

**West Side Neighborhood  
ACTION PLAN  
Spring 2015**

**Prepared for the City of Pittsfield  
Department of Community Development and  
West Side Neighborhood Initiative Steering Committee**

**Respectfully submitted by  
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## **Introduction and Executive Summary**

This document provides a summary of the planning process of updating the West Side Neighborhood Action Plan, completed in the Spring of 2015. Meeting notes included.

**The VISION** of the West Side Neighborhood Initiative is “Enriching the West Side: Safe, Clean, Healthy and Strong. It takes all of us!”

**The Priorities** that the group decided to focus on for Work Planning were the following: 1) Cleaner and Safer West Side; 2) Parks and Recreation; and 3) Youth.

**Key Action Items** for each prioritized area (see tables on pp. 9-10 for more detail):

### **CLEANER AND SAFER WEST SIDE:**

In addition to the traditional Fall Neighborhood Cleanup, a creative approach to creating a cleaner and safer neighborhood is to hold occasional “Walking Meetings.” While walking together, neighbors will get to see, meet and greet one another while discouraging crime in some small, yet highly visible way. They will also be able to identify vacant buildings, blight and need for better lighting. It was also suggested that Trainings be considered a part of the meetings. A training on canvassing (door-to-door) could be requested from Thacher Kent, Western Mass Labor Action. Developing relationships among neighbors can create a safer community.

### **PARKS AND RECREATION:**

A key aspect of the Parks and Recreation plan involves sponsoring events in the various parks, to promote the recreational assets of the neighborhood, and involve a broader, more diverse community. Examples include Cohost a Business Seminar with NAACP to encourage local businesses, especially related to parks and recreation, to start in the neighborhood; Sponsor a Meet and Greet in the Greenway; Host events to raise awareness of Community Gardens; Promote the use of parks by community groups; Hold fundraising events to support parks and recreation. Other specifics include development of Nature Trail between the schools, maintaining playgrounds and parks, planting trees and using Facebook to get the word out.

### **YOUTH:**

The action items listed under Youth mostly had to do with learning more about what’s already available for young people in the neighborhood, and helping to get the word out about those. This will help with participation in these great programs, and also broader community awareness of positive programming for youth. Several people took on the tasks of being in touch with the various programs, and finding ways to support them. Also identifying a young person to represent the West Side Neighborhood Initiative on the Pittsfield Youth Commission could be considered a priority.

**West Side Neighborhood Initiative  
Neighborhood Planning Session #1  
DATE: October 27, 2014**

**Proposed AGENDA**

- Welcome and Introductions
  - Vision/Mission
  - Review 2006 Plan – Accomplishments and “Still to do” (or not)
  - Nominal Group Technique for Action Planning
    - Silent Generation of Ideas
    - Round Robin Recording
    - Clarification
    - Discussion/Combination
    - Prioritizing – Voting with colored dots and stars for residents
  - Top Three (or so) PRIORITIES and Next Steps
  - Closing Thoughts and “Share a ‘gem’!”
- ADJOURN

As part of their regular monthly meeting, the West Side Neighborhood Initiative Steering Committee spent some time thinking together about action planning. It was decided to go forward with the process as far as identifying concrete projects to move forward, trying to clarify those, and continue with discussion/combination and prioritizing at the next monthly meeting.

**The 2006 Plan** was briefly reviewed. It was noted that much had been accomplished, and there are some larger projects currently underway, most notably the Greenway, which was another agenda item at this meeting, with architectural drawings to review. There was a brief discussion about the importance of having short and long-term objectives as part of a planning process.

**The Vision** of the West Side Neighborhood Initiative is

- REBUILDING THE WEST SIDE:
- Safe, Clean, Healthy and Strong.
- It takes ALL of us!

The question for this planning session is “**How do we get THERE from HERE?**” ---

**Silent Generation of Ideas and ROUND-ROBIN Recording (Results on next page) – to be clarified, discussed and prioritized at next meeting.**

- Cleaner West Side
- Push River Way Project to End
- Better Lighting on Corners
- Empower Youth with Healthy Life Education
- Business/Neighborhood Gathering
- Neighborhood-Friendly Businesses
- Involve Communities of Faith located in West Side Neighborhood
- Trainings for Community Programs
- Support Small Businesses – Seminars
- 20% Increase in Home Ownership
- Strengthen Code Enforcement to Address Blight
- Youth Volunteers to Help Elderly
- Welcome Packets for New Residents
- Plan for Vacant Lots – to Fruition
- Development of Nature Trail Between St. Mark and Conte Community Schools
  - Involve STEM program (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)
- More Walk-in Addictions Counseling
- Neighborhood Policing
- Programs for Youth
- Youth Commission-Connection
- Visiting Nurses – Neighborhood Health and Wellness Screening
- Resume Tree Planting
- Interesting Walking Routes (Attractively Marked, Historic, Environmentally-friendly)
- Invest in Maintaining Parks and Playgrounds
- Community Center
- Literacy Program for all – Research What Already Exists
- Sidewalk Survey for Walkability
- Stronger Social Media Presence
- Attend City Council Meetings
- Two Trash Pick-ups per Week
- Deal with Vacant Buildings
- More Resident Engagement
- Increase Programs at Community Gardens (especially Robbins Ave.)
- City Councilor involvement
- Strip Mall

Wendy's thoughts about process, and how to proceed:

I may like to ask the group to establish some ground rules before beginning this time. I also think that during the "clarification" process, it is important that those who know what already exists play a key role in that step. Also – there are many things on this list that are conceptual, rather than actual concrete projects that can be completed. I recommend that they either be made into very clear action items, or that they be removed from the list. It is also possible that as we discuss and combine, they will fall into appropriate categories.

I see a few clear themes:

- 1) Youth
- 2) Businesses
- 3) Parks and Recreation/Infrastructure
- 4) Vacant Lots and Buildings
- 5) Civic/Social/Faith Community Engagement

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**West Side Neighborhood Initiative  
Neighborhood Planning Session #1  
DATE: November 24, 2014**

**Proposed AGENDA**

- Welcome and Introductions
  - Set Groundrules/Expectations
  - Vision/Mission review
  - Review Results Nominal Group Technique for Action Planning (from 10/27/14)
  - PRIORITIZE Top Three (or so) Items
  - Next Steps
  - Closing Thoughts and “Share a ‘gem’!”
- ADJOURN

**The following Expectations were identified by the group:**

- 1 person speak at a time
- Make points succinctly
- Stick to the subject at hand
- Share “air time”
- Listening
- Respect
- No complaining!

It was noted that **The Vision** of the West Side Neighborhood Initiative is

- **ENRICHING** (not “rebuilding”) **THE WEST SIDE:**
- Safe, Clean, Healthy and Strong.
- It takes ALL of us!

The results of the **Silent Generation of Ideas and ROUND-ROBIN Recording from 10/27)** were reviewed, and a few more ideas were added:

- Explore alternative energy – especially in housing
- Emergency Plan for Neighborhood – send rep. to Community Emergency Disaster Relief Committee
- Mentoring/Apprentice Programs
- Access to Healthy Food
- Communication – to each doorway

**The list was clarified, discussed and prioritized as follows:**

**TOP THREE PRIORITIES: -- to develop Work Plans (WHO DOES WHAT BY WHEN)**

- #1 (26 pts) Cleaner West Side
- #2 (20 pts) Push River Way Project to End
- #3 (16 pts) Better Lighting on Corners

**Other Items, in order of priority:**

- (13) City Councilor involvement (develop relationship/community voice)
- (11) Community Center
- (9) Access to Healthy Food
- (9) Literacy Program for all – Research What Already Exists
- (8) [Programs for] Youth
  - (+5) Increase Programs at Community Gardens (especially Robbins Ave.)
  - Empower Youth with Healthy Life Education
  - Youth Volunteers to Help Elderly
  - Mentoring/Apprentice Programs
- (8) Strengthen Code Enforcement to Address Blight
- (8) Communication – to each doorway
  - Welcome Packets for New Residents
- (7) More Resident Engagement
- (5) Plan for Vacant Lots – to Fruition
- (5) Support Small Businesses – Seminars
- (4) Development of Nature Trail Between St. Mark and Conte Community Schools
  - Involve STEM program (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)
- (4) Explore alternative energy – especially in housing
- (3) Business/Neighborhood Gathering
- (3) Neighborhood-Friendly Businesses
- (3) Resume Tree Planting
- (2) Visiting Nurses – Neighborhood Health and Wellness Screening
- (1) Youth Commission-Connection
- (1) Neighborhood Policing
- (1) 20% Increase in Home Ownership
- (1) Invest in Maintaining Parks and Playgrounds

**The following items were not “voted for” in prioritizing process:**

- Involve Communities of Faith located in West Side Neighborhood
- Trainings for Community Programs
- Interesting Walking Routes (Attractively Marked, Historic, Environmentally-friendly)
- Sidewalk Survey for Walkability
- Stronger Social Media Presence
- Attend City Council Meetings
- Two Trash Pick-ups per Week
- Deal with Vacant Buildings
- Emergency Plan for Neighborhood
  - send rep. to Community Emergency Disaster Relief Committee
  
- Strip Mall (This was added after adjournment of (10/27 meeting)
- More Walk-in Addictions Counseling (This was removed at 11/24 meeting)

**Wendy’s thoughts about process, and how to proceed:**

At the next meeting, the group should develop Work Plans for the first three priorities:

- 1) Cleaner West Side
- 2) River Way Project
- 3) Better Lighting, especially on corners

It is interesting that the “THEMES” that were recognized after the first meeting did not actually get prioritized (unless we consider River Way Project as “Parks and Recreation”).

The earlier themes were as follows:

- 1) Youth
- 2) Businesses
- 3) Parks and Recreation/Infrastructure
- 4) Vacant Lots and Buildings
- 5) Civic/Social/Faith Community Engagement



**West Side Neighborhood Initiative**  
**Work Planning Session: January 26, 2015**

The **AGENDA** for this meeting is to determine **WHO** does **WHAT** by **WHEN**, as it relates to moving forward on the three identified priorities. At the end of the last meeting, the three priorities were 1) Cleaner West Side, 2) RiverWay Project, 3) Better Lighting. The minutes from the last meeting were reviewed, and the group decided to adjust their priorities in order to focus on 1) Cleaner **AND SAFER** West Side (which includes better lighting, especially on corners); 2) **PARKS & RECREATION** (which includes the RiverWay Project as one aspect); and 3) **YOUTH**. Small groups were formed. Results follow:

**CLEANER AND SAFER WEST SIDE**

<b>TASKS</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>\$\$\$</b>
Identify Vacant Lots, Buildings, and Blight, and Call City	all		
Neighborhood Clean-up (flyer to get the word out)	NJ	8/30	City\$
Neighborhood Watch Meetings – bolster membership			
Knocking on doors: Are you concerned about the neighborhood?			
Set Training with Police (maybe in conjunction with Morningside)			
Each one bring one!			
Brainstorm Trainings we can have at our meetings			
Have Walking Meetings!			
Identify areas that need lighting			
Ask Police Dept. for maps of houses to avoid when canvassing			
Raids listed on Police Dept. website – keep tabs on it			
Western Mass Labor Action – Talk to them about their canvassing format (Thacher Kent)			
Shirley Edgerton can also be a resource.	VK		

## PARKS & RECREATION

TASKS	Who	When	\$\$\$
Riverway – Communicate plan and raise awareness	All	summer	
- Post project posters at Dewey site			
- Select pavilions for Park (consider other design choices)			
Development of Nature Trail between Taconic (St. Mark) and Conte			\$\$
- Speak with Jim McGrath			
Maintaining Playgrounds and Parks			
Promote use of parks by community groups			
Promote events/awareness of Community Gardens			
Furnish benches for Coolidge Park Gardens (and others?)	DF/BB		
Meet and Greet in Greenway		May	
Fund Raising Event	CS/BB		
Businesses/Cohosting with NAACP, Seminar: City Info Session		April	
Use FaceBook to get word out (Ken Demers, Berkshire Works)			
Tree-Planting	DF		

## YOUTH

TASKS	Who	When	\$\$\$
Consider Sports League		summer	
Talk with Shirley Edgerton about STEM group involvement	VK	2/10	
Talk with Manny about Literacy Program			
Send (Youth) Representative to Youth Commission	JG	Feb?	
Gardening – Help Julia get participation	AB		
Connect with After-School Homework Help Program	SS/CV		
Identify 3 people interested in engaging youth	CV		