

# GREENVILLE WEST SIDE

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

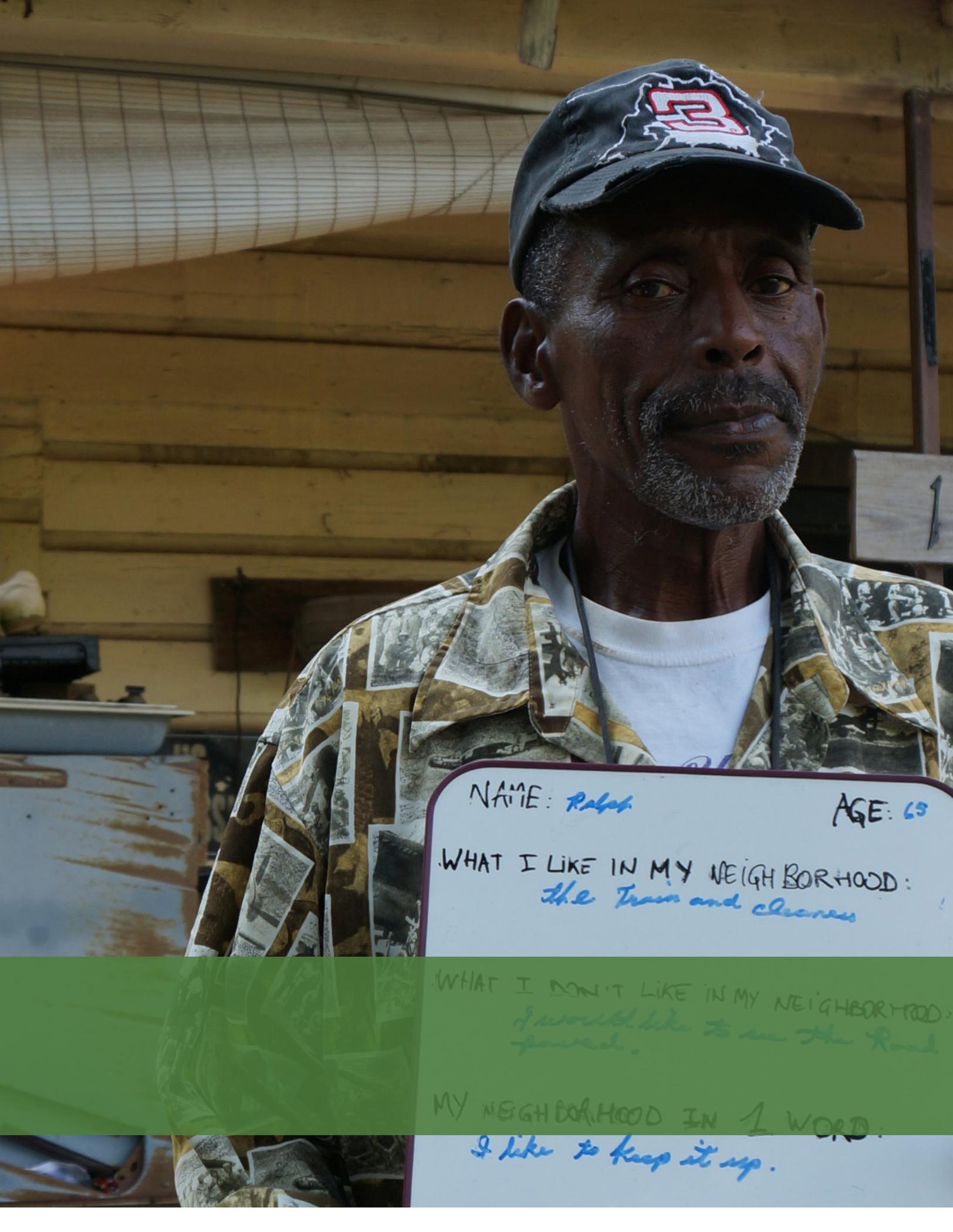


February 19, 2014

**City of Greenville, South Carolina**



### Chapter 4: Organizing to Empower the Community



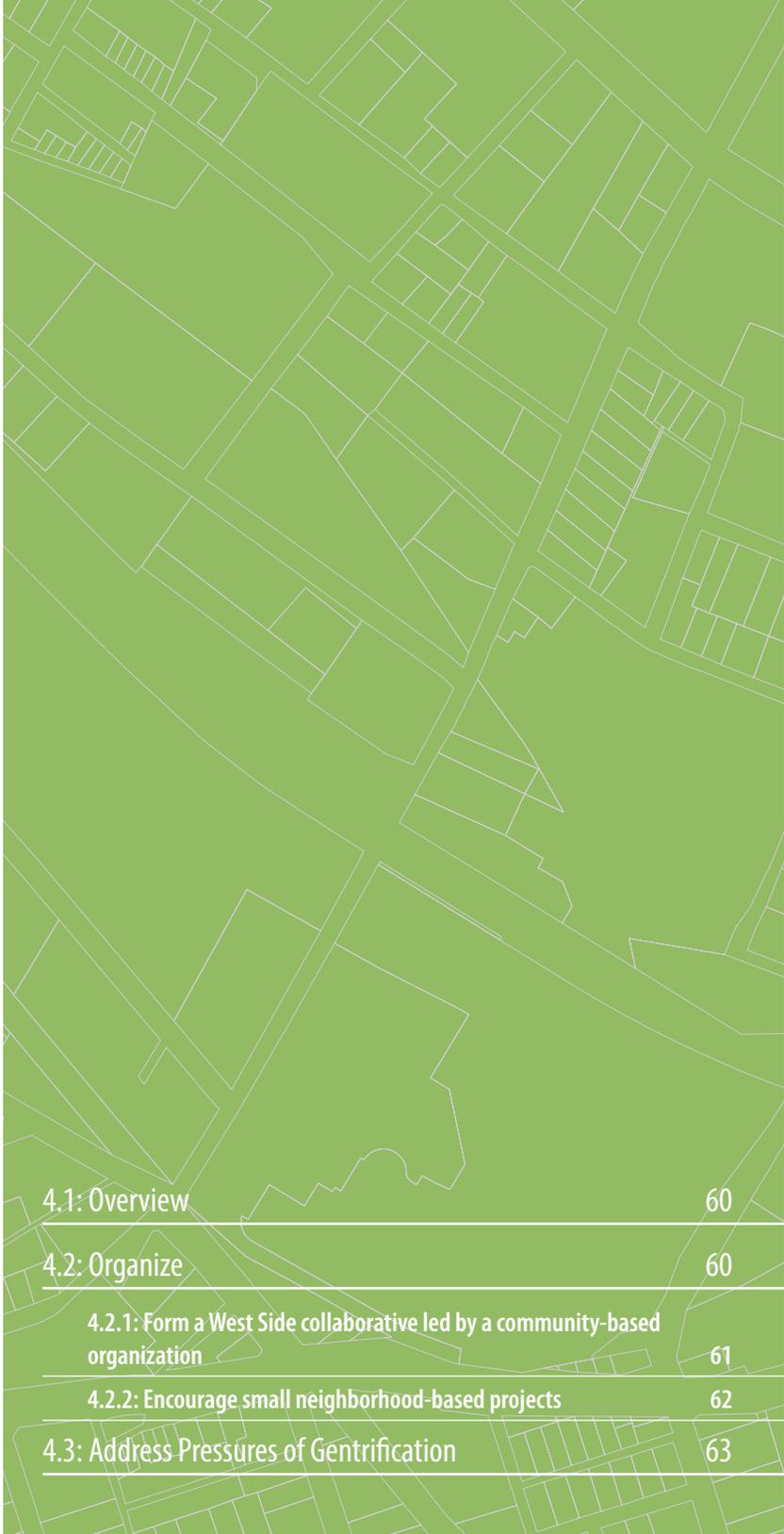
NAME: *Robert*

AGE: *65*

WHAT I LIKE IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD:  
*the Train and churches*

WHAT I DON'T LIKE IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD:  
*I would like to see the Road paved.*

MY NEIGHBORHOOD IN 1 WORD:  
*I like to keep it up.*



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# Organizing to Empower the Community **4**

## 4.1: Overview

During the planning process, residents and local organizations indicated a desire to be involved in the City of Greenville's efforts to revitalize the West Side neighborhoods, rather than simply watch passively as City officials pursue plans. This chapter outlines grassroots efforts intended to empower residents and community groups in implementing the vision developed in this plan (§4.2). Additionally, this chapter discusses the potential pressures associated with the threat of gentrification, particularly the potential displacement of existing residents and businesses, and policies and programs within this plan that will seek to address these issues (§4.3).



## 4.2: Organize

One key to the success of this plan will be taking a new approach to community involvement. There is an ingrained culture of distrust among many residents, sewn by a history of disinvestment and urban renewal projects that fragmented neighborhoods, including the construction of Pete Hollis Boulevard and South Academy Street within the West Side. These are residents who will not respond to fliers and mailings because they do not view the advertised events are intended for them.

While some residents may never be reached, many could be engaged by changing the mode of interaction. Agencies working in the community should organize resident advocates to deliver the message face-to-face, rather than relying on passive announcements.

This section proposes a grassroots organization to lead implementation of this plan, as well as a community-based implementation strategy to start making changes, on the ground, as soon as possible.



Neighborhood Workshop: Residents and team members discuss issues they would like to see addressed

### 4.2.1: Form a West Side collaborative led by a community-based organization

Responsible Agent(s): **Community Organizations, Service Providers**

Action Type: **Programs & Policy**

Funding Level: **\$**

Time Frame: **Year 1-5 for Implementation; On-going after startup**

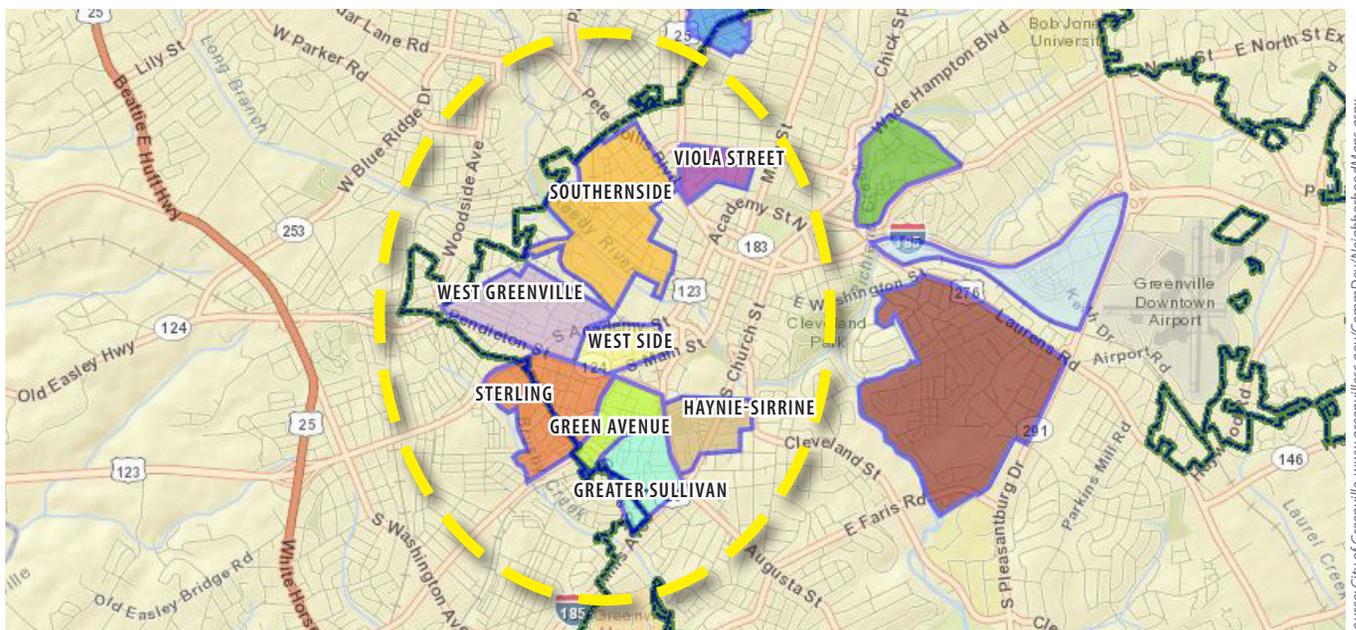
While the three West Side neighborhoods have different histories and aesthetic characteristics, all face the same challenges as development pressures threaten displacement of residents and businesses and a change in community culture. Banding together to enact programs and policies through a nonprofit organization will strengthen the ability of all three neighborhoods to retain and expand affordable housing. Additionally, a strong community organization that includes and engages existing residents, and pools the resources of a collaborative group of providers, can serve in a variety of roles to build cohesiveness and empowerment within the area. This collaboration could be spearheaded by either an existing organization or a newly formed incorporated non-profit entity.

The role of such a West Side collaborative would be to engage existing organizations and provide a framework for coordination around

specific issues. The lead organization of this collaborative would serve not to create new programs, but to act as a coordinating entity. There are already many organizations at work throughout the West Side, including faith-based groups, social service organizations, community housing development organizations, and food providers. This collaborative would build the capacity and increase the impact of these groups by creating synergy between them.

In addition to preventing involuntary resident displacement and improving access to existing services, the lead organization could help bridge socio-economic groups through shared interests, coordinate community programs and events to build trust between neighbors, access local talent, and, ultimately, empower residents to improve their neighborhood.

There may be some benefit as well to including the other nearby Special Emphasis Neighborhoods that face similar issues, such as Viola Street, Sterling, Green Avenue, Greater Sullivan, and Haynie-Sirriner, as well as adjacent neighborhoods outside of the incorporated City of Greenville limits.



City of Greenville Special Emphasis Neighborhoods: The dashed circle highlights the West Side neighborhoods—Southernside, West Greenville, and West End—and other Special Emphasis Neighborhoods nearby that offer opportunities for future collaboration.

### 4.2.2: Encourage small neighborhood-based projects

Responsible Agent(s): **Neighborhood Associations, Residents, Local Business Owners**

Action Type: **Programs & Policy**

Funding Level: **\$**

Time Frame: **On-going**

As the recommended West Side collaborative begins to build capacity, it should work with the City of Greenville to identify small projects that neighborhoods can undertake to improve public spaces, such as those targeted by the City's Grant Assistance Partnership (GAP) program (see Resources section at the end of this chapter). Neighborhood sponsored park clean-ups, beautification and planting projects, and park patrols could serve the West Side collaborative's mission to engage citizens and create a stronger sense of community and ownership. (For more details about coordinating community food-growing efforts, see §6.3.)

Resident groups could use the GAP program for "tactical urbanism" projects. These are initiatives by community members to make positive changes in their neighborhood through informal actions, such as planting on vacant lots, improving transit stations, and creating small temporary public spaces.<sup>1</sup> (See §8.3.4 for a related pocket park program.)

Local projects also could tap into the resources of local volunteer organizations such as Hands on Greenville, Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, local high schools and area colleges and universities. Partnering with these groups to initiate clean-up days or assist in other efforts that require volunteer labor will help to extend the impact of the collaborative's initiatives.

<sup>1</sup> For more information about tactical urbanism, see "Tactical Urbanism 2" by Street Plans Collaborative: [http://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tactical\\_urbanism\\_vol\\_2\\_final](http://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tactical_urbanism_vol_2_final); and the Better Block: <http://betterblock.org/>



Tactical Urbanism Demonstration Project - PARK(ing) Day: Every September, people in cities around the world convert on-street parking spaces into parks for people for one day. This type of temporary demonstration can inspire long-term changes as well. This image is a park created on North Davidson Street for PARK(ing) Day in Charlotte, North Carolina. See <http://parkingday.org/> for more details.

### 4.3: Address Pressures of Gentrification

Gentrification is the displacement of lower-income households that occurs when higher-income households begin to move into a neighborhood and restore housing and commercial structures. Generally, investment that revitalizes a community—making it safer, improving public spaces and infrastructure, attracting new businesses—is a positive force. However, when investment raises property values and rents to a point where lower-income families can no longer afford to live in the neighborhood, and enjoy the benefits of revitalization, it is an inequitable force.

#### Vulnerability to Gentrification

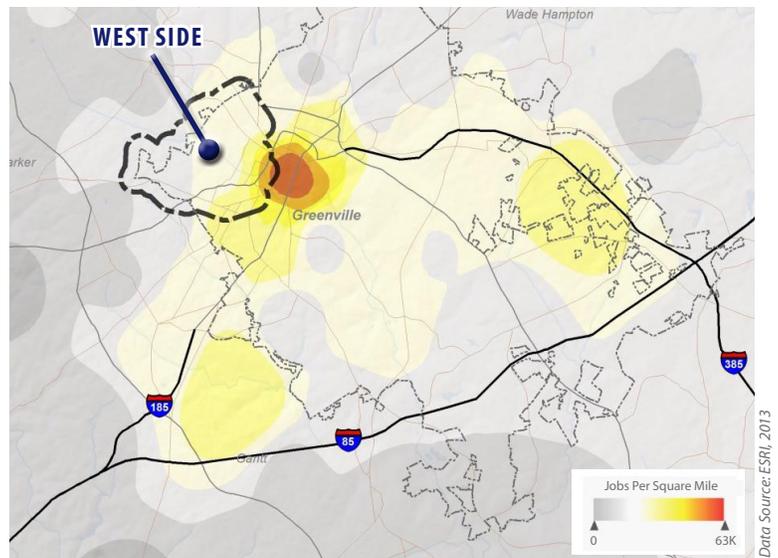
Studies show generally four attributes that make a neighborhood vulnerable to gentrification: A high proportion of renters; easy access to job centers; low values for a housing stock with architectural merit; and increased traffic congestion.<sup>2</sup> The West Side exhibits the first three of these four attributes.

- Over 54 percent of households in the West Side are renters, a high proportion relative to the City of Greenville, the Greenville Metropolitan Statistical Area, and the state.
- The single highest concentration of jobs in the region is located in Greenville’s downtown, in very close proximity to many areas within the West Side. The proposed bus rapid transit (\$7.5.3) would further increase the connectivity between the West Side and downtown jobs.
- The median housing value in the West Side is \$81,400. This is significantly lower than the median housing value of \$147,600 in the City of Greenville as a whole (data from ESRI, 2013). Additionally, many of the homes were built in the early- to mid-twentieth

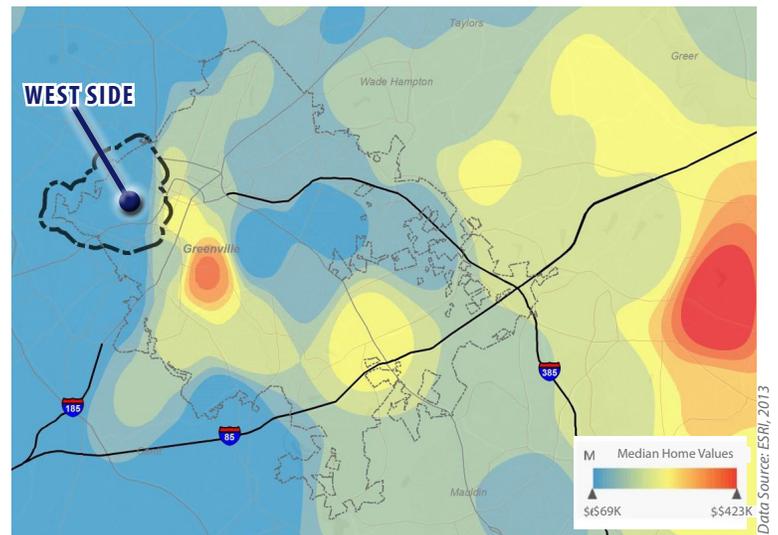
<sup>2</sup> Kennedy & Leonard. (April 2001). Dealing with Neighborhood Change: A Primer on Gentrification and Policy Choices.” Brookings Institution & PolicyLink. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2001/04/metropolitanpolicy>



Housing Occupancy Rates, 2012



Job Density in the Greenville Region



Median Housing Value in the Greenville Region

## Equitable Development Toolkit

According to PolicyLink, a leading organization in equitable development strategies and creator of the Equitable Development Toolkit, “Equitable development is an approach to creating healthy, vibrant, communities of opportunity. Equitable outcomes come about when smart, intentional strategies are put in place to ensure that low-income communities participate in and benefit from decisions that shape their neighborhoods and regions.”

### 27 Equitable Development tools:

- Access to Healthy Foods
- Affordable Housing Development 101
- Brownfields
- Community Strategies to Prevent Asthma
- CDCs with Resident Shareholders
- Code Enforcement
- Commercial Linkage Strategies
- Commercial Stabilization
- Resident-Owned CDFIs
- Community Land Trusts
- Community Mapping
- Community Reinvestment Act
- Cooperative Ownership Models
- Corner Stores
- Developer Exactions
- Employer-Assisted Housing
- Expiring Use: Retention of Subsidized Housing
- Farmers Market
- Foreclosed Properties
- Grocery Stores
- Housing Trust Funds
- Inclusionary Zoning
- Infill Incentives
- Just Cause Eviction Controls
- Limited Equity Housing Cooperatives
- Living Wage Provisions
- Local Hiring
- Minority Contracting
- Real Estate Transfer Taxes
- Rent Control
- Transit Oriented Development
- Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens
- Urban Greening

(Note: Many of these tools are employed throughout this plan)

Source: PolicyLink, Equitable Development Toolkit: [http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.5136725/k.EE25/All\\_Tools.htm](http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.5136725/k.EE25/All_Tools.htm)

century, and exhibit an architectural vernacular that is desirable in this region.

These attributes suggest that the West Side is poised to experience pressures of gentrification. In fact, new private interest is already evident in areas close to downtown, particularly in the West End and Southernside neighborhoods. Additionally, significant new amenities in the area, such as the existing The Salvation Army Ray & Joan Kroc Corps Community Center (Kroc Center), A.J. Whittenberg Elementary School, and Swamp Rabbit Trail, as well as the potential bus rapid transit system and city park, will continue to increase the attraction of the West Side.

### Threats Related to Housing

New investment in the West Side neighborhoods—both public and private—will raise housing values in the area. The basis of housing values is complex; it is derived not only from the value of the structure, but also the value of surrounding properties, transportation access, and proximity to amenities. Increased housing costs will cause the following pressures within the neighborhood:

Existing homeowners will face higher property taxes, costs associated with fixing up older homes, and pressures by developers seeking to assemble properties for large redevelopment projects.

Residents—including young families and retirees looking to downsize—may no longer be able to afford to buy a home in their neighborhood.

Landlords may raise rents to cover increased property taxes and/or meet increased demand, leaving current renters unable to meet lease obligations.

Areas with the best pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access may become the least affordable to those who do not own cars and rely on other modes of transportation.

### Threats Related to Employment

Resident incomes must increase at the same rate as the cost of living for long-time residents to remain in the West Side as it revitalizes. Without opportunities to earn a wage that is commensurate with price increases, residents must rely on subsidies or price controls to remain in place. This also means that the education that children receive must prepare them for jobs that pay a living wage in the neighborhood.

### Threats Related to Food Access

The West Side is classified by the USDA as a food desert, meaning that there is low-availability of fresh, healthy food. With an influx of new residents, the area is more likely to attract a grocery store; however, if that grocery store targets higher-income residents, then existing residents may still lack access to healthy food.

### Threats Related to Transportation Access

Without reliable transportation, West Side residents may continue to find access to employment, healthy groceries, services and amenities difficult. Limited coverage and frequency hinders the public transit system as a reliable resource for West Side residents who do not own cars. Additionally, the West Side's geography, and poor connections

over and under the railroad tracks, isolate neighborhoods to the west of downtown, such as West Greenville, Newtown and Woodside. Without improved connections, these neighborhoods may remain isolated and not benefit from revitalization efforts.

### Displacement Prevention

Private investment and increased property values are key elements of the economic growth and vitality of an area. Yet, providing opportunities for current residents to continue to live in the area is key to the revitalization of a neighborhood.

Therefore, this plan's recommendations encourage the continued participation of residents in the decision making and implementation process of the revitalization of the West Side. Additionally, many of the recommended policies and programs, particularly those addressing affordable housing, employment opportunities, access to healthy food, and transportation systems, seek to prevent the involuntary displacement of existing residents. These recommendations are integrated throughout the plan and summarized in the following Displacement Prevention Action Items (§4.2.1) to assist in prioritization of strategies.



**Vulnerability to Gentrification:** Affordable homes with architectural merit may attract new investors to the West Side, potentially displacing existing residents.

## DISPLACEMENT PREVENTION ACTION ITEMS

### THREATS RELATED TO EMPLOYMENT

RESPONSE: Provide job training and quality education

§ 5.2.1	Fund a West Side “career-ladder” case manager
§ 5.2.2	Expand pool of potential employers for job placement programs
§ 5.2.3	Expand access to West Side educational facilities

### THREATS RELATED TO FOOD ACCESS

RESPONSE: Improve access to healthy food

§ 6.2.1	Attract a new neighborhood grocery store that provides healthy food options
§ 6.2.2	Expand mobile farmer’s markets
§ 6.3.1	Develop an urban farm and education center

### THREATS RELATED TO TRANSPORTATION ACCESS

Goal: Provide high-quality transportation options for all income-levels

§ 7.5.1	Increase local bus route coverage and frequency
§ 7.5.2	Introduce a West Side trolley route.

Goal: Improve access for neighborhoods on the northwest side of the rail tracks

§ 7.4.1	Improve Queen Street bridge
§ 7.4.2	Improve the West Washington Street underpass
§ 7.4.3	Improve the Lois Avenue/Woodside Avenue underpass
§ 7.4.5	Rebuild the Hampton Avenue bridge

### THREATS RELATED TO HOUSING

RESPONSE: Protect Existing Homeowners

§ 9.3.1	Legislate a tax-cap for fixed-income homeowners
§ 9.3.2	Create a Home-selling Education Program

RESPONSE: Create more affordable homeownership opportunities

§ 9.4.1	Form a community land trust
§ 9.4.2	Recruit local job-providers to participate in employer-assisted housing program

RESPONSE: Protect renters

§ 9.5.1	Preserve affordable housing
§ 9.5.2	Expand a tenant rights education program

RESPONSE: Develop new mixed-income housing

§ 9.6.1	Develop a dedicated funding stream for local housing trust fund
§ 9.6.2	Support the homeless population through housing first programs

**Preventing Displacement:** This table summarizes action items found in the plan that seek to protect existing residents from pressures of gentrification. More information on each recommendation may be found in specific section listed.

## Key Local Resources

### CommunityWorks Carolina:

Provides small business development education and microloans to entrepreneurs. <http://communityworkscarolina.org/>

### Greenville Dreams

Greenville Dreams works directly with neighborhood association leaders to help build upon the strengths and assets already present in their neighborhoods.

Working in partnership with United Way of Greenville County (UWGC), the City of Greenville (CG), and the Greenville County Redevelopment Authority (GCRA), Greenville Dreams consists of neighborhood leaders from Special Emphasis Neighborhoods (including all three West Side neighborhoods) collaborating to focus on facilitating positive community changes through resident-centered neighborhood development.

**Mission Statement:** Greenville Dreams is a coalition of neighborhood and community leaders organized to empower residents to improve their neighborhoods through leadership development while leveraging available resources.

**Vision Statement:** Our vision is that all Greenville residents live in a productive, vibrant, healthy and safe neighborhood.

**Strategic Focus Areas:** In order to carry out our Mission and realize our Vision, the Greenville Dreams focuses on the following Strategic Focus Areas:

- Organizational and Leadership Development
- Collaborative Relationships
- Resource Development
- Education and Awareness
- Youth Development and Engagement

Source: United Way of Greenville County <http://www.unitedwaygc.org/greenville-dreams-home.php>

### Grant Assistance Partnership (GAP)

The GAP is a combined effort between the City of Greenville, the United Way of Greenville County, and the Greenville County Redevelopment Authority to empower residents through their neighborhood associations to enhance and improve their communities.

GAP is an annual competitive grant program that provides up to \$2,500 to selected projects. All three West Side neighborhoods are eligible to apply for GAP funds through their respective neighborhood associations. GAP funds cannot be used to make improvements to private property.

Projects should address one or more of the following areas of community development:

- Organizational & Leadership Development
- Training/Education/Awareness
- Resident Involvement
- Beautification
- Communication
- Capital Improvements
- Crime Prevention
- Housing Development

Source: City of Greenville, Division of Community Development <http://www.greenvillesc.gov/CommDev/FormsApplications.aspx>