

# ONE LINDEN

Our Community. Our Future.

## WHAT IS A COMMUNITY PLAN?

Community planning incorporates both physical and social considerations while also relying on guidance from residents and stakeholders. The central tenet of community planning—and of this plan—asserts that “when people participate directly in determining policies that affect their lives, the decisions are more likely to produce support and commitment than when policies are determined for them.”

## THE LINDEN PLANNING AREA



## LINDEN HISTORY & CONTEXT

Founded as Linden Heights in 1908, the Linden neighborhood was separate from the City of Columbus until 1921 when the village was annexed into the city. Since then, like all neighborhoods, Linden has experienced significant population shifts. Rapid housing development in the mid-20th century led to changes for neighborhood residents, as the neighborhood began expanding north and south from the original Linden Heights boundaries. In an attempt to control the demographic composition and physical layout of the area, some housing developers used deed restrictions that mandated minimum construction costs or barred African-Americans and sometimes other minority groups from purchasing properties.

Data from the U.S. Census show that parts of Linden shifted from a predominately white neighborhood to predominately African-American by the 1970 census. In 1960, the white population of Linden was 27,209. By 1970, that fell to 15,882 and by 2016 it had fallen to just 4,162. From October 1970 to October 1971, the number of white students at Linden-McKinley High School decreased by more than 50%. Between 1950 and 2010, the population of the Linden area fell from 27,070 to 18,079—a decrease of 9,876 people—as the neighborhood began to experience disinvestment.

In addition to a lower population, the Linden neighborhood has experienced social stress in other areas. Homeownership—often considered a marker of community stability—has declined from 63% in 1980 to 37% in 2015. The number of families experiencing federal poverty status has also been increasing, from 31% in 1990 to 43% in 2015.

## RESEARCH + DATA

The Existing Conditions section of the Linden Community Plan offers a portrait of the most recent data and information available for the community. To better understand the current challenges and opportunities of Linden, data from various sources have been collected and illustrated. Most attributes are presented as neighborhood averages using seven census tracts that closely resemble the planning area. While much of the data is collected from the 2016 American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau, other data has been collected from various public and nonprofit institutions.

Data on physical health conditions illustrate primary causes of death, a high infant mortality rate, rates of insurance coverage, access to food assistance, and some mental health statistics. Safety data encompasses crime rates and 911 calls, as well as incarceration data from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. Data on education includes an overview of school facilities,

Each working group developed a goal to guide their recommendations in five core areas:



### Health & Safety

Promote physical and emotional health, safety, and robust social networks.



### Transportation

Allow residents to move around the neighborhood and city for economic advancement and social connection.



### Housing

Provide high-quality housing to create a socially integrated environment where people can thrive.



### Retail & Small Business

Increase the ability of residents to participate in the economy and expand neighborhood amenities.



### Education & Workforce

Support lifelong learning from pre-K to post-college with a holistic, intergenerational approach.

school enrollment, and achievement data from the Ohio Department of Education, as well as the use of vouchers to attend nonpublic schools. Employment data provides an overview of unemployment rates and offers insight into the location and types of industries where Linden residents are employed. An overview of transportation offerings and use of public transportation is provided, along with an analysis of traffic incidents and the active mobility landscape. The housing section demonstrates details of homeownership, housing cost-burden, vacancy, subsidized housing, and evictions. A study of the housing market is also provided, projecting future demand for housing units in Linden. With consideration of national retail trends, the retail and small business section offers an analysis of the Linden retail environment while suggesting three locations for future retail development based on consumer spending data and preferences.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Linden Community Planning team worked to engage a diverse array of Linden stakeholders, from residents to business owners, churchgoers, and former residents from March 2017 through April 2018. Public meetings were held on March 11 and April 22 where residents offered input on topic areas and commented on community asset maps. The planning team acknowledged barriers that suppress attendance at traditional public meetings and offered incentives for residents to attend events—in addition to the existing incentives offered through the Celebrate Linden program. Incentives included gift cards and community meals. During the summer of 2017, the planning team attended scheduled events hosted by other organizations rather than establishing new events. The team spoke with residents at festivals, food distribution events, commission meetings, and in other informal settings. Feedback was recorded and incorporated into a booklet of comments that helped inform working group conversation topics in the fall and winter.

As a 2017 culmination, the planning team hosted two year-end events to present results of the initial working group process. First, the December Open House brought together community partners, nonprofits, and city departments to share activities with residents. Next, a Workshop provided an interactive opportunity for residents to come together in a group setting, discuss issues, and vote on top priorities. A final event on April 24, 2018 presented a draft of the 10 Big Ideas to the community and facilitated additional resident input. Over 14 months, the Linden community engaged with the planning team through numerous avenues and approaches to develop the 10 Big Ideas, which represent feedback and priorities voiced throughout the process.

## PLANNING PROCESS TIMELINE

*For 14 months, the Linden community came together to voice concerns and propose solutions to address challenges and leverage opportunities in their neighborhood.*

### 27 FEBRUARY 2017

Mayor Andrew J. Ginther announced the Linden Community Plan as part of his focus on neighborhoods. “This plan will create a roadmap for safe neighborhoods, economic development and access to affordable housing, quality healthcare, education and employment opportunities.” —Mayor Ginther



### MARCH & APRIL 2017

The first public meeting was held at Douglas Recreation Center. Residents left comments on printed materials and discussed the planning process. The second public meeting was an opportunity for additional public feedback on the five focus areas of the plan.



### SUMMER 2017

Throughout the summer, the planning team attended events around Linden to talk with residents about their aspirations and challenges. From Jazz in the Park to partnering with United Way of Central Ohio events, the team spoke with the Linden community and collected considerable feedback.



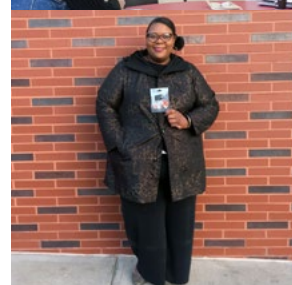
### FALL 2017

From August to November, working groups met monthly to identify the most pressing issues facing the Linden neighborhood. In a collaborative manner, residents and stakeholders discussed how to address these challenges and move forward.



### WINTER 2018

Working group meetings continued January through March to transform issues identified in the autumn groups into potential solutions. All residents were entered to win a \$50 Visa gift card for attending.



### SPRING 2018

Nearly 100 residents came to St. Stephen's Community House on April 24, 2018 to hear initial visioning, complete a mapping exercise to prioritize future investments, and vote on the 10 Big Ideas.







## IMPLEMENTATION

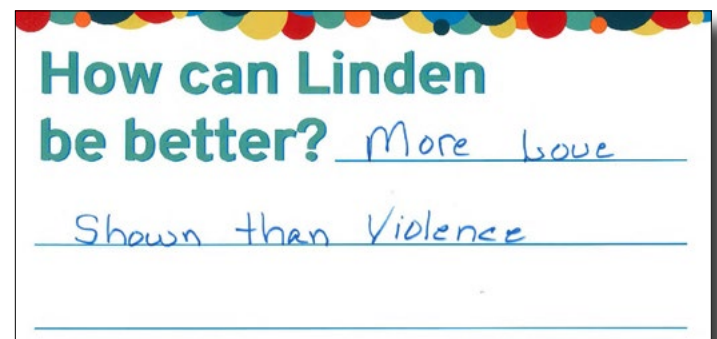
With this plan as a roadmap to an improved quality of life for Linden residents, implementation will be driven by opportunities as they arise and by the community. An entity or collaborative must integrate residents into decision-making functions in an authentic and meaningful way. Realizing the physical manifestation of planning recommendations in the Linden Study Area is a long range proposition with a timeframe of at least a decade. There is, however, a need to focus on early catalytic projects that can seize on near-term opportunities and set a new standard for future development. Interventions may include investments in direct programs and services as well as the development of physical spaces that can anchor community-driven economic development efforts.

Linden will thrive not because of its physical structures, but the people that inhabit them. Empowering residents to realize their aspirations means significant investment—of time and money—to develop leaders. It is critical to empower residents and build capacity across the demographic spectrum, from youth to elders and across income and race. Building capacity occurs by facilitating neighbor-to-neighbor relationships and strengthening social connections to create a more cohesive and resilient community that can advocate and enact change.

How will the Linden Community Plan measure progress throughout implementation? Outcomes and metrics in the implementation tables point to desired results from each action step, but some action steps are more difficult to quantify. At what point will Linden be considered “stable” and no longer in need of concerted interventions?

## APPENDIX & SUPPORTING MATERIALS

A thorough review of previous studies and reports on the Linden community opens the Appendix, followed by various tables of relevant data and written documentation from events. Previous studies and other research documents are presented chronologically and classified by type, along with a summary of the contents and findings. Many data tables expand on information and figures offered in the Existing Conditions section, though some stand in isolation as accompanying data. Also included are visionary diagrams and renderings that show aspirational urban design changes to demonstrate the major impact that high-quality or cutting-edge innovations could have on the Linden community.



Hand-written posters were filled out by residents who attended public events on December 7 and 9, 2017.



Residents work on identifying top issues at the December 9, 2017 workshop at Linden-McKinley High School.

The Linden Community Plan offers context, history, data, and an overview of previous planning efforts. Linden has been the subject of much research over the past half-century. The neighborhood is a large swath of Columbus' inner core and represents a major portion of the population. Getting to know the background, identity, and obstacles of the Linden area will help set the stage for informed future investments and coordination. Throughout the plan, data is provided to shed light on the current realities facing residents. This helps highlight the obstacles that many families face to achieving stability and economic mobility.

## THE TEN BIG IDEAS

The Linden Community Plan recommendations are integrated across topic areas, represented by 10 Big Ideas. These ideas combine multiple issues to focus on a shared goal. For example, in order to “Reimagine Cleveland Avenue,” the solution must consider multiple impacts: Transportation, Housing, Retail & Small Business, and Health & Safety. The recommendations span these topic areas to present a package of potential actions that will comprehensively transform the neighborhood.

This integrated approach allows the objectives to be multi-faceted, working in tandem with one another rather than siloed into separate categories. The concepts presented here are simply recommendations, not prescriptions. They illustrate what is possible and attempt to capture the essence of more than a year of public engagement activities. Some are immediately actionable—some ambitious and visionary. Taken together, the 10 Big Ideas demonstrate that the goals of community revitalization are simultaneously simple and complex. Neighbors want safety, social connectedness, peace, aesthetic beauty, physical health, economic opportunity, educational excellence, and stability. While that much is true, the definition of those terms and the paths to reach them are dynamic and individually interpreted. The 10 Big Ideas acknowledge this, but also put forth an implementable vision that will begin to tackle some of Linden's looming challenges while capitalizing on its strengths. See the following pages for details on the 10 Big Ideas.

## PUBLIC INVESTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

**The City of Columbus has made significant programmatic and physical infrastructure investments in the Linden area in recent years, with more investment planned. Below are selected projects from various departments:**

- LED/Smart Street Lights are still planned in the Linden area, from East North Broadway south to Hudson Street. Work is scheduled to begin in 2019. Decorative street lighting will also be added to Cleveland Avenue between Chittenden Avenue and Hudson Street, with the project beginning in 2019 at an estimated cost of \$1,270,000.
- Columbus Public Health (CPH) programs have served residents of the Linden neighborhood with more than \$4.25 million in funds. Programs provide services that include, but are not limited to:
  - Alcohol and Drug Services
  - CARE (Community, Action, Resilience, Empowerment)
  - Community, Education, Screening and Linkages
  - Creating Healthy Communities
  - Epidemiology
  - Family Ties
  - Healthy Children, Healthy Weights
  - Healthy Places
  - HIV Care
  - Immunizations Clinic
  - Injury Prevention/Car Seats
  - Lead Safe
  - Local Food Systems Strategies
  - Minority Health
  - Moms & Babies First
  - My Baby & Me
  - Neighborhood Health Projects
  - Neighborhood Health Social Work
  - Pregnancy Support
  - Safe Routes to School
  - Sexual Health Clinic
  - Strategic Nursing Team
  - Tuberculosis Clinic
  - Vector Control
  - Walking Programs
  - WIC (Franklin County Women, Infant, Children Food Assistance)
  - Women's Health Clinic
- Parks and Recreation improvements in the Linden Area made with funding from the Urban Infrastructure Recovery Fund as well the Capital Improvement Program:
  - Linden Park improvements estimated at \$25 million, including a new Opportunity Center, scheduled to begin 2019
  - Audubon Park improvements valued at \$301,394
  - Kenlawn Park improvements completed in 2014, valued at \$192,285
  - Maloney Park is scheduled for \$200,000 in improvements by 2020
  - Douglas Recreation Center HVAC improvements were made in 2016 at a cost of \$3,403,425

# TEN BIG IDEAS

The Ten Big Ideas capture a range of topics and reflect the integrated nature of challenges and opportunities facing Linden.

## STABILIZE & EXPAND HOUSING OPTIONS

**Respect long-term residents, improve condition of housing, create options for multiple income levels, and improve tenant-landlord relations.** Discussions with Linden residents revealed that the physical condition of housing is a top priority. Many people expressed a desire for more attractive housing and were concerned about properties in disrepair. Improving the quality of housing and increasing the variety of options were major points raised during the planning process. Strategies should focus on keeping residents in Linden while increasing the demographic mix of the neighborhood.

## REIMAGINE CLEVELAND AVENUE

**Address safety concerns and aesthetic appeal of the corridor.** By leveraging investments in the public realm, sound urban design, anchors to drive traffic, and coordination of complementary uses, a district can be created that is greater than the sum of its parts. The Cleveland Avenue corridor is largely unattractive due to poor structural conditions of abutting properties, decaying sidewalk infrastructure, and haphazard utilities, and signage. Successful retail areas need investment in the public realm and cooperation of property owners to create a consistent and high-quality pedestrian experience—and curb appeal for passing motorists.

## CONNECT RESIDENTS TO EMPLOYMENT

**Offer skills training, improve the school to career track, and augment transportation connections to job centers.** The employment strategy focuses on preparing, getting, retaining, and advancing people in the workforce. Preparing starts young, perhaps in high school, to ensure students have realistic expectations and minimum technical and soft-skills required to obtain employment. Finding employment is about making connections with employers and industries, while retaining focuses on wraparound supports to mitigate life circumstances that can impact job status. Advancement looks at building skills to move up in the workforce.

## SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

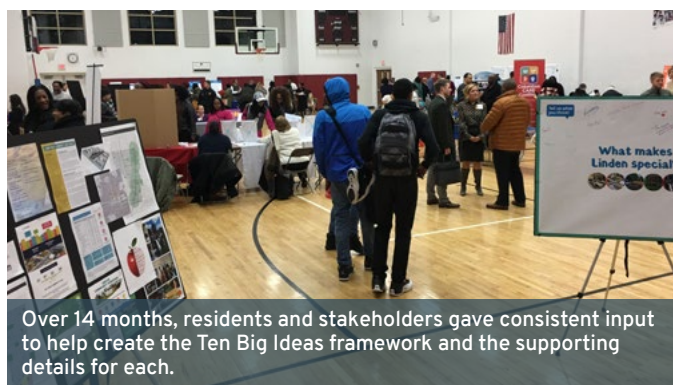
**Incentivize neighborhood school attendance, create a system of wraparound support, and address housing instability.** Performing well in school is a result of many factors, both in and out of the classroom. With high rates of poverty, disproportionately high 911 calls of domestic violence, higher than average violent crime, and a high eviction rate, children in Linden have many external factors influencing academic success. Strategies should focus on preventing and mitigating negative effects of traumatic life events and refocusing public schools as the center of the Linden community.

## CONNECT THE COMMUNITY

**Better incorporate Linden into the fabric of the city, improve access to the neighborhood, and ease physical and psychological barriers.** To create strong connections between Linden and adjacent areas, consideration should be given to robust bicycling infrastructure, completion and improvement of pedestrian infrastructure, and presentation of cohesive neighborhood identity and signage. In addition to physical interventions, focus should be placed on connecting Linden neighbors with one another through sustained social engagement and outreach activities.

## REDUCE CRIME & IMPROVE PERCEPTION

**Build trust between police and the community, focus on jobs and early childhood education, and reduce vacant properties as part of a comprehensive beautification approach.** The reputation of Linden is often dominated by a narrative of crime and violence. Due in part to media attention, many people think of Linden as a dangerous area. To improve this perception, higher than average rates of crime should be tackled in concert with efforts to improve the perception of Linden through coordinated media and an established neighborhood identity.



Over 14 months, residents and stakeholders gave consistent input to help create the Ten Big Ideas framework and the supporting details for each.



Each idea is truly “big,” encompassing a range of action items and strategies supporting the plan’s ambitious goals.

## SUPPORT ENTREPRENEURS & DEVELOP BUSINESS

**Encourage new Linden businesses and create pathways to entrepreneurship.** Owning businesses can be one path to financial security while contributing to the economic vitality of the local community. Strategies should support current business owners in Linden while attracting new investment to help revitalize the Cleveland Avenue corridor. Attention should also be given to the role of New Americans in founding enterprises throughout the Northeast section of the city.

## BUILD COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

**Create a favorable environment for market investment with physical interventions and policy/program changes.** Concerted infrastructure improvements and policy adjustments can help create a market-ready economy in Linden. After decades of disinvestment and businesses leaving the neighborhood, it will take a significant amount of time to prepare the infrastructure and regulatory framework necessary to spur private investment. Consideration should be given to supporting a mixed-income community and removing barriers to redevelopment.

## ADDRESS EARLY CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCE

**Support stability in young lives, improve access to trauma-informed services, and cultivate experiences that develop well-rounded youth.** Focusing on early childhood years pays dividends in the future by nurturing children in their most critical stages of development to set a strong foundation for future success. Increasing access to high-quality pre-K and preventing and treating childhood trauma are both important strategies to creating positive experiences that help create strong and thoughtful citizens.

## SUPPORT RESIDENT HEALTH

**Consider physical, emotional, financial, and other aspects of wellness to design programs that make the healthier choice the easier choice.** The social determinants of health—conditions that are influenced by a person’s socio-economic status—have gained focus in public health and policy in recent years. Strategies should mitigate negative impacts of low-incomes and high stress, while focusing on access to affordable nutritional foods and mental health services. Attention should also be given to getting individuals and families fiscally fit through financial empowerment counseling services.



Two rounds of postcards were sent out to alert residents of the planning process, reaching more than 7,000 households and businesses in the Linden area.

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

### YEAR 2017

February: 2 events  
March: 5 events  
April: 4 events  
May: 1 event  
June: 8 events  
July: 6 events  
August: 10 events  
September: 8 events  
October: 5 events  
November: 7 events  
December: 2 events

### YEAR 2018

January: 5 events  
February: 6 events  
March: 7 events  
April: 2 events

**46**  
meetings  
hosted

**32**  
meetings  
attended



A vinyl banner was mounted at the intersection of 11th & Cleveland to let neighbors know about the December 2017 events.

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**OCTOBER 2018**

Completed by The Neighborhood Design Center  
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