



A VISION FOR JEFFERSON

Revitalizing the East Avenue Corridor

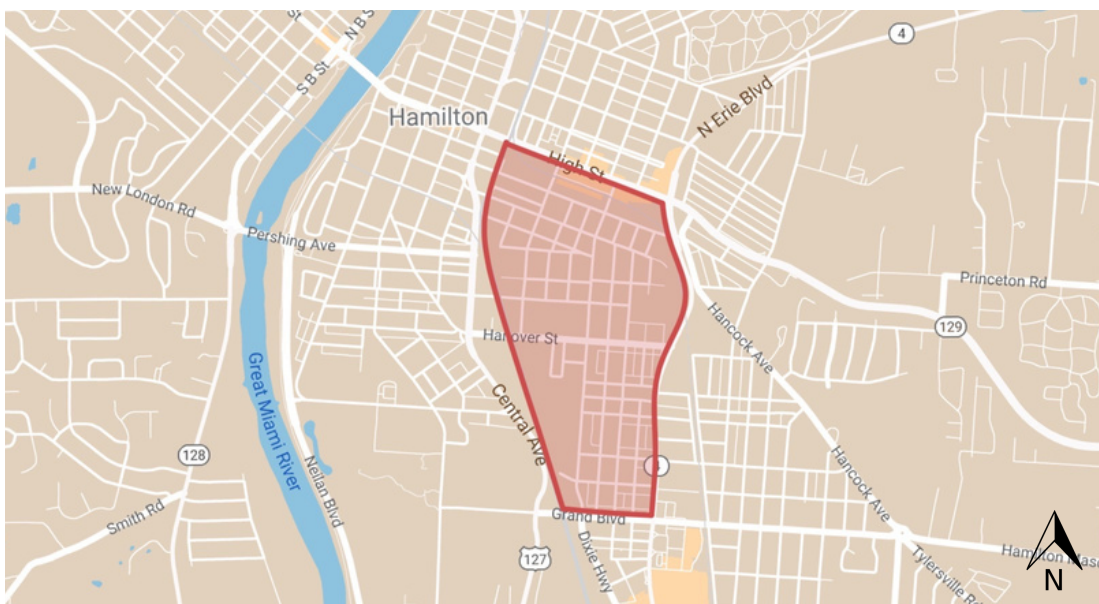


Prepared for the City of Hamilton
by Miami University Advanced Urban and Regional Planning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY







The Jefferson neighborhood is one of Hamilton's historic and most diverse neighborhoods, with East Avenue as its heart. Jefferson is a traditionally working-class neighborhood bounded by industry and rail lines but has faced substantial economic and social struggles. The East Avenue Corridor is a vital connector to Downtown Hamilton and the spine of the Jefferson neighborhood. Currently, East Avenue is not a destination: it has many vacancies, run-down amenities, and serves as a popular transit for cars and a truck route. However, the area's proximity to Downtown Hamilton, diversity, and high-traffic location give it enormous potential. As one of the most economically and socially diverse neighborhoods in Hamilton, the Jefferson neighborhood holds great potential to be a hub of cultural and economic activity.

This plan, drafted for the City of Hamilton by Miami University Advanced Urban and Regional Planning students, seeks to revitalize the area through a focus on economic development and reinvestment, community engagement and improve existing housing conditions while sustaining the cultural heritage of the neighborhood. Guided by Plan Hamilton and stakeholder input, this plan focuses on revitalizing the neighborhood by utilizing its diversity and culture as its most valuable asset. This plan lays the framework for the East Avenue Corridor to become a destination of its own within the city through neighborhood placemaking, transportation and streetscape, community development, and economic development.



The Jefferson neighborhood is located Southeast of Downtown Hamilton

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INTRODUCTION



PROJECT CONTEXT

History

The East Avenue Corridor and Jefferson neighborhood are an important part of Hamilton's history and culture. In the early 1900s, Hamilton experienced significant growth and development, resulting in the development of new neighborhoods, including Jefferson. The neighborhood is uniquely situated in that it is bounded by three sides on railroad tracks, fueling an industrial economy. Historically, the neighborhood was a thriving, well connected city corridor for its residents and all Hamiltonians. The neighborhood was home to a diverse population of working-class families, many of whom were employed by industry in and around Hamilton.

In recent decades, the East Avenue Corridor and Jefferson neighborhood have become less economically viable. Through research, planning, and implementation the Jefferson neighborhood can be revitalized to the thriving neighborhood it was in the past. This revitalization plan provides the East Avenue Corridor and Jefferson neighborhood with tools to return to a place where its residents can live, work and play.



East Avenue after the 1913 flood in Hamilton

Existing Conditions

The East Avenue Corridor and broader Jefferson neighborhood is a historic area close to Downtown Hamilton with a wealth of opportunities for redevelopment and reinvestment. The neighborhood hosts a mix of older homes, apartments, and commercial properties, providing a neighborhood structure where Hamiltonians can live, work and play. The East Avenue Corridor is primarily a mixed-use community business district but has numerous vacant properties. With lower property values relative to Hamilton and the larger US, the neighborhood provides an opportunity for local real estate investments to have a large impact. Roads in the area are in need of repair, however, this provides the opportunity for streetscape changes to curbs, painting, and sidewalks.

Existing initiatives in the neighborhood have yielded positive results, demonstrating that the Jefferson neighborhood is able to adapt and change. City programs such as the Neighborhood Stabilization Program and the Building Blocks Program provide funding for the rehabilitation of vacant and abandoned properties. The Jefferson Alliance and community organizations have fostered growth among the residents. These initiatives and structures will be crucial in continuing and accelerating the revitalization of the area.



Recently improved Jefferson Park



1. Site Visit

Following a request for proposal from the City of Hamilton, a site visit was conducted by the project team to better understand the existing conditions, and discuss the area with stakeholders. During this visit, the team was able to learn more about the project area, analyze the current conditions, and take photographs for use in the written plan.



2. Proposal Presentation & Visioning Workshop

The project team presented a proposal for the work to be completed by the team. The presentation also featured relevant best practices and potential opportunities in the area. Jefferson community stakeholders and city officials participated in two mapping exercises, and a word cloud exercise to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

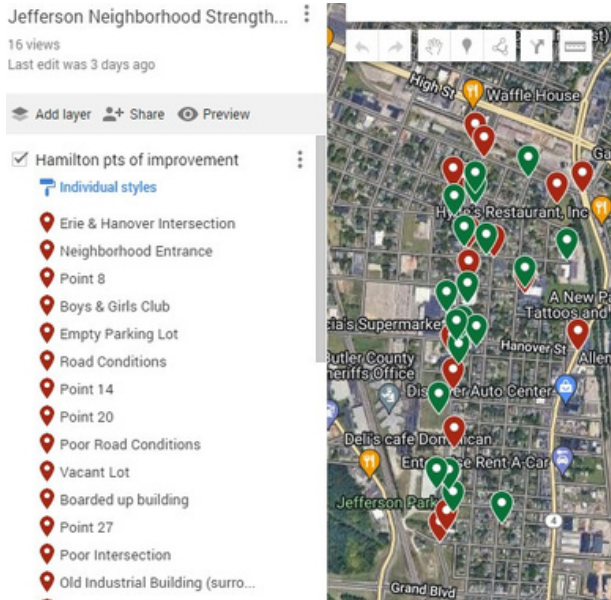


3. Draft Plan Presentation & Stakeholder Feedback

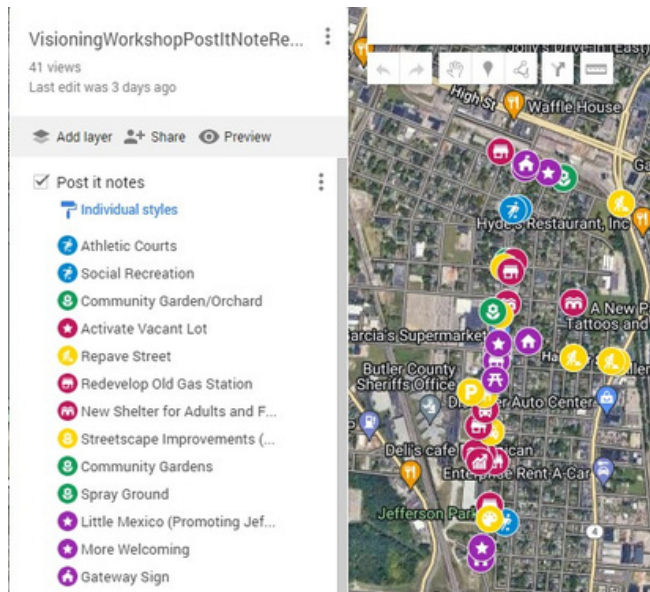
The project team presented goals, tools, and strategies for the revitalization of the East Avenue Corridor to community stakeholders. City officials and community members provided feedback on the viability of these options and engaged in conversations and a survey to determine what should be prioritized in the final plan.

Strengths and Weaknesses

In the visioning workshop, participants shared their thoughts about the neighborhood's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.



Stakeholders input of positive (green) and negative (red) points



Stakeholders input of needed changes

How Do You Describe Jefferson?



Words stakeholders used to describe Jefferson and East Ave

VISION STATEMENT

Based on this feedback, the team compiled the following vision statement:

The Jefferson neighborhood will be a diverse and tight-knit community, and the East Avenue Corridor will be a vibrant and attractive place for residents and visitors alike.



NEIGHBORHOOD PLACEMAKING



OVERVIEW

Neighborhood placemaking is a planning component that works to revitalize neighborhoods by creating public spaces and building community identity. The goals and strategies of this section aim to promote the following: social gathering and recreation, strengthening a sense of pride and belonging, and creating branding elements.

Goals

- Strengthen the connections between places and people
- Foster cultural representation within the built environment
- Create accessible, diverse spaces to serve the community and beyond
- Utilize vacant properties within the neighborhood and corridor
- Implement neighborhood branding

Existing Conditions

- Lots within the East Ave Corridor hold revitalization potential
- Spaces to gather are available, but limited
- Hamilton Urban Gardens System
- Neighborhood diversity not yet matched by cultural representation
- Implementation opportunities for branding signage
- Revitalized Jefferson Park & StreetSpark Mural, but limited others



Mural by StreetSpark, Jefferson Park

STRATEGIES

Mixed-Use Parks

Mixed-use parks are recreation and gathering areas that contain a diverse range of amenities and activities. These parks are designed to draw in visitors as well as serve the local residents. With the creation of Jefferson Park, the community has a walkable recreation area complete with a playground and open field. Complementing Jefferson Park with a mixed-use park with differing amenities would create variety within the neighborhood.



Jefferson Park, Hamilton, OH

Benefits

- Variety of uses that promote social gatherings
- Creation of an anchor for the corridor
- Walkable for neighborhood residents

Case Study

Marcum Park, a previous brownfield site, was reinvented into a central mixed-use gathering space for the community. The park space provides an interactive sprayground, sculptures, artwork, benches, picnic tables, an open field, and a venue for hosting events.



Marcum Park, Hamilton, OH

Implementation

To complement and enhance the already existing Jefferson Park, this plan suggests the strategy of a mixed-use park about a block away on East Avenue. The mixed-use park would provide a variety of amenities and activities for the community and visitors. Benches, picnic tables, interactive water features, artwork, and open space would best complement and add to the neighborhood and Jefferson Park.



Vacant lots on East Avenue, across from Edison Avenue



Mixed-use park rendering for the vacant lots on East Avenue, across from Edison Avenue

Pocket Parks

Pocket parks are small-scale, urban, open spaces that provide community members with a safe, walkable, and inviting environment. They also meet a variety of needs and functions, including small event spaces, play areas for children, spaces for relaxing or meeting friends, and taking lunch breaks.



Franklin Street Park, Cambridge, MA

Benefits

- Revitalization of vacant properties
- Accessible gathering spaces for the community
- Amenities such as benches and tables

Case Study

The Mt. Airy Business Improvement District in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania has provided multiple pocket parks along the Germantown Avenue Commercial Corridor in an effort to contribute to Philadelphia's Comprehensive Plan vision that residents live within a 10-minute walk from neighborhood park areas.



Freedom Park, Philadelphia, PA

Implementation

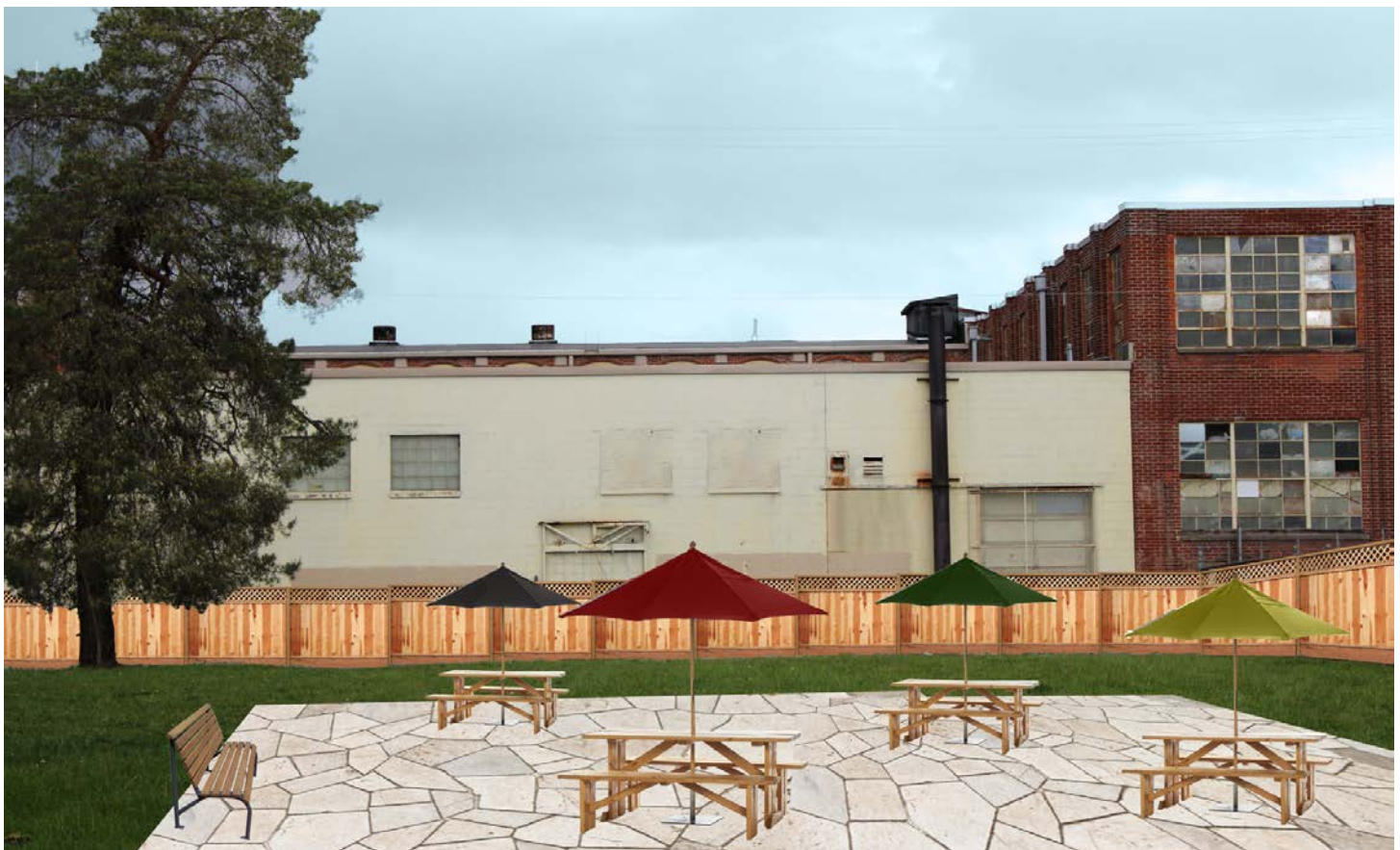
The plan suggests the creation of pocket parks within the corridor to provide spaces and amenities for residents and visitors alike. An ideal location for a pocket park would be near the intersection of East Avenue and Hanover Street, where Garcia's Supermarket provides a center of commerce and cultural community. The park could be a place for customers to take their meals and a location for community and cultural events.



Garcia's Supermarket, Hamilton, OH



Vacant lots located on East Avenue across from Garcia's Supermarket



Pocket park rendering for vacant lots on East Avenue across from Garcia's Supermarket

Murals

Community art, especially murals, is a strong and effective tool to inject life into public spaces. Artists create murals on raw walls and buildings selected in partnership with the owners. The murals can help reflect the local contexts of people, neighborhoods, and the city's history.



Mural located in Downtown Hamilton, OH

Benefits

- Brings color and vibrancy to the neighborhood
- Expression of cultural representation
- Could encourage community engagement



Mural located in Downtown Hamilton, OH

Case Study

The Pilsen neighborhood, located a few miles southwest of downtown Chicago is defined by the neighborhood's Latino culture expressed through public art and murals. Murals contribute to the neighborhood's sense of place by representing the culture of the community, adding meaning to the existing environment.



Mural located in Pilsen, Chicago, IL

Implementation



Side of the Boys & Girls Club of Hamilton facing towards Hensley Avenue

The Jefferson community is culturally diverse, but a passerby might not notice at first glance. Murals can help to brighten the neighborhood, represent its diverse cultures, and inspire greater creativity. The plan suggests the installation of murals on key locations along East Avenue. Community design sessions as well as independent artists within the neighborhood could be included in the process in order to accurately represent the community. One possible mural location could be on the side of the Boys & Girls Club building, located on East Avenue.



Possible mural rendering on the side of the Boys & Girls Club, facing Hensley Avenue

Gateways

Gateway signage welcomes residents and visitors, helping build community identity. Well designed gateways have the ability to help neighborhoods stand out from others. Gateways take a variety of forms and styles including archways, gates, signage, sculptures, and murals.



German Village gateway, Hamilton, OH

Benefits

- Helps to foster pride and ownership
- Establishes neighborhood identity
- Visitors know when they are entering or exiting the neighborhood



Gateway in Humboldt Park Neighborhood, Chicago, IL

Case Study

Gateways can take sculptural form, as in these Puerto Rican flags, which serve as gateways for a portion of Division Street known as the Paseo Boricua, the heart of the neighborhood's Puerto Rican community. The unique gateway design welcomes residents and visitors while representing the history and pride of the community.

Implementation

Implementation of a gateway would increase the sense of place and identity for the neighborhood and its residents. They can be designed to tell a story about the neighborhood and draw people in. One style of gateway does not fit all neighborhoods, input sessions from Jefferson residents could aid in the design process, ensuring the neighborhood's identity is portrayed. Gateways could be installed at key neighborhood entry points like on East Avenue between Sipple Avenue and Grand Boulevard.



The Roosevelt Road gateway design created by the Site Design Group, Ltd. in Chicago, IL is an example of a unique gateway that expresses neighborhood identity.



Possible gateway rendering for the area on East Avenue between Sipple Avenue and Grand Boulevard

IMPLEMENTATION

Park, mural, and gateway features could be installed along East Avenue at key locations to gather community members and welcome visitors.



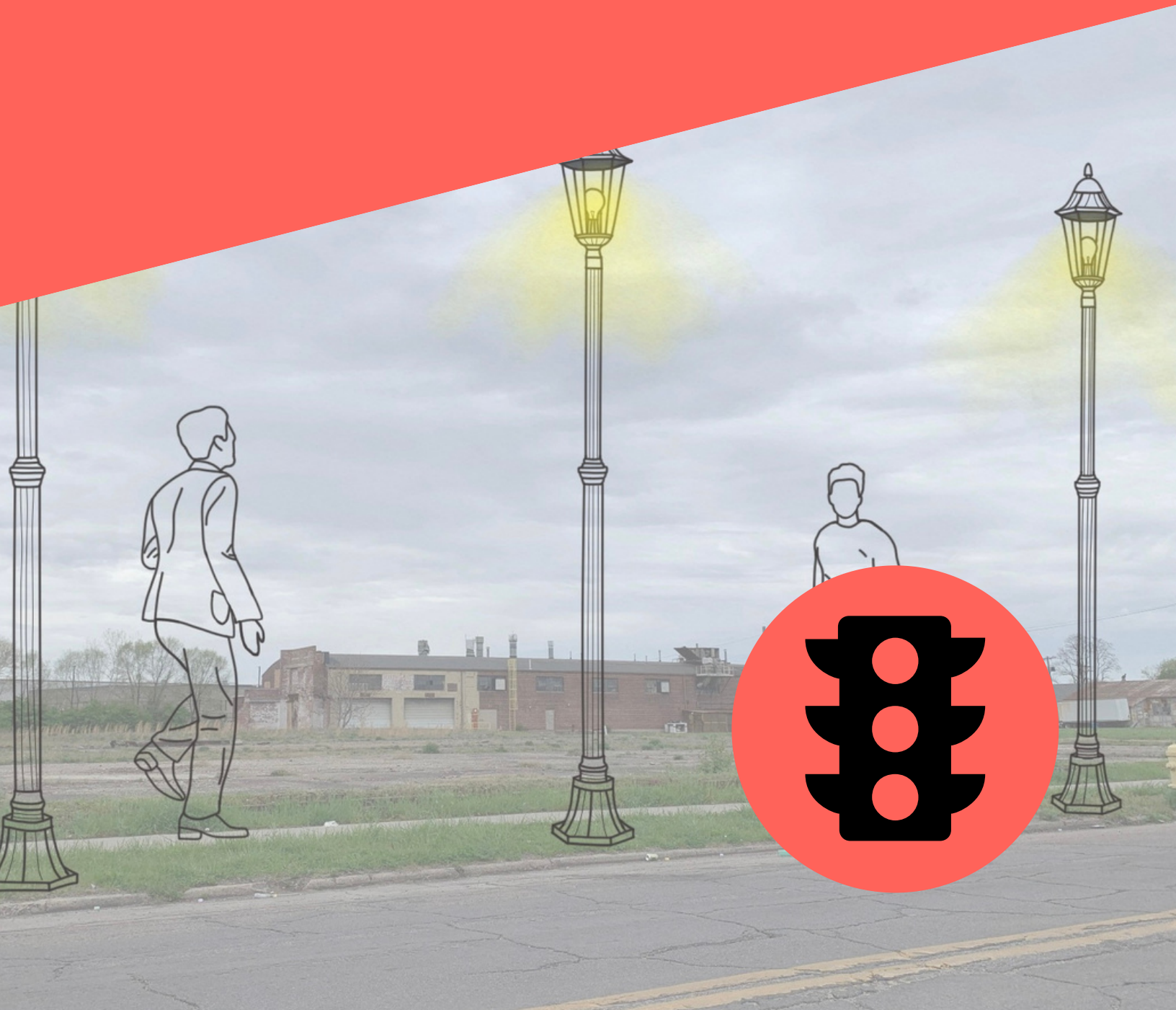
17Strong event at Jefferson Park

Funding Strategies

- Hamilton Community Foundation
- Community Development Block Grant
- City Parks Alliance partnership
- NatureWorks grant program



TRANSPORTATION & STREETScape



OVERVIEW

East Avenue Corridor provides both a major transportation connection for the Jefferson neighborhood as well as a public space for its residents. In order to improve both the identity and prosperity of Jefferson, a focus on improvements to the streetscape and infrastructure along the East Avenue Corridor is important. Offering multi-modal transportation accommodations and a more aesthetically pleasing streetscape, the East Avenue Corridor can help Jefferson become a neighborhood to live, work, and play.

Goals

- Provide multimodal transportation routes on East Avenue for:
 - Cyclists
 - Truck routes
 - Commercial motor vehicles (CMVs)
- Improve road quality and streetscape beauty
- Design for a safer, cleaner, and more efficient corridor



Intersection of East Avenue and Hanover Street

Strategies Include:

- Cycling Route Accommodation
- Intersection Safety Infrastructure
- Streetscape Beautification



View facing North on East Avenue

TRANSPORTATION

Cycling Routes

Many Jefferson residents bike for transportation and deserve safe and accessible routes. Narrow streets and on-street parking make it difficult to add facilities like bike lanes, but bicycle travel can be accommodated by retrofitting to accommodate both bikes and drivers. Utilizing the parallel one-way streets of 11th and 12th as bike boulevards would still allow for connectivity between the North and South ends of Jefferson and connect residents with the rest of the city of Hamilton.

Benefits:

- Provides greater safety for cyclists
- Preserves existing on-street parking and road infrastructure
- Relatively low-cost for street markings



A bike boulevard promotes biking while still allowing local motor vehicle access



Map of proposed cyclist flow on 11th and 12th streets

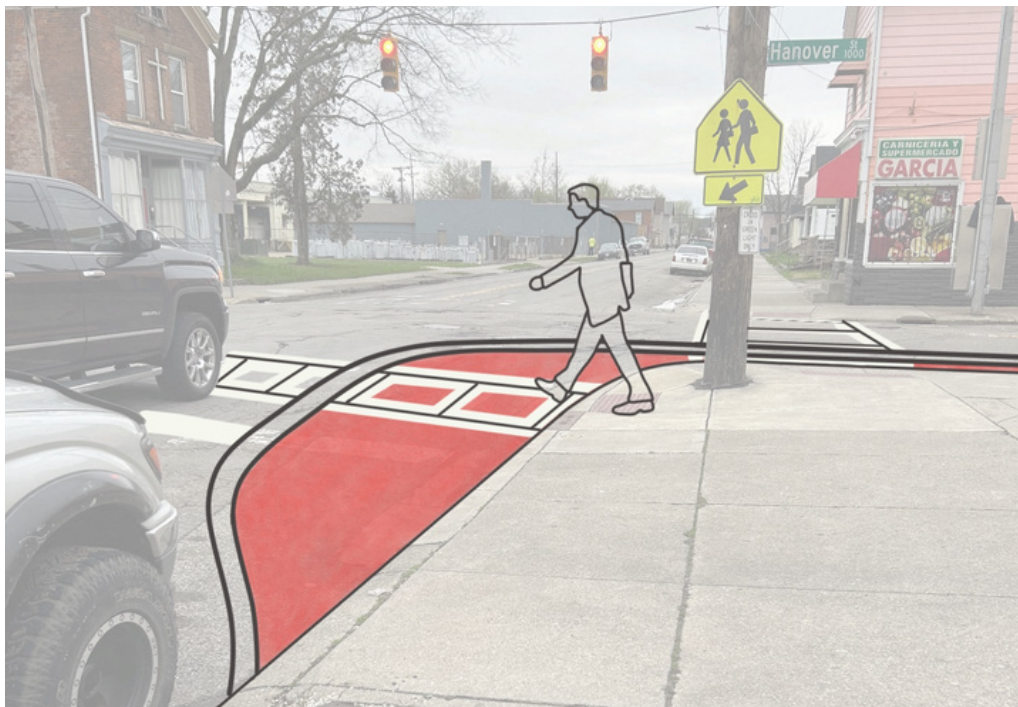
Intersection Safety

East Avenue is a major vehicular thoroughfare for Hamilton, and the road is also shared by pedestrians and bikes traveling along and across the street. In order to ensure that the East Avenue Corridor remains safe for all users, new infrastructure at major intersections would help improve safety in addition to adding beautification elements to the streetscape.

Option 1: Adding truck aprons at major intersections along East Avenue would help improve pedestrian safety while accommodating truck traffic.

Benefits include:

- Improved driver visibility of pedestrians crossing the street
- A buffer around crosswalks
 - Directs commercial motor vehicles around it
 - Allows a wider turning radius for freight trucking traffic
- Coloration adds extra visibility for protecting pedestrians



Truck aprons calm traffic while accommodating commercial vehicles

Option 2: Enforced buffered no-parking zones surrounding stop signs at intersections would help provide both pedestrian and driver safety. Residents noted difficulty seeing down side streets at intersections in Jefferson, so creating a wider line of vision would help to prevent driver-cyclist collisions, especially if shared bike lanes are implemented.

BEAUTIFICATION

Lighting

In order to both build upon the sense of neighborhood pride in Jefferson and improve walkable conditions, streetscape beautification can help improve the East Avenue Corridor for both residents and those passing through the neighborhood. One current issue brought to light by residents was that East Avenue becomes dark at night due to a lack of street lighting.

Option 1:

Street lamps along East Avenue add safer walking conditions for pedestrians and allow for better pedestrian visibility for drivers. They also add the opportunity for creating neighborhood charm and a neighborhood aesthetic by sticking with a certain style of street lighting.



String lighting adds a warm, inviting atmosphere



Lamps add beauty and increase safety

Option 2:

String Lighting across a high-traffic section of East Avenue can help create a more lively and safer nightlife along East Avenue and help to create a central “downtown” area for residents to gather.



Rendering of streatery on East Avenue

Streateries

Another option for streetscape improvement would be to add streateries or parklets as curb extensions. A streatery is a parklet that features dining and viable locations would be in partnership with local restaurants along East Avenue, such as Garcia's.

Benefits

- Increased seating and business for local restaurants
- Narrowing of street to slow traffic
- Increased liveliness and community gathering spaces along East Avenue

Parklets

Parklets can be used similarly to curb extensions, but in order to still accommodate truck turning radii, can be set back from the intersection. They feature open green space and/or seating for residents.

Benefits

- Increase vegetation and help to reduce water runoff
- Add beauty and aesthetic to the East Avenue streetscape
- Adds a community amenity for residents



Rendering of Parklet on East Avenue

IMPLEMENTATION

Using the strategies outlined in this chapter, along with funding strategies listed below, the East Avenue Corridor can transform into a more livable, walkable, and safer anchor for the Jefferson neighborhood.



Map of implementation points along East Avenue

Funding Strategies

OH Department of Transportation

- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
- Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)

US Department of Transportation

- Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)



Possible new streetscape for the Hanover and East Avenue intersection



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



OVERVIEW

The goal of community development is to enhance the overall quality of a neighborhood through various elements, such as, public services, housing, and economic development. Ultimately, these strategies aim to diversify housing options while also promoting sustainable and economic growth in the community.

Goals

- Diversify housing options
- Incorporate more affordable housing options
- Improve the physical conditions of buildings along East Avenue
- Provide potential programs to prevent resident displacement



Housing conditions in the Jefferson neighborhood

STRATEGIES

Adaptive Reuse

The Jefferson neighborhood, centered along the East Avenue Corridor, is known as a historic neighborhood. Adaptive reuse is a sustainable approach to diversify housing options that preserves the historic buildings and charm of the neighborhood while modernizing their uses. This strategy focuses on the productive use of already existing buildings rather than redevelopment.

Benefits

- Reduced infrastructure costs
- Energy and resource conservation

Opportunities

A potential site for adaptive reuse would be the Heirs Covenant Church. This is a beautiful and historic building that could be transformed into affordable apartments, local business or social services.



Heirs Covenant Church



Possible future adaptive reuse of the Heirs Covenant Church building

Façade Improvement

The appearance of buildings from the street has a significant impact on economic corridors. A Façade Development Program utilizes incentives and grants to motivate property owners to improve the outward appearance of buildings. This strategy could be effectively employed along the East Avenue Corridor with the goal of enhancing the streetscape and neighborhood identity in addition to making properties more appealing to lessees.

Best Practices

- Grant programs administered by city governments or community organizations (such as the Jefferson Alliance)
- Tax incentives for property owners who participate in the program
- Emphasis on high-impact, relatively low-cost improvements such as new paint, siding replacement, and replacing broken windows and doors
- Façade improvements that support neighborhood identity (ex. Bold colors, awnings, themed signage)

Opportunities

A Façade Improvement Program would enhance the look of the East Avenue Economic Corridor. The renderings below feature two of the many buildings that could benefit from this program, found at the intersection of Walnut Street and East Avenue.



Current Building Condition



Rendering of the Potential Implementation of the Façade Improvement Program Along East Avenue

Mixed Use Zoning

Rezoning East Avenue to mixed-use would allow unoccupied or vacant developments to support additional and diverse housing while also supporting small businesses. By having a combination of uses in a single location, we can create a more community based neighborhood that supports the vision of live, work, and play.

Benefits

- Diverse and affordable housing options
 - Markets the neighborhood to prospective residents
- Residential, commercial, or retail space all in one location
- Reduces car dependency
- Promotes a sense of community and place
- Fosters economic development and growth

Opportunity

Vacant buildings along East Avenue



Mixed-use zoning has been implemented along Main Street in Hamilton, along with an upper-floor rehabilitation program.



Mixed-use rendering along East Avenue Corridor

One-Stop Center

Social service agencies play a core role in strengthening the Jefferson community. A "One-Stop Center" allows social and financial services to be located in one building, making services easier for neighborhood residents to find and access. If implemented in the East Avenue Corridor, services could include:

- Banking and Financial Services
- A Food Bank
- Computer Access Points
- A Phone Booth
- Social Service Assistance (Social Security, WIC, Food Stamps, Housing)

Best Practices

- Location accessible by multiple transportation modes
- Established near a cultural center of the community, such as East Avenue and Hanover Street
- Collaborate with existing nonprofits to maximize impact and avoid unnecessary redundancies in services.

Opportunities- Potential One Stop Locations



The Buildings on the West Side of the Intersection of East Avenue and Hanover



The Old Gas Station Building at East Avenue and Walnut

IMPLEMENTATION



Possible location to utilize mixed-use zoning by East Avenue & Hanover

Funding Strategies:

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- State CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) Program
- Neighborhood Stabilization Program
- HUD's Rehabilitation and Repair Home Loan



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



OVERVIEW

Revitalizing the East Avenue Corridor will take growing and building its economy. The strategies and goals outlined in this section aim to bring economic growth and stability to the Jefferson neighborhood and East Avenue Corridor while preventing gentrification and supporting the goals outlined in the previous sections.

Goals

- Create a robust economic corridor
- Increase the number of resident-staffed jobs
- Generate economic growth, support business development, and create opportunities for upward mobility



East Avenue has many vacant and run-down commercial spaces.



Garcia's Supermarket is a driver of economic activity in the East Avenue Corridor.

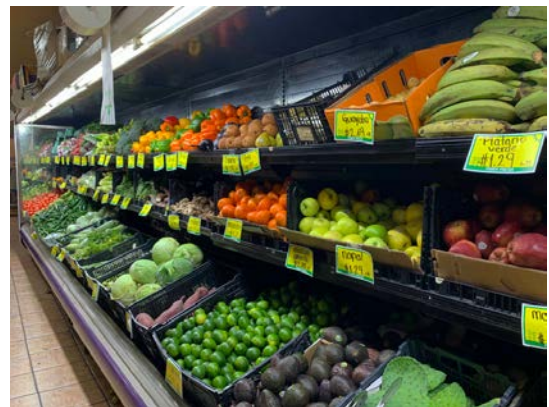
STRATEGIES

Business Recruitment & Development

Small businesses will be a staple of economic growth in the East Avenue Corridor. Supporting small business development would be an effective strategy for creating jobs and bringing additional funds to the neighborhood economy. Small business development includes the recruitment of new businesses and growth of existing businesses.

Small Business Development Techniques

- Small Business Loans (Federal, State, and City level)
- Small Business/Startup Incubation Programs
- Community Development Block Grants
- Prioritize Businesses that Support Community Goals
- Take Advantage of the Mixed-Use Nature of the East Avenue Corridor to Recruit and Support A Variety of Business Types Such as:
 - Hardware Stores
 - Restaurants
 - Small Grocery Stores
 - Industrial and Manufacturing



Mary's Comida Casera and Garcia's Supermarket are both current businesses on East Avenue

Workforce Development

Centralized Workforce Development Center

- One location which supports training programs for Jefferson residents to gain credentials for high-quality, well-paying jobs. These training programs could include:
 - Healthcare Certifications (CNA, EMT, Basic First Aid)
 - Industrial Training and Certifications (Welding, Carpentry, Electrician Training)
 - Computer Software Training Programs
 - Food Safety Training through Ohio State Extension
- Potential for a partnership with neighborhood businesses, Butler Tech, Miami University Hamilton, or Ohio State Extension.

Potential Partners:



Utilize Existing Nonprofits

- Collaborate with existing nonprofits in the Jefferson neighborhood to host basic training that makes Jefferson residents more marketable to employers.
- Focus on basic workforce and life skills such as:
 - Computer Literacy
 - Financial Literacy
 - Basic First Aid Training

Potential Partners:



IMPLEMENTATION



Fruit displayed at Garcia's Supermarket

Funding Strategies:

- State of Ohio grants:
 - Public Infrastructure Projects
 - Job Training (through businesses)
 - For businesses with 5 employees or less
 - For community Development Corporations
- US Economic Development Administration grants



ENVISIONING THE JEFFERSON OF TOMORROW



Envisioning a new Jefferson

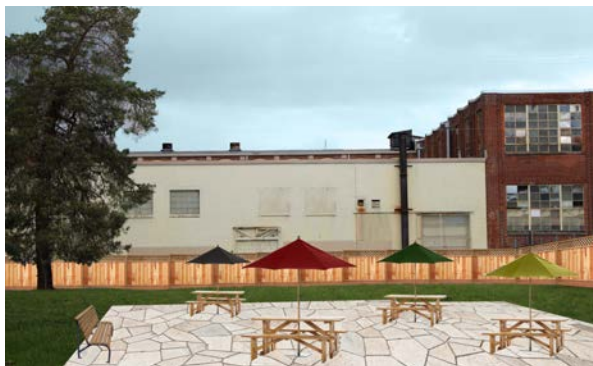
This plan has outlined how changes along the East Avenue Corridor will have a positive impact on the residents of the neighborhood and the City of Hamilton as a whole. With improvements in neighborhood placemaking, transportation and streetscape, community development, and economic development, the East Avenue Corridor and Jefferson neighborhood will be a vibrant and attractive place for residents and visitors alike.



A bike boulevard promotes biking while still allowing local motor vehicle access



Opportunity for a Parklet on East Avenue



Pocket park opportunity for vacant lots on East Avenue across from Garcia's Supermarket



String lighting adds a warm, inviting atmosphere



Truck aprons calm traffic while accommodating commercial vehicles



Mixed use park opportunity for the vacant lots on East Avenue, across from Edison Avenue

The proposed changes along the East Avenue Corridor will create a place where people can gather, improve the neighborhood for residents and encourage people that would have once only used East Avenue as a driving pass-through to stop and engage with what the community has to offer.



Proposed cyclist flow on 11th and 12th streets



Changes for East Avenue Corridor

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to....

City of Hamilton Staff:

Liz Hayden, Director of Planning
Brooke Wells, Department of Neighborhoods
David Stark, Department of Neighborhoods
Ed Wilson, Planning Department
Katie Johnson, City of Hamilton Police Department

East Avenue Corridor Visioning Workshop Participants:

Pastor Aaron Simpson, Freedom House Ministries
Matt Pfirman, Linrose Manufacturing
Adriana Reyes, Hamilton Resident
Carol Combs, Neighborhood Resident
Tommy John, Boys & Girls Clubs of Hamilton
Vicki Cross, Neighborhood Resident
Jeff Gambrell, Serve City
Cathy Hester, Hamilton Living Water Ministry, Inc.

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Dr. David Prytherch
Debbie White, Administrative Assistant

We appreciate the cooperation, constructive dialogue, support, and valuable feedback. With the contributions from these stakeholders, this plan better represents the goals and ambitions for this corridor and the community at large. We thank them for their shared desire to create an East Avenue Corridor and Jefferson neighborhood where all Hamiltonians can live, work and play.

ABOUT US

The East Avenue Corridor revitalization plan was generated by a team of eight students from the Department of Geography at Miami University with expertise in planning, architecture, sustainability, development, and public participation. By combining these skills with the valuable knowledge and feedback provided by Jefferson community stakeholders during the visioning workshop and draft plan presentation, we generated a comprehensive redevelopment plan for the East Avenue Corridor. The project team is incredibly grateful for the opportunity to work with the City of Hamilton and Jefferson community stakeholders on this impactful project. We hope that this plan will advance the revitalization efforts already underway in the East Avenue Corridor while providing clear goals and additional strategies. The East Avenue Corridor holds enormous potential, and we look forward to watching the area become a vibrant and engaging place for residents and visitors alike.

Team Members

Grace Axlund

Alexandria Coffman

Eli Davies

Melissa Ervin

Maria Klocke

Sarah Lowe

Justin Parks

Morgan Thompson

City of Hamilton
BUTLER COUNTY OHIO

