

Westside

Go West To The Best

Neighborhood Assessment Report

Neighborhood Workshop Date: September 13, 2003

Accepted by City Council Date: January 26, 2004



Neighborhood Assessment Program

Sponsored by:

City of Springfield
Department of Planning and Development
Neighborhood Conservation Office

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VISION 20/20 AND NEIGHBORHOOD ASSESSMENTS



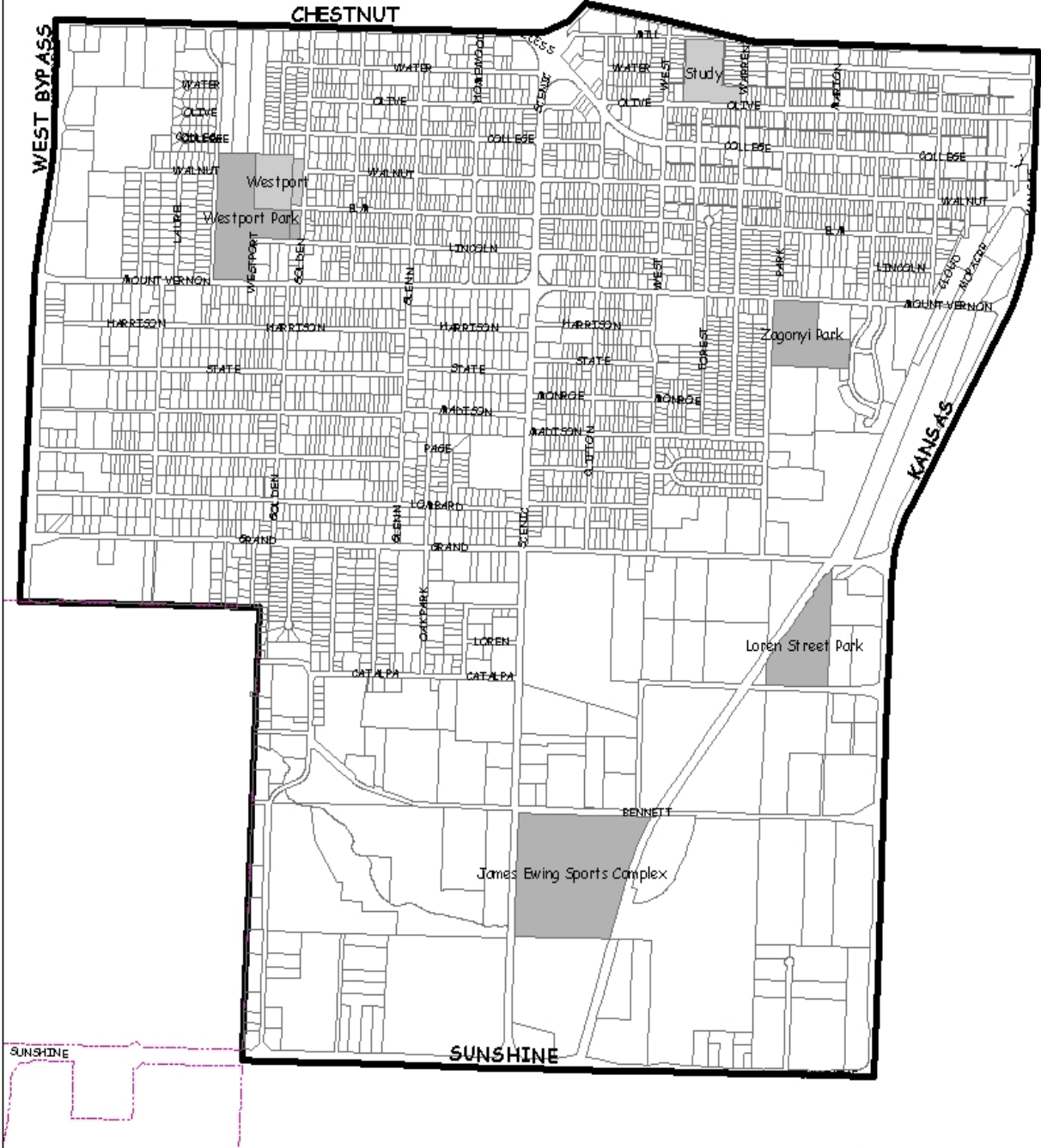
The Vision 20/20 *Neighborhoods Plan*, a portion of the Springfield/Greene County Comprehensive Plan, was adopted on July 10, 2000. The *Neighborhoods Plan* outlines objectives and actions that Springfield and Greene County will pursue to stabilize or improve existing neighborhoods and to create sustainable attractive new neighborhoods. The *Neighborhood Assessment* process was adopted by City Council in order to implement a portion of the *Neighborhoods Plan*. Specifically, the *Assessment* process implements the *Plan* by:

Allowing local residents to create an "*Assessment of neighborhood condition*". Helping local residents to identify where "*Targeted neighborhood improvements*" are needed. Identifying where "*Housing services*" and "*Housing assistance*" programs are desired.

Springfield's *Neighborhood Assessment* process mirrors a public input process developed and utilized by the City of Kansas City, Missouri.

With assistance from City staff, residents, business representatives and people who work in local institutions provided input at the Westside Neighborhood Assessment workshop. Participants mapped their community, and identified assets and priority issues in their neighborhood.

Westside Neighborhood Assessment Area



- Westside Assessment Area
- City Boundary
- Property Boundaries



Department of Planning and Development
City of Springfield, Missouri

CHART NOTES



Neighborhood Slogans

The attendees listed several slogans to describe their neighborhood. The slogans helped the participants to identify how they viewed their community.

The selected slogan:

Go West To The Best

Other suggested slogans:

- Westside Is A Friendly Side
- Go West
- Westside Is A Respectful Side
- Westside Is The Best Side
- The Westside Is A Very Good Side



Workshop participants work together to create a slogan for their neighborhood.

STEP 1: Facts About My Neighborhood

The data presented at the Assessment workshop was from the 2000 Census, the Police Department, Building Development Services and the Planning & Development Department's Grants and Program Implementation Division. Below are the facts the participants said were surprising or noteworthy. (See the neighborhood assessment workbook for more detail.)

- How do you determine vacant units?

Staff Response: The number of vacant housing units are determined by the U.S. Census Bureau, which compiles this data at the block group geography level. The Census collects information based on addresses and a community survey. By subtracting the number of occupied housing units from the number of total housing units (addresses) in an area we can determine the number of vacant housing units. For more information you may visit www.census.gov

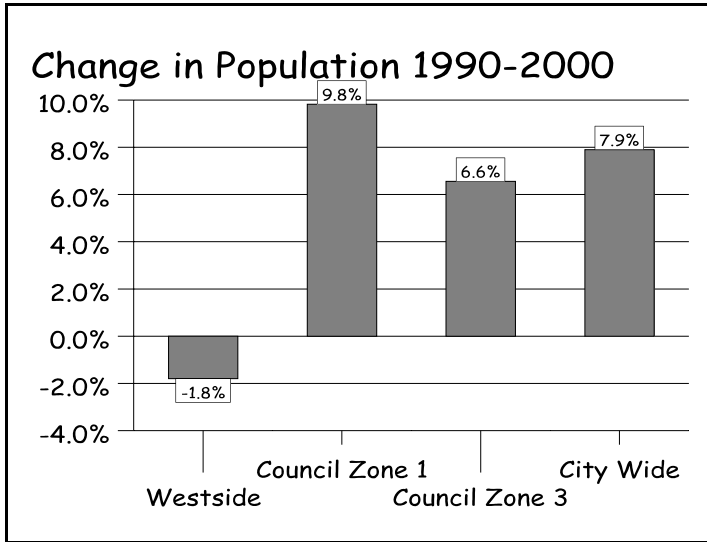
- Why does the criminal data not go back further?

Staff Response: The Springfield Police Department collects data on the number of calls for police service. Recently the department has upgraded to a new system of data collection and has only incorporated data back to the year 2000. In order for us to provide the most accurate comparison of police data, at each geographic level we can only include calls for service based on the years 2000, 2001, and 2002.

Participants are given census data for their neighborhood, council zones and the city as a whole.

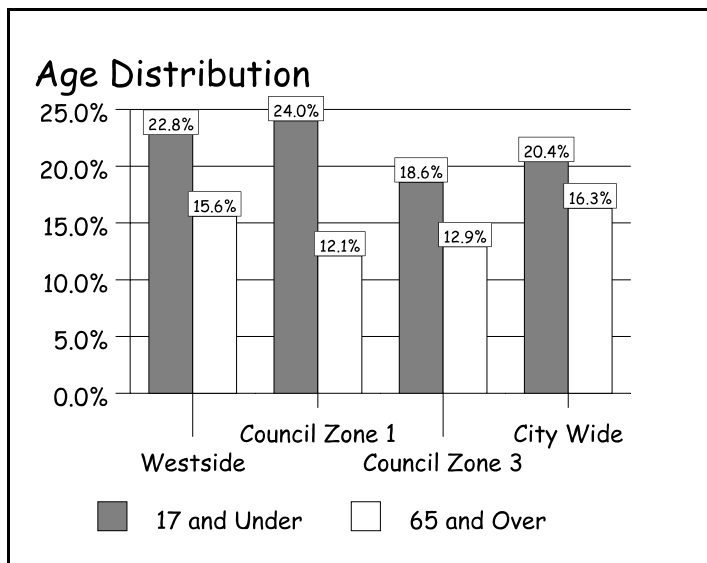


POPULATION



2000 Census

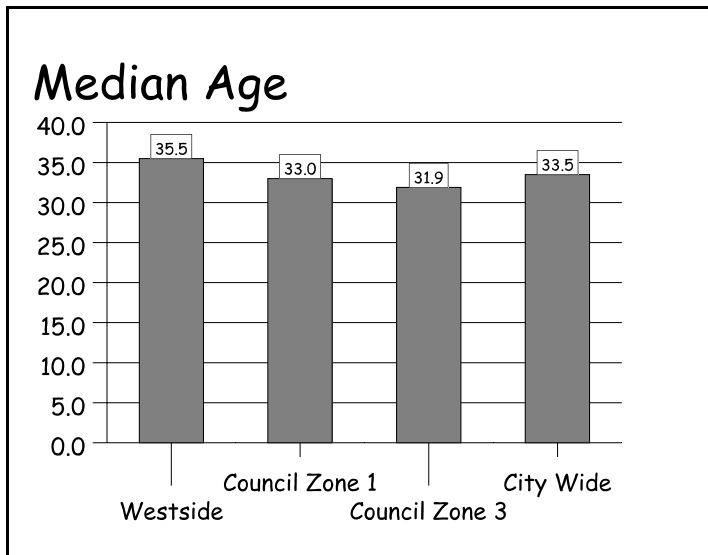
In 2000, there were 7,541 persons living in the Westside neighborhood. Between 1990 and 2000, the population in the Westside neighborhood decreased by 1.8%. By comparison, the population increased in Council Zone 1 by 9.8% and Council Zone 3 by 6.6% and in the City by 7.9%.



2000 Census

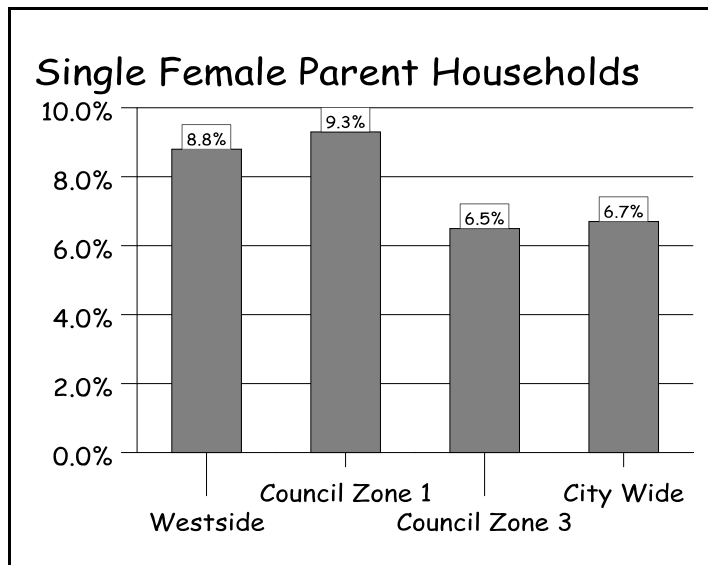
The percentage of people under age 17 in the Westside neighborhood is 22.8% and 15.6% are over the age of 64. By comparison, Council Zones 1 has 24.0% under age 17 and 12.1% over age 65 and Council Zone 3 has 18.6% under age 17 and 12.9% over age 65. City wide 20.4% are under age 17 and 15.3% are over age 65.

POPULATION



2000 Census

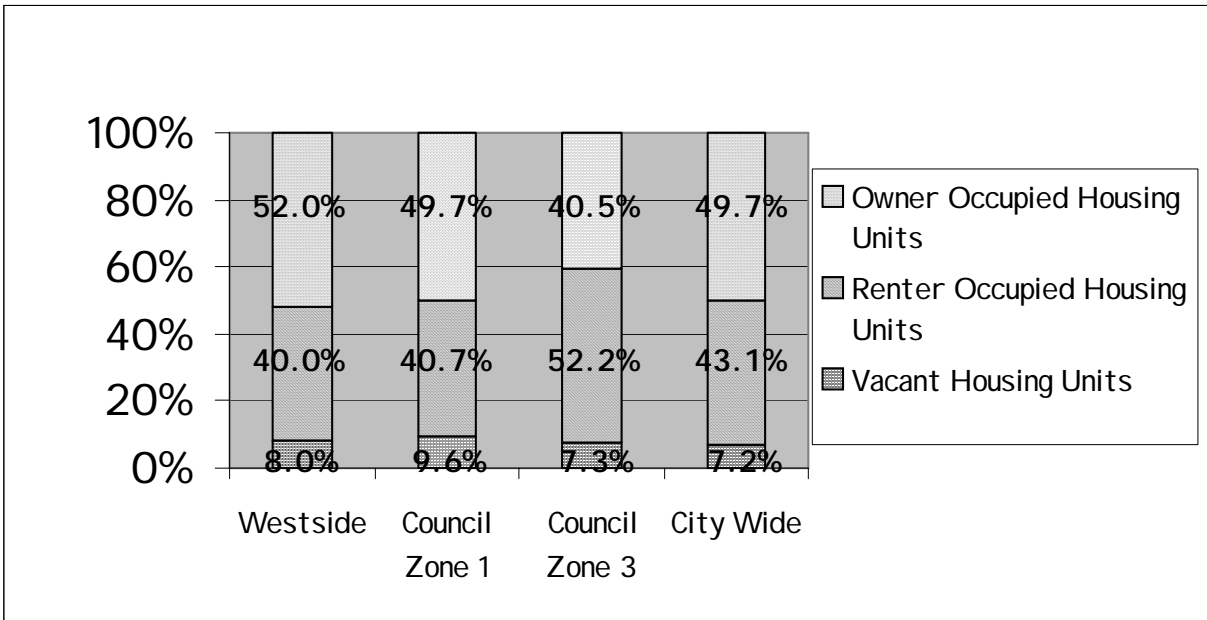
In the Westside neighborhood, the median age is 35.5, which means that half of the people in your neighborhood are younger than 35.5, and half are older than 35.5. In Council Zone 1 the median age is 33 and in Council Zone 3 the median age is 31.9. City wide it is 33.5.



2000 Census

The percentage of single female parent households (with children under 18 years of age) in the Westside neighborhood is 8.8%. This compares with 9.3% in Council Zone 1, 6.5% in Council Zone 3 and 6.7% city wide.

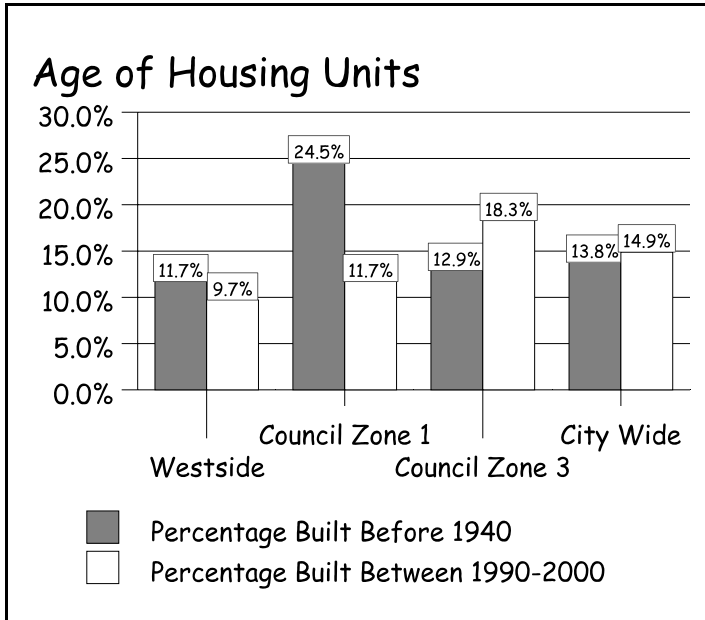
HOUSING OCCUPANCY



The housing in the Westside neighborhood is composed of 52% owner occupied, 40% renter occupied, and 8% vacant housing. The percentage of owner occupied housing in your neighborhood is slightly higher than that of Council Zone 1, Council Zone 3, and the city as a whole. The percentage of rental housing is also comparable to Council Zone 1. The percentage of vacant housing in the Westside neighborhood falls in between that of Council Zone 1 and the city.

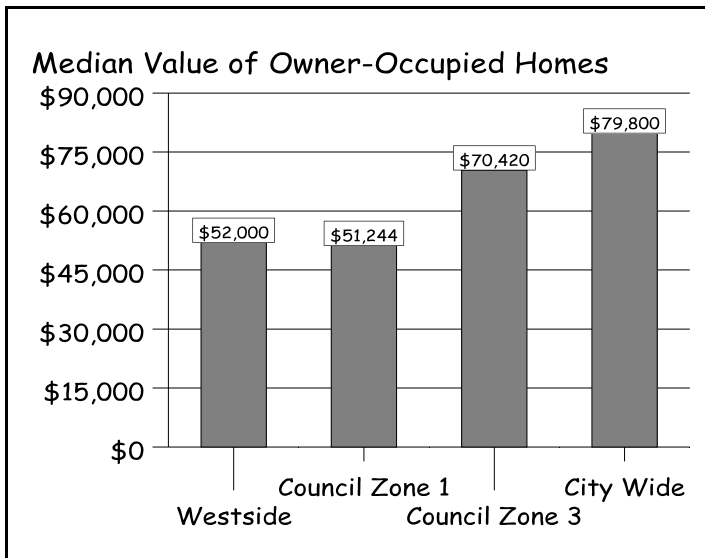
HOUSING

A housing unit is a house, an apartment, a mobile home or trailer, a group of rooms, or a single room that is occupied as a separate living quarters, or, if vacant, is intended for occupancy as a separate living quarters.



The percentage of housing units in the Westside neighborhood built before 1940 is 11.7%. This compares with 24.5% in Council Zone 1 and 12.9% in Council Zone 3. City wide it is 13.8%. In addition, the percentage of housing units built in the Westside neighborhood between 1990 and 2000 is 9.7%. This compares with 11.7% in Council Zone 1, 18.3% in Council Zone 3 and 14.9% city wide.

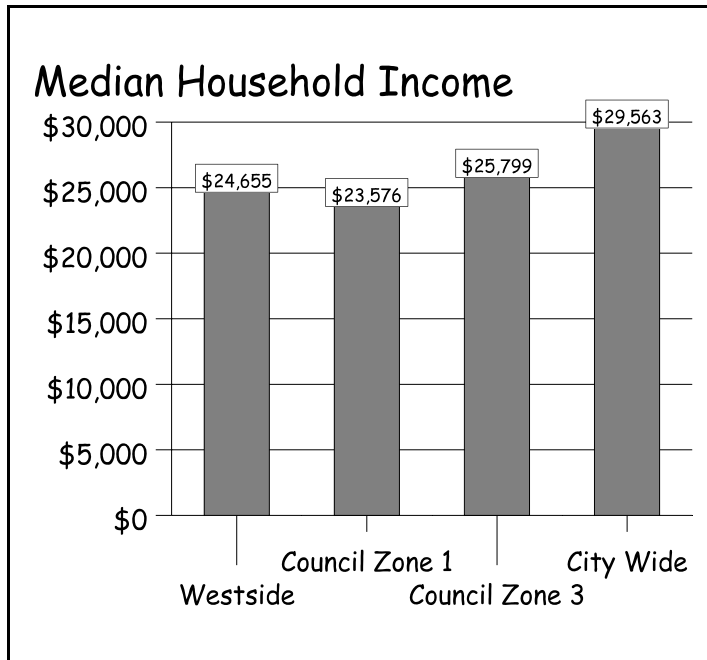
2000 Census



In the Westside neighborhood, the median value of an owner-occupied home is \$52,000. This means that half of the owner-occupied homes in the neighborhood are valued at more than \$52,000, and half are valued for less. The median value of owner-occupied homes in Council Zone 1 is \$51,244, in Council Zone 3 it is \$70,420 and city wide is \$79,800.

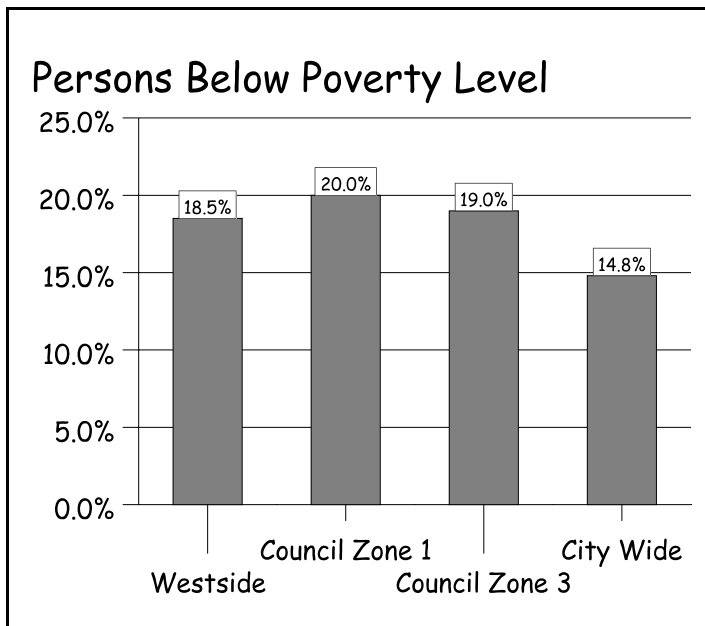
2000 Census

INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT



The median household income in the Westside neighborhood is \$24,655, which means that half of the households in the neighborhood have incomes of more than \$24,655 and half have less. This compares with median household incomes of \$23,576 in Council Zone 1 and \$25,799 in Council Zone 3. City wide it is \$29,563.

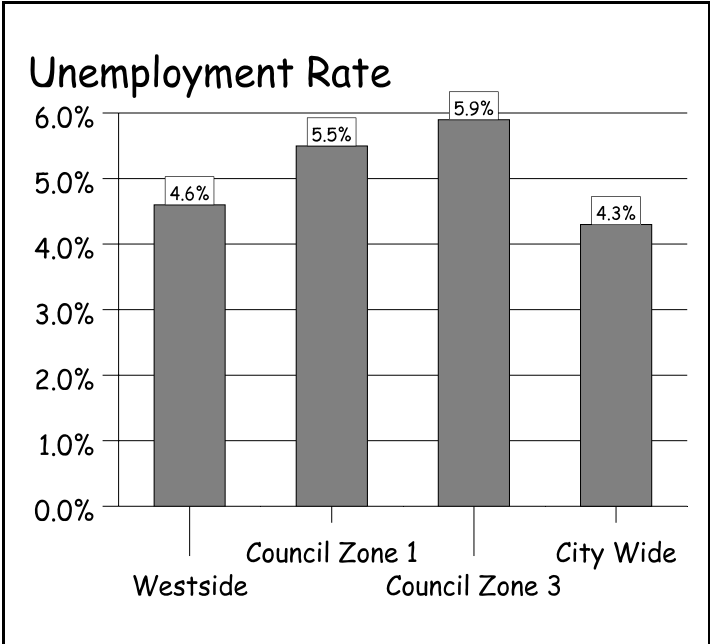
2000 Census



Poverty level is based on the income, age and number of people in the household. The percentage of persons living below the poverty level in the Westside neighborhood is 18.5%. This compares to 20% in Council Zone 1 and 19% in Council Zone 3. City wide it is 14.8%.

2000 Census

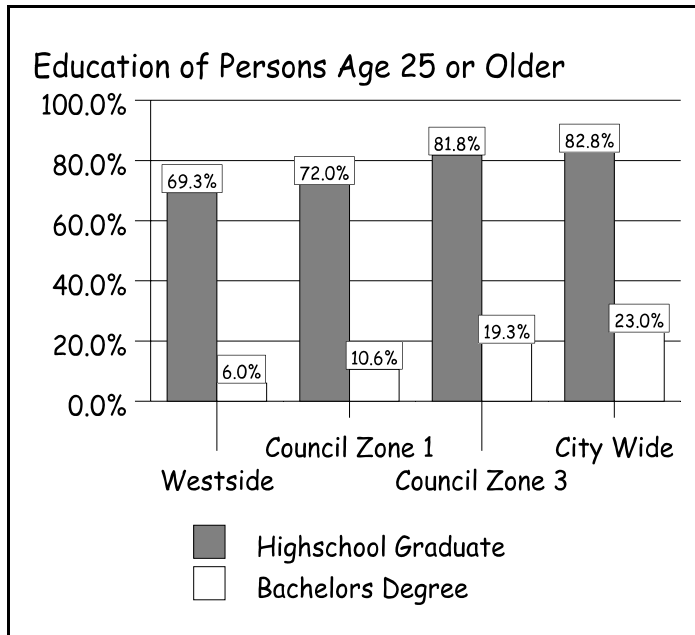
INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT



In the Westside neighborhood, 4.6% of persons are unemployed. In Council Zone 1, the percentage is 5.5% and in Council Zone 3, the percentage is 5.9%. City wide the percentage is 4.3%.

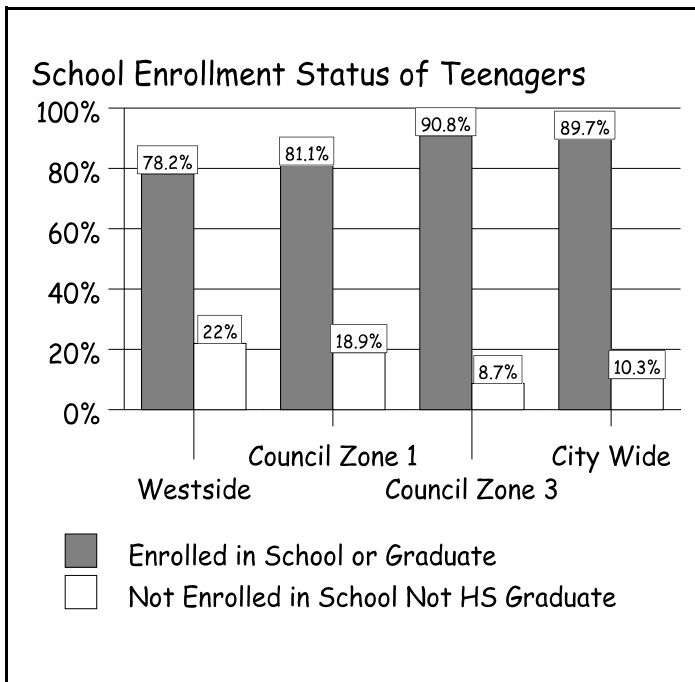
2000 Census

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND SCHOOL ENROLLMENT



2000 Census

Information shows highest level of educational attainment by persons 25 years of age or older. The percentage of persons within the Westside neighborhood who have attained a high school diploma as their highest level of education is 69.3%. In Council Zone 1 it is 72% and in Council Zone 3 it is 81.8%. City wide it is 82.8%.

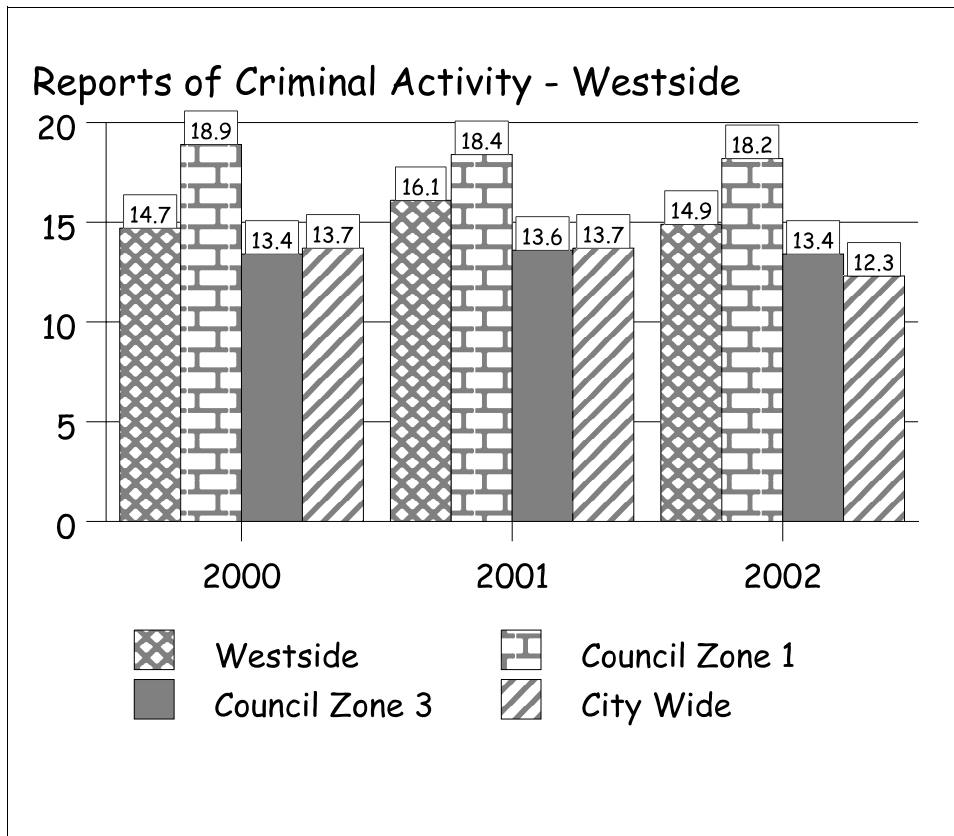


2000 Census

The percentage of teenagers within the Westside neighborhood who are enrolled in school or have graduated is 78.2%. In Council Zone 1 it is 81.1% and in Council Zone 3 it is 90.8%. City wide it is 89.7%.

REPORTS OF CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Reports of criminal activity have been compiled from the year 2000 to 2002 for comparison with your neighborhood, Council Zones 1 & 3, and the city as a whole. These reports include calls for service to the Police Department for the following activities: assault, drugs, general disturbances, noise disturbance, loud parties and residential burglaries. The chart below reflects the number of calls for police service per 100 people in each area.



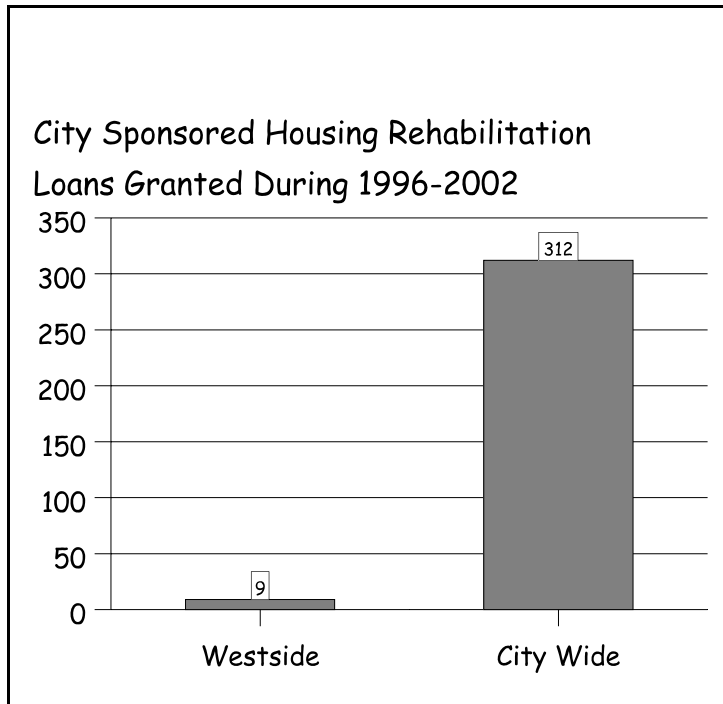
Types of activities are: assault, drugs, general disturbances, noise disturbance, loud parties and residential burglaries.

The Westside neighborhood shows a higher concentration of police service calls than Council Zone 3 and the city as a whole over the last three years. 2000 marks the lowest number of reported crimes for Westside followed by a slight increase in the neighborhood in 2001. In 2002 there was a slight decrease of reported crimes for the Westside neighborhood. Both Council Zones 1 & 3 remained steady over the three year period. The city as a whole remained the same in years 2000 and 2001 and in 2002 had a slight decrease in activity.

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

Housing Rehabilitation Loans

Housing rehabilitation loans granted by the city include low-interest loans for the renovation of owner-occupied homes, and low-interest loans for the rehabilitation of rental properties. Roughly 3% of all city sponsored housing rehabilitation loans were made within the Westside Neighborhood from 1996 to 2002. This information was retrieved from the City of Springfield, Department of Planning & Development, Grants and Program Implementation Division.

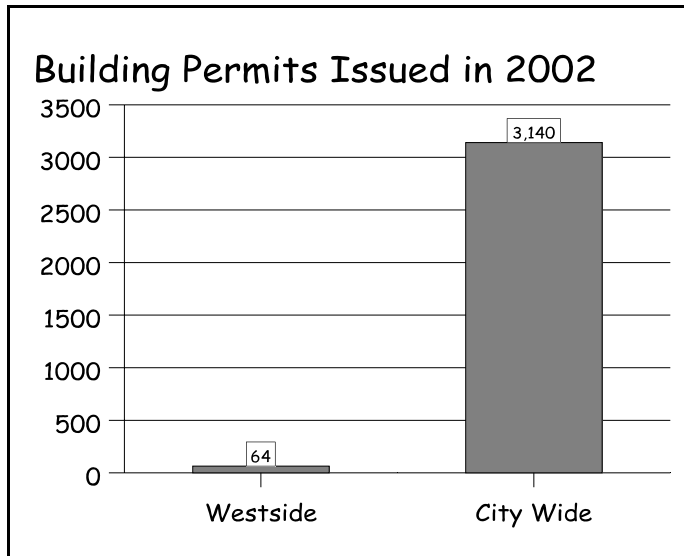


City of Springfield, Department of Planning and Development,
Grants and Program Implementation

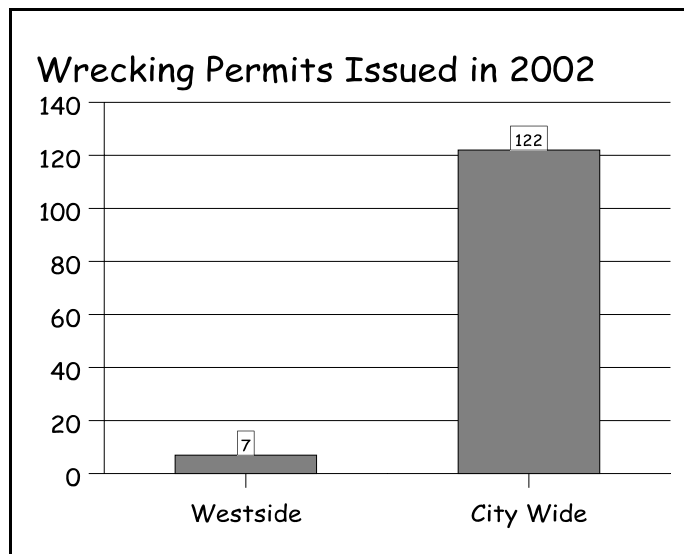
DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

Building and Wrecking Permits

Building permits are issued by the city for activities including the construction of new buildings, additions to existing buildings, remodeling, damage repair, etc. Wrecking permits are issued for any type of demolition activity - whether for part of a structure or an entire structure. This information was retrieved from the City of Springfield, Department of Building Development Services.



City of Springfield, Department of Building Development Services



City of Springfield, Department of Building Development Services

STEP 2: My Neighborhood Is

Workshop participants identified how they experience their neighborhood, and considered those things they want to protect, preserve or enhance. They thought about the landmarks, paths, activity centers, districts, edges or barriers, and features. These were noted on a wall map.

- △ *Landmarks* — significant physical objects, like buildings or signs
- +++ *Paths* — routes people use to get places
- *Activity centers* — gathering places to do some activity
- *Districts* — areas of recognizable character
- \\ \\ *Edges or barriers* — a limit or boundary that prevents people from enjoying the neighborhood or something in it
- ✕ *Features* — things people like and would like to preserve or enhance

Landmarks:

- Historic House on Scenic
- New Fire Station

Paths:

- West Avenue
- Mt. Vernon Street
- College Street
- Walnut Street
- Grand Street
- Golden Avenue

Activity Centers:

- Schools
- Parks
- Golden Avenue Church
- College Street Church
- Free Clinic at Old Fire Station on Scenic
- Boys & Girls Club

Districts:

- College Street

Edges or Barriers:

- Paul Mueller
- Bennett & Hillcrest
- Lack of sidewalks on Hilton joining park on the north

Neighborhood Images



Landmark:
The assessment participants considered the new fire station on South Scenic to be a landmark within their neighborhood.

Activity Center:
The assessment participants considers Westport Elementary, along with other neighborhood schools, as activity centers.



Activity Center:
Assessment participants consider all churches in their neighborhood to be activity centers.



Activity Center:
James Ewing Park is another example of an activity center within the Westside neighborhood.

STEP 3: My Neighborhood's Assets

Workshop participants identified assets that add value to their neighborhood. The assets include places, groups, organizations, equipment, skills, abilities and any other asset that adds value to the neighborhood. These assets are listed in random order.

- Park Next to Boys & Girls Club
- Westport Community Center
- Westside Optimist Club
- Caring Communities
- Study Middle School
- Grand Oaks Baptist Mission
- Boys & Girls Club
- Westport Park
- Optimist Club
- Breakfast Optimist Club
- Westport School
- Timber Creek AG Church



Westport Park was identified by assessment participants as an asset to the neighborhood.

STEP 4: If I Could Fix One Thing

In every neighborhood there are some things that need to be changed. These issues can prevent residents from enjoying their neighborhood and from doing the things they like to do. Below is the list of “fixes” that workshop participants said they would like to see in the Westside neighborhood.

- Keep neighborhood free of trash
- Dogs running loose
- Harrison west of Golden - drug problem
- Kids on four wheelers/go karts/dirt bikes on Walnut & Harrison
- Small children playing in streets
- 3300 block West Mt. Vernon - no sidewalk
- Trash at the bus stops
- Drugs at Westport Park and others
- West Avenue - clogged culverts
- Kids walking the streets all hours of the night
- Fully staffed, full service Health Clinic
- Poor lighting - West Avenue between Mt. Vernon and Grand
- Auto related noise (stereo & alarm)
- Speeding on residential streets
- No incentive for home purchases
- Unlit parking lots & streets
- Funding resources for minor home repairs

STEP 5: Describing My Neighborhood

The *Vision 20/20 Neighborhood's Plan* recognizes that not all neighborhoods in Springfield are the same. The character and condition of where we live varies according to age, history, type of housing and other factors. Each community has different strengths and opportunities. Each has different assets and priorities that drive unique strategies for improvement. The four unique Neighborhood Types that generally describe Springfield neighborhoods. Each Neighborhood Type suggests what actions are required for an area to become or stay healthy. These four types (assigned the colors Blue, Orange, Purple and Green in the Neighborhood Assessment workshop) are:

Developing (Blue)	Conservation (Orange)	Stabilization (Purple)	Redeveloping (Green)
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The Assessment is a beginning point from which the community can move forward and achieve quality living environments through a commitment to continuous improvement. The descriptions for these four Neighborhood Types are contained in the Westside Assessment Workbook.

In the workshop, participants defined the tools, actions and strategies for improving their community. They will use this information to strategically apply public and private resources in a way that is based on existing conditions, trends, opportunities, strengths and needs. Once other neighborhoods identify their type, then similarly "typed" Springfield communities can connect and partner around common issues and projects while assisting each other in developing their organizations.



Those who attended the workshop were asked to vote on the Neighborhood Type that best described their neighborhood. Their choice was **Conservation**.

My neighborhood has been developed for some time. Established businesses and institutions are located in the neighborhood. Places of worship, schools, recreational and entertainment facilities, and businesses provide many opportunities near my home.

Tree-lined streets, historic structures or qualities, public art and/or other amenities characterize the neighborhood and give it a sense of place. Most of the houses are occupied. Little demolition has occurred here and vacant land is scarce.

It appears that both public and private areas are well-maintained, although a house or business periodically falls into disrepair from a lack of routine maintenance (painting, yard upkeep, awning repair, etc.). Some infrastructure repairs may be needed to keep the neighborhood attractive. Generally the problems that do come up can be addressed by our neighborhood association, by a call to the City, or through neighbors getting together to help one another.



Participants listen to facilitators describing the different neighborhood types so they can decide which type fits their neighborhood.

STEP 6: Making My Neighborhood Better

The Westside workshop participants talked about specific actions their community can take to address the issues and challenges identified earlier in the assessment. They brainstormed ideas, concentrating on those actions that can be performed by the community to improve the neighborhood.

Below are the lists of all the ideas mentioned by workshop participants. They voted on the ideas that they most want implemented to make their neighborhood better.

Things we can do with a **Partner**:

- Re-establish a trash and bulky item pick-up program (for couches, etc.).
- Work with health care organizations to establish a full service health clinic in the neighborhood.
- Encourage the City to partner with the Council of Churches & Board of Realtors to help people with home repairs.
- Work with the Police Department to create a neighborhood watch program.
- Coordinate with C.U. to improve the placement of street lighting & tree trimming.
- Coordinate with agencies (C.P.O., D.F.S., City, Police, etc.) to address unsupervised children playing in streets.
- Coordinate with the Police Department to increase surveillance of activity at Westport Park.
- Contact the Urban Neighborhoods Alliance to establish a home repair/maintenance program in the neighborhood.
- Contact City Utilities about cleaning up garbage around bus shelters.
- Work with churches and the Police Department to address the issue of youth gathering and creating noise late at night.
- Create an incentive for home purchases in a targeted area within the neighborhood.

Things the **City** should do:

- Improve enforcement measures for auto noise related issues such as loud stereos and car alarms.
- Install a sidewalk on the 3300 block of West Mt. Vernon.
- Monitor speeding on residential streets.
- Increase the surveillance of four wheelers/go karts/dirt bikes.
- Improve enforcement measures for barking dogs.
- Consider traffic calming for speeding on residential streets.
- Re-establish the "White ways" plan/program.



Workshop participants vote on their priorities.

CITY ACTION PLAN

PRIORITIES

During the Neighborhood Assessment workshop, Westside residents identified 18 actions that they could do “themselves”, “with a partner”, or actions the “city” could take. Following the workshop, attendees voted for the actions that they felt were the most necessary to improve their neighborhoods. Westside residents chose the following actions as their top priorities:

- The neighborhood should **partner** with the City to re-establish trash & bulky item pick-up program (for couches, etc.).
 - The **City** should improve enforcement measures for auto noise related issues such as loud stereos and car alarms.
 - The neighborhood should **partner** with Health Care Organizations to establish a full service health clinic in the neighborhood.
 - The **City** should install a sidewalk on the 3300 block of West Mt. Vernon Street.
 - The City should **partner** with the Council of Churches & Board of Realtors to help people who need home repairs.
 - The neighborhood should **partner** with the Springfield Police Department to create a neighborhood watch program.
 - The **City** should monitor speeding on residential streets.
 - The **City** should increase surveillance of four wheelers/go karts/dirt bikes on residential streets.
-

CITY ACTION ON PRIORITIES

Westside participants were told throughout the Neighborhood Assessment workshop that the city could only focus on a few activities in the short term. Based on the input and review of the priorities identified by Westside residents, various City departments and other organizations have committed to taking the following 4 actions in the Westside Neighborhood Assessment Area:

Issue: The neighborhood should partner with the City to re-establish a trash & bulky item pick-up program (for couches, etc.).

Response: The City of Springfield periodically designates funds for neighborhood-wide trash, bulky item and yard waste pick-up programs. The Westside Neighborhood Association should coordinate with the Community Partnership of the Ozarks to apply to the Springfield Planning Department for City funding for such program.

Issue: The City should install a sidewalk on the 3300 block of West Mt. Vernon Street.

Response: Improving pedestrian connectivity along W. Mt. Vernon is a desirable goal of the City of Springfield and the Westport Elementary PTA. To meet that goal, the Springfield Public Works Department and the PTA have agreed to utilize 1/4 cent sales tax funding to construct school related sidewalks. One of the sidewalk segments proposed to be constructed is on the south side of W. Mt. Vernon and extends west from Golden Avenue (3100 and 3200 blocks). This sidewalk segment is a critical need because it will connect school children from areas to the south with the crosswalk at W. Mt. Vernon and Golden. A new sidewalk segment on the north side of W. Mt. Vernon (3300 block) also has merit because it will decrease the current gap between sidewalks to the east and west. Despite this fact, this sidewalk provides less utility for school children north of W. Mt. Vernon because their path to school is generally to the north through Westport Park - away from this higher volume street.

Sidewalk construction in this vicinity of W. Mt. Vernon is dependent on renewal of the current 1/4 cent sales tax during the City's February referendum. Should the 1/4 cent sales tax be renewed, the sidewalk segment on the south side of W. Mt. Vernon (3100 and 3200 blocks) will be constructed. The sidewalk segment on the north side of W. Mt. Vernon (3300 block) will also be constructed utilizing a separate funding source for Neighborhood Assessment projects. Should the 1/4 cent sales tax not be renewed, Neighborhood Assessment project funds will then be used to only construct the sidewalk segment on the south side of W. Mt. Vernon due to the greater need of providing safe routes to school.

Issue: The City should partner with the Council of Churches & Board of Realtors to help people who need home repairs.

Response: The City of Springfield already provides Community Development Block Grant funding to the Council of Churches & Board of Realtors to fund home repair

programs for the elderly, handicapped and low-income families. The Westside Neighborhood Association should contact these organizations to determine if their programs address the needs of many of the Westside neighborhood's residents. Dialogue between the neighborhood association and these charitable organizations could result in the re-structuring of how these organizations provide services.

Issue: The City should monitor speeding on residential streets.

Response: The Springfield Police Department will request that the Springfield Public Works Department conduct a study on Mt. Vernon, Walnut, West, Grand and Scenic streets to determine where speeding enforcement needs to be concentrated. After receipt of the traffic data, the Police Department will formulate a strategy for speeding enforcement in the vicinity.

CITY RESPONSE ON PRIORITIES

Some of the priorities identified on page 24 can not be undertaken by the City at this time. City action is either not recommended, or can only take place with further involvement and/or information from neighborhood residents. The following list provides some suggestions which neighborhood residents can use to increase the chances that these issues can be better addressed in the future:

Issue: The City should improve enforcement measures for auto noise related issues such as loud stereos and car alarms.

Response: This is a sporadic issue that is difficult for the Springfield Police Department to address unless neighborhood residents provide specific information on the houses or vehicles that are generating City noise ordinance violations. Westside Neighborhood Assessment attendees were provided with Police and Public Information Office contact information so that they can notify the City of any specific problem properties. When reporting noise problems, the public should contact 911 if the problem is occurring at that time; or, contact the Public Information Office at 864-1011 if the problem is recurring but not taking place at that specific time. Complaints may be submitted anonymously.

Issue: The neighborhood should partner with the Springfield Police Department to create a neighborhood watch program.

Response: Westside Neighborhood Assessment attendees were provided with contact information for the Springfield Police Department officers who would help them set up a Neighborhood Watch program. Officer Rick Bookout had also addressed the Westside Neighborhood Association in August, 2003, about establishing a program and has been awaiting a response from members of the Association. Individuals interested in establishing a Neighborhood Watch program in the Westside neighborhood should re-contact Officer Rick Bookout at 891-1503, or contact Officer Harter at 837-5863.

Issue: The City should increase surveillance of four wheelers/go karts/dirt bikes on residential streets.

Response: As with noise concerns, this is a sporadic issue that is difficult for the Springfield Police Department to address unless neighborhood residents provide specific information on where the offences are taking place. Westside Neighborhood Assessment attendees were provided with Police and Public Information Office contact information so that they can notify the City of any specific problem properties. When reporting problems, the public should contact 911 if the problem is occurring at that time; or, contact the Public Information Office at 864-1011 if the problem is recurring but not taking place at that specific time. Complaints may be submitted anonymously.

CITY ACTION ON OTHER ISSUES

Other actions, while not determined by Neighborhood Assessment participants to be priorities, were proposed that might require City involvement to be undertaken. Of those actions, the City will commit to or has completed the following:

Issue: Pre-Assessment City staff tour of the Westside assessment area.

Response: Prior to the Westside Neighborhood Assessment workshop, City staff conducted a day-long tour of the assessment area. Based on this tour, the Springfield Public Works Department conducted the following maintenance:

- The following missing signs were replaced:

Street Signs: Walnut/Park, Page/Laurel, Sunshine/Hillcrest, Elm Forest

Stop Signs: Elm/Forest

"Street Ends" Signs: Lombard going west from Western

- Bike straps were welded to the storm drainage grate at the southwest corner of College and Kansas to make it safer for bicycle use.
- Clogged drainage culverts along West Street were cleared. Several culverts were also repaired.

Acknowledgements



Tom Carlson, *Mayor*
Tom Finnie, *City Manager*

City Council

Denny Whayne
Zone 1 Councilman

Mary Collette
General Councilwoman A

Shelia O. Wright
Zone 2 Councilwoman

Gary Deaver
General Councilman B

Ralph Manley, Mayor Pro Tem
Zone 3 Councilman

Conrad Griggs
General Councilwoman C

John D. Wylie
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