

# The Priority Objective:

Improve access to community hubs and destinations within Newark through enhanced public transit options.

## WHY IS TRANSIT A PRIORITY?

The addition and/or improvement of transit service within Newark was noted as a priority in the results of the community survey. Participants felt this was essential in enhancing mobility and securing the long-term success of the City.

The existing transit system serving the Newark area is operated by Licking County Transit and consists of an on-demand scheduled-ride system open to all County residents. Rides are available to the general public for \$4.00, with reduced fees for children, the elderly, and disabled people, and offers same day service on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Respondents to the community survey indicated the addition of fixed-route, scheduled transit lines as a major priority for the improvement of Newark's transportation system. Respondents stated that both inter-city and intra-city transit would be an asset to Newark's residents and employees. While transit was a priority for residents responding to the survey, the cost to municipalities can be considerable and should not be ignored. Below are cost estimates for 2016 from a national survey of bus transit costs:

### Capital Costs

\$300,000 – \$650,000 per bus

### Operating Costs

\$65-\$120 an hour per bus

Based on this data, if in the course of one hour a bus carries 6 people, it could cost

the transit agency up to \$20 to carry each passenger. A full bus carrying 60 passengers might only cost the agency \$2 per passenger. Reliable, efficient transit service can be an expensive amenity for municipalities to fund, even with rider fares factored in.

## WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

In a word, *autonomy*. Our society is on the cusp of a revolution in transportation technologies that will occur over the next 10-20 years and will affect every aspect of our current transportation system, including public transit. As described above, the cost of purchasing, maintaining, and operating a transit system is high. Automation offers a significant reduction in cost, combined with an increase in efficiency and level of service for users, and it is already being tested in several communities nationwide. Many questions still remain, but the push toward autonomy is doubtless among the majority of planners, technology researchers, and vehicle manufacturers.

## WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR NEWARK?

While a robust conventional transit system may be prohibitively expensive for smaller communities such as Newark, a fully autonomous system may provide enough cost savings to establish both inter-city and

intra-city lines to serve the city. Two models of autonomous transit systems are described below:

**Municipally-owned fleet:** The City, County, or Transit Agency could own a fleet of micro-shuttles that provide on-demand services to residents, reacting in real-time to transit demand. These micro-shuttles can also be programmed along fixed routes, and come at a much higher frequency than would be possible with conventional bus transit. In essence, more micro-shuttles can be deployed during periods of higher demand, all with a much lower cost per hour than is currently possible.

**Municipally-subsidized trips:** It's important to understand transit as a means to an end, which is to provide access from one place to another. As automation occurs throughout the country, private companies will have autonomous fleets deployed in major population centers to provide on-demand service (think autonomous Uber, Lyft, etc.). A second option for transit can utilize private systems, providing a subsidization scheme that could be targeted towards lower-income residents.

As the research and technology of autonomous vehicles continue to evolve in the coming years, it will be crucial that communities of Newark's size remain flexible and responsive to the coming changes in public transportation.



# Developing the Objective: Next Steps

Coordinating with regional transportation entities and organizations is key to ensuring long-range success in Newark. In order to establish a partnership among the various transportation groups in Central Ohio, a working group should be coordinated and a quarterly meeting

is recommended. This working group will be tasked with tackling the priority objective and actions listed below and should represent agencies at the local, county, and regional level.

## OBJECTIVE 3.1: Improve access to community hubs and destinations within Newark through enhanced public transit options.

### PRIORITY OBJECTIVE

### POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Action 3.1.1: Establish a partnership with Licking County Transit, Licking Memorial Hospital, and a rideshare service (i.e.. Uber, Lyft, etc.) to expedite improved transportation options through a voucher system.

Action 3.1.2: Engage the LC Transit Board to discuss the possibilities of changes to the current system.

Action 3.1.3: Study some of the surrounding transit operations to see similarities and differences.

Action 3.1.4: Engage private partners that could benefit from an upgraded system and participation.

Action 3.1.5: Further detailed survey to determine feasibility, ridership, etc. of a fixed route system.

- Licking County Commissioners
- Licking County Transit
- Ohio Department of Transportation
- Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission
- Central Ohio Technical College
- The Ohio State University at Newark
- Denison University
- Licking Memorial Hospital
- Local and regional job and retail centers
- OhioMeansJobs | Licking County



## Regional Connections

### Columbus + Newark

The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) recently launched its initiative 'NextGen' to determine areas for transit growth for the next 10 to 25 years. The project openly addressed the projected changes in demographics including a rising population and expanding suburbs.

Two critical goals of the NextGen initiative are to maintain regional competitiveness and respond to demographic preferences. This vision led to support for a transit line linking Newark to Columbus, increasing the region's size and competitiveness. As the Millennial demographic matures into working professionals, more and more are resisting the past tradition of car ownership and relying instead on public transportation to commute. A permanent transit line linking Newark and Columbus would thus increase the region's attractiveness to younger generations, ensuring a healthy economic future. It is imperative that any future transit options in Newark take COTA's longterm plans into account to maximize the effectiveness of the system as a whole.

## MOBILITY AND TRANSPORTATION

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# NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

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*The Vision: Vibrant, attractive, and safe neighborhoods with a diverse range of housing options and quality of life amenities that provide current and future residents the opportunity to live comfortably in the City throughout their various stages of life.*



## OVERVIEW

From diverse housing options, to quality public space, there are a number of variables that go into developing and maintaining quality neighborhoods. Many of these elements are highlighted elsewhere throughout the plan. This section focuses on specific recommendations to help guide neighborhood revitalization strategies. Providing a range of housing options in safe and comfortable neighborhoods is critical to the overall success of the community, from a workforce and economic development perspective, to socialization and community pride. In simple terms, neighborhoods are the back bone of a community and foundation for how a city operates now and for generations to come.

## KEY FINDINGS

These findings helped create the framework for the Neighborhood Revitalization Pillar and were generated from the community survey, best practices, and technical research.

- At 46.2% owner occupied, Newark's housing has a higher than average percentage of renters than peer communities.
- Currently, multi-family zoning districts exist on the periphery of Newark, and not in the dense, inner-ring neighborhoods surrounding Downtown.
- Approximately 87% of housing units on record were built prior to 1970, presenting challenges for maintenance and accommodating changing household structures.
- The Housing Choice Voucher program is used to aid in assisting low-income families obtain housing. Newark has approximately 800 households using vouchers across the City, largely in the southern and eastern census tracts.
- Approximately 13,800 residents, or 29% of Newark's population, experience food access issues in the City of Newark.



# The Vision:

Vibrant, attractive, and safe neighborhoods with a diverse range of housing options and quality of life amenities that provide current and future residents the opportunity to live comfortably in the City throughout their various stages of life.

## Creating the Vision: Objectives & Actions

If the vision is the desired outcome of a particular subject, the objectives and actions are the roadmap on how to produce that outcome. The objectives listed below represent the key steps identified during the planning process through extensive community engagement. Each objective is supported by a series of actions steps that collectively work to achieve the overall vision. While all the

objectives are necessary and important to achieve the vision, one objective has been identified as the Priority Objective. This objective represents the first step in implementing the vision and should serve as a catalyst to create early success, build momentum, and lead to the implementation of subsequent objectives.



**OBJECTIVE 4.1: Systematically revitalize neighborhoods in the downtown and adjacent areas through a Neighborhood Improvement Program. PRIORITY OBJECTIVE**



**OBJECTIVE 4.2: Promote property maintenance through the development of code enforcement policies, procedures, and personnel.**



**OBJECTIVE 4.3: Promote the development of a range of housing options.**



**OBJECTIVE 4.4: Identify and plan for Capital Improvements that advance ongoing neighborhood revitalization efforts.**



**OBJECTIVE 4.5: Improve neighborhood health through improved access to neighborhood goods and services.**

*The complete list of Neighborhood Revitalization objectives and actions are listed in the Recommendations section of the Appendix.*



# The Priority Objective:

Systematically revitalize neighborhoods in the downtown and adjacent areas through a Neighborhood Improvement Program.

## WHAT IS A NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM?

A neighborhood improvement program is a targeted revitalization strategy that aligns and promotes both financial and human capital to improve the economic, social, and physical elements of a neighborhood. This can work to elevate the quality of Newark's core neighborhoods. Key goals of a traditional neighborhood revitalization program are to:

- » **Enhance neighborhood character** by providing resources for current and future residents to improve property conditions and the public realm;
- » **Improve the livability of existing housing stock** by connecting residents to financial resources for home improvements;
- » **Preserve historically significant structures** through restoration and preservation of unique characteristics; and
- » **Infill core lots and blocks** to eliminate blight and create cohesive neighborhoods and community.

The Neighborhood Improvement Program will work to achieve the following:

- » Increase property values
- » Reduce vacancy rates
- » Simplify home ownership
- » Support property maintenance
- » Promote identity and pride

These results have been targeted as those that will most greatly transform the neighborhoods of Newark by supporting its current residents and creating strong markets for attracting new residents.

## WHY IS IT NEEDED?

### *1. Maintain and Advance the Economic Success of the Neighborhoods Surrounding Downtown*

The City takes great pride in its success at restoring the Historic Downtown, now host to residential lofts, unique shops, and popular restaurants along with Newark's historic public square and courthouse. Significant efforts have gone into revitalizing the downtown into what it is today.

The next step in the revitalization and economic stabilization of the community is to enhance the surrounding neighborhoods, extending downtown's success and impact beyond the Newark Square.

It is vital for community stakeholders to address the quality and character of housing around the downtown to ensure residents have attractive, connected, healthy, and safe neighborhoods. Deterioration of the older residential areas is not atypical for Ohio as these neighborhoods have historically suffered from vacancy and decline due to suburbanization and outward growth.

Due to their close proximity to the historic core, these areas are also home to many historic structures and aging neighborhood elements. While these older buildings can at times be difficult or expensive to maintain, they hold significant community value as they represent the traditional neighborhood characteristics that historically defined Newark. It will be important moving forward to preserve these historic elements to ensure the community character remains intact.

A strong urban neighborhood can bolster a downtown by attracting additional residents and visitors to the area. This can be done without following gentrification efforts common in other communities. It is critical to act on this initiative now to capitalize on current revitalization momentum and respond to community needs.

### *2. Improve Housing and Neighborhood Conditions*

In addition to protecting and advancing the economic success of the downtown neighborhoods, a program is also needed to improve housing conditions citywide. The following existing conditions of Newark have been gathered using U.S. Census data and the Licking County Auditor, and should be addressed:

- » The Licking County Land Bank owns 45 vacant parcels in the City currently; this is an important tool to consider as part of future neighborhood revitalization efforts.
- » Residential vacancy by census tract varies widely, with significant concentrations on the west and south sides.
- » Approximately 13,800 residents, or 29% of Newark's population, experience food access issues, with higher concentrations in and around Downtown.
- » Many of the highest concentrations of vacant land in Newark are in the residential neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown.
- » Downtown neighborhoods are higher than the national average (36.1%) of renter occupied units at 55-60%. This factor, along with an older housing stock, presents challenges for property maintenance.

Each of these factors should be considered during the creation of the Neighborhood Improvement Program. A comprehensive approach to stabilizing the housing market of Newark is needed to ensure that as neighborhoods are systematically revitalized, the end result is a community that can sustain its value for decades to come.

# Developing the Objective: Next Steps

One of the first steps in the implementation of this objective is to create a committee of Newark stakeholders to champion the initiative. A critical component of the neighborhood improvement program is community partnerships. Key to ensuring the success of the program will be gaining commitments of support from local organizations and

securing local matching funds wherever possible. A comprehensive and cohesive approach to community involvement is necessary to advance the mission of the program. This truly embodies the spirit of community engagement and a collaborative revitalization strategy.

## OBJECTIVE 4.1: Systematically revitalize neighborhoods in the downtown and adjacent areas through a Neighborhood Improvement Program. PRIORITY OBJECTIVE

### POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Action 4.1.1: Create a housing and revitalization committee with diverse representation.

Action 4.1.2: Develop a Neighborhood Improvement Program focused on improving the condition and quality of housing in Newark's neighborhoods.

Reposition: Acquire vacant and abandoned properties for renovation.

- Repair: Work with property owners to improve and maintain existing housing stock.
- Educate: Host a series of informational workshops on homeownership and maintenance.

Action 4.1.3: Identify potential partners and funding sources.

Action 4.1.4: Host a series of informational sessions to roll out the program.

Action 4.1.5: Identify neighborhoods in and around the Downtown interested in participating, and launch the Neighborhood Improvement Program.

Action 4.1.6: Work with local representatives and agencies to communicate and celebrate the success of the program.

- Mid-Ohio Habitat for Humanity
- City of Newark
- LEADS
- Licking County Land Bank
- Newark Development Partners
- Metropolitan Housing Authority
- Licking County Coalition for Housing

## REVOLVING LOAN FUNDS

To fund the Neighborhood Improvement Program, the Neighborhood Revitalization committee should first work with a local financial institution to establish a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF). Using a nominal amount of seed money from public or private partners, an RLF can continuously fund improvements and secure the program's long-term sustainability. Using the RLF as the financial footing for the program, the program will execute on the following strategies:

### REPOSITION

**Acquire vacant and abandoned properties for renovation.** Partner with the City to identify and prioritize blighted, tax reverted, foreclosed, and vacant properties and use money from the RLF to purchase these properties. Then work with select developers to renovate and build homes, or hold the properties and reposition them in the market.

### REPAIR

**Work with property owners to improve and maintain the condition of the existing housing stock.** Direct property owners to

new opportunities for low-interest home improvement loans for qualified buyers and existing residents. The RLF will be used to fund the loans and interest paid on the loans will return to the RLF.

### EDUCATE

**Host a series of informational workshops on homeownership and maintenance.** Empower residents with the information necessary to complete low-cost, do-it-yourself home improvement projects. A variety of tactics will be used including public access TV, pamphlets, and community workshops.

# NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

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# VIBRANT DOWNTOWN

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*The Vision: A vibrant and beautiful Downtown with a balanced mix of residential, commercial, and entertainment uses supported by a combination of both public and private investments.*



## OVERVIEW

At the heart of every successfully growing city is a bustling downtown. And yet, these hubs of activity don't necessarily create themselves. A vibrant downtown takes hard work, collaboration, and creative and dedicated local stakeholders who work together to create a vibrant and authentic place. It takes the strategic alignment of a variety of assets to foster an identity, and encourages new development. The City of Newark is ideally positioned with a downtown full of historic buildings, diverse retail and entertainment, and active citizens willing to instigate further success. This is the recipe for success.

## KEY FINDINGS

These findings helped create the framework for the Vibrant Downtown Pillar and were generated from the community survey, best practices, and technical research.

- The unique architecture and character of the Downtown can and should be leveraged.
- A number of vacant spaces still need to be filled Downtown.
- 22.8% of downtown's land area is devoted to parking for a rough total of 4,000 spaces
- Many members of the community would like to see the Arcade revitalized and active all year long.
- Mixed income and affordable housing is in demand Downtown to attract Millennials to the area.
- New restaurants are wanted in the area, providing healthy and family-friendly dining options to residents.
- More outdoor entertainment space and outdoor dining options are desired.



# The Vision:

A vibrant and beautiful Downtown with a balanced mix of residential, commercial, and entertainment uses supported by a combination of both public and private investments.

## Creating the Vision: Objectives & Actions

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vision. While all the objectives are necessary and important to achieve the vision, one objective has been identified as the Priority Objective. This objective represents the first step in implementing the vision and should serve as a catalyst to create early success, build momentum, and lead to the implementation of subsequent objectives.



**OBJECTIVE 5.1: Leverage the unique character of, and the recent momentum in, Downtown to continue development. PRIORITY OBJECTIVE**



**OBJECTIVE 5.2: Create alternative types of indoor and outdoor public space.**



**OBJECTIVE 5.3: Support continued growth in Downtown's restaurant and retail offerings.**



**OBJECTIVE 5.4: Create spaces that foster social interactions, transforming the streets of Downtown into a destination.**



**OBJECTIVE 5.5: Coordinate a series of events to attract residents and visitors Downtown.**



**OBJECTIVE 5.6: Increase residential density in Downtown.**

*The complete list of Vibrant Downtown objectives and actions are listed in the Recommendations section of the Appendix.*





# The Priority Objective:

Leverage the unique character and recent momentum in Downtown to promote continued development.

## BEAUTIFICATION OF NEWARK'S CORE

Downtown Newark has seen great success in recent years filling empty storefronts, revitalizing historic buildings, completely redesigning infrastructure and streetscape, and creating the award-winning Canal Market District. These improvements give the area a sense of momentum, pride, and change that has become contagious in the downtown community and beyond.

The challenge now is to maintain the momentum and continue to promote new investment that will elevate the quality of life, but through a collaborative and strategic plan that will align future projects to build on the recent success.

As outlined in the action list for Objective 5.1 on the next page, there are several methods for capitalizing on this momentum in both big and small ways. Downtown beautification programs, such as the murals and hanging flowers initiatives, are often easily implemented and carry a large impact on the greater area.

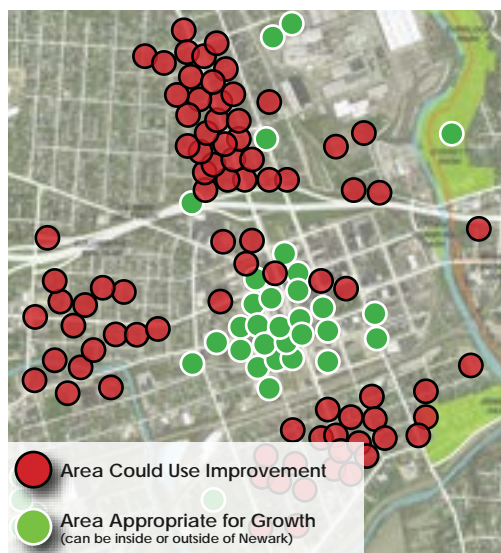
Getting the local community involved in programs through arts, nonprofits, and garden clubs, can be an excellent way to

ensure community support. This has been reflected in the local murals, and this trend can and should continue, with a focus on engaging and celebrating local artists, community history and local figures.

## MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES

Action 5.1.3 entails creating a marketing tool to further promote development in Downtown Newark. This “look book” could be updated regularly with landowners, vacant properties, historic buildings available for grant funding, etc. in order to stay current. Complete with images, site data, and information developers in today's market are looking for, the book could then be distributed to investors and interested parties to expedite development in the downtown.

This look book of property also can double as a catalogue of change in Newark. In the future when new development has successfully filled in vacant land and revitalized older buildings, this book will be a historic record of the progress Newark has accomplished.



## Why Downtown?

The downtown serves as a barometer for the community as it represents the most visible, distinct, and unique place in a city. It is the heart and must be healthy for the community as a whole to thrive.

Like downtowns throughout Ohio, Newark's historic core is an urban mixed-use district that is home to a number of prominent historic properties recognized as unique in the region. Its development pattern is built around the pedestrian, and the businesses that call it home are local and unique to the City.

When asked at the first public meeting as part of this planning effort “which areas of Newark you would like to see continued growth” (green dots, image left), residents had a clear preference for the downtown. Neighborhoods surrounding the downtown were identified as areas that could use improvement (red dots, image left); this also gave direction to the Neighborhood Revitalization initiative. The concentration of dots of both colors in this area of Downtown Newark supports continued investment in the core with a focus on enhanced quality of life.