

Section 1: BASIC INFORMATION

City of North Little Rock Jump Start Application for the Levy Neighborhood

Project Name: Levy Revitalization Study

Project Sponsor: City of North Little Rock

Primary Contact Name and Affiliation: Robert Voyles, Planning Director, City of North Little Rock

Street Address: 120 Main Street

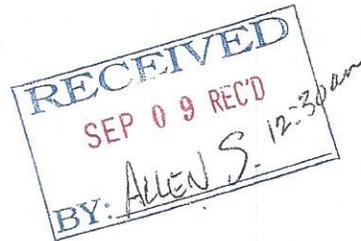
City State Zip: North Little Rock, AR 72114

Work Phone: 501-975-8870

E-Mail Address: rvoyles@nlr.ar.gov

This project is located in North Little Rock

The project type is: Urban/infill



Section 2: SCREENING REQUIREMENTS

Land use at project site: The current zoning for the Levy neighborhood is traditional Euclidian zoning. The current zoning of the Levy Neighborhood separates uses and accommodates the needs of the motorists.

The major commercial corridor in Levy is Camp Robinson Road, a C-3 district with buildings set back 40' or more in most cases. Uses along the Camp Robinson commercial corridor include many national franchise stores: Kroger, Dollar General, Auto Zone, O'Reilly's, McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, Sonic, PayLess Shoes, and several service stations. The area also contains some Arkansas franchise businesses: Centennial Bank, Hearn's Furniture, US Pizza, the Dixie Pig, Senor Tequilas, and Spectators. These businesses are important commercial assets for the area.

Levy was originally a separate city that eventually merged with North Little Rock. The old commercial district of Levy is the area south of Doyle Venable Drive. Many of the buildings are located close to the front property lines and relatively compact. There has been little redevelopment in the older Levy district over the past twenty years. The area has good potential for a walkable mixed-use setting.

The Levy area developed due to geographic reasons. The neighborhood is situated in a natural gap in local hills. A rail line crosses the southern border, as well as a major state highway, Highway 365. Interstate 40, constructed in the 1960's, provides an east-west route through the area. Levy has two interchanges -- one in the old commercial district and one to the west at Burns Park. Pike Avenue and Camp Robinson Road are radial arterial streets through the core area. Over the years, the bulk of commercial activity migrated to Camp Robinson Road (Ark. Highway 176), following expansion of that State Highway to a five-lane arterial.

The City currently has a variety of zoning tools available to support flexibility with use and development of property. In 2012, a "Smart Code" was adopted that provides a form-based code option for neighborhoods over 20 acres. In 2007, a "Traditional Neighborhood Development" zoning option was adopted to support a planned dense mixed-use neighborhood upstream from the downtown area. In the early 1990's, a C-6 downtown zoning classification was adopted which allows for buildings near the front property line and permits mixed use by right. In the 1980's, Planned Unit Development was added to the Zoning Ordinance that permits mixed-use developments with flexible design standards. In addition to these zoning classifications, the City has many zoning overlay districts to promote various themes. However, these options must be requested by a developer or landowners in the area, and that has not occurred in Levy.

Levy is North Little Rock's most diverse neighborhood, with its citizens being roughly 1/3 Hispanic, 1/3 African American, and 1/3 Caucasian. A number of businesses in downtown Levy cater to the Hispanic community; several of the Hispanic business only list the Spanish name in their advertisements.

Levy is a working-class neighborhood that desperately needs revitalization. The old Wal-Mart #7 on Camp Robinson Road has remained vacant for the past 20 years, and some buildings surrounding it are also boarded-up and vacant.

One recent project involved the beautification of the area below the I-40 overpass. Another recent project was the purchase and conversion of a Union Pacific Railroad spur to a bicycle/pedestrian trail -- now known as the Levy Trail. The area below I-40 has concrete walkways and benches with trees and raised planting beds. This is a landmark area that may become a public gathering space. The trail extends for about 1½ miles -- from 33rd Street to 52nd Street. A second, northerly phase of the trail -- from 33rd Street to Remount Road (also 1½ miles) -- is expected to be under construction within the next month or so. The Levy Trail provides a north-south recreation and exercise facility in the heart of a fully developed urban area.

The Levy Revitalization Study will review current conditions, identify property owners, and develop design and architectural guidelines to direct new development in a form-based code that will encourage pedestrian-oriented development -- a "Special Place", with a center that is mixed-use, walkable and sustainable. The area is ripe for redevelopment and

infill. It is hoped that the revitalization study exercise will present images to stimulate reinvestment in the diverse neighborhood.

Stakeholders: There are a few active organizations in the Levy area, with "Neighbors United for Levy" and the "Amboy Neighborhood Association" being the most prominent.

Matching requirements: The City of North Little Rock has indicated willingness to financially support one Jump Start planning exercise. The City anticipates the need for approximately \$55,000 being the local match and media contribution for the revitalization study project.

Outreach: The City's Neighborhood Services Department supports many neighborhood programs and communication. Direct mailing to specific areas is expected to be employed to contact those interested in participating in the planning and execution of a Jump Start project. The two neighborhood associations will be contacted to solicit participation with all facets of the Revitalization Study project.

Section 3: CONSISTENCY with REGIONAL GOALS

Goal Area 1: Provide Transportation Choices and Enhance Mobility and Access

The Levy Revitalization Study will focus on various modes of transportation in the Levy area. Automobile, walking, bicycling, and public transit will be evaluated. Primary travel is currently by automobile. The Levy area has sidewalks on some of the major arterials but few are located on local streets. Bicycling is present on and off the roadways. Limited public transit is available, with bus arrivals being about an hour apart.

The City has adopted a Complete Streets policy for the community. All new roadways must include provisions for safe travel by all modes. Also, City's working Bicycle Plan proposes facilities and education regarding that travel mode. Opening of the Levy Trail has highlighted the need to resolve a route southerly from its south terminus at 33rd Street to the River Trail. This can be accommodated by the following options: (1) routing bicycle traffic crossing Percy Machin Drive at the grade crossing onto Old Pike Avenue, or (2) routing bicycle traffic to Doyle Venable Drive, MacArthur Drive, 25th Street to Parker Street - a North-South, planned bicycle boulevard connecting the River Trail.

There have been very few new transportation projects in the area: (a) the improvement of 47th Street (east of Camp Robinson) around 1990; (b) the widening of Camp Robinson Road (previously mentioned); (c) construction of the I-40 off ramp and associated realignment of Doyle Venable Drive around 1996. To the north, Donovan Briley Boulevard - between Military Drive (near the front gate of Camp Robinson) and Camp Robinson Road, near the old St. Joseph Orphanage -- was constructed as an east-west collector, but that is outside the study area.

The Levy Trail is one of the best assets underway. It provides pedestrian and bicycle mobility and connections to many homes. The Levy Revitalization Study will examine means of expanding the Levy Trail and its activity through the Levy Neighborhood, as well as enhancement of the trail through establishment of connections to public transit.

Redevelopment of the old downtown Levy Neighborhood to a mixed-use area will allow many trips to be avoided as people will have the option of walking or bicycling to trip destinations.

Goal Area 2: Increased Housing Choices and Development/Land Use Diversity

- (a) Levy is a working-class neighborhood, and the housing stock is aging. There are few examples of high priced housing in the area. Most housing is middle income or lower priced housing. The area northeast of Levy has many apartment complexes and an elderly assisted living housing option that was completed in the last two years. The Levy Revitalization Study will present the opportunity for the addition of housing near the Levy historic commercial district, and possibly the closed Wal-Mart property.
- (b) The addition of urban infill in the Levy Neighborhood is expected to generate an urban setting that affords and promotes walkability.

Goal Area 3: Enhance Economic Competitiveness

Creation of a "Special Place" in the heart of the old Levy commercial district will create market demand for redevelopment. Currently, most new jobs in the U.S. are small business start-up companies. With proximity to major commuter routes, Burns Park and other recreation opportunities, and the new Levy Trail, a revitalized Levy neighborhood can become a "Special Place" with residents in walking distance of shopping and services. Neighborhood educational programs will be another component of the revitalization.

Goal Area 4: Support Existing Communities

- (a) The Levy Neighborhood has CATA route operating through the area. For the purpose of this study, the core area distance is less than ¼ mile to a transit route.
- (b) Not Applicable
- (c) While the Revitalization Study is not expected to involve significant extensions/upgrades of water, sewer, or other utilities, or construction or modification of streets, improvements recommended by the Levy Revitalization Study may address minor enhancements or revisions to accommodate the study's recommendations.

- (d) It is hoped or expected that this Study will identify or focus on neighborhood improvements that accommodate and promote walkability and bicycling. Infill and a “Special Place” recommendation from the Levy Revitalization Study will focus on promotion of enhanced social, recreational, and educational elements to better integrate the diversity of the Levy Neighborhood demographics.

Goal Area 5: Support Environmentally-Responsible Development

- (a) The “scope of work” that will be given to the Levy Revitalization Study consultant will include narrative that conveys a clear policy that is sensitive to environmental responsibility. The compact setting will help promote energy efficiency.
- (b) The Levy Neighborhood has City-owned property north of Doyle Venable Drive and east of the UPRR tracks that was cleared due to flooding issues. This area will be retained as green space, park, and a flood management facility.
- (c) The Levy Neighborhood has a fairly well developed urban tree canopy but limited wooded areas. Expanding the urban canopy will improve ambient air quality as well as improving amenities.
- (d) The Study will promote revitalization of the Levy core area. Green components of the plan will focus on enhancing livability issues, such as expanding the Levy Trail, adding sidewalks, and improving street-scaping.

Goal Area 6: Quality Places and Healthy Communities

- (a) The plan will likely preserve the building form where buildings are located close to front property lines. There are few historically significant structures.
- (b) The pedestrian plaza recently completed under I-40 will remain a significant landmark. It is hoped the study will enhance this setting, adding public services and commercial activity.
- (c) The Levy Revitalization Study will result in architectural and design guidelines to promote the desired pedestrian setting.
- (d) The Levy Neighborhood has one anchor grocery and will soon have a second grocery (not yet announced). These groceries are within walking distance to many homes.
- (e) Through involvement with business owners, residents, and local government, measures will likely be drafted to sponsor a healthier urban setting.

Section 4: LOCAL COMMITMENT to the PROJECT

- (a) The City of North Little Rock has committed to providing up to a \$40,000 local match, and the NLR Economic Development Agency has agreed to provide \$15,000 media fund to support the project. Two neighborhood associations will likely be involved in the project. These are: (a) Neighbors United for Levy and (b) the Amboy Neighborhood Association.
- (b) Other City departments that will likely be involved include the Mayor's Office, Community Planning, Parks Department, Community Development, Neighborhood Services, and the City Engineering Department.
- (c) Levy Baptist Church is an anchor in the core area and frequently provides meeting space for various community projects. In addition, the various restaurant owners are expected to participate -- U.S. Pizza, Spectators, and Dixie Pig. In addition, the owner of Neighborhood Spirits is involved in most community planning efforts in the City and the Levy area.
- (d) In 2012, a walkability audit, led by Dan Burden, was conducted in the area. This exercise identified several deficiencies that the City is attempting to correct. Also, community gardens operate in the area -- helping generate a sense of community pride.
- (e) Neighbors United for Levy meets monthly at the North Heights Community Center on Allen Street. The Amboy Neighborhood Association also meets monthly. Both neighborhood associations have long been valuable, energetic groups. As mentioned, Levy Baptist Church is a major meeting place for community events. Two other churches -- the Levy Church of Christ on Camp Robinson and one on 52nd Street -- regularly provide community meeting space.

Section 5: DEVELOPMENT in DISTRESSED AREAS and PLANS for INCLUSION of TRADITIONALLY UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS

- (a) Levy is located in the North Little Rock Community Development's defined Target Area for CDBG funding. This means that a majority of residents are at 80% of the poverty level. A media effort is proposed to include a kick-off event that will include an ice cream social.
- (b) Levy is a recognized diverse neighborhood. As was previously described, it has a balance of Hispanic, African-American, and Caucasian residents.

Section 6: INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS and POTENTIAL to SERVE as a MODEL

With its active neighborhood associations, the Levy neighborhood possesses an energy that is uncommon among typical working-class neighborhoods. Local civic and community events are regularly promoted. The neighborhood's civic-mindedness is also reflected in higher-than-average voter turnouts.

The Revitalization Study will further galvanize this neighborhood energy and serve as an excellent example of how the citizens of a socio-economically depressed area can respond in their involvement in a significant revitalization effort.

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



JOE A. SMITH
MAYOR
mayor@northlittlerock.ar.gov

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NORTH LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72119-5757
website: www.northlittlerock.ar.gov

August 29, 2013

Richard Magee
Metroplan
501 W. Markham Street, Suite B
Little Rock, AR 72201

Dear Mr. Magee,

The North Little Rock City Council would like to formally indicate its support for a planning project for the Park Hill, Levy, or Lower Baring Cross Neighborhoods through the Metroplan "Jump Start" program. Each of these three neighborhoods has great potential for redevelopment and enhancement for livability themes. The Park Hill area would likely focus on the commercial corridor running north-south through the residential district between I-40 and M Street, providing infill of commercial, office and entertainment uses while protecting the historic residential district. The Levy Neighborhood study area would be evaluating development options to provide infill with form-based code measures of generating a walkable neighborhood. The focus area would be primarily the old downtown Levy area north of I-40 but may extend to design recommendations along Camp Robinson Road. The Levy area has several restaurants, a new bike trail, and traditional community anchors that all contribute to making the Levy Neighborhood prime for urban infill. The Lower Baring Cross Neighborhood has been a focus of revitalization over the past decade and a study of this area will likely build on the previous enacted Traditional Neighborhood Development zoning.

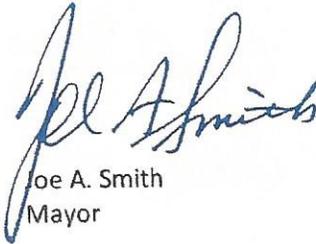
As a show of our support, the City Council is considering a resolution at its next meeting committing to financially support one of the three proposed project study areas. The City is specifically agreeing to provide a cash match of up to \$40,000 and the Economic Development Agency of the City has committed to providing \$15,000 to a media element to support the planning project. In addition to this support, the City's Complete Community Coordinator, Fit 2 Live Coordinator and the City's planning staff are available to expand staffing capabilities and GIS services that might be required.

The City of North Little Rock adopted zoning in the 1960's and much of that remains in place. To provide additional flexibility, the City adopted Planned Unit Development in the 1980's, revised its downtown zoning district in the 1990's, and has adopted a variety of zoning overlays and categories to support the creation of more compact, mixed-use neighborhoods. The Park Hill and Levy Neighborhoods have traditional zoning. The Lower Baring Cross is zoned for Traditional Neighborhood Development. The City recently adopted a Smart Code option that embraces the goals of form-based code. The City has a history of reviewing land use options and adopting those that it views as providing a positive result. As such, there are currently available land control options that can be applied to one of the three proposed study areas.

"An Equal Opportunity Employer"

The North Little Rock City Council understands that implementation of the JumpStart sub-area development plan for a selected study area is likely to require changes to these land use and/or design codes and regulations currently in place. The City Council has agreed to applications for the study of three proposed project areas. Through the study, the City intends to consider zoning and other land use tools to support redevelopment of one of the three neighborhoods proposed for study so that the neighborhoods become more compact with mixed-use development to improve the pedestrian setting with attention to integrating transit. North Little Rock understands that this will involve consideration of regulation revisions and a refocus on how best to handle automobile traffic and parking in these areas. The City realizes that planning studies are often conducted and little implementation follows. We hope that the planning exercise becomes more than an exercise and is followed by redevelopment in keeping with creation of special neighborhoods focused on walkability and complete community goals.

Sincerely,



Joe A. Smith
Mayor

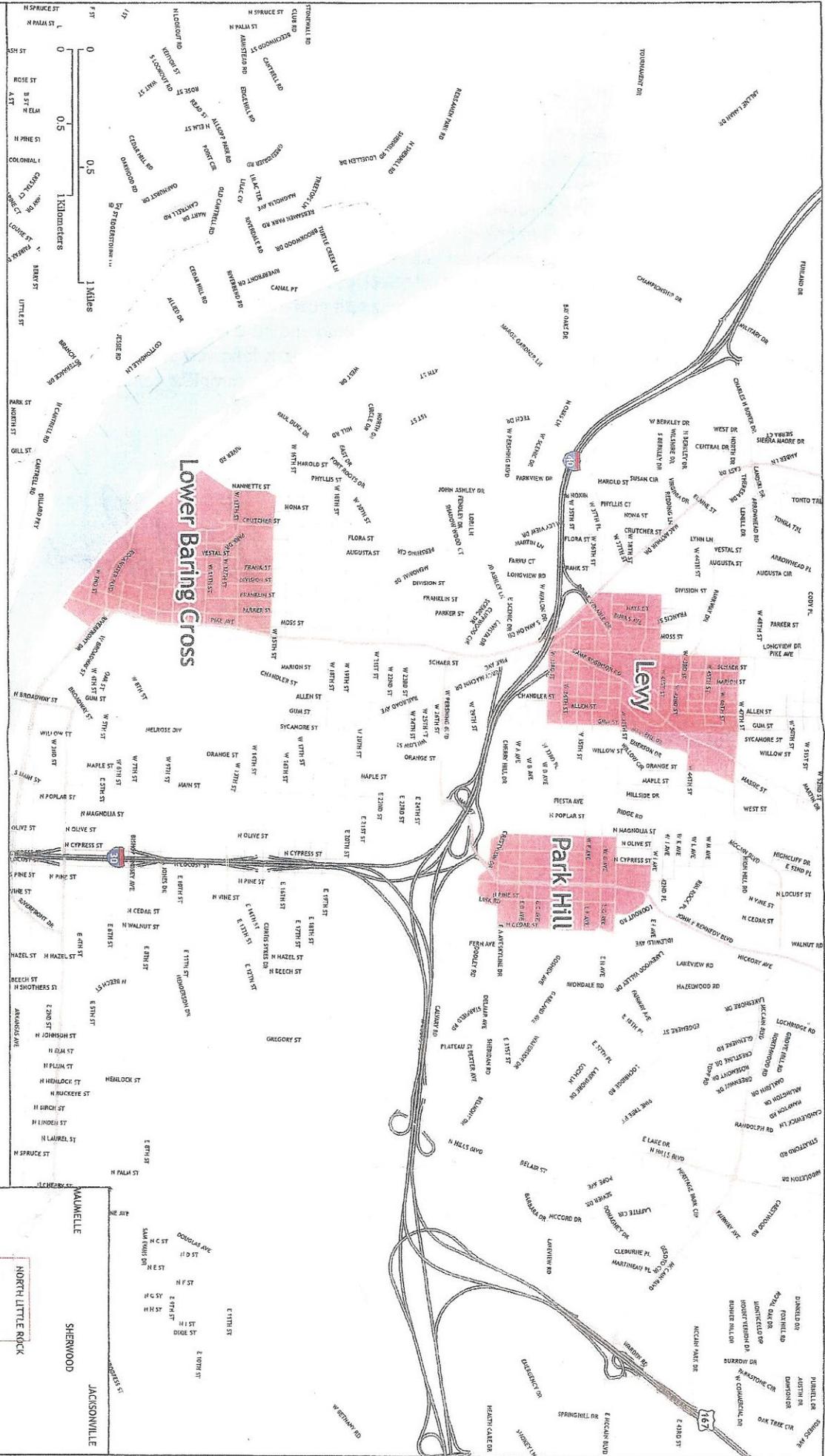
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cc: Robert Voyles, Planning Director



4/29/2013

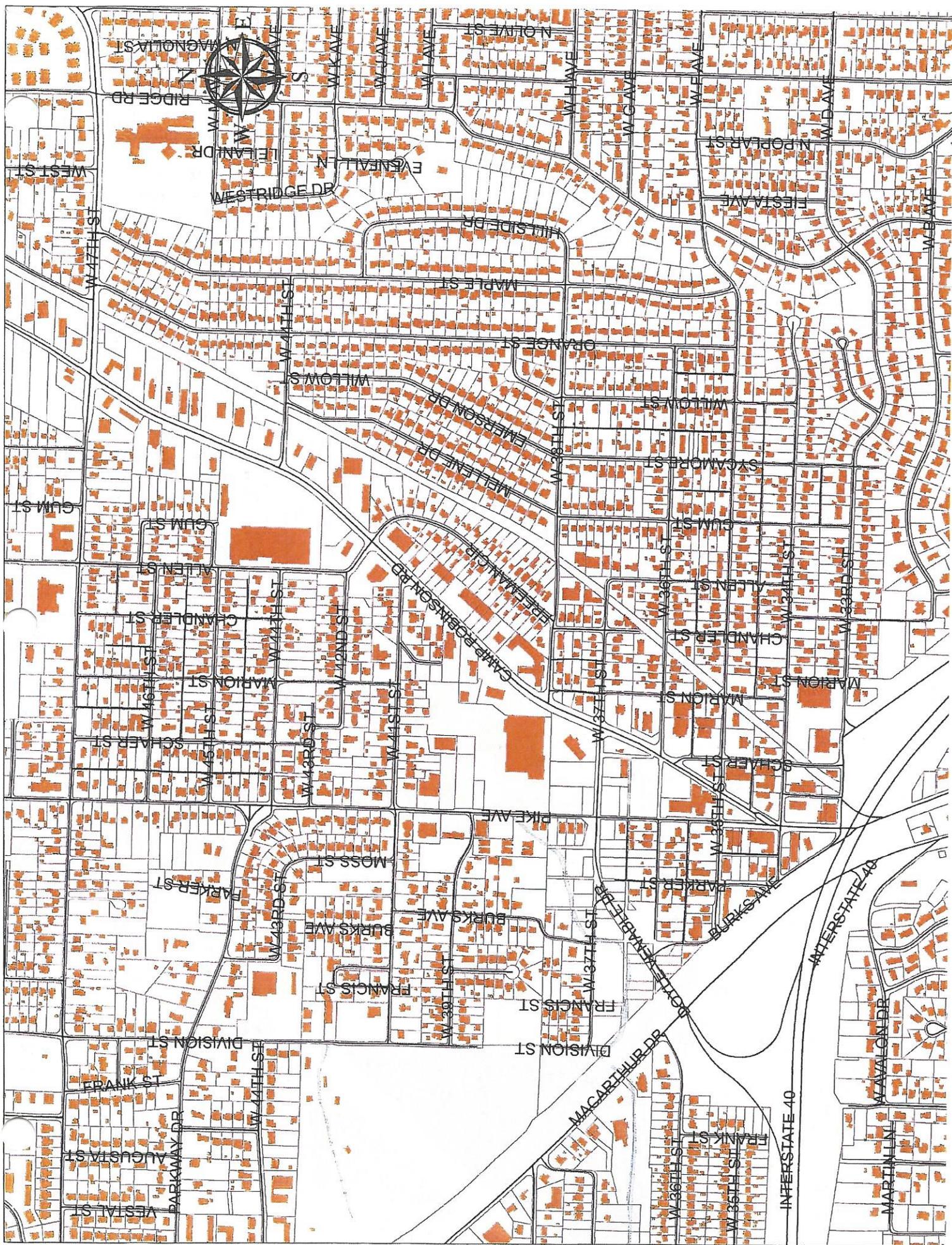
North Little Rock Study Areas



Daily changes may occur in the area depicted that are not reflected in the map. Accordingly, the City of North Little Rock does not warrant or guarantee that the map accurately reflects any and all recent changes.

Sources: Pags, U.S. Census Bureau, GeoStor, ESRI





CN Sept. 9 agenda

R-13-___

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING CITY COUNCIL SUPPORT OF THE NORTH LITTLE ROCK APPLICATION TO METROPLAN FOR JUMP START PROJECT FUNDS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

WHEREAS, Metroplan is seeking to "Jump Start" sustainable projects in central Arkansas by providing site specific development plans for a select number of neighborhood sub-areas; and

WHEREAS, Metroplan's Jump Start Project will focus on areas (not corridors) for the revitalization and repurposing of existing neighborhoods or areas and green field development and will provide planning funds to evaluate selected neighborhood sub-areas and recommend regulatory and development options to create more livable urban settings; and

WHEREAS, the City of North Little Rock ("the City") has made application to Metroplan for the study of three of its neighborhoods (Baring Cross, Levy and Park Hill) with final selection to be made by Metroplan; and

WHEREAS, the City's cost for each neighborhood study will be \$50,000.00, representing a 20% local match of \$40,000.00 plus a \$10,000.00 share for media costs; and

WHEREAS, the City feels it is in its best interests to participate in and support the Jump Start Project and will provide financial support for one neighborhood study at a total investment of \$50,000.00.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORTH LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1: That the City of North Little Rock supports land use regulations that support compact, mixed-use development, without excessive front building setbacks.

SECTION 2: That, if needed, the City will enact a zoning overlay and/or form-based code for the project site to encourage and allow unique designs that may be recommended in the Jump Start planning process.

SECTION 3: That the City agrees to financially support one (1) Jump Start project with a total monetary outlay of \$50,000.00 (\$40,000 as its 20% local match and \$10,000 media cost share), and will provide other in-kind staffing and support services as needed and available.

SECTION 4: That the local Economic Development Agency has advised that it will contribute \$15,000.00 toward the \$50,000.00 project cost, and the remaining \$35,000.00 will be appropriated from the General Fund.

SECTION 5: That this Resolution shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and approval.

PASSED:

APPROVED:

Mayor Joe A. Smith

SPONSOR:

Mayor Joe A. Smith

ATTEST:

Diane Whitbey, City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

C. Jason Carter, City Attorney

PREPARED BY THE OFFICE OF THE CITY ATTORNEY/b

5-57 on ju-pd

FILED _____ A.M. _____ P.M.
By _____
DATE _____
Diane Whitbey, City Clerk and Collector North Little Rock, Arkansas
RECEIVED BY _____

Adam Hicks, President
Cheryl Schoeneweis, Treasurer
Robert Fureigh, Secretary

NEIGHBORS UNITED for LEVY
829 West 50th Street
North Little Rock, Arkansas 72118
501-993-5371

September 9, 2013

Richard Magee
Metroplan
501 West Markham Street, Suite B
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

Dear Mr. Magee,

We're happy to be involved with Mr. Robert Voyles and the City of North Little Rock in its application for a Jump Start grant to fund the Levy Revitalization Study.

Neighbors United for Levy has long been a mainstay neighborhood association in the Levy area. We are regularly involved in various city and community projects. One of our early efforts (1993) was the establishment of the "Welcome to Levy" Plaza, located at Camp Robinson Road and 35th Street. Other sample actions/projects include (a) a NUFL float in the City's Christmas parade (winner in our category); (b) organization in many annual "block parties" associated with National Night Out Against Crime; and (c) active participation in the City's annual "North Little Rock Cleanup".

Our monthly meetings at the North Heights Recreation Center are well attended – typically, with 25-30 Levy residents. Each meeting includes an interesting program that is direct interest to our members.

The NUFL will be a major contributor with public involvement in the conduct of the Levy Revitalization Study. We will be happy to help with logistics of public meetings – advertising, promotion through our monthly meetings, canvassing, etc.

Sincerely,



ROBERT FUREIGH, Secretary

Amboy Neighborhood Association
in partnership with the Belwood Community

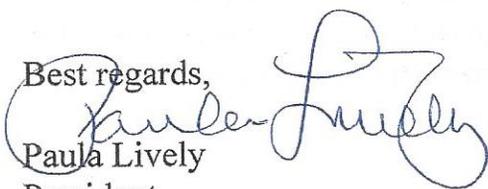
Monday, September 9, 2013

To whom it may concern:

On behalf of the Amboy Neighborhood Association (*in partnership with the Belwood neighborhood*) we will be proud to support the Levy Revitalization efforts of the Jump Start Program.

Amboy representatives will be pleased to attend open forum community meetings and planning sessions.

Best regards,


Paula Lively

President

Amboy Neighborhood Association

5713 Shamrock

North Little Rock, AR 72118