team, West End schools, partner organizations, local businesses, and neighborhood groups.

- Monitor the data analytics of communications, through “clicks” or reactions to digital content, participation in events, and occasional brief surveys or interviews to gauge awareness of West End revitalization efforts. Adjust the strategy as needed based on data analytics.

#### *Year 3 Action Steps*

- Continue developing and deploying communications through the identified channels. This should include:
  - continuing to update the communications plan with content that needs to get out,
  - continuing to build relationships with businesses, organizations, and individuals who can support the deployment of the communications strategy, and
  - continuing monitoring reactions to communications.

#### Funding: Needs and Sources

##### *Needs*

Funding needed to develop and deploy a communications strategy has already been taken into consideration in the funding section of Action 0.1: Create a locally run West End Community Development Corporation (CDC). The estimated budget covers the time for one (1) full-time staff member to focus on the communications strategy, likely with some support from part-time staff members. It also already includes budget for contract support through a graphic designer, and the budget for other direct costs would cover expenses related to printing and distributing materials.

##### *Sources*

This action is indirectly funded by the sources of funding for the creation of the West End CDC. See the funding section of Action 0.1 for context.

#### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – The City of Rock Island distributes a newsletter and manages various social media pages that can be leveraged to disseminate information on quick wins, project updates, and the overall progress of the action plan.
- *Private sector* – The communications lead should consider any local businesses that serve as community gathering spaces where information sessions can be held, tabling can take place, or where flyers and information materials can be shared.
- *Nonprofit sector* – Can help share, publicize, and distribute communications resources such as newsletters, social media posts, and news articles.
- *Philanthropic sector* – Philanthropy can play an indirect role by funding the operations of West End CDC in the first three years.

#### Additional Resources

- [Community Toolbox: Developing a Plan for Communication](#), University of Kansas Center for Community Health and Development
- [Community Engagement Toolkit: Developing the Engagement Plan](#) (starting on page 50), HUD and Enterprise Community Partners
- [Develop a Communications Plan and Create a Template](#), The Pell Institute – this resource was designed for communicating about a program evaluation effort, but many of the principles still apply to a communications strategy for the West End.



# Strategic Objective 1: Strengthen civic capital in the West End and beyond

## Strategic Objective Targets

Below are targets that are anticipated to be achieved in the short term (three years), with the full implementation of the Action Plan and those that are anticipated to be achieved in five years, with the continuation of the strategies in the action plan and the addition of new strategies to advance the goals.

### Short-term Targets (Three Year)

- The West End CDC has met with the City of Rock Island and the Rock Island-Milan School District to advocate for their creation of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policies.
- The West End CDC has allocated funds to several local projects through a pilot participatory budgeting process.

### Medium-term Targets (Five Year)

- City of Rock Island and RI-Milan School District have equity plans, informed by local data.
- Engage 1,000 West End residents in a participatory budgeting process to allocate \$100,000.
- People in the West End and in local institutions and local government can talk about challenging topics race, racial equity, immigration, and more.
- Young people in the West End are civic minded and engaged, volunteering, mentoring younger children, advocating to local government, etc.
- West End residents communicate their questions, concerns, and ideas easily, regularly, and constructively.
- West End residents are well-informed about issues that impact their lives and the lives of others.
- West End-hosted candidate forums are regularly occurring.

## Background, justification, and description of impact area strategic objective

The West End Community Assessment and Recommendations report noted significant gaps in and desire from local leaders to build civic capital, not that it is critical to achieving all other objectives for the West End. In the National Civic League's 2019 edition of the Civic Index, there are seven key components to civic capital: 1) engaged residents, 2) inclusive community leadership, 3) collaborative institutions, 4) embracing diversity & equity, 5) authentic communication, 6) culture of engagement, and 7) shared vision & values. Findings from the assessment suggest notable challenges in most of these components, but especially engaged residents, collaborative institutions, embracing diversity & equity, authentic communication and culture of engagement. Two actions were prioritized to carry out specific to this impact area strategic objective.

## Priority Actions

- **Action 1.1** Advocate to/partner with local government and school district to develop and deploy racial equity strategies.
- **Action 1.2** Fund a participatory budgeting process in the West End to determine how to allocate applicable revenue for the Community Development Corporation.

In addition to the above priority actions, actions in this plan will be approached in ways to build and enhance civic capital. Several other actions were recommended in the initial West End Community Assessment and Recommendations report that were either moved to another impact area (creation of a West End CDC is now captured in cross-cutting findings), rolled into other actions (e.g. funding and supporting West End community organizing, advocacy, and engagement will be part of several actions in this plan including the creation of the West End CDC and tenants association).

## Three-Year Plan by Priority Action

### Action 1.1: Partner and advocate with local government and school district to integrate racial equity into its work

#### Description and key considerations

The City of Rock Island also has not published any Racial Equity Assessment of the city or a city-wide Community Needs Assessment that specifically and comprehensively addresses racial disparities. Given that the City of Rock Island exhibits significant racial disparities, the integration of DEI goals and functions in the City to conduct these assessments is important to ensure a more equitable Rock Island and West End. Policy supporting activities tend to fit within 4 [distinct buckets](#):

- Conducting equity reports through data collection on the city's equity and disparities, primarily centered around race, but also touching on other demographic characteristics such as sex, gender, nationality, disability status, etc.;
- Providing trainings and workshops for city staff and departments on racial equity and biases;
- Investigating harassment and discrimination complaints to ensure equity in hiring and contracting processes; and
- Holding or supporting city multicultural events such as festivals and parades.

Research from [Brookings](#) emphasizes that for DEI initiatives to be successful, they need several characteristics outlined in the article, of which a few key for city departments include concrete plans that track and measure impact and progress, widespread political support and spirit for racial equity inside and outside of government, and more generative projects that turn equity assessments into action, including infrastructure investment plans and new equitable budgeting practices. The role for the West End CDC in this process is then of an advocate and convener of relevant stakeholders during the planning and development process for creation and implementation of DEI policies and practices. Support and input from stakeholders from across the City government, as well as the Rock Island-Milan School District, Housing Authority, and more is key to ensure the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of a DEI policies and practices. One standpoint characteristic of existing city DEI departments among cities where their DEI work has been successful in meeting its goals is having DEI officers embedded across city departments. This typically includes having one staff member in each city department who is extensively trained in DEI and racial equity who then often serves on an interdepartmental team working to ensure equity across the city government.

Bringing officials from the school district to convening discussions could also be important in advocating for the creation of a similar DEI office within the district that can help ensure equitable outcomes for students of all races in the school system. DEI initiatives in schools are often based around training for staff to help eliminate implicit racial biases and bring awareness to the inequities in school and classroom practice, and while these have proven [helpful for educators](#), they have a limited impact when not tailored to the specific problems of individual schools and when not followed by concrete change to funding distributions or, on a smaller scale,

teaching practice and course content. DEI impact to this point is most often measured through change in test scores and federal dollars are typically directed to influence this metric, but there are many other important metrics such as how racial disparities in discipline change.

[Research says](#) that in order to avoid solely performative efforts, school district DEI officers need clear support from district leadership, including financial resources, authority to launch programs, and personnel such as data analysts to support evaluation efforts. Importantly, DEI efforts in schools require both micro- and macro-level solutions, which is how a position dedicated to DEI work can be helpful to ensure there is no misdiagnosis of a problem or insufficient band aid solution used. DEI officers in school districts have the ability and dedicated time to diagnose and prescribe these micro- and then macro-level solutions, they just must also have the support and financial resources to follow through.

### Milestones over Three Years

- West End CDC partners with the City of Rock Island and the Rock Island-Milan School District to each create and evaluate DEI policies and practices. This involves the CDC helping convene these and other relevant stakeholders to discuss and understand the need for a DEI-focus. The West End CDC continues to advocate for specific focus on the West End, given its historic racial disparities.

### Action Steps

#### *Year 1 Action Steps*

- Action steps not prioritized in Year 1.

#### *Year 2 Action Steps*

- West End CDC conducts research to understand more about the approaches and examples to integrating DEI into school districts and local governments.
- West End CDC develops stakeholder engagement strategy and meetings with stakeholders to share learning and understand their perspectives on the issue and identify allied partners.
- West End CDC and partners meets with represents of the City of Rock Island and school district for initial conversations on the topic and to gauge interest and willingness to collaborate on integrating DEI in their institutions.

#### *Year 3 Action Steps*

- Too dependent on results from action steps in Year 2 to determine at this time.

### Funding: Needs and Sources

The only identified funding need for this strategy is to cover staff time for conducting case-making to the City and the school district. The funding sources and budget estimation for the staff time of West End CDC employees is covered under the West End CDC creation action, Action 0.1.

### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – The integration of racial equity and DEI into public sector institutions like local government and the school district must necessarily be led by them, but hopefully informed by other key stakeholders.

- *Private sector* – Consultants may need to be hired to conduct a racial equity assessment and/or provide training to local government and school district staff.
- *Nonprofit sector* – Allied partners either to collaborate with the West End CDC, City, and school district or as part of an organizing or advocacy campaign.
- *Philanthropic sector* – Could provide funding to conduct a racial equity assessment.

#### Additional Resources

- [Plan, Informing the Plan, Community Assessment Tools and Resources](#) – Provides a list of community assessments, case studies, and tools related to promoting racial equity in cities
- Case studies
  - For evidence of some of the great accomplishments city DEI departments have had so far see [Oakland](#), [San Francisco](#), and [Roseville, MN](#). Roseville keeps a comprehensive [progress dashboard](#) tracking their progress towards their Strategic Racial Equity Action Plan.
- Toolkits, etc.
  - [Advancing Racial Equity and Transforming Government: A Resource Guide to Put Ideas Into Action – Resource guide from the Government Alliance on Race & Equity \(GARE\) on government’s role in advancing racial equity, with case studies illustrating best practices](#)
  - [How Community-Based Organizations Use Data to Advance Racial Equity](#)
  - [Rethink Housing and Community Development to Advance Racial Equity and Inclusion – Short article outlining the ways a racial equity focus can reform the ways we approach community development](#)
  - [Racial Equity: Getting to Results – GARE resource guide on effectively advancing racial equity with case studies](#)
  - [Racial Equity Action Plans: A How-to Manual – GARE guide to creating a Racial Equity Action Plan for local governments, which outlines an assessment process that could be useful for a West End racial equity assessment](#)
  - [Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity – GARE’s Racial Equity Tool to help analyze the racial equity impact of policy, program, and budget implementation and design](#)

Action 1.2: Fund a participatory budgeting process in the West End to determine how to allocate potential revenue from a newly designated West End Special Service Area (SSA)

#### Description and key considerations

The term “Participatory Budgeting” (PB) is both a broad, aspirational concept, as well a specific tool with a specific meaning. It is often used to describe the practice of direct, democratic decision-making within the context of a public sector budget. This can focus on a cross-section of issues within a jurisdiction, such as:

- The [ARPA-funded process used in Evanston, IL](#), where a specific set of budget items were pre-selected for citizens to weigh in on,
- Chicago’s [infrastructure-focused PB “menu” for participating wards](#),
- Participatory budgeting initiative with [Chicago Public Schools](#), or

- [Transit agencies, like LA County’s Metropolitan Transit Authority’s interactive PB tool](#) used to prioritize certain transit services

PB processes center the involvement and leadership of local residents during concept development, rulemaking, the solicitation and crafting of proposals, and, most importantly, to the selection of projects for funding by vote. Given the level of time and staff resources that typically go into these kinds of participatory budgeting processes, there needs to be a relatively high minimum threshold of funding at play for it to be worth the investment – Evanston’s ARPA pilot involved a \$3 million set-aside, while participating Chicago wards were allocated \$1.3 million for this purpose. Furthermore, a well-funded PB process is unlikely to launch without certain pre-conditions being met, such as institutional support among the bodies that control budgets, alignment and partnerships with community organizations, and buy-in among community members.

However, there are other ways that the principles and practices of PB can be applied in a context where funds are scarcer and public sector partners aren’t ready to implement. In their [Participatory Policy-Making Toolkit](#), the Participatory Budgeting Project & Democracy Beyond Elections distilled three key principles that can be applied broadly, namely ensuring that the participatory process is equitable, accessible, and can have significant outcomes.

Following these principles, a West End CDC could launch its own PB-influenced process for allocating organizational or philanthropic funds for small projects in the West End and/or within the organization itself. While this action plan is oriented to how the West End CDC can deploy its own PB process, it’s important to keep in mind that a successful “pilot” effort could help establish the conditions and lay the groundwork for the City of Rock Island to launch its own PB initiative for local government funds or funding captured from a potential West End Special Service Area (SSA).

#### Milestones over Three Years

- A West End CDC would pursue a parallel track that focuses on raising funds and implementing its own PB-informed pilot while sowing the seeds for a broader PB process that would be integrated into a local public agency (or citywide) budgeting processes.

#### Action Steps

##### *Year 1 Action Steps*

- Action steps not prioritized in Year 1.

##### *Year 2 Action Steps*

- The West End CDC will need to determine if the necessary preconditions exist.
  - Is there institutional support and capacity among those that currently control the budget?
  - Is there funding available to support the process itself across every phase?
  - Is there appetite for PB among the local resident population, including resident leaders that have interest and capacity to help design the process from the very beginning?
- At a high level, the West End CDC and its partners will need to establish the goals, basic structure, timeline, and funding needs for a local pilot, ultimately answering the following questions:
  - Will the funds focus on community priorities that are external to the CDC, such as small business development, public safety, etc., or will the process focus on how to allocate the West End CDC’s own organizational budget across its staffing, services, and other line items?
  - What amount of philanthropic funding will be necessary to meaningfully fund the kinds of projects or line items being imagined, as well as the staffing needed to facilitate the process?
  - What might the staffing look like from the CDC’s end, and are there other core stakeholders that could play a trusted role in facilitating the process?

- Who is impacted by the decisions and how do we ensure that the decisions being made are being influenced by the folks that are most impacted?
- With some of these basic questions answered and a 1-2-page proposal in hand, the West End CDC and its partners will initiate conversations with philanthropic partners and explore the kinds of expectations, outcomes, and timelines they have in mind for an initiative like this. Starting with trusted funding partners such as the Deere Foundation and branching out to other possible partners through social network connections, cultivating a funding partner will likely be an iterative process that unfolds over several months. During this period, development staff should also keep an eye out for grant opportunities that align with the goals of civic engagement and inclusive development (a few are suggested in the “Funding” section below).
- Once funding is secured, or appears on the horizon, the West End CDC and its partners will oversee a process for revisiting desired goals and outcomes for the PB process. This process would ideally be conducted with the support of a Steering Committee, and the CDC should put out a general call and recruit from trusted partner organizations for members. The Steering Committee should reflect a diverse set of experiences and include residents, particularly those from underrepresented communities.
- The Steering Committee will be tasked with answering some difficult questions:
  - Aside from democratizing decision-making over the expenditure of the West End CDC’s funds, are their specific priorities that the lead stakeholders are seeking to advance through the process itself?
  - Is there a specific population being targeted for participation (e.g. youth, low-income households, etc.) for which specific benefits are being pursued through setting up a PB process?
  - Is there an area of public policy or public concern that the process might target, such as reimagining public safety, youth programming, or the built environment?
  - What will the communication infrastructure look like - will there be a need for new software to engage a cross-section of residents throughout the process, or will existing channels suffice?
  - Will the PB process require an independent evaluator?
  - How will the Steering Committee function throughout the process and what role will they play in administering the selection of proposals?
- At this stage, it might be necessary to create documents such as a Memorandum of Understanding for Steering Committee members, as well as a shareable Rulebook that outlines the budget decision-making process for participants.

### *Year 3 Action Steps*

- A PB process, even at a smaller scale within a CDC, requires significant logistical planning. The Steering Committee and support staff must decide how they will engage the public and involve residents in decision-making, which will likely include a mix of public meetings, smaller working groups, educational sessions, and online communication. Reaching a broad audience may involve many smaller points of engagement, such as tabling at fairs and pop-up events, as well as larger information sessions at libraries, churches, and other local institutions. There will also need to be a way to gather ideas and input from a large group of people in an organized and streamlined way, which will likely require an email listserv at the least, as well as more sophisticated software or online platforms such as [Miro](#) and [Mentimeter](#). Considerations for childcare, language access, and transportation should also be made to ensure that all interested residents are able to participate.
- Once the process and logistics are settled, the Steering Committee and West End CDC staff will need to support residents in developing and submitting proposals. This may require workshops – virtual and/or

in-person – to give people examples and guidance on what a strong proposal looks like, as well as creating a template that participants can use to articulate their ideas. Once a call for proposals is complete and yields enough submissions, staff will need to oversee a voting process for selecting the top choices. Voting should be conducted in a way that maximizes participation, prioritizing simplicity and accessibility.

- Getting dollars out to projects and programs is the fun part – but will also involve a level of logistics and ongoing communication with fund recipients. This will depend on the reporting and compliance requirements attached to the source of funds being used, and efforts should be made in the planning process to ensure that grant execution and disbursement can be done in an efficient manner that limits the burden on grantees.
- As the process concludes, it will be critical to get the word out about what happened and which proposals were selected for funding. The West End CDC will likely take on the bulk of this communications responsibility. In addition, it will be important to document and evaluate how the process went – strengths, challenges, outcomes, and lessons learned. Whether this is conducted by CDC staff or an external partner, evaluating the effort will be critical to evolving the practice, securing additional funds, and socializing the work with the various stakeholders that will be needed to launch a larger public PB effort.
- Assuming the goal is to institutionalize participatory processes within the West End CDC, the following year should usher in a new round of democratically selected projects and programs. With a West End “proof of concept” to highlight and progress made on cultivating the right preconditions, this will be a prime opportunity to advocate for and gaining support for integrating PB into the budgeting process for public funds. Depending on the success and impact of the pilot year, this is also an opportunity to engage philanthropic partners for additional funding, potentially elevating the amount of funds that are in play for the next round of proposals.

## Funding: Needs and Sources

### *Needs*

Rightsizing the funding for a participatory budgeting process within the West End CDC will depend on the goals and scope that are determined in the proposal development process. A safe assumption would be in the **\$50,000** range for project funding, as well as funding for at least .25 FTE within the CDC to staff the process and additional funding for logistics, events, and participation stipends, which is covered under Action 0.1 Create a locally-run West End Community Development Corporation.

With plans to designate an SSA in the West End, a participatory budgeting process could be a great opportunity to use citizen input to determine how best to allocate the revenue from that SSA. Considering that, based on the timeline outlined in this action plan, the SSA wouldn't be established until year three, the development of the participatory budgeting process would then be delayed until after revenue from the SSA is ready to be budgeted. Considering that delayed timeline, this action plan still outlines the general action steps for the CDC to enact a participatory budgeting process that can be applied to differing timelines for different funding sources.

- Cities like Evanston, IL used ARPA funds to launch a successful PB process locally, and while The City of Rock Island's ARPA allocation is no longer on the table, this is an important precedent as future federal block grant funds become available.

### *Sources*

Philanthropic partners can and should invest in these efforts by funding the staffing infrastructure, evaluation/communication, and pilot funds within the CDC. In addition to the John Deere Foundation, some potential options for engagement include:

- [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#): With a focus on health equity outcomes, RWJF has a history of funding initiatives that emphasize systems change and community leadership. Future funding opportunities may align well with a Participatory Budgeting pilot; [funding alerts](#) are made periodically through email updates.
- [Democracy Fund](#): National foundation that provides grants and other support to organizations and leaders pursuing projects that bolster democracy and strengthen civic capacity. They do not have an open grant cycle and instead use an invitation-only process, but it would be worth reaching out directly and/or working through potential connections among their [past and current grantees](#).

### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – The City of Rock Island’s Community Economic Development would be a natural partner for a future public PB process and can be an ongoing participant-observer in the pilot launched within the West End CDC. It might also be wise to share a PB proposal and/or present to affiliated Boards and Commissions, such as the [Planning Commission](#), [Arts Commission](#) and [Beautification Commission](#).

Local public schools with strong student representation in the West End may also be strong partners, especially if there’s interest in targeting funds towards projects and services that serve school-age populations.

- *Private sector* – Local businesses could be a key stakeholder, especially if the kinds of projects being considered for funding address public space and infrastructure that could improve economic vitality in the neighborhood.
- *Nonprofit sector* – Existing non-profit partners of the MLK Center’s West End collective impact model could support outreach to residents and coordinate/facilitate community convenings. Depending on the particular communities that the PB process is trying to reach, community-based organizations can play a critical role in bolstering the legitimacy of the effort and educating residents about the process.
- *Philanthropic sector* – Local and other mission-aligned foundations can provide initial seed funding for a PB pilot within the context of a CDC/philanthropic partnership in the West End. More information below.

### Additional Resources

- Case studies
  - [Seattle’s Participatory Budgeting Process](#) Webpage
  - [Evanston’s Participatory Budgeting Process](#) Webpage
  - [People’s Budget Chicago](#)
- Toolkits, etc.
  - [Running a PB Process from Start to Finish: A How-To Manual](#) – Manual from the Participatory Budgeting Project outlining the entire participatory budgeting process from initial development to outcome monitoring. It is designed for any group looking to implement PB, from government agencies to schools and communities.
  - [Participatory Policy-Making Toolkit](#) – Participatory Budgeting Project & Democracy Beyond Elections toolkit and overview of participatory policy-making processes – combining processes from both participatory budgeting and policy juries.
  - [The Beginner’s Guide to Participatory Budgeting – CitizenLab’s introductory guide for participatory budgeting that includes key steps for development and implementation and case studies and best practices.](#)



- [Evanston's Participatory Budgeting Rulebook](#) – Rulebook created specifically for the City of Evanston, IL's participatory budgeting process. It takes best practices from PB processes elsewhere and edits them to meet Evanston's community needs.
- [Participatory Budgeting in Schools](#) – 2020 toolkit from UIC Great Cities Institute on creating and running a participatory budgeting process in schools, created in collaboration with Chicago Public School administrators.

# Strategic Objective 2: Build West End residents' assets and incomes

## Strategic Objective Targets

Below are targets that are anticipated to be achieved in the short term (three years), with the full implementation of the Action Plan and those that are anticipated to be achieved in five years, with the continuation of the strategies in the action plan and the addition of new strategies to advance the goals.

### Short-term Targets (Three Year)

- Workforce collective impact partnership has been established and is sustaining.
- Regular workforce training and jobs fairs are occurring at Rock Island High School and other key locations for disconnected youth.
- ILW Construction Pre-Apprenticeship program is operational.
- Service Corps has been established to meet critical needs in West End.
- A financial literacy curriculum and coaching has begun delivery to West End residents.

### Medium-term Targets (Five Year)

- West End CDC creates a youth workforce development program, in partnership with the City and others, that impacts the following annually:
  - 50 youth participating in career aptitude/skill training
  - 25 youth getting temporary job placements
  - 25 youth getting long term full-time employment
- Hundreds of West End residents have participated in financial literacy education and coaching.
  - Credit scores have improved among a large portion of those participating.
- A community-minded bank has opened in the West End.
- Large increase to number of banked households in the West End.
- Dozens of West End parents/caregivers have created children's savings accounts and are contributing to it regularly.

## Background, justification, and description of impact area strategic objective

West End residents earn significantly lower incomes, experience higher unemployment and poverty rates, and have high rates of disconnected youth compared to the rest of Rock Island and the greater metropolitan area. This is important because income is a strong indication of a family's material well-being. Families need a certain base level of income to meet their basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, health care, and any costs related to sustaining a job. Further, children raised in higher-income households demonstrate higher academic achievement and educational attainment, better physical and mental health, and fewer behavioral problems than their peers from lower-income households. Further, savings can help families weather destabilizing events like a period of unemployment or unexpected expenses. Given the significant disparity in these economic security measures and their importance to building a community of wealth, power, and livability, it is vital to increase the assets and income of West End households.

## Priority Actions

- **Action 2.1** Support service corps and collective impact workforce development model that creates long-term living wage
- **Action 2.2** Provide access to affordable, mainstream, digitally enabled banking products as an entry point to fully participating in the economy and achieving financial stability
- **Action 2.3** Fund and incentivize children’s saving accounts
- **Action 2.4** Develop and deliver financial literacy curriculum and coaching

The actions prioritized above are drawn from the West End Community Assessment and Recommendations report. Action 2.1 was revised from its original version to account for the fact that pandemic-recovery funds and jobs are no longer relevant and available. Additionally, the strategy to require local and/or targeted hiring from the original report was moved to Impact Area Strategic Objective 4: Increase the economic vitality of the West End and revised to focus on preparing businesses to gain contracting opportunities to account for the fact that this plan is focused on actions the West End CDC can take, not the Rock Island local government. Finally, the strategy to pilot a guaranteed income program, which was recommended in the original report, was not prioritized by the Steering Committee or working groups for action in the first three years of this work.

## Three-Year Plan by Priority Action

### Action 2.1: Support service corps and collective impact workforce development model that creates long-term living wage

#### Description and key considerations

West End residents need training for and access to living wage jobs with good benefits that can also fulfill specific unmet community needs, such as the need for workforce that can rehabilitate housing in the West End. A service corps, notably those that emerged during the pandemic, is an effective model for how cross-sector partners can come together to connect unemployed and underemployed people with employment opportunities through targeted workforce development. One way that cross-sector partners—major employers, workforce agencies, city government, schools (K-12 and post-secondary), community colleges, community-based organizations, the Chamber of Commerce, funders, and others—can better ensure that West End residents (and low-income residents of color throughout the region) will actually benefit from workforce development programs is by strategizing and acting more collaboratively.

The West End CDC specifically can serve as a backbone organization for a workforce development collective impact infrastructure and serve as the collective’s clearinghouse for data on disconnected youth and the un/underemployed in the West End. The West End CDC then may also want to explore potentially launching a service corps as a 501(c)3, but this should be discussed with the City of Rock Island, as city government can also choose to launch their own city-wide service corps. The target populations for this strategy are disconnected youth and the unemployed/underemployed in the West End, with an emphasis on prospective workforce who can play a role in rehabilitating and revitalizing West End housing stock.

## Milestones over Three Years

- Formal collective impact partnership established with Rock Island-Milan School District, the areas many workforce development providers, the City, and West End residents, with the CDC serving as a backbone.
- Quarterly or annual series of workforce training and jobs fairs at Rock Island High School and other key locations for disconnected youth begin.
- Rock Island-based ILW Construction Pre-Apprenticeship Program launched.
- Determining whether launching a service corps informed by public service and other critical workforce needs is an appropriate role for the CDC.

## Action Steps

### *Year 1 Action Steps*

- As the West End CDC is in formation, the MLK Center or workforce development leader can begin identifying other stakeholders and gauging their interest in participating in a collective impact model for workforce development.

### *Year 2 Action Steps*

- The newly established West End CDC can then serve as a backbone for convening the Rock Island region's workforce development partners, the City, Rock Island-Milan School District, and most importantly, West End residents who are in the target population group.
- West End CDC facilitates the establishment of clear goals with the partnership to improve outcomes for those who need it most—for example, Black residents, low-income residents, disconnected youth, and residents in the West End.
- West End CDC conducts a crosswalk between the needs of West End residents (can be based on the Phase I West End Assessment & Recommendations report and targeted follow-on surveys) and existing workforce development training programs to identify if there are any gaps that could be filled by new workforce development programs. This would likely necessitate:
  - reaffirming previously identified needs from Phase I,
  - assessing the need for wraparound services like childcare and transportation to/from West End and regional skills training and workforce development, and
  - developing a comprehensive inventory of existing workforce training programs with the help of the collective.
- West End CDC should also consider hosting a working session with the City to identify where municipal programs that directly serve West End residents—such as the owner-occupied Housing Rehabilitation & Repair, code enforcement, and public park and streetscape maintenance—have capacity or implementation gaps that could be filled by trained and certified West End residents. This may indicate a need for a formal neighborhood-based public service corp.

### *Year 3 Action Steps*

- West End CDC partners with Illinois DCEO and local pre-apprenticeship program providers in the [Illinois Works Construction Pre-Apprenticeship Program](#) to launch a Rock Island-based ILW Construction Pre-Apprenticeship Program. The West End Workforce Development collective (with the West End CDC as backbone) could facilitate the launch of this program by identifying a pipeline of disconnected youth and underemployed West End residents who can enroll in the program for construction trades, as well

as identifying other potential pre-apprenticeship program providers that are not yet participating in the program. Current local pre-apprenticeship program providers include:

- United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers, and Allied Workers Local Union 32;
  - Heat & Frost Insulators Local 81;
  - Painter's DC 81;
  - Ironworkers Local Union #111;
  - Sheet Metal JATC 91;
  - Quad City Electrical JATC;
  - Chicago Regional Council of Carpenters East Moline Campus.
- West End CDC begins hosting an annual series of workforce training and jobs fairs at Rock Island High School and other key locations for disconnected youth to showcase the region's training and apprenticeship programs (from the crosswalk done in Year 2), as well job opportunities for those who matriculate through existing and new workforce development programs.
  - West End CDC determines whether launching a service corps would be an appropriate next step, based on the landscape of existing workforce development programs & services, gaps in city capacity, and partner capacity (identified in Years 1 and 2).

## Funding: Needs and Sources

### *Needs*

Funding will be needed to fund the collective impact model, specifically for the expansion or development of new targeted workforce development programs like the pre-apprenticeship program, producing and distributing resource guides on programs and opportunities, and hosting events like job fairs during the first three years. As the only action related to potentially launching a West End-specific service corps will be related to considering its feasibility, no costs are associated with that step.

- Launching Pre-apprenticeship program (curriculum development and staffing): \$700,000 - \$1.5 million
- Virtual and in-person job fair: \$15,000 - \$50,000
- Outreach and development/distribution of informational materials to prospective participants in Year 3: \$15,000 - \$25,000
- Total: **\$730,000 - \$1.575 million**

### *Sources*

Funding for these expenses can come from the following sources:

- [Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity](#) (DCEO) is a key conduit for workforce development funding opportunities, in tandem with philanthropic grantmaking. CDC should familiarize themselves with existing funding opportunities.
- [YouthBuild](#) – A U.S. Department of Labor funded community-based pre-apprenticeship program providing job training and educational services for opportunity youth ages 16-24. [Upcoming funding cycle](#) (due February 1, 2024) will fund approximately 75 projects cross the country with individual grants ranging from \$700,000 to \$1.5 million. CDC should consider applying in future application rounds.
- Illinois Department of Human Services also administers a [variety of workforce development grants](#), including programs geared towards LMI individuals, SNAP or TANF beneficiaries, and others facing barriers to employment.

- The National Fund for Workforce Solutions has several [guide books](#) on how to fund regional workforce collaboratives and connect with private funders that the West End Workforce Development collective could refer to.

### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – The City of Rock Island will be a key partner for the West End CDC and its workforce development collective, particularly where trained and certified West End residents could potentially fill public service gaps through a service corps that the city could help secure funding for and inform employment placements.

Rock Island-Milan School District will need to be a partner in the collective to ensure that programs launched meet the future career needs of students in high school and earlier and address barriers to future employment in living wage jobs. More information is needed to ascertain if West End residents are aware of and able to access existing programs and initiatives offered by [Illinois DCEO](#).

- *Private sector* – Local employers will have final say on what any apprenticeship programs look like, with compliance and regulatory oversight from DCEO. Workforce training providers, with support and guidance from the West End CDC, can serve as a liaison between local employers and those designing any targeted apprenticeship programs.
- *Nonprofit sector* – Nonprofits serving the West End, including the West End CDC, will have specific insights on the barriers to employment that could be addressed through new or existing workforce training programs. The CDC can serve as a clearinghouse for these insights from peer nonprofits.
- *Philanthropic sector* – Philanthropic foundations can serve as key funders for both the collective impact infrastructure as well as any funding gaps for designing and administering programs. The West End CDC can serve as a primary point of contact for engagements with philanthropic foundations on behalf of the collective.

### Additional Resources

#### Case Studies

- [Birmingham Service Corps](#) – During the pandemic, this initiative placed over 300 members in opportunities, 62% of whom are Black and 69% of whom are women. Corps members are paid as 1099 contractors, with wages ranging from \$15 to \$25 dollars per hour. Corps projects were designed in partnership with community organizations and approved by organization’s board and the City of Birmingham city. This is part of a national expansion of [Baltimore Corps](#).
- Council Bluffs Community School District’s [TradeWorks Academy](#) program – This initiative prepares students from 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, first offering “hands-on learning to enter a registered apprenticeship program after graduation” in one of five in-demand trade occupations, with opportunities for earning industry recognized credentials. The second phase offers “college-level coursework and provides high-quality pre-apprenticeships sponsored by local employers” through a partnership with Iowa Western Community College and the National Center for Construction Education and Research.
- [Baltimore Clean Corps Initiative](#) – Multi-agency initiative led by the city in partnership with nonprofits to clean and maintain community-selected vacant lots.

## Resources/Information

- [Illinois workNet® Portal and Program](#) – This portal includes information on events, guides, and resources for workforce programs across the state, as well as different state-led initiatives and state partner resources
- State of Illinois WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) [Unified State Plan for Program Years 2020-2023](#) (July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2024)
- The U.S. Department of Education’s [UnlocMLK Career Success](#) initiative – Tools and case studies to prepare high school students for careers, through dual enrollment in college courses, work-based learning, workforce credential attainment, and career advising.
- National Fund for Workforce Solutions has developed a helpful [framework](#) for improving outcomes for workers, employers, and communities, as well as tools and funding opportunities.
  - [How to form a Regional Workforce Collaborative](#)
  - [Knowing Your Regional Workforce Collaborative's Value Proposition](#)
  - [Funding Your Regional Workforce Collaborative](#)
  - [Connecting Your Regional Workforce Collaborative with Private Funders](#)

## Action 2.2: Provide access to affordable, mainstream, digitally enabled banking products as an entry point to fully participating in the economy and achieving financial stability

### Description and key considerations

There are no banking service locations within the West End, making it difficult for West End residents to access affordable banking products. With access to these products, which are readily available to middle- and upper-class households, people can use credit to buy a home or invest in their education or business; without it, people face difficulty building savings and credit and are forced to use higher cost financial transactions by relying on pay-day and predatory loan businesses, which are plentiful in the West End.

The Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund (CFE Fund) has launched a national movement called BankOn to establish coalitions of regional financial institutions who will agree to offer safe, low-cost banking products. As a result, the West End CDC can help connect West End residents with affordable, mainstream, digitally enabled banking products by tapping into the local BankOn Illinois coalition, particularly by launching a public education campaign to help unbanked or underbanked West End residents open bank accounts with participating BankOn Illinois coalition partners. The West End CDC could also facilitate formal partnerships with other local financial institutions who can commit to:

- joining the BankOn Illinois coalition,
- reforming their reliance on ChexSystems or offering “second chance” accounts to people in ChexSystems who complete financial education curriculum,
- consider establishing a brick-and-mortar location in the West End,
- fund lending circles or credit builder loans, and/or
- deliver ongoing financial empowerment curriculum to households who open or are considering opening a bank account.

One mechanism for formalizing partnerships with banks is a community benefits agreement (CBA). CBAs can secure increased funding for mortgage and small business lending, as well as increase community development loans, affordable housing investments, and commitments to building new branches and CRA-approved

philanthropy. The target population for this strategy are unbanked and underbanked low- to moderate-income households in the West End.

### Milestones over Three Years

- Financial institution partners established.
- Public education campaign launched to connect West End residents and businesses with trusted BankOn coalition partners.
- Financial empowerment curriculum aligned with banking needs is developed.

### Action Steps

#### *Year 1 Action Steps*

- Begin meeting with financial institutions with a presence in the Quad Cities to develop an inventory of the products, tools, and services they're currently offering, what the take-up level is in West End census tracts, and barriers to providing services in the West End. A partnership or working group will need to be established and empowered to make key decisions in Years 2 and 3.

#### *Year 2 Action Steps*

- Survey existing residents on their access and awareness of banking services, including barriers they encounter and what kind of products they need or would be potentially interested in.
- Identify potential commercially zoned parcels or commercial lease space where banking services could be provided.
- Based on the needs assessment and outreach to existing financial institutions in Year 1 or with the help of a consultant, the MLK Center or the newly formed West End CDC should then synthesize what gaps in products, services, and tools need to be filled and what assets in the West End can be leveraged (helping banks meet CRA requirements, available commercial space, large demand due to unmet needs, etc.).
- The West End CDC could then begin facilitating the negotiation of CBAs with financial institutions, potentially with support from the National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC) and the Illinois-based Woodstock Institute. The CDC can use information gathered in Year 1 to clearly lay out needs and pitch potential incentives or assets that can be leveraged in the West End. NCRC suggests that a process like this could take four to five months, "but can be shorter or longer," and receiving NCRC's support would require the CDC to become a member organization.<sup>1</sup>
- Connect with BankOn Illinois and local coalition partners to develop a marketing campaign to recruit other mission-aligned financial institutions to join the coalition.
- Convene local nonprofit partners and Rock Island-Milan School District to develop a comprehensive financial empowerment curriculum to complement the products, services, and tools that West End residents need to be prepared for. The curriculum can be paired with incentives like access to reduced or no-fee products, additional match on children's savings accounts, or other benefits to residents. Curriculum content should be designed to be delivered both virtually and in-person at key West End locations, with adaptations to the curriculum for different age groups and language needs.

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<sup>1</sup> National Community Reinvestment Coalition. Community Benefits Agreements: How Banks Ensure They Meet Local Needs, [https://www.ncrc.org/cba/#:~:text=Community%20benefits%20agreements%20\(CBAs\)%20are,neighborhoods%20compared%20to%20prior%20practices](https://www.ncrc.org/cba/#:~:text=Community%20benefits%20agreements%20(CBAs)%20are,neighborhoods%20compared%20to%20prior%20practices).



### *Year 3 Action Steps*

- The West End CDC would then need to design and launch a public education campaign to inform West End residents and business owners of currently available or new banking products, tools, and services, as well as broadcast upcoming opportunities to participate in financial empowerment courses.
- Launch the West End-specific financial empowerment curriculum.

### Funding: Needs and Sources

#### *Needs*

In total, this strategy could cost **\$50,000 - \$100,000** over the course of the first 3 years. Funding would be needed for program design and potentially to compensate staff of external partners for their time compiling information, convening key partners, and developing new content in Years 1 and 2. Funding for marketing materials and hosting events related to the public education campaign will also be needed in Year 3. Compensations for West End CDC staff time are already considered and outlined in Action 0.1, so are not included in this estimate.

#### *Sources*

In the event that current financial institutions are unwilling to negotiate or commit to a CBA, there may be a need for philanthropy to invest in regional Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) to fill the gap. Philanthropy will likely play a significant role in funding these efforts, but other organizations may be able to donate their time as an in-kind contribution.

### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – The City of Rock Island can play a role in reducing access to risky financial products from predatory lenders. For instance, they can regulate predatory small-dollar lending by leveraging land use and zoning ordinances to restrict how closely lenders can locate to one another or barring payday lending in low-income census tracts.
- *Private sector* – Private banks across the Quad Cities region can become BankOn coalition members. They may also consider either co-locating services in the West End and/or expanding their offering of digital banking services through their apps or new app features and marketing campaigns. These actions can be mutually beneficial for households who don't currently have access to safe, affordable banking products and to financial institutions who need to fulfill Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) requirements.
- *Nonprofit sector* – Nonprofits, potentially in partnership with Rock Island-Milan School District and private banks, can develop and deliver financial empowerment curriculum that complements the increased access to safe banking products.
- *Philanthropic sector* – In the event that existing financial institutions are unable to adequately meet the banking needs of West End residents and business owners, philanthropic foundations can invest in CDFIs (which specialize in providing financial services in low-income communities and to people who lack access to financing).

## Additional Resources

- [BankOn Illinois](#)
- [Financial Inclusion for All Illinois](#) – access to Banking policy recommendations
- [Community Benefits Agreements: How Banks Ensure They Meet Local Needs](#), National Community Reinvestment Coalition
- [Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund](#) – Funds TA for cities exploring community banking initiative and seed funding for launching BankOn coalitions, if a more locally based coalition is desired over the newly established BankOn Illinois coalition.
- Case-making
  - [Bank On National Data Hub: Findings from 2022](#), Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis
  - [How Equitable Access to Banking Improves Economic Conditions for Everyone](#), National League of Cities
  - [The Racialized Costs of Banking](#), New America
  - [Report on the Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2022 - May 2023: Banking and Credit](#), Federal Reserve System

## Action 2.3: Fund and incentivize children’s saving accounts

### Description and key considerations

Children’s Savings Accounts (also known as Child Development Accounts or CDAs) are long-term savings or investment accounts established for children and youth (ages 0-18) and allowed to grow until children reach adulthood. Ranging from small programs serving children at one school to statewide programs serving all newborns, these programs all share a common goal: promoting savings and asset building opportunities for children, especially those from low and moderate-income families. This action would therefore be oriented towards West End households with children aged 0-18 years old.

### Milestones over Three Years

- Project lead selected and needed project staff hired (if necessary)
- Sufficient funds raised to begin launching the CSA initiative
- First child enrolled

### Action Steps

Prosperity NOW’s *Campaign for Every Kid’s Future*<sup>2</sup> has identified a step-by-step process that the West End CDC can follow to support the creation of a CSA initiative in the West End. Those steps are outlined below:

#### Year 1 Action Steps

- Given the time sensitivity of engaging with potential financial partners who are ready to begin work on this initiative, the MLK Center will want to establish a working group or committee of relevant stakeholders who can steer the launch of CSAs in the West End. This group should include parents who could be impacted by the strategy as well as folks from the financial industry and nonprofit financial literacy and economic mobility service providers.

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<sup>2</sup> Prosperity NOW, (2017), Investing in Dreams: A Blueprint for Designing Children’s Savings Account Programs, [https://prosperitynow.org/sites/default/files/resources/InvestingInDreams\\_Updated%20Oct%202017.pdf](https://prosperitynow.org/sites/default/files/resources/InvestingInDreams_Updated%20Oct%202017.pdf).

- This group will then work to select program goals for the CSA initiative and make key decisions on program design criteria, such as:
  - target population (all children enrolled at schools in the West End, LMI children only, etc.),
  - how will children be enrolled (automatic or self-enrollment),
  - what types of financial incentives will be needed,
  - metrics for measuring success, and
  - which organizations or financial partners in the area could be a trusted project lead for CSA funds and responsible for CSA program administration and staffing.
- Once these decisions are made, the group will need to do outreach and formalize an agreement with the organization or financial partner that will be the project lead managing the CSA initiative.

*Year 2 Action Steps*

- The designated project lead will then need to draft a program budget that can be presented to the working group or committee for thought partnership and feedback.
- Building a shared understanding of necessary program funds will enable the designated project lead and the group to develop a strategy for raising funds to cover program expenditures. The fundraising strategy should include:
  - Identification of potential funding partners,
  - Creating the pitch to these potential funding partners,
  - Designating project lead or group members who will be responsible for outreach to potential funding partners, and
  - Creation of a tracker to monitor which potential funding partners have been engaged and successful funding commitments.
- As operating funds gradually become available, the designated project lead will need to begin setting up operations and management systems, including account and data management systems, family engagement and enrollment tracking, partner management, and policies and procedures.
- Begin developing financial literacy curriculum for participating children and their families.

*Year 3 Action Steps*

- The project lead will continue setting up operations and management systems. Once these are complete, enrollment can begin.

Funding: Needs and Sources

*Needs*

The table below demonstrates an example of the minimum funding needed to support one CSA cohort of 1,000 automatically enrolled kindergarteners. Total program estimates should be verified using Prosperity NOW’s [CSA Budget Calculator](#) to ensure that key assumptions around programming staffing, administrative costs, deposit rates, and matches align with what the CDC and its partners are envisioning.

	Year 1	Year 2	Years 3 - 15	Total
<b>Program Delivery</b>	\$150,000	\$100,000	\$195,000 (\$15,000/year for ongoing costs of maintaining participant accounts)	\$445,000

<b>Initial Deposits</b>	\$100,000 (\$100 initial deposit each for 1,000 participants)	\$0 (no new children enrolled)	\$0 (no new children enrolled)	\$100,000
<b>Projected Savings Matches (w/55% draw-down rate)</b>	\$55,000	\$55,000	\$0 (savings match only offered for 2 years)	\$110,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$305,000</b>	<b>\$155,000</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>	<b>\$655,000</b>

Prosperity NOW's Example of the minimum funding needed to support one CSA cohort when enrolling 1,000 Kindergarteners, with an initial deposit of \$100 and up to \$100 in savings matches.

*Sources*

Funding for CSAs is generally sourced from leveraging a combination of philanthropic and public sector funding. CSA programs generally include some kind of match component, with some program sponsors adopting a “multi-rate match structure, with the rate decreasing as household income rises,” which would enable LMI households in the West End to maximize savings for their children.<sup>3</sup>

Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – Public sector partners like the City of Rock Island or Rock Island County will likely need to be brought into CSAs in the West End, given that local government generally funds at least a smaller portion of a CSA’s startup cost or deposit match. Rock Island-Milan schools in the West End should also consider delivering financial literacy curriculum to prepare participating children, prospective participating families, and all students generally for adulthood, either at the individual school level or school district-level.
- *Private sector* – Not applicable for this action.
- *Nonprofit sector* – The CDC may also determine that existing nonprofit organizations are better positioned to provide financial literacy curriculum for participating children and their families, as opposed to public schools in the West End.
- *Philanthropic sector* – The most common type of funding received by CSA programs is grants from the philanthropic community, including local community foundations.<sup>4</sup> Foundations and Individual donors are key funders of CSAs, funding the initial deposits and providing match for the first cohort of children. However, others such as the corporate sector, employers, and other public sector entities are also common funders.

Additional Resources

- [A Review of Children’s Savings Accounts](#), Urban Institute
- Prosperity NOW’s [CSA Starter Kit](#)
  - [Making the Case for a CSA Program: Template](#)

<sup>3</sup> Urban Institute, (2015), *A Review of Children’s Savings Accounts*, <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/2000157-A-Review-of-Childrens-Savings-Accounts.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Prosperity NOW, (2018), *An In-Depth Look at the CSA Field: Funding*, [https://prosperitynow.org/sites/default/files/resources/CSA\\_Funding\\_Brief\\_Field\\_Scan\\_0.pdf](https://prosperitynow.org/sites/default/files/resources/CSA_Funding_Brief_Field_Scan_0.pdf).

- [Blueprint for Designing Children’s Savings Account Programs](#)
- [CSA Budget Calculator](#)
- [Key Considerations](#)
- [An In-Depth Look at the CSA Field: Funding](#)
- [Lessons Learned from Children’s Savings Account Programs: Tools to Leverage Spending to Facilitate Saving among Low-Income Families](#), University of Michigan Center on Assets, Education, & Inclusion
- [Financial Inclusion for All Illinois](#), Children’s Savings Accounts policy recommendations
- [Illinois First Steps Program](#) – college savings started program administered by Office of the Illinois State Treasurer beginning in 2023

## Action 2.4: Develop and deliver financial literacy curriculum and coaching

### Description and key considerations

Beyond connecting West End residents with workforce development training to build their incomes through employment (Action 2.1) and improving their access to asset-building financial tools (Actions 2.2 and 2.3), West End residents need to be understand effectively use foundational financial skills and tools, like budgeting, managing personal finances, building credit, and investing. The West End CDC and its future partners can support this by delivering financial literacy curriculum and coaching. The curriculum for the program should cover a range of financial literacy topics, tying into themes in the other actions, like preparing for homeownership and building savings for children, while also creating a space for participants to receive direct support for their questions related to personal and household financial management and wealth-building from trusted community partners.

### Milestones over Three Years

- Partners have secured funding necessary to develop, staff, and deploy the program.
- Curriculum developed for a West End-specific financial literacy program.
- Financial coaches have been identified and trained to work with West End students and other residents.
- Partnerships with schools and other institutions have been established to deliver the curriculum.
- Delivery of curriculum and coaching begins.

### Action Steps

#### Year 1 Action Steps

- Identify partners who are interested in leading or supporting this effort, including those who may already be providing financial literacy or coaching services, those who have access to and trust of potential participants, potential funders, etc.
- Establish a lead organization who will house and manage the program.
- Define target populations (e.g. high school students, disconnected youth, parents with dependent children, etc.) for the program (e.g. challenges, specific needs, with respect to financial literacy and coaching).
- Establish partnerships with organizations who work with target populations (e.g. schools) and that are interested in collaborating the delivery of the curriculum and coaching.
- Gather data and insight on the target populations to inform curriculum and coaching services.

- Develop a budget and staffing plan to implement the program.
- Draft a proposal and secure funding for the action.

#### *Year 2 Action Steps*

- Inventory existing financial literacy curriculum and financial coaching services in the area.
- Design the financial literacy curriculum targeted to the West End target population(s). Program design should include tie-ins to the programs, products and services being deployed in Actions 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.
- Identify and train financial coaches.
- The lead and its partners will then coordinate logistics for delivering curriculum, including:
  - Format of content – arrangements for virtual trainings, developing graphics, printing materials
  - Location – securing physical space
  - Scheduling – frequency and duration of trainings, as well as identifying dates and times for delivery of live content
- The lead and its partners will also need to develop an outreach plan to encourage enrollment/participation among West End residents. This will likely entail drafting marketing language and securing translation services, as well as getting connected with local media outlets, partner newsletters, and the communications and social media teams of partner organizations.

#### *Year 3 Action Steps*

- Begin deploying program.

### Funding: Needs and Sources

#### *Needs*

Resources to fund a portion of staff time and for financial coaches will be needed. Additionally, other direct costs like printing outreach or curriculum materials, space rentals, and more will be required. Expect a range of \$150,000-\$300,000 for the first three years.

#### *Sources*

Some of the funds needed for this strategy can be sourced from local financial institutions aiming to meet their Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) obligations, either by having their bank employees teach financial education, homebuyer education, savings, or youth money management or by providing loans and grants to nonprofits that deliver said curriculum. CDFIs and philanthropy can be an added source of grant funding to develop curriculum and staff the delivery of the curriculum.

### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – Not applicable for this action.
- *Private sector* – Local financial institutions would be a key stakeholder, not only as a potential lead for delivering the program, but also because of their data on demand for and uptake on financial services and products.
- *Nonprofit sector* – Existing nonprofit partners, particularly those who have trusted relationships with residents in the West End, may also be a strong lead partner organization for this strategy. They can leverage their knowledge of the needs of the community and familiarity with the residents they serve to help inform the content of the curriculum and to potentially deliver the program if a financial

institution is not suitable. Nonprofit partners can also help support with outreach by promoting the new program.

- *Philanthropic sector* – Philanthropy can serve as a source of grant funding to cover operational costs of the financial empowerment program.

#### Additional Resources

- [Financial Education Resources: Presentations, Curriculum, & Online Learning](#), National Financial Educators Council
- [Financial Education for Adults](#), Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
  - [Youth Financial Education](#)
  - [Tools and resources](#)

# Strategic Objective 3: Increase housing stability and quality and community control of land and housing

## Strategic Objective Targets

Below are targets that are anticipated to be achieved in the short term (three years), with the full implementation of the Action Plan and those that are anticipated to be achieved in five years, with the continuation of the strategies in the action plan and the addition of new strategies to advance the goals.

### Short-term Targets (Three Year)

- The Proactive Rental Inspection program informed by and in partnership with West End stakeholders is fully operational and enforced.
- New jobs for West End residents are created for either code enforcement and/or to rehab properties to respond to or prevent code violations.
- The West End has an organized tenants' association implementing education and advocacy campaigns.
- Land has been acquired and a co-developer partnership has been established to begin the creation of new housing in the West End.
- More homeowners in the West End are getting resources to rehab and maintain homes.

### Medium-term Targets (Five Year)

- Occupied Rehab
  - Homes rehabbed
  - People trained
  - Jobs created
  - Property value increased
  - Reduced home owner costs
  - Money invested
- Proactive rental inspection
  - People trained
  - Jobs created (eg inspectors, property maintenance)
  - Proactive rental inspection ordinance and program (re)designed with strong input from West End/tenants association
  - Proactive rental inspection implemented and enforced in the West End
  - Relocation assistance provided, as needed
  - Identified/registered all rental properties in the West End
- New quality housing created
  - Homes developed
  - Homes rehabbed
  - Reduced vacant, blighted property
  - CDC acquires, develops, rehabs property
  - People trained
  - Jobs created



- Approach in place to ensure increasing property values do not displace existing residents due to increasing property taxes
- Tenants' Association
  - Organized, active group
  - Changed policies to support tenant rights
  - Created a number of opportunities for tenants to purchase their rental property
- Homebuyer support
  - People trained through homebuyer counseling
  - Credit scores improved
  - Downpayment assistance provided
  - Homes purchases and owner occupied

### Background, justification, and description of impact area strategic objective

Housing that is stable, quality, builds assets and wealth, and is located in a safe neighborhood with amenities impacts an individual's upward mobility. The key findings from the West End assessment point to housing challenges on all of these fronts. The City of Rock Island's most recent Consolidated Plan (2019-2023) finds: "The most critical housing characteristic that causes instability and potential homelessness is the age and condition of Rock Island's housing stock," which is particularly troublesome in the West End. The City of Rock Island has identified areas of the West End as a targeted reinvestment area (TRA), as it was highlighted as a R/ECAP in the 2019 Regional Assessment of Impediments to Fair and Affordable Housing and it meets the City's definition of "deteriorated or deteriorating." As a result, the City will target code enforcement, infrastructure improvements, and housing programs to this area. This targeting (and the added recovery funds) provides an opportunity to make more significant headway on increasing housing stability and quality in the West End. The benefits of these improvements should accrue to West End residents. Combining strategies that enhance and target the planned programs with new strategies that increase West End community control over land and housing can better ensure multiple positive impacts for West End residents.

### Priority Actions

- **Action 3.1** Support the expansion of proactive rental inspection program to increase housing stability and quality, while protecting tenant rights
- **Action 3.2** Create a tenants association
- **Action 3.3** Create a housing supply pipeline for potential West End homeowners
- **Action 3.4** Establish West End housing rehab support program.

## Three-Year Plan by Priority Action

### Action 3.1: Support the (re)design, implementation, and enforcement of the City of Rock Island's proactive rental inspection ordinance

#### Description and key considerations

As described by ChangeLab Solutions in their *Guide to Proactive Rental Inspection Programs*, proactive rental inspection (PRI) programs are one way to alleviate housing quality issues. Unlike complaint-based rental inspection programs, PRI programs perform inspections on a regular schedule, reducing the likelihood that renters will be evicted or illegally punished for reporting hazards. PRI programs can work cooperatively with building owners to improve housing quality and preserve the existing stock of affordable housing by preventing buildings from deteriorating to the point where they can no longer be inhabited or where teardown and

replacement of the building makes more economic sense. Proactively inspecting rental housing to enforce housing codes helps localities keep people in their homes and protect tenant health and well-being. PRI programs can also be designed to minimize inequities that might arise from enforcement actions. To accomplish these goals effectively, PRI programs require strong housing codes, well-trained enforcement officers, and cross-agency collaboration. Agencies charged with conducting rental inspections must also partner with community groups, establish programs to assist residents and property owners, and collect and monitor data from the field.

Some localities, especially when first initiating a PRI program, choose to concentrate their efforts in particular neighborhoods or areas. This approach enables a locality to focus limited resources where they are most needed. Localities frequently focus on specific neighborhoods, based on the history of housing complaints and violations, the age of the housing stock, or the prevalence of rental units in the neighborhood. The West End meets the type of criteria localities typically use to determine neighborhood focus and the City of Rock Island already declared portions of the West End as a Targeted Reinvestment Area.

The City of Rock Island has an ordinance that created a Residential Registration Licensing program that requires an initial inspection as well as subsequent inspections one to four years later, depending on whether the building is new construction and/or the severity of code violations identified during the initial licensing inspection. There are also fees associated with licensing and inspections, which help fund the programs.<sup>5</sup> However, as reported by City officials, the City has never had the capacity to enforce these programs. In 2023, the City created an Inspections Commission whose primary duties are:

- Solicit community input on the adoption and development of codes.
- Advise the Mayor and City Council on building trades and matters to do with property management.
- Act as liaison between the City, agencies, associations and residents relative to programs and activities.
- Make recommendations on the development of new programs and activities.
- Monitor and evaluate programs and activities.
- Act as a quasi-adjudicative board of appeals when a property owner or tradesperson dispute the meaning or intent of an adopted code of the City including the building, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, or health codes.

There are nine members on the Inspection Commission, which consists primarily of representatives of the building trades, though a minimum of one restaurant owner or operator and one residential landlord is on the commission. There are no residential tenants or West End residents on the commission. City officials recognize they need partnership from tenants and tenant advocates to effectively enforce a proactive rental inspection program. When localities are trying to evaluate and understand existing housing conditions, community members can bring valuable experience and insight about what works, what isn't working, and what needs people have. Community members can also pull in new partners and resources and advocate for supportive policies when institutions cannot. In addition, community engagement efforts themselves can help to build trust and cohesion across communities, which can improve community health and advance health equity.

While a West End tenants' association (Action 3.2) will likely play a key and ongoing role in these actions, there are actions steps that will need to take place in the near term, prior to the creation and full functioning of a tenants' association, in order to seize the opportunity to inform the design and priorities of a refined proactive rental inspection program.

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<sup>5</sup> See ARTICLE VIII. RESIDENTIAL RENTAL PROPERTY

## Milestones over Three Years

- City designs new proactive rental inspection program, which is informed by tenants and West End residents and prioritizes the West End for implementation.
- City rolls out the program, in partnership with West End stakeholders.

## Action Steps

### *Year 1 Action Steps*

- Identify additional funding to support outreach, education, organizing, and advocacy for West End residents.

### *Year 2 Action Steps*

- Organize West End tenants and tenant advocates to engage with and inform the City's Inspection Commission, especially to inform the (re)design of the proactive rental inspection program and to prioritize the West End for its implementation.
- Examine the need and options (e.g. licensed third-party inspectors) for additional capacity outside of the City (staff and PRI-generated fines and fees) to inspect homes for the newly designed and prioritized proactive rental inspection program.
- If third-party inspectors are needed to supplement the capacity of the City, explore the possibility of training and certifying West End residents to become third-party inspectors as part of workforce development program.
- Train inspectors to serve the community, including interacting with different cultures, those who have limited English proficiency, those who have mental health changing; providing resources and information on available and relevant resources; among other topics.
- To coincide with the (re)launch of the proactive rental inspection program, conduct regular outreach and education to key stakeholders in the West End, especially tenants and landlords, on the proactive rental inspection program.
- If determined as a need and opportunity, create a workforce development program to train West End residents to become third-party inspectors.

### *Year 3 Action Steps*

- Continue conducting outreach and education to key stakeholders in the West End.

## Funding: Needs and Sources

The exact amount of funding needed to implement a PRI program, in general, will be based on a variety of factors, influenced in large part by the design and whether specific neighborhoods or building types are priorities, among other factors. Typically, PRI programs are funded by the fees and fines that are built into the program. These may not be sufficient, though, for a variety of reasons. Other potential funding sources include:

- Philanthropy
- Public-private partnerships with anchor institutions like local or regional hospitals and healthcare systems
- Federal sources like Community Development Block Grants

Funding needed to support the actions that are not (solely) led by the City, such as education, outreach, and organizing over the three year period may amount to approximately **\$200,000** to cover a portion of staff time from the designated community organization(s) to design and implement education, outreach, and organizing activities, including for direct costs like materials, event space rentals, stipends to enable community participation, etc. This funding amount does not include the potential action of creating and implementing a workforce development program to train West End residents to become licensed third-party inspectors.

#### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – Design, implement, enforce, and (primarily) fund a proactive rental inspection program.
- *Private sector* – Potentially serve as licensed-third party inspectors, if needed to supplement City capacity. Potential for public-private partnership with the City to fund the PRI program, especially hospitals and health systems.
- *Nonprofit sector* – Lead or support actions to educate and organize West End stakeholders both to inform the design of the PRI program, as well as the rollout and continued implementation of the program. Training inspectors to work in the West End community. Lead or support workforce development program to train West End residents in becoming licensed third-party inspectors, if determined as a need and desirable strategy.
- *Philanthropic sector* – Provide supplementary funding for the PRI program itself, to community organizations to support the PRI program, and/or to support a workforce development program to train West End residents in becoming licensed third-party inspectors.

#### Additional Resources

- A Guide to Proactive Rental Inspections. *ChangeLab Solutions*. 2022. <https://www.changelabsolutions.org/product/healthy-housing-through-proactive-rental-inspection>
- How to make proactive rental inspection effective. *National Center for Health Housing*. 2020. <https://nchh.org/resource-library/how-to-make-proactive-rental-inspection-effective.pdf>
- “Moline announces new inspection program for rental properties in 2024.” WQAD. December 5, 2023. <https://www.wqad.com/article/news/local/new-moline-renting-inspection-program-changes/526-cc863dee-2641-46ea-8194-ceb882eeed79>

Prior to 2024, only large, multi-family rental complexes were subject to annual inspections. The city's new program will expand that to all rental properties, including single-family. It will be fully funded by the fees and fines associated with the program.

### Action 3.2: Create a tenants’ association

#### Description and key considerations

Nearly 60% of West End homes are occupied by renters (compared to 38.9% for the City of Rock Island as a whole), many of whom experience housing cost burdens and high levels of instability. Insecure housing is known to contribute to negative education and health outcomes, undermine economic mobility, and sap residents of the ability to fully participate in their communities, all of which became exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. To address these issues, more and more cities around the country are implementing new

programs and policies aimed at keeping the most vulnerable renters in their homes by preventing eviction and other forms of displacement.

These programmatic and policy-based interventions could be paired with community-led organizing through a tenants' association to ensure that tenants have a stronger collective voice and mechanisms to maintain greater accountability on the implementation of these interventions. Tenants' associations are "groups of tenants in a single building or in a town that work to improve the conditions of rental housing," and "work to protect and increase the legal rights of tenants," as a collective. This kind of collective organizing can impact renters' access to stable, quality rental housing and potentially prevent displacement by increasing renters' access to information, resources, and advocates. This action would thus be oriented towards renters in the West End.

### Milestones over Three Years

- West End CDC or other backbone organization has comprehensive inventory of rental housing needs, quantitative and qualitative data on rental units and their residents, and factors contributing to renter instability in the West End.
- Tenants' association begins convening.
- Tenants' association establishes prioritized plan of action.
- Kickoff renter education campaign and public advocacy campaign to critical implementers.

### Action Steps

#### *Year 1 Action Steps*

- Due to the importance of having a trusted organization to facilitate the launch of a tenants' association, the first year will be centered on the establishment of a CDC and relationship/trust building with partners who can serve in a tenant facilitation capacity in the West End.

#### *Year 2 Action Steps*

- The West End CDC or other backbone organization should conduct initial outreach to renters in the West End to identify the primary factors contributing to rental housing insecurity and shared goals that could be addressed through organizing and advocacy. This step requires a baseline understanding of where tenants are renting their homes (i.e. in multifamily apartment buildings or scattered site single-family homes) and an outreach strategy to establish safety and trust.
- West End CDC or other backbone organization should also engage existing housing advocacy and counseling agencies to get their perspectives on the trends and dynamics facing Rock Island Renters, as well as insights into the efficacy of existing programs and tenant protection policies.
- West End CDC or other backbone organization work in partnership with local legal aid housing professionals to conduct an inventory of existing policies and programs aimed at supporting existing renters, ensuring high quality housing, and reducing the likelihood of eviction and other involuntary moves.
- Once trust is established, bring interested tenants together to establish shared goals and logistics for forming an association.
  - Stakeholders will eventually need to determine whether a tenants' rights organization is more feasible on a rental property-by-rental property basis or if there is strength/interest/capacity in numbers for forming a comprehensive West End tenants' association.

- The West End CDC or other backbone organization that lead Year 1 information gathering should also share out their findings so that the tenants’ association can prioritize needs, with the CDC or other backbone organization facilitating prioritization as needed.

#### *Year 3 Action Steps*

- Establish a plan of action with the support of local housing experts; the action plan could include drafting formal written requests or facilitating meetings between renters and property management, City leadership or code enforcement, mediators, legal aid organizations, and other key stakeholders.
- Prepare and launch a renter education campaign that informs renters of their legal rights as tenants, fair housing laws, information on eviction diversion and rental assistance programs, and other resources to empower them.

#### Funding: Needs and Sources

##### *Needs*

Tenants’ association are typically volunteer-led efforts, with nonprofits and legal aid organizations providing pro-bono services. The tenants’ association may also desire philanthropic dollars to compensate tenant leaders/representatives for their efforts and time. Depending on the number of tenant members nominated to the associations’ leadership, the West End CDC may want to consider budgeting for \$5,000 per year for each tenant leader for Years 2 and 3, i.e. **\$50,000** should be budgeted for the duration of this action plan if there are 5 tenant leaders being compensated for Years 2 and 3.

##### *Sources*

Depending on the challenges identified, the city may need to allocate funding and/or private foundations may need to establish a fund for solutions that the tenants’ association successfully advocates for.

#### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – The **City of Rock Island** plays a role in tenants’ rights by establishing codes, building standards for rental properties, monitoring/inspecting/enforcing the habitability of rental units, and by partnering with legal aid organizations and nonprofits to ensure that renters have information on tenants’ rights. The City could serve as additional support to a tenants’ association by establishing a proactive rental inspection program (Strategy 3.1). Additionally, the city can facilitate tenants’ rights by ensuring that landlords are aware of fair housing laws and by potentially serving in a mediation/facilitative capacity through programs like the City of Tacoma’s Landlord-Tenant Program.

The City of Rock Island’s Code of Ordinances and building standards (and the city’s ability to effectively enforce them) are a first line of defense against poor living conditions and code violations on rental properties. The City’s new Inspections Commission will want to consider reviewing the latest best practices for rental property standards in the event that the current code hasn’t been updated recently. While the City alone has the sole liability/authority to inspect rental properties for code violations, tenants’ associations can serve as a vehicle for tenants to feel more empowered to report code violations to the city and to help facilitate the collection of data/documentation of violations for city inspection processes.

Some tenant protection strategies, such as just cause eviction requirements or rent withholding rights when landlords delay making critical repairs, require city ordinances as they’re not currently protected

under Illinois state law. There is often a close interaction between local tenant protection policy and state law that must be carefully evaluated. For example, the State of Illinois does have a Residential Tenants' Right to Repair Act (Illinois Compiled Statutes 765 ILCS 742/) that would allow tenants to make their own repairs and deduct the expenses from their rent without the passage of new city ordinances. Local rent stabilization or rent control, on the other hand, is currently prohibited by state preemption law. As renter needs are assessed and priority strategies are identified, close attention must be paid to the opportunities and limits of local legislative authority.

- *Private sector* – Not applicable for this action.
- *Nonprofit sector* – A backbone organization, like a CDC, can sometimes serve as supportive infrastructure for a tenants' association, particularly where tenants are not yet at a stage to engage with key partners or where a trusted and familiar community organization could facilitate tenant engagement. **Legal aid organizations**, such as Prairie State Legal Services, can provide ongoing legal expertise to LMI renters on tenants' rights, fair housing, and eviction prevention. Tenants will also need information from **other community organizations and nonprofits** that provide wraparound services such as emergency rental assistance, relocation services, and renter education (rights, how to organize, rental repair guidance, resources, etc.) that can support housing stability and quality for renters in the West End as they organize.
- *Philanthropic sector* – Philanthropy can play a role in funding the various stages of tenant engagement and organizing. For example, private foundations may need to establish a fund for solutions that the tenants' association successfully advocates for.

#### Additional Resources

- Local & State Resources
  - [Rock Island County's Eviction Diversion Program](#)
    - [The Justice Network](#), Project NOW
  - Rock Island-based Prairie State Legal Services' [Fair Housing Project](#) and [Community Outreach & Education on Rights](#)
  - [Law Center for Better Housing \(LCBH\)](#) – Chicago-area nonprofit law firm that “focuses solely on LMI renters in the private housing market.” They provide direct legal services and social service supports, conduct community engagement with renters and landlords, and do renter advocacy work.
  - [Illinois Department of Human Rights Fair Housing Division](#)
- Best Practices
  - [The White House Blueprint for a Renters Bill of Rights](#)
  - [Tenants Association](#), BASTA (Building and Strengthening Tenant Action) – step-by-step guide to forming a tenants' association
  - [Tenants' Rights in New Jersey](#) guide – an example of a comprehensive resource for renters that could be replicated and adapted to Rock Island.
  - [When You Rent: A Rental Housing Handbook](#) – another example of a comprehensive resource created by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Department and Legal Aid of North Carolina
  - [Organizing Neighborhood Equity \(ONE\) DC's Homes for All](#) – capacity building campaign for tenants' associations

- [Home for Good: Strategies to Prevent Eviction and Promote Housing Stability](#), Enterprise Community Partners

### Action 3.3: Create a housing supply pipeline for potential West End homeowners

#### Description and key considerations

A key component of asset building and wealth generation is homeownership, but in most housing markets, homeownership is often out of reach for LMI households and households of color like those in the West End.<sup>6</sup> Many factors contribute to this Black-White homeownership gap in general, including disparities in household income and credit scores, but the West End can begin to combat some of this gap by leveraging a key asset: vacant housing and land. The census tracts in the West End consistently have some of the highest amounts of vacant properties (residential and commercial) and the highest percentages of vacant addresses out of total addresses in the City of Rock Island, as well as some of the lowest homeownership rates in the city. The West End CDC can leverage the availability of vacant housing and vacant land by acquiring these properties to create a pipeline of housing supply for potential homeowners, thereby beginning to close the homeownership gap and increasing housing quality and safety in the neighborhood. After the first three years in which partners can establish critical relationships, bring in capital, and begin acquiring land, the partners can then continue to facilitate homeownership in the West End by then 1) rehabilitating existing housing on acquired properties and/or 2) constructing new housing (which may require demolition on some properties) to sell to new West End homebuyers.

To complement this strategy after the first three years, partners in the West End should build off the financial literacy and coaching program (Action 2.4) and develop or target existing homebuyer counseling programs to the West End to create a pipeline of potential homebuyers.

#### Milestones over Three Years

- Goals and criteria for acquisition strategy determined.
- First parcel(s) of land acquired.
- Co-developer partnership formalized.

#### Action Steps

##### Year 1 Action Steps

- Connect with Quad Cities Land Bank Authority and other mission-aligned partners who acquire and develop land in the area to:
  - Build an understanding of market dynamics and lessons learned through the acquisition/development process, AND
  - Identify an experienced, mission-aligned partner who could eventually serve as a partner for acquiring and/or holding land.

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<sup>6</sup> Choi, Jung Hyun, Alanna McCargo, Michael Neal, Laurie Goodman, and Caitlin Young, (2019), *Explaining the Black-White Homeownership Gap: A Closer Look at Disparities across Local Markets*, Washington, DC: Urban Institute, [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/101160/explaining\\_the\\_black-white\\_homeownership\\_gap\\_2.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/101160/explaining_the_black-white_homeownership_gap_2.pdf).



### *Year 2 Action Steps*

- The partners will need to establish criteria and goals for land to be acquired to inform the acquisition strategy. The partnership will need to determine what types of homeownership opportunities they'd like to generate a supply for, all of which may have different lot requirements (minimum size, lot configuration, allowable zoning, etc.). For example, the partnership may identify that they want to create a supply of exclusively single-family rehabilitated homes; alternately they may want to do a mix of single family, duplexes, and/or multifamily condo development. This could be informed by procuring a market study, but keep in mind that there will eventually be efforts to build up a pipeline of West End homebuyers whose demand for certain types of homeownership units may not be adequately reflected in a market study.
- To continue to build out this acquisition strategy, the partners will then want to develop an inventory of potential West End properties that could become a part of a housing pipeline for potential West End homeowners. This can be done with the use of data from the Rock Island County Assessment Office, City of Rock Island CED, and others so that the partnership can affirm that the properties in the inventory align with established criteria and goals.
- Information in the acquisition inventory pipeline can then be used as a basis for funding requests to philanthropy and financing sources.
- A lead partner will then be able to begin acquiring land to hold during the rehabilitation or redevelopment process.

### *Year 3 Action Steps*

- Continue acquiring land.
- The lead partner will also need to identify a co-developer partner who can manage the actual redevelopment of the property or properties. This co-developer will not only need to be mission-aligned, but they'll need to be experienced in developing the types of housing that the partnership planned for in Years 1 and 2 (in terms of housing typology and activities like rehabilitation, demolition, or new construction). They'll ideally have existing relationships with potential financing partners and with the contractor and materials supplier ecosystem in the Quad Cities region or have the capability of efficiently establishing those relationships. A co-developer agreement laying out the terms of the partnership will be needed before any work can begin.

## Funding: Needs and Sources

### *Needs*

In the first year of this strategy, the MLK Center and its partners will have a stronger grasp of market trends and the associated costs of acquiring land in the West End to build a property pipeline for homebuyers. The partnership's primary funding needs in the first three years will be related to securing financing to put money down and, eventually, fully acquire properties and clear any titles. Costs related to rehabilitating or demolishing and redeveloping housing stock will be incurred in the fourth year or later (and are accordingly excluded from this action plan). Some key inputs for determining exact costs include:

- Whether the property has a structure,
- Whether the property has a clear title, and
- Who currently owns the property (an out-of-state owner can delay the acquisition process which can add to costs; a local partner who owns the desired property may convey favorable or below-market sales terms).

If land is acquired through the Quad Cities Land Bank Authority or through the City, the partners may be able to negotiate to reduce overall expenditures through reduced impact fees (permits, extending or accessing utilities, rezoning requests, etc.) or property disposition fees. For example, the sale price of most City-owned property is **between \$1,200 and \$2,000 per parcel** including closing costs, but some parcels in the West End are currently listed for \$1. Assuming the higher end of the parcel sales cost and if the partners focus their acquisition efforts on these low-cost municipally owned or QCLBA owned properties, they could expect to budget for **\$120,000 to acquire** up to 55 city-owned parcels not earmarked for the community garden program. The partners may want to secure **up to \$150,000** to account for legal fees and other administrative expenses related to property acquisition.

#### *Sources*

Philanthropy will play a key role in helping the partners establish an initial capital stack for acquisition and development of property to create a housing supply pipeline. Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) and other financial institutions may also be a source of financing for hard costs (the physical construction of the housing) as well as soft costs (site acquisition, environmental remediation, insurance, architectural services, etc.). Experienced co-developer partners will also likely have banks that they typically work with to secure financing on their other residential development projects.

#### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – The Quad Cities Land Bank Authority (QCLBA) is an intergovernmental agency that should be a key partner in efforts to acquire and develop a housing pipeline in the West End. Public sector land banks are uniquely positioned to support the revitalization of housing and properties 1) where the private market will not intervene and 2) where there are concerns that the private market will intervene in ways that displace or alter existing communities. As such, the partnership should leverage QCLBA in the West End. The City of Rock Island also owns a significant amount of land in the West End and could serve as a key source of property supply for a housing pipeline. Additionally, the City of Rock Island and Rock Island County will serve as key data partners for property acquisition and helping the partners confirm the feasibility of developing certain types of housing (i.e., zoning changes needed, local building codes, permitting requirements, etc.).
- *Private sector* – Private banks and financial institutions can be another source of acquisition and eventually development financing. Additionally, mission-aligned co-developer partners from the private sector should be considered by the partnership.
- *Nonprofit sector* – Several local nonprofit partners, such as Rock Island Economic Growth Corporation, DARI, and others have insight that can be shared on housing development dynamics in Rock Island. One (or more of these organization) should serve as a lead partner in acquiring and holding land, and may even be well-positioned to be a co-developer if their non-profit organizations have experience in that arena.
- *Philanthropic sector* – Philanthropy can provide PRI and capital for the partners to fund acquisition and development.

#### Additional Resources

- [Quad Cities Land Bank Authority](#)
- [Available City Properties](#), City of Rock Island Community & Economic Development
  - [Available Property Inventory Database](#)
  - [Available Property Inventory Map](#)

### Action 3.4: Establish West End housing rehab support program

#### Description and key considerations

Some homeowners in the West End face challenges in maintaining their properties and paying housing expenses—fluctuating or unexpected costs that are often difficult for those on fixed incomes or among homeowners already paying a large share of their income on their housing costs. Several resources, like rehabilitation loans, property tax exemptions and deferrals, and utility assistance are available for some Rock Island residents. However, many homeowners do not take advantage of these programs either because they are not aware of them, are not eligible, or there have not been sufficient resources to meet the needs of all homeowners.

One way to stabilize low-income homeowners in the West End is by helping them rehab and maintain safe, high-quality homes. This approach will enable homeowners to remain in their homes for longer by supporting homeowners with rehab and repair efforts that ensure long-term livability and safety of their homes. A CDC can support this approach by offering free and discounted rehab supplies, partnering with non-profits providing rehab and repair services, providing home repair trainings, and serving as a conduit for grants and other forms of financing. This action would be oriented towards homeowners in the West End, particularly vulnerable homeowners such as those that are LMI, elderly, cost-burdened, or in older housing. Significant portions of the West End are already located within the City's "West" Targeted Area Repair Rehabilitation Program (TARRP).

#### Milestones over Three Years

- West End CDC and partners conduct an assessment of existing housing rehab resources.
- Host a homeowner resources education fair in the West End.
- Launch a new pilot program.

#### Action Steps

##### *Year 1 Action Steps*

- Due to the importance of having a trusted organization to facilitate a housing rehab support program, the first year will be centered on the establishment of a West End CDC and relationship building with homeowners in the West End.

##### *Year 2 Action Steps*

- Once the West End CDC is established, the group should conduct a comprehensive assessment of the suite of programs that help homeowners consider and fund rehabilitation. This assessment should help the West End CDC determine whether existing rehab programs can be improved upon, or whether the West End CDC should pilot a West End specific program.
  - In the first three months, the working group should develop an evaluation plan to guide their work.
  - In months 3-12, the working group should then begin collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to understand gaps in existing programs, opportunities for program improvement, and the need for new targeted pilot programs to serve West End residents. Data should be collected from West End homeowners on awareness of, perceptions of, interest in, and accessibility of existing rehab programs, as well as from, existing service and program providers on total and average amount of funds distributed by program, households served, households who applied, potentially demographic data on program applicants, some

information on leading causes of denials, and any administrative, political or policy barriers that may be affecting the operation of their programs.

- This data can also be used to develop a homeowner resource guide of existing program.

#### *Year 3 Action Steps*

- If a West End-centric pilot program is deemed most appropriate, the West End CDC will need to work with the City CED department, local nonprofits, and other funders to identify how much funding would be needed to fund each potential household and what funding models would be most appropriate (grants, forgivable loans, etc.). Any informal partnerships used to assess the existing rehab program landscape will need to be formalized with MOUs or other written agreements. Additionally, funds will need to be secured and key program details such as eligibility, staffing logistics, policies & procedures, and communications will need to be ironed out during this phase as well.
- Once the above critical details on the West End-centric program are ironed out, the West End CDC should develop a proactive communications and outreach strategy to broadcast the forthcoming rehab program and secure early interest in participating. The communications and outreach strategy should prioritize households who shared their feedback during the assessment phase, and provide a variety of opportunities for prospective participants to stay informed, i.e., in-person events, social media posts, information guides, etc.

#### Funding: Needs and Sources

##### *Needs*

The city's current housing rehabilitation program should serve as a model for estimated housing rehabilitation costs (including labor and materials), with adaptations made for West End specific housing considerations like age and size of homes. Program data, such as total program expenditures and average allocations per household, is likely already tracked on a routine basis through the City's CDBG reporting and can help the West End CDC estimate total pilot program costs in the West End. As a West End-specific rehab program would likely be layered onto existing city funding, the total cost for this strategy for three years could be:

- \$100,000 to \$150,000 for rehab funds (\$10,000 per home for 10 to 15 homes starting in Year 3)
- \$15,000 for deploying marketing materials or hosting virtual and/or in-person trainings & events
- Total: **\$115,000 - \$165,000**

Funding covering compensation staff time is covered by funding estimations under Action 0.1.

##### *Sources*

Sources for a West End-specific homeowner rehab pilot could include city-administered CDBG, Illinois Homeowner Assistance Fund (ILHAF), and Project NOW Community Action Agency funding. The CDC may want to partner with CDFIs, philanthropic partners, and other community-based lenders to create creative lending products or services that help West End homeowners overcome rehab funding barriers.

#### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – City of Rock Island CED Department will be a vital partner in this strategy design and implementation in several ways. They can provide key program data on existing rehab programs that can inform how these programs could be adapted, how they are performing, and what resources and partners have already been leveraged. Additionally, as the administrator of most of the public funds

available for owner-occupied rehab, such as CDBG and HOME funds, stakeholders can partner with CED to identify potential ways that public funds can be leveraged alongside other sources of funding. The city could also establish rehab guides with approved rehab design specifications to make the process more straightforward for homeowners and the contractors working on their homes.

- *Private sector* – Businesses serving the Quad Cities, such as hardware/home improvement stores, contractors, and construction material suppliers, could support this strategy by donating materials, providing home maintenance demonstration classes (for minor repairs), or establishing a network of labor and materials for homeowners to tap into for major rehab projects.
- *Nonprofit sector* – Trusted local nonprofits will likely need to 1) provide technical assistance to LMI homeowners trying to navigate rehabilitation programs, 2) track valuable program data, 3) have a direct relationship with public and private funders, and 4) support with advocacy for program implementation and/or improvements. There’s also a role for Community-Based Development Organizations (CBDOs) to play, as a lead partner that can provide technical assistance to homeowners seeking to understand how to go about rehabilitating their homes, which could include how to assess what needs to be rehabilitated, cost estimating, how to select contractors, or how to DIY the rehabilitation tasks.
- *Philanthropic sector* – Local Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFIs), community lenders, and other financial institutions may need to be invited to collaborate on the creation of new lending products to finance residential rehabilitation.

#### Additional Resources

- [Homeowner rehabilitation assistance programs](#), Local Housing Solutions – ideas for different rehab programs across the country
- [Filling the Gaps: Helping Struggling Property Owners Connect to Rehab and Repair Resources](#), Center for Community Progress
- [City of Rock Island Housing Rehabilitation](#) Program, City of Rock Island

# Strategic Objective 4: Increase the economic vitality of the West End

## Strategic Objective Targets

Below are targets that are anticipated to be achieved in the short term (three years), with the full implementation of the Action Plan and those that are anticipated to be achieved in five years, with the continuation of the strategies in the action plan and the addition of new strategies to advance the goals.

### Short-term Targets (Three Year)

- Businesses in the West End getting the support and resources they need to survive and thrive.
- The City has a disadvantaged businesses (DBE) ordinance in place that is operating effectively.
- DBEs are prepared to take advantage of contracting opportunities from the City and major employers and institutions in the region.
- Partnership, funding and financing in place to launch a community grocery store in the West End.

### Medium-term Targets (Five Year)

- West End community grocery store serving residents with healthy, affordable food.
- A community-minded bank has opened in the West End.
- Have three community navigators to support businesses
  - Navigators have assisted 20 businesses/entrepreneurs to date with growing or starting their business
- West End businesses (current and new) have access to business loans and lines of credit.
- West End businesses experience revenue growth.
- Chambers of Commerce and other institutions consider the West End to be an important and powerful constituency.
- The city has an established and functional DBE policy, West End businesses are enrolled and gaining contracting opportunities through it.
- The local business registry is accurate for the West End
- Outside investment has been attracted to support economic vitality

## Background, justification, and description of impact area strategic objective

There are several notable programs and investments targeted or available to the West End to attract and support businesses and improve services and amenities available. These include, but are not limited to, façade improvement programs, small business technical assistance, and a planned (though not yet confirmed) mixed-use development that is intended to include a grocery store. However, the West End is still struggling—with few thriving businesses and living wage jobs and a notable absence of much-needed amenities and services, such as a grocery store, health services, and community facilities that can serve all West End residents, and more. For the West End to become a community that builds the wealth, power, and livability of its residents and a preferred place to live and thrive, there must be more (and more targeted) investment to support, grow, and attract businesses and entrepreneurs and to provide much-needed services and amenities to all community members.

## Priority Actions

- **Action 4.1** Adopt a community navigator model to support West End businesses and entrepreneurs
- **Action 4.2** Prepare businesses to gain contracting opportunities
- **Action 4.3** Explore the creation of a community grocery store in the West End

The Economic Vitality Working Group prioritized the above actions to focus on for the next three years. The other strategies related to this objective listed in the original West End Community Assessment and Recommendations Report that may still be explored as part of achieving the long-term vision and explored in the future include:

- Build and resource a large facility in the West End to house community groups, programs, and services.
- Leverage publicly owned and underutilized properties in the West End.
- Catalyze development on 11<sup>th</sup> Street corridor to attract more needed services and amenities.

Crosscutting Action 0.2 in this Action Plan: Explore and support partnerships to redevelop Franklin Field would certainly serve as an example of leveraging publicly owned and underutilized property and, depending on what gets built on the field, could also serve as an opportunity to build and resource a large facility to house community groups, programs, and services for the West End.

## Three-Year Plan by Priority Action

### Action 4.1: Adopt a community navigator model to support West End businesses and entrepreneurs

#### Description and key considerations

Business ownership and self-employment can be valuable assets for economic mobility. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, self-employed individuals are wealthier than their non-self-employed peers. However, Black Americans do not benefit from business ownership nearly as much as White Americans, with business equity making up a much larger share of White families' nonfinancial assets than Black families' (33% vs. 12.5%).<sup>7</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic further exasperated this disparity, as between February and April 2020 alone, the number of Black business owners dropped by 41%, compared to only 17% for White business owners. Among the causes of this is the fact that Black-owned businesses are less likely to have strong bank relationships and are less likely to access or apply for bank financing and financial relief programs.<sup>8</sup>

Now, coming out of the height of the pandemic, however, the number of new Black-owned businesses has skyrocketed, due to access to new capital resources, previously unparalleled support for Black businesses, and a greater focus on online business.<sup>9</sup> This national trend creates an even greater need for local business support networks to help connect existing, new, and aspiring small businesses and entrepreneurs to existing resources. Although Enterprise's Phase 1 Assessment report focused this strategy around SBA's [Community Navigator Pilot Program](#), which is no longer open, there is still opportunity for the West End CDC to run a similar program for the West End to help connect businesses to the existing resources and assistance in the Quad Cities region.

The key role for a West End CDC in running a community navigator program is in serving as the hub in a hub-and-spoke model, connecting businesses and entrepreneurs to the resources and assistance offered by spoke

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Small Business Administration, (2021), "Small Business Facts: The Importance of Business Ownership to Wealth," <https://advocacy.sba.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Small-Business-Facts-Business-Owner-Wealth.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Kramer Mills, Claire and Jessica Battisto, (2020), "Double Jeopardy: COVID-19's Concentrated Health and Wealth Effects in Black Communities," Federal Reserve Bank of New York, [https://www.newyorkfed.org/medialibrary/media/smallbusiness/DoubleJeopardy\\_COVID19andBlackOwnedBusinesses](https://www.newyorkfed.org/medialibrary/media/smallbusiness/DoubleJeopardy_COVID19andBlackOwnedBusinesses).

<sup>9</sup> Fazio, E. Catherine et al., (2021), *How is COVID Changing the Geography of Entrepreneurship? Evidence from the Startup Cartography Project*, NBER Working Paper Series, [https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w28787/w28787.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w28787/w28787.pdf).

organizations in the region. The specific work done by the West End CDC could vary depending on the perceived need of local businesses and entrepreneurs but would most likely require staff dedicated to small business support work. These community navigators' primary function would be to be available to meet with local business owners and entrepreneurs to connect them with existing resources and assistance programs to help them start, grow, and/or sustain their business and, if deemed a gap necessary for the West End CDC to fill, provide business coaching and business training courses. This would require navigators to maintain a list of the existing resources available to businesses in the area.

Navigators could connect business owners to these and other providers, assist with applications to their and other programs, and any other support activities deemed helpful. It will be important that the CDC provides a continuum of support, from ideation phase support to entrepreneurs to specific support to more established businesses.

The CDC could also explore partnership with Rock Island High School for a young entrepreneur program within the school, that could involve community navigators coming to speak with students about the steps to starting a business and the resources that can help them do so. Similar programming could also be held at the CDC, inviting West End youth with or without an existing business idea to come learn about entrepreneurship and starting a business.

The West End, specifically to fill existing gaps in the local business support ecosystem. These existing resources may not be targeted to the West End, may not meet needs unique to West End businesses, or West End business owners may have difficulty accessing or may not be aware of these resources, and more. Beneficiary targets include:

- existing West End small business owners, and
- entrepreneurs and prospective small business starters. The community navigator program should not only help existing businesses, but also help residents turn their business ideas into reality with actionable plans. This also includes educating local students and youth on business ownership to help encourage future growth of the West End business community.

#### Milestones over Three Years

- West End CDC establishes a business support program and hires 2-4 "community navigators" to lead these services. These community navigators should be community members with business experience, to ensure that they are not only knowledgeable about entrepreneurship, but about the community and its people as well. Community members will feel more comfortable coming to people they recognize for this support.
- West End CDC develops a database to house the catalogue of available business support programs in the area. This would begin as an inward facing tool to track existing resources, but could eventually be made outward facing on a business support services webpage.
- West End CDC publishes outreach/media tools to publicize the upcoming availability of the CDC's business support services.
- West End CDC begins hosting, as deemed helpful/necessary, business courses and business coaching to local business owners and entrepreneurs. See example of similar services from the [New Covenant CDC](#) in the North Lawndale community of Chicago, IL.



## Action Steps

### Year 1 Action Steps

- Action steps not prioritized in Year 1.

### Year 2 Action Steps

- Convene/speak with local residents, entrepreneurs, and business owners to better understand the business community: types of industry, where businesses are located, who runs businesses, etc. This will also be an opportunity to learn from the community what they would want to see in the West End CDC's business support services. This initial trust building with the community is key to encourage business owners and entrepreneurs to actually seek the CDC's help.
- Map the ecosystem of existing resources in the West End, in Rock Island, and in the Quad Cities region, such as those listed above. This should include organizations currently providing similar support and referral services, technical assistance to businesses, and those providing capital resources to businesses, such as microlenders, CDFIs, and banks.
- Compare the needs expressed by the community with the catalogue of existing services and programs in the area to identify potential gaps that the West End CDC should look to fill within its own business support program.
- Design community navigator and business support program. Consider whether the West End CDC will focus on improving access to existing resources or if it also will create and provide new workforce development and/or business support services. This design decision will greatly inform funding needs, hiring, and more.
- Develop a staffing plan and budget needed to implement program as designed.
- Identify and secure funding.

### Year 3 Action Steps

- Hire staff, AmeriCorps VISTAs, and/or contract consultants based on staffing plan outlined in Year 2.
- Launch the program.

## Funding: Needs and Sources

### Needs

Overall, the funding needed to get the community navigator program up and running is estimated to total between **\$500k and \$1 million**. The upper limit of \$1 million is based off of the Tier 3 awards from SBAs navigator program, which awarded a maximum of \$1 million to local grantees serving populations under 500,000.

Additional funding could be needed for the operation of those services and programs, depending on what they offer. For example, business classes led by the CDC may need funding to supply learning resources or to bring in business experts to lead specific learning sessions.

### Sources

- [AmeriCorps VISTA](#) – Opportunity to receive an embedded volunteer to serve as a community navigator. VISTA members serve for one year to help build the capacity of nonprofit organizations or public agencies.
- [AmeriCorps State and National Grants](#) – Opportunity to receive an embedded volunteer to serve as a community navigator. AmeriCorps State/National members also serve for one year, but while VISTA

members are intended for capacity building work, AmeriCorps State/National members are more focused on hands-on work directly serving the public.

- Monitor the U.S. Small Business Administration’s page for grants for community organizations that support small business growth and development: [Grants for community organizations](#)
- [EDA Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs](#) – Economic Adjustment Assistance program may be applicable to provide funding for some business support services.
- [SBA Community Navigator Pilot Program](#) – Continue to monitor the SBA’s Community Navigator Pilot Program in case it returns in the future.

### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – Connection and collaboration with existing business support service providers in the public sector, such as the City of Rock Island and the Illinois Small Business Development Center, will be necessary, both to ensure that the CDC’s services fill existing gaps, particularly those that exist in the West End, and that these providers can be partners for client referrals.

Rock Island-Milan School District, and more specifically Rock Island High School, could be important partners if there is a need and desire for educational programming on entrepreneurship and business operations for local students and youth. This programming could take place in schools, at CDC facilities, or elsewhere.

- *Private sector* – Similar to the public sector, local workforce training providers must be consulted early on to ensure the CDC’s services fill the existing service gaps and that these providers are partners to whom community navigators can refer residents when needed.

Local business owners and employers should be consulted in the planning phase of this work to gain an understanding of local business climate and what support business owners would like from a community navigator program.

- *Nonprofit sector* – Nonprofits providing business support services in the West End should also be consulted to understand existing gaps for the CDC’s programming to fill. These providers can also be partners to whom community navigators can refer residents when needed.
- *Philanthropic sector* – Philanthropic foundations could serve as funders to support the employment of community navigators or the operations of the business support programs and services provided.

### Additional Resources

- Case studies
  - [New Covenant CDC](#) – New Covenant CDC in the North Lawndale community of Chicago provides business support services, including leading courses on business financial management, one-on-one business coaching, hands-on business training, and business workshops.
  - [New Kensington CDC](#) – New Kensington CDC in Philadelphia provides technical assistance in-house to small businesses and keeps an extensive catalogue of available resources from external partners, including funding opportunities, business guides and tools, and business education and consulting support.

- [NEI Neighborhood Business Initiative](#) – This NEI initiative in the Detroit area was designed to help advocate for local businesses, better position small businesses to access capital resources, and promote available retail and commercial spaces for small businesses.
- Toolkits, etc.
  - [Entrepreneurial Ecosystems and the Role of Commercial Districts](#) – Short article from Main Street America on the importance of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial ecosystems to cities and how to make these networks strong.
  - [Building Equitable Local Ecosystems for Small Business](#) – Guide to creating strong local small business ecosystems.
  - [Analysis of Small Business Development Strategies](#) – Analyzing the efficacy of the small business development strategies and ecosystems in the U.S.’s ten largest cities through small business ecosystems framework.
  - [Creating a Robust Network for Small Business Support](#) – Guide to small business support networks.

## Action 4.2: Prepare businesses to gain contracting opportunities

### Description and key considerations

Another way to support West End businesses and entrepreneurs is to establish a DBE program and conduct targeted outreach and capacity strengthening to West End business owners. Many communities have local purchasing preferences, recognizing that their spending – on schools, infrastructure, and services – can provide a positive impact on the local economy. In 2019, the City of Rock Island partnered with Augustana College to study DBEs within the area that perform work on public works projects. As part of this effort, the City of Rock Island sought to develop a list of DBEs for future consideration in City projects. DBE programs attempt to remedy ongoing discrimination and the effects of past discrimination in the procurement of goods and services by the public sector.

The City of Rock Island CED Department and City Manager can establish purchasing policies for City, while anchor institutions like major employers/companies (e.g. John Deere, health systems, school systems, etc.) in the region can also lead development of DBE purchasing policies for their own institutions. The West End CDC could support these efforts by cataloguing and engaging with small business owners in the West End to identify who could potentially benefit from such a policy and what supports they may need to be competitive.

Depending on the City’s status on implementing a Minority Business Enterprise/Woman Business Enterprise/Section 3 Initiative as part of the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program, the West End CDC could be a key data partner and accountability advocate on behalf of DBEs in the West End. The West End CDC could also launch an advocacy campaign to the anchor institutions in the Quad Cities that don’t yet have DBE purchasing policies that West End businesses could benefit from. The West End CDC can also play a role in convening business development partners who can connect small businesses with the trainings and resources that they need.

### Milestones over Three Years

- Launch West End DBE support program that aligns with the City’s DBE initiatives.

## Action Steps

### Year 1 Action Steps

- Reconnect with the City of Rock Island CED department to understand:
  - the status of the Minority Business Enterprise/Woman Business Enterprise/Section 3 Initiative,
  - the status of the development of a DBE data collection and bid opportunity system,
  - whether any DBE goals have been set for city contracting, and
  - what wraparound supports are being offered or going to be offered to potential DBEs.

### Year 2 Action Steps

- Develop an inventory survey of or conduct a focus group with potential DBEs, to assess their capacity to contract with the City and anchor institutions, what kinds of contracting opportunities they are interested in, what barriers they face, and what supports they may need to be competitive.
- If the focus group or small businesses surveyed express interest in contracting with anchor institutions, the West End CDC and its partners will want to do outreach to said anchor institutions so that they can prepare DBEs appropriately.
- Convene business development partners who can provide capacity building support to potential DBEs.
- The partners would ideally wait until the City clarifies what its DBE goals are, but the West End CDC and its business development partners could design a program offering 1:1 support to potential DBEs. The program should include guidance on:
  - the city's (or anchor institution's) requirements and bid process,
  - best practices for contracting with a city,
  - a list of curated training providers and procurement events and opportunities, and
  - individual coaching.

### Year 3 Action Steps

- Launch the West End DBE support program.

## Funding: Needs and Sources

### Needs

No additional funding should be needed to establish the policy beyond staff resources of time. However, there would be implications for resources/city staff time to implement. The City will need to determine if existing staffing could absorb this function.

### Sources

Philanthropic funding and/or existing small business support service providers would need to focus resources on capacity building for small business to be eligible and competitive for these opportunities by offering funding and support to secure needed trainings and certifications.

## Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – The City of Rock Island is truly the lead on establishing a municipal DBE purchasing policy. They may turn to the West End CDC as a trusted intermediary between the City and DBEs in the neighborhood.
- *Private sector* – The West End CDC may choose to prioritize advocating for and supporting a DBE purchasing policy for the City of Rock Island, however there are opportunities for the West End CDC to

facilitate connections with anchor institutions that West End businesses could contract with through DBE policies.

- *Nonprofit sector* – Can provide support organizing potential DBEs and spreading awareness of the DBE program.
- *Philanthropic sector* – Philanthropic organizations could potentially fund capacity building delivered by local nonprofits to small businesses.

#### Additional Resources

- [Equitable Contracting and Procurement](#), PolicyLink
- [Inclusive Procurement and Contracting: Policies, Programs, and Practices for Local Leaders](#), National League of Cities
- City of Muscatine’s [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program](#)

### Action 4.3: Explore the creation of a community grocery store in the West End

#### Description and key considerations

The West End Community Assessment documented limited access to healthy food in the neighborhood. The only “grocery” store in the neighborhood is a Family Dollar, which does not provide health food options. In addition, the full-service grocery store is challenging to get to for West End residents because it takes 45 minutes, one-way by public transit. While faster to reach by car, many West End households do not have access to a vehicle. The USDA’s [Food Access Research Atlas](#) shows that the West End is considered “low access” to food and “low-income,” basically, a food desert.<sup>10</sup>

Governor JB Pritzker recently passed the Grocery Initiative Act, which authorized the Illinois Grocery Initiative (IGI). IGI will grant \$20 million to address inadequate access to fresh foods, especially in “food deserts.” One of the two components of the IGI includes grants for new grocery stores in food deserts. The grants will provide reimbursement for both capital and non-capital costs associated with establishing a sustainable grocery store in a food desert. The IGI will also provide [free technical assistance](#) (TA) to prospective applicants and grantees, including on business planning, marketing, financing, supply chain management, and workforce development as needed.

These resources present a significant support to bring a grocery store to the West End. Additionally, City or Rock Island Mayor Mike Thoms expressed hope and interest that this funding can help the city tackle food deserts in the city and indicated the city is more than willing to offer some tax rebates and incentives to attract a grocery store in these areas.<sup>11</sup> So there seems to be support from local elected officials as well. Funding, free technical assistance, and political are key ingredients to make this happen, so there is a window of opportunity to be seized now.

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<sup>10</sup> Rather than using the term “food desert”, since 2013, ERS has used the term “low-income and low-access” to designate areas with limited access to healthy food as it more accurately reflects what is statistically measured in FARA.

<sup>11</sup> Frazier, Victoria, (2023), “Rock Island hopes to combat food deserts with new funding,” *Our Quad Cities News*, <https://www.ourquadcities.com/news/local-news/rock-island-hopes-to-combat-food-deserts-with-new-funding/>.

## Milestones over Three Years

- Application to the IGI new grocery store grant is submitted.
- IGI funding awarded.
- Capacity built by IGI TA provider to ensure successful creation and sustained management of a grocery store in the West End.

## Action Steps

### Year 1 Action Steps

- Engage potential partners to assess interest and eligibility in creating and running a grocery store in the West End and applying to the upcoming new grocery store grant opportunity.
- Assuming an applicant partner is identified, collaborate with them and the IGI TA providers to develop an application once the IGI Notice of Funding Opportunity is publicized.
- While awaiting notice of award, develop and implement a scope of work with the TA providers to position the applicant and their partners to best take advantage of the grant if awarded.

### Year 2 Action Steps

- To be confirmed with the IGI TA provider if awarded IGI new grocery grant.

### Year 3 Action Steps

- To be confirmed with the IGI TA provider if awarded IGI new grocery grant.

## Funding: Needs and Sources

### Needs

To be informed by the IGI TA providers.

### Sources

[Illinois Grocery Initiative grant information page](#): this landing page for the State of Illinois IGI provides an overview of the legislative origins of the funds and information for the various grant and TA programs that are being rolled out. As of March 2024, only the [\\$3.5. million Equipment Upgrades NOFO](#) (for upgrading to energy-efficient equipment in existing grocery stores) has been released. Grant cycles for new grocery stores in “food deserts” and related technical assistance are expected to be released later in 2024.

[Healthy Food Financing Initiative](#): This USDA program was established in 2009 to provide grants, loans, and technical assistance to support access to healthy food options in historically underserved and/or rural communities. While the program is currently unfunded, additional funds became available as part of the American Rescue Plan Act in 2021, suggesting that additional resources may come online again in the future. In Illinois, the CDFI [IFF has previously served](#) as the fund administrator for this program, making several loans and grants to healthy food projects across the state. [A public-private partnership known as America’s HFFI](#) was established in 2014 and reauthorized in 2018; this iteration of the program still periodically offers grants, partnerships and technical assistance.

## Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – Support the application to the IGI. Provide tax rebates and other incentives to enable the creation of a grocery store in the West End.

- *Private sector* – Provide financing for the creation of a grocery store.
- *Nonprofit sector* – Potentially serve as partners in running a grocery store and provide support to funding applications.
- *Philanthropic sector* – Provide grants to support the creation of a grocery store.

#### Additional Resources

- [Getting to Grocery: Tools for Attracting Healthy Food Retail to Underserved Neighborhoods](#) (Public Health Law & Policy, 2009) – This resource provides guidance and strategies for attracting and/or a new grocery store to under-resourced communities. This includes recruitment strategies, advocacy approaches, funding options, and an overview of the real estate development considerations that go into launching a new grocery store.
- [Financing Healthy Food Options](#) (CDFI Fund, 2012) - This resource, published by the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s CDFI Fund, provides technical and in-depth information on financing grocery stores and supermarkets, as well as a variety of other resources on the food sector. While geared more towards community development finance professionals, resources provide deep insights into how the economics of grocery stores are considered by lenders.
- Case study and cautionary tale: [Remembering Community Foods, West Oakland’s Crowd-funded Grocery Store](#) (Oaklandside, March 2023) - This piece consolidates local coverage of the rise and fall of a community-led grocery store in West Oakland, California. It offers helpful insights into the promise and challenges of raising funds, developing, and sustaining a local grocery store in a historically disinvested neighborhood.
- Subject matter expert: [Jamila Medley](#) (Columinate) – Experienced consultant that has led development and training for grocery food cooperatives in the United States.

# Strategic Objective 5: Improve the infrastructure and visual design of the West End

## Strategic Objective Targets

Below are targets that are anticipated to be achieved in the short term (three years), with the full implementation of the Action Plan and those that are anticipated to be achieved in five years, with the continuation of the strategies in the action plan and the addition of new strategies to advance the goals.

### Short-term Targets (Three Year)

- Funding awarded and projects beginning to increase broadband access in the West End.
- Funding awarded for streetscape improvements and projects beginning in alignment with broadband projects, as needed.
- Placemaking vision established by West End key stakeholders with multiple short-term activities implemented and long-term projects and funding to support them identified. Organization in place to coordinate and sustain the efforts over time.

### Medium-term Targets (Five Year)

- Douglas Park has seen an increase in usage of ~50% by sports teams, festivals, and for rentals
  - Usage for 2030 is 75% booked
- All homes in the West End have broadband internet access
- A database of internet subsidy programs is curated and shared through multiple channels with West End residents, allowing all West End residents to be able to afford internet access
- The City has Internet Service Providers committed to increasing their infrastructure in the West End
- \$10 million has been secured for streetscape improvements
  - Citizen groups are a key part of the development and planning processes
  - Ground has broken on significant project(s)
- All streetlights on 11<sup>th</sup> St corridor are working and working well
- There has been a City-led and community-driven decision on the placement of a roundabout in the West End and/or a street improvement plan has been developed
- Public space in the West End has multiple uses and West End residents and visitors are regularly taking advantage of them.
- West End festivals and other community events attract residents and visitors to the neighborhood.

## Background, justification, and description of impact area strategic objective

While investments have been made to improve the infrastructure in the West End, many interviewees and Community Conveners who contributed to the West End Community Assessment and Recommendations Reported continued to point to deficiencies in the West End's infrastructure—sidewalks, streets, broadband access—and their impact on everything from transportation and business attraction to recreation and educational outcomes. More than living in a functional space, Community Conveners emphasized the importance of living in a beautiful space, which has significant real-life impacts. Researchers have concluded that the presence of green spaces, parks, and trees in cities can have a positive impact on a person's mental



health and well-being and even prevent premature death. Arts, culture, and creative placemaking can increase social cohesion and improve mental and physical well-being, even (and especially) during times of crisis.

### Priority Actions

- **Action 5.1** Strengthen affordable broadband access for all
- **Action 5.2** Complete streetscape improvements to increase mobility and beautification
- **Action 5.3** Amplify local character through placemaking initiatives

## Three-Year Plan by Priority Action

### Action 5.1: Strengthen affordable broadband access for all

#### Description and key considerations

According to [Verizon](#), broadband is defined as “the transmission of wide bandwidth data over a high-speed internet connection.” The FCC defines this as having a download speed of at least 25 Mbps (megabits per second) and a minimum 3 Mbps upload speed. Broadband internet can be deployed through various technologies, including fiber optics, wireless, cable, DSL, or satellite connections. Looking at the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity’s (DCEO) [Broadband Map](#), cable covers the entire West End, but large portions of the area lack fiber connection, which typically provides the fastest broadband speeds.

Despite recent influxes in funding to the City of Rock Island for broadband expansion such as ARPA funds, the Emergency Broadband Benefit, the ARP Emergency Connectivity Fund, and the ARP Capital Projects Fund, broadband connectivity in the West End is still not 100 percent. This [two-pager](#) from the Illinois DCEO shows that 7.6 percent of Rock Island County does not have wireline broadband access and its Broadband Map (layer titled *25 Mbps Down/3 Mbps Up (All Fixed – with Wire+LFW+UNLFW)*) shows that a large percentage of the West End is unserved at required minimum broadband speeds. While the map shows that the entirety of the West End is already served by cable broadband, this doesn’t necessarily mean that every West End household can connect to high-speed internet. Broadband maps often only track access at a more granular data level than the household level, such as by census tract, so if one household has access, the map might say the entire census tract does as well. This doesn’t appear to be true on this map, but it is a possibility. Additionally, just because the cable connection covers an entire area doesn’t mean all households in that area can actually connect to the internet. Many households face a cost burden for internet and can’t afford to pay for Wi-Fi and other internet tools, despite the infrastructure existing. Therefore, there are two potential paths to ensure all West End residents have broadband access: 1) assume households simply can’t afford to access the existing cable connection and subsidize their costs or point them to existing internet subsidizing programs, or 2) install fiber connection broadband infrastructure that ensures the highest of speed connections for the West End while still subsidizing resident’s costs. A broadband needs assessment of the West End will be necessary to determine which of these paths to pursue.

If installation of fiber connection infrastructure is pursued, fiber optic cables are typically buried underground, often underneath roads. Fiber infrastructure installation, therefore, would require the excavation of the road. To reduce costs and traffic disruption, the best practice is to “dig once,” installing broadband infrastructure during road construction. DOT has a published federal “Dig Once” rule allowing and encouraging federal projects and states to abide by this practice and Illinois’s [Dig Once Act](#) came into effect January 1, 2024. Where

possible, the installation of broadband infrastructure should then be paired with street construction, which is covered in Action 5.2.

### Milestones over Three Years

- In response to case-making efforts by the MLK Center, the City of Rock Island applies to and obtains funding for broadband expansion.
- Broadband needs assessment for the West End is conducted to help inform the implementation of the broadband expansion project.
- Information and resources helping West End residents obtain internet access is published.

### Action Steps

#### *Year 1 Action Steps*

- With the City of Rock Island's jurisdiction over the rights of way, the City, and particularly the Public Works Department must lead the implementation of strategies related to broadband infrastructure installation and streetscape redevelopment. The primary role of the MLK Center, at least in Year 1, is therefore to case-make to the City for the implementation of these strategies. The first step in this is to develop the case for the need for broadband expansion in the West End. Gather existing data, potentially from the maps discussed above, showing the lack of access to broadband internet in the area. Collect testimonies from residents without broadband access.
- Collect a list of available funding opportunities, such as those listed below, that could be deployed for broadband expansion projects. It is important that this work move along during Year 1, given the current availability of funding, without certainty that similar opportunities will exist after the current programs close.
- Bring a package of evidence of need for broadband expansion and funding for that infrastructure to the City of Rock Island.
- With City interest in the strategy, The MLK Center should help convene relevant stakeholders to develop applications for funding opportunities. These stakeholders should include the MLK Center, City of Rock Island Public Works Department, telecommunications company(s), and potentially the City's Planning & Redevelopment Division. The City may already have a preferred telecommunications partner, who should therefore be the group included in this work.
- Support the development of applications to funding opportunities, which given existing opportunities, would likely need to be submitted during Year 1. The development of these applications should factor in the benefits of a dig-once project, pairing broadband infrastructure construction with street reconstruction, covered in Action 5.2.

#### *Year 2 Action Steps*

- A broadband needs assessment of the West End could be part of the application and project development process or could come after funding is secured. Regardless, the MLK Center/West End CDC could likely support the conducting of said assessment, which the City should likely lead. This assessment can include various aspects, but often centers around gathering broadband need and usage data from local telecommunication companies, talking with residents to understand their access and barriers to broadband, and conducting a gap analysis between these two datasets. Data collection from residents is often done using surveys, interviews, focus groups, or questionnaires. The MLK Center/West End CDC should help with data collection where needed and possible, although the City

would likely need to contract a consultant group with expertise in conducting these broadband assessments. The MLK Center/West End CDC should also then support the RFQ development process and selection if a consultant group is needed.

- Support the broadband infrastructure implementation however possible. An important role for the West End CDC in this aspect is keeping residents informed and up to date on project development, implementation progress, important dates, and more.

#### *Year 3 Action Steps*

- Gather and publish information outlining to residents how to get internet access now that broadband infrastructure is installed.
- Identify household internet subsidy programs available to West End residents and publish and share those opportunities where they would be easy to locate. Once broadband infrastructure is installed this will help households take advantage of the new internet connection. The CDC will need to continue monitoring available household subsidy programs; if there is concern that households are still unable to access broadband, there may be a need for a new internet subsidy program run by the City, or potentially the West End CDC.

#### Funding: Needs and Sources

##### *Needs*

The only notable funding need for the MLK Center is for staff time dedicated to case-making to the City and later for supporting implementation and gathering resources on accessing the internet and internet subsidy programs. Funding for staffing is already reflected as part of the budget delineated in Action 0.1 Create a locally run West End Community Development Corporation (CDC), so it is not pulled out here separately to avoid duplication of funding requests.

The funding sources listed below, however, are for the implementation, and will therefore be accessed by the City of Rock Island. These are examples of opportunities to bring to the City in the case-making phase.

##### *Sources*

- EDA's [Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs](#) – Telecommunications infrastructure and broadband infrastructure deployment are eligible activities under the Public Works program. Specifically available to economically distressed areas. Maximum award of \$30 million. No application submission deadline.
- Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity's [Connect Illinois Broadband Grant Program](#) – Funds the broadband access projects in un- or underserved areas that can include project planning, network design, and construction of infrastructure. From the Illinois Broadband Map linked above, it appears that there are none of either of these areas in the West End, so it may be ineligible. Maximum award of \$10 million. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis but are reviewed in quarterly windows. The next two windows end April 1, 2024 and July 1, 2024.
- Monitor the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's [BroadbandUSA](#) for grant opportunities. They post all federal broadband-related opportunities along with several of their own programs.

#### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – This strategy will have to primarily be City led, given its control over the right of way of the streets, under which broadband infrastructure is typically installed. The Public Works Department and Planning and Redevelopment Division will therefore be key partners to lead this process throughout.

- *Private sector* – A local telecommunications company will likely have to conduct the actual installation of broadband infrastructure and should therefore be included in the project planning and development and funding application process.
- *Nonprofit sector* – Nonprofit organizations serving the West End can help disseminate information on available broadband cost subsidy programs for households.
- *Philanthropic sector* – Philanthropic foundations could be used to fund the broadband needs assessment or the infrastructure installation itself. There could also be space for philanthropy to fund a household internet subsidy program, if interested.

#### Additional Resources

- Broadband 101 info:
  - Benton Institute for Broadband & Society short article: [Everything You Wanted To Know About Broadband \(But Were Afraid To Ask\)](#)
  - Informational webinar from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration’s BroadbandUSA program: [Internet for All Webinar Series - Introduction to Broadband and High Speed Internet](#)
  - [How Broadband Infrastructure Gets Built](#) – Brief introduction to how broadband infrastructure is installed.
- [Increasing Broadband Investment in Low-Income Communities](#) – Overview of broadband access, needs, barriers in low-income communities from an FCC broadband working group.
- NTIA’s [Internet for All: Digital Equity Needs Assessment Guide](#) – Outlines the steps to completing a broadband needs assessment.
- National League of Cities’ [Digital Equity Playbook: How City Leaders Can Bridge the Digital Divide](#) – Guide to broadband needs assessments within NLC’s Digital Equity Playbook, which is generally a good tool to reference.
- [6-step Digital Needs Assessment Handout Outline](#) – Guide to completing a broadband needs assessment.
- [A Handbook for the Effective Administration of State and Local Digital Equity Programs – Handbook for state and local governments on developing a digital equity plan.](#)
- Explanations of the benefits of dig once projects: [Building Resilient Communities: The Power of Dig Once Policies](#); [Tactical approaches to achieve benefits of dig once](#)
- Household internet subsidy programs
  - USAC’s [Lifeline Support](#) program – Eligible low-income households can receive up to \$9.25 per month off the cost of phone, internet, or bundled services.
  - FCC’s [Affordable Connectivity Program](#) – Provides discounts of up to \$30 per month for internet service costs for low-income households. The program also provides one-time subsidies for laptop or tablet purchases. Unfortunately, applications for the program close on February 7, 2024, and without new Congressional appropriations for the program, it will close in April.

## Action 5.2: Complete streetscape improvements to increase mobility and beautification

### Description and key considerations

Although the City of Rock Island has already done work and made investments into improving the city’s streetscape—streets, sidewalks, alleys—there is still need for more investment specifically in the West End. The

City has domain over public streetscapes, and as such, continued improvements in the West End must continue to be led by the City's Planning & Redevelopment Division along with the Public Works Department. However, there is space for the MLK Center, and later the West End CDC, to contribute to and help move along these efforts. With many key funding opportunities closing soon or opening for the coming year's cycle soon, it is critical to prioritize moving this strategy forward quickly to take advantage of this funding availability. To do so, the MLK Center will need to convene relevant stakeholders in streetscape improvements to develop a plan and applications for funding opportunities. It is important that throughout the process, the MLK Center (and later West End CDC) continue to advocate for these funds to be equitably distributed to meet the needs in the West End.

### Milestones over Three Years

- City of Rock Island applies to and obtains funding for streetscape improvements.
- West End CDC supports the City in planning processes for the mobilization of funds once awarded.
- System to catalogue inventory of needed streetscape improvements developed.

### Action Steps

#### *Year 1 Action Steps*

- Collect a list of available funding opportunities, such as those listed below, that could be deployed for streetscape improvement projects. It is important that this work move along during Year 1, given the current availability of funding, without certainty that similar opportunities will exist after the current programs close.
- To quickly gather momentum, the MLK Center should convene relevant partners as soon as possible to develop a plan for streetscape improvements, select funding opportunities to apply for, and develop applications. Partners that should be involved include the MLK Center (as advocates for the West End), The City of Rock Island—Planning & Redevelopment Division and Public Works Department—and, given the benefits of pairing street improvements with broadband infrastructure installment, a major local telecommunications company(s) that can work well with the City on the broadband provision side. During the project development phase it is important that the MLK Center advocate to the City around design and implementation specifically ensuring that the needs of the West End are taken into consideration and will be addressed.
- In the case-making process to the City, there is need to collect an inventory of the needed streetscape improvements in the West End. The MLK Center could lead this effort by mobilizing West End residents to collect inventory. In the short term, this may need to be a concerted effort of organizing volunteer residents to walk the neighborhood and catalogue where and to what extent streets, sidewalks, and alleys are in disrepair. This could be done before, concurrently with, or after convening relevant partners, as the West End's inventory need for investments could be part of a funding application or part of a plan developed once funding is awarded. This need will depend upon the specific funding opportunities and their application requirements but should be determined as soon as possible. This inventory collection could be conducted concurrently with a broadband needs assessment if there is desire to conduct a "dig once" project.
- Support the City in developing and submitting applications to relevant funding opportunities. Given some funding programs preference to invest in economically distressed areas, advocating for focus on the West End could boost the potential success of an application. The MLK Center, and later the West

End CDC, should continue to be involved in the application process to ensure the City is prioritizing the needs of the West End.

#### *Year 2 Action Steps*

- If the city is successful with its funding applications, it may begin designing streetscape improvement projects.
- Once the West End CDC is stood up, it could partner with the City in subsequent planning efforts to mobilize awarded funds to meet the streetscape improvement needs in the West End.

#### *Year 3 Action Steps*

- For the long term, work with the City to develop a scoring/rating system to catalogue streetscape improvement needs in the West End, and potentially the city at large. The rating system could help prioritize segments of road and sidewalk for attention based on condition and priority criteria such as proximity to a school or hospital, level of threat to public safety, proximity to concentrations of residents with accessibility needs, etc.
- Lead or support the City in creating an online survey/form reporting platform where residents can score/rate and provide feedback on street, sidewalk, and alley condition as they notice needs for repair or maintenance. The reporting platform should be housed on the City's website and be made easily accessible to residents to complete on a device (or print out if needed). The survey submissions should be collected in a database maintained by the City that tracks streetscape ratings and condition. This could be developed by the City with support from the West End CDC. The database will allow the City to more efficiently allocate funding and apply to new funding opportunities when available.

### Funding: Needs and Sources

#### *Needs*

Funding would be needed to cover the assessment of need for streetscape improvement, as well as to cover plan development and project design with the support of engineers, technical experts, and city public works staff. The City would be responsible applying for, managing, and administering funds related to streetscape improvements, so the CDC would bear no costs associated with this action. Funding for staffing is already reflected as part of the budget delineated in Action 0.1 Create a locally run West End Community Development Corporation (CDC), so it is not pulled out here separately to avoid duplication of funding requests.

#### *Sources*

- DOT's [RAISE Grant Program](#) – Streetscape improvement aren't explicitly listed as an eligible activity, but can be eligible if they meet the program goals including safety, equity, workforce development and job creation, and greenhouse gas emission reduction, among others. Awards of a minimum of \$5 million to urban areas. FY 2024 application deadline February 28, 2024, although there will be future cycles for FY 2025 and 2026.
- DOT's [Safe Streets and Roads for All](#) – Two types of grants are available: 1) Planning and Demonstration Grants for developing and completing a comprehensive safety action plan that identifies roadway safety concerns and how to address them and 2) Implementation Grants that funds projects and strategies identified in an action plan (comprehensive safety action plan is needed to apply for Implementation grants) (See page 6 of NOFO for Action Plan requirements). Planning and Demonstration Grants have a maximum award of \$10 million and Implementation grants have a maximum award of \$25 million. Applications open February 2024, although no exact date has been announced at the time of writing.

- EDA’s [Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs](#) – Upgrades to public infrastructure are among eligible activities under the Economic Adjustment Assistance program. Specifically available to economically distressed areas. Maximum award of \$30 million. No application submission deadline.
- T-Mobile’s [Hometown Grants](#) – Intended to help improve and build community spaces, so road construction is likely not eligible, but based on past grant winner’s projects, streetscape placemaking projects such as adding street furnishings and outdoor spaces are eligible. Maximum award of \$50,000. Applications are open on a quarterly basis, so the current cycle is due in March, and the following cycle opens in April and closes in June.

#### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – The City of Rock Island, namely the Planning & Redevelopment Division and Public Works Department should lead this strategy with support from the King Center and CDC, because the City has domain over the public streetscapes. With support from the King Center/CDC, the City will need to maintain an inventory of streetscapes needing improvement.
- *Private sector* – To allow for an efficient “dig once” project pairing streetscape improvements with broadband expansion, local telecom company(s) should be included in the planning and application phase.
- *Nonprofit sector* – Local nonprofit organizations that serve the West End and its residents can serve as stakeholders in the visioning and planning process for streetscape improvement projects.
- *Philanthropic sector* – Philanthropic foundations can also fund streetscape improvement projects, so keep an eye on opportunities from those organizations as well.

#### Additional Resources

- Case studies
  - [Colorado Springs Street Maintenance Request form](#) – Example of crowdsourced street maintenance requests from Colorado Springs, CO.
  - DOT FHA [Crowdsourcing to Improve Traveler Information & Operations](#) – Article on crowdsourcing for traffic management and road maintenance need information.
  - pathVu Reporter [link 1](#); [link 2](#) – Potential software tool to use for crowdsourcing.
- Toolkits, etc.
  - [Smart Growth America](#) is a national nonprofit leading the National Complete Streets Coalition working for the development and implementation of safer and more accessible streetscapes. Their website includes a lot of good resources around streetscape design, improvement, and policy.

### Action 5.3: Amplify local character through placemaking initiatives

#### Description and key considerations

To “placemake” is to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value.

While many different types of activities can constitute placemaking, there are some principles, processes, and components to placemaking that often form the foundation of this work. The Partnership for Public Spaces (PPS) draws on its years of placemaking experience around the country and around the world to present a summary of principles and processes which are summarized below and that can inform this work in the West End. More on their approach and other relevant resources can be found in the Additional Resources section below.

### Placemaking Principles

- The community is the expert
- Create a place, not a design; form supports function
- You can't do it alone, partners are critical
- You can see a lot just by observing
- Have a vision
- Experiment with and learn from short-term, low-cost improvements
- Arrange spaces with multiple uses and linkages between them
- You are never finished, placemaking is ongoing

### Milestones over Three Years

- A placemaking vision, informed by engagement with stakeholders and an evaluation of the place, is developed.
- Short-term, low-cost projects are being implemented.
- An organization is identified to lead sustained and long-term placemaking efforts.
- Long-term projects that may require more investment are determined and funding is secured to implement them.
- Long-term projects begin implementation.

### Action Steps

#### *Year 1 Action Steps*

- Action steps not prioritized in Year 1.

#### *Year 2 Action Steps*

- Convene a meeting with West End stakeholders across multiple sectors—residents, local business owners, civic associations, nonprofit groups, local government officials—to identify the main issues that different groups face with respect to public spaces in the West End and to identify specific place or places to focus their placemaking efforts.
- Once the specific place in the West End is selected, determine who is interested in changing the space, whether they are willing to participate in some way, either with time, talent, or funds, which existing funds could be used to make improvements to or program the space, especially with low-cost, short-term experimental improvements and activities, which existing organization(s) could provide long-term management for the space.
- Organize a placemaking workshop with stakeholders to evaluate the selected place and identify issues. PPS has a useful Place Performance Evaluation Game (linked below) tool that can be used by anyone from children to highly trained performance.
- Based on insights from the placemaking workshop, develop a vision for the selected place, including a mission statement of goals, a definition of how the space will be used, a concept plan for how the



space could be used, successful examples of similar spaces, and an action plan for short-term and long-term improvements.

- Launch short-term experiments based on your vision, or what PPS called “lighter, quicker, cheaper” (LQC) projects that require a short timeline and small budget. These activities help test ideas for the public space, they aren’t an end in themselves.

#### *Year 3 Action Steps*

- Continue LQC projects.
- Continue stakeholder engagement.
- Conduct ongoing evaluation of the LQC projects and the space.
- Based on lessons from LQC projects, plan for long-term, potentially more expensive improvements to the space.
- Secure funding and management for long-term improvements and maintenance of the space.
- Potentially begin implementing long-term projects in alignment with the placemaking version for the space.
- Work with the administrators of the West End Special Service Area (if established per Action 0.3) to identify placemaking projects to be funded by the SSA.

#### Funding Needs and Sources

##### *Needs*

Funding needs over the three years will be determined in large part by the vision for the space that is developed in Year 2 and the long-term improvement projects that are selected for Year 3. However, the amount of funding likely needed to get through the action steps excluding long-term improvements and management of the space are estimated to be **\$50,000-\$150,000**. This includes direct costs for placemaking may include supplies, materials, contracts for consultants, space rentals, etc. and other funding for the low-cost, short-term projects in Year 2 and 3. Funding will also be needed to staff this work, for which the expected budget is reflected as part of the budget delineated in Action 0.1 Create a locally run West End Community Development Corporation (CDC). It is not pulled out here separately to avoid duplication of funding requests.

##### *Sources*

There are several funding sources for placemaking. Funding from local or regional foundations should be targeted to cover the initial planning and some of the LQC projects in Year 2. Beyond that, additional funding opportunities are listed below:

- T-Mobile [Hometown Grants](#) – Provides up to \$50,000 for towns with populations under 50,000 to fund shovel-ready projects that foster local connections, like technology upgrades, outdoor spaces, the arts, and community centers.
- [Patronicity](#) – Empowers local placemaking projects through crowdfunding, access to matching grants and hands-on project coaching.
- Partnership for Public Service [Community Placemaking Grants](#): Enables nonprofits and government agencies to work with local stakeholders to transform public spaces or co-create new ones. The grant provides direct funding, technical assistance, and capacity building. This grant appears to be recurring, but is not currently open.
- National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) [Challenge America](#): Challenge America offers support primarily to small organizations for projects in all artistic disciplines that extend the reach of the arts to groups/communities with rich and dynamic artistic and cultural contributions to share that are underserved. The FY 2025 application closes April 30, 2024, but it seems to be a recurring opportunity.

It is a small award of \$10,000 and requires a cost share/match of \$10,000 in cash and/or in-kind contributions.

- NEA [Grants for Arts Projects](#): Provides between \$10,000-\$100,000 grants to strengthen the nation's arts and cultural ecosystem. There is a cost share/match requirement for the award received. The FY 2025 application closed February 15, 2024, but it seems to be a recurring opportunity.
- If the West End Special Service Area is established, it may serve as an ongoing source of funding for placemaking projects.

#### Collaborative Actions

- *Public sector* – The public sector may serve as a funder of placemaking projects and a stakeholder in the development of the placemaking vision.
- *Private sector* – Local businesses in the West End, especially those proximate to the specific place identified for placemaking will be key stakeholders in the development of the vision and may support and/or help implement placemaking activities. Other private sector entities like the Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce and larger businesses in the city or region may provide funding for placemaking projects.
- *Nonprofit sector* – Nonprofit organizations that are based in or serve West End residents or the neighborhood as well as West End civic leaders and residents more broadly can serve as key stakeholders in the development of the vision and as implementers of (especially) short-term, low-cost placemaking projects. Nonprofits, civic associations, and civic leaders can also assist with stakeholder engagement.
- *Philanthropic sector* – Local, regional, and national foundations can fund placemaking projects, large and small as well as the organization(s) that manage the placemaking initiative overall.

#### Additional Resources

- [Project for Public Spaces](#) has numerous placemaking resources, from toolkits, to research, case studies, grants, training, and more.
- [Revitalizing Neighborhoods: How Creative Placemaking Transforms Vacant Properties into Vibrant Community Spaces](#), Center for Community Progress – This blog post highlights and links to several examples of communities who leveraged blighted, vacant properties as part of their placemaking efforts.
- [The Power of the Commons: Impact and Opportunity in America's Public Spaces](#), Reimagining the Civic Commons – This provides a model and examples to consider in public space placemaking.
- [More than Storefronts: Insights into Creative Placemaking and Community Economic Development](#), LISC – This resource presents six case studies in placemaking and arts and culture's contributions to economic development.
- [Creative Placemaking Public Resources Guide](#) – This resource helps community development practitioners, artists, and arts and cultural organizations survey the landscape and decode the language of federal government funding opportunities that might support creative placemaking efforts. Use this guide to identify public resources and to determine if they are the right fit for your community.