

Neighborhood's Best Practice Conference

Reports Presented by Leyila Cabus

Please note that this report is written almost as a transcript. If reading everything is too time consuming please read the Wilkos section. I also requested that Rebecca invite Erin Prosser from the affordable housing presentation to present at upcoming meetings. I thought this would be beneficial for our Planning Committee because of previous discussions regarding potential quotas. It was estimated that they could probably present in early 2023. Thank you for reading

- **Introduction to the Event:**

- The theme of this year's Neighborhood's Best Practice Conference was neighborhoods rising post pandemic.
- Carla Williams-Scott emphasized some larger goals before she presented the Mayor. The goals were to facilitate new connection with our peers, celebrating youth, creating inclusive communities, enhancing community feedback and creating community networks, and lastly implementing purposeful action in both personal and professional contexts.
- The Mayor presented bond issues 14-18 which would provide \$1.5 billion to supporting and creating better neighborhoods. (These issues were presented in front of the commission).
- He also mentioned charter issues 19-21. Issue 19 would improve the initiative process to place an issue on the ballot. This charter amendment would tell voters the interest group that benefits financially off of their vote and how much money that special interest group would make in the first three years after the ballot. Issue 20 has a goal of hiring qualified and diverse employees. Lastly, Issue 21 would modernize public meetings and offices. This would allow for virtual meetings in certain contexts that would be determined by City Council.

- **Guest Speaker Ameena Kemavor the Vice President of Advocacy and Engagement for ADAMH presented for the group:**

- The main theme was moving forward. She advocated for building resilience in the face of adversity because moving backwards or remaining stagnant in thought processes tends to prevent social, emotional, and spiritual growth. The idea behind this was that building better selves in all components of our lives facilitates building better communities because we have more emotional energy to help others. We can not help others if we can not help ourselves.

- Another notable component of her speech was allowing for grace. Forgiving oneself helps us on an emotional level, therefore we can learn from our mistakes and grow. To add, it is important to have grace for others. Others make mistakes too. If we would like others to be kind and to forgive our misdoings, it would probably be wise to allow forgiveness for others. She added that when we speak to ourselves and our peers, we should speak with purpose.
- She encouraged working on resilience and working on gratitude. Both of these concepts are important because they allow us to be present in our everyday lives, which contributes to more meaningful social relationships.
- **Michael Wilkos' Report on Growth and Change in Our Communities:**
- Note: most data is from the United States Census and most data points are from 2010-2021, unless stated otherwise. This is a protective measure in case I forget to cite sources or years.
- In the 1990's Columbus was the most statistically average place in the United States. This trend has made obvious growth over the years. From the United States Census Bureau it was reported that from 2010-2021 there was an addition of 249,043 people or better put the City of Columbus grew by a quarter of a million people. This is the largest growth in years and it is said that Columbus is growing faster than most big cities in the United States.
- Throughout the decades Columbus has grown through annexation. The suburbs do not touch because Columbus needs to grow its tax base. This is reflective of why we see many constituents of Columbus sending their children to schools in the suburbs.
- Columbus has a Triple A bond rating which draws attention to developers.
- Columbus grew 1.5% in land area, but squeezed 119,000 people into its limits.
- There is a trend of increasing density (also known as growing upwards according to Wilkos) because it is convenient and it promotes an idealistic lifestyle for some residents. For example, it is easier to live in a high density apartment on High Street if you work downtown. In contrast, it is less convenient to work downtown if you live in a single family house in the suburbs.
- This being said Dublin's Bridge Park was built out of an old strip mall. This increase of density has brought more convenience, job opportunity, and living space to Dublin.
- It was expressed that growth in the United States was 7.4% whilst Columbus grew 15% from 2010-2021.
- It was reported that all cities and suburbs grew in Franklin county this year. As a special mention, Hilliard grew about 34 percent.

- We add the entire population of Worthington to our population each year. This includes a 14% growth in Franklin County.
- There are two reported losses in population trends. This is the area on West Broad Street from Hollywood Casino to COSI Science Museum and from South Parsons Avenue to Whittier Street. This can be attributed to the loss of affordability in housing. To add, this loss in trends in population reflects a loss of residents with school aged children.
- All growth in Columbus is due to an increase in diversity of its residents. The amount of white/caucasian residents has dropped by 3,000 in the last 10 years. This trend can be explained by an increase of residents who identify as two or more ethnicities.
- Almost every census tract became more diverse. Cultural communities are changing, however there are still areas that are segregated and disconnected. The most homogenous places in the Columbus Metropolitan area are Clintonville, Upper Arlington, German Village, Worthington, Grandview, and Bexley. This has a heavy background in our City's redlining codes. Redlining has since been dissuaded in zoning, but its effects still remain in parts of our city. Every homogenized area, other than German Village has a direct correlation to the city's prior redlining codes. (See last section, I will provide some pictures and general learning statements from my separate visit to Mitchell Hall's Redlining exhibit).
- Downtown Columbus surged with a 91% growth. The core of the surge was a 44% growth around Dublin Road to I670 and this growth also pertains to parts of Marble Cliff. This being said, growth in our commission area is subject to growth in future years to come. Accessibility needs to be addressed in our area.
- It was expressed that gentrification historically happens in white dominated neighborhoods in the city of Columbus. These areas would include High Street and parts of downtown.
- Linden has had growth for the first time in 60 years. Its population increased by 2,600 people. To add, Linden grew in its diversity over this past decade. Despite the increase of residents, Linden lost 4% of its housing units. This trend is universal. The city of Columbus is facing a housing shortage. Young people are living doubled up in neighborhoods that are not desirable or economically safe.
- Wilkos reported that Linden is ground zero for growth. Large developers are using the housing shortage as a reason to exploit disadvantaged neighborhoods for profit.
- Another city that is showing growth is Northland. Northland grew by 15.4% or roughly the whole population size of Bexley. The trend still remains that there is a housing shortage. The number of units barely increased in Northland, but it

gained about 14,000 residents. As a notable mention, the amount of vacant housing in this area dropped by around 50 percent.

- Growth in Northland continued even though construction did not increase. Wilkos speculates that this is from Intel spill over. It was vaguely mentioned that the amount of jobs in Columbus continue to increase, but housing does not. Additionally, in Northland the income per household tends to be lower, but there is no housing. Overall, there are a multitude of reasons that there is a housing shortage.
- Currently, the City of Columbus and developers are considering the idea of repurposing pre-existing hotels into micro-apartments. During this portion of the presentation, there was pushback from Area Commissioners which brought Wilkos to a larger point. Civic Associations and Area Commissions are giving pushback for repurposing these types of developments. Pushback from commissions comes from the notion that they can not believe that residents don't want (or most times can't afford/find access) to live in single family homes.
- It was said that Morse road is more local than High Street in both localization and economics/business. He also gave credit to the fact that the business owners are more diverse than the business owners along High Street.
- It was also mentioned that Northland and Linden are surrounded with work opportunities.
- Wilkos transitioned into talking about the Near East Side. He shared that there has been a rapid racial shift in this area. Because there are less vacant structures on the Near East Side, there has been growth inwards.
- The large amount of change in our neighborhoods has changed the housing market. Housing prices have increased significantly. Wilkos stated that a once \$70,000 home changed to a \$300,000 home in the span of two years!
- Wilkos prides Columbus in increasing its diversity. The black middle class is on the rise in our major suburbs. Upper Albany West has had the largest growth in its population of middle class African Americans. In fact, North Albany High School now has a membership in the NAACP.
- Wilkos described that the I71 demarcation is preventing diversity in our area. However, he also stated that trends suggest by the end of the decade, there will be no racial majority in the city of Columbus. To add, Columbus lost 9% of its white population in the last decade.
- According to Wilkos there are some areas that racial groups are increasing in population. There was 208% increase of white people in Northeast Columbus. There was a 65% increase of Asian people living in Northern Columbus. Lastly,

there is consistent growth of the Hispanic/Latino population in all parts of Columbus.

- West Broad Street along 270 is the most diverse place in Columbus. This is because this area is desirable, but it is not asking for top prices.
 - The most homogeneous area in Columbus is Upper Arlington behind Whole Foods.
 - Wilkos shared that we are chronically underbuilding. He suggested that Columbus needs to be building 14,000-21,000 units per year based on our continuous growth. The fact that we are chronically underbuilding is proven by the fact that we added one unit per 3 jobs. Most successful cities have one unit per job. Our underbuilding is influenced by our outdated zoning code.
 - Because we are not building new homes, housing prices are continuing to rise. The median price of homes in Columbus were \$246,000 and in Hilliard it was \$354,000. To compare, housing prices in Upper Arlington have risen 53%, Housing Prices in Dublin have risen 54%, and housing prices in Columbus have risen by 88%.
 - Before COVID-19 affordable apartments were rented below \$900 a month. To add, 54,000 households pay more as reported in comparison to previous years.
 - Wilkos stated that there were 9,417 less vacant structures this past year.
 - Wilkos also mentioned that if we don't increase building, costs will continue to increase as will the homelessness population.
 - Wilkos expressed a trend that Area Commissions are continuing to go against rezoning, however Wilkos expressed that more rezoning contributes to creating more diversity.
 - Wilkos concluded with the main points that the city needs to build more compact and diverse, the zoning code update is important, vote for the Columbus Bond Package, and support the Source of Income Ordinance which states that all legal sources of income must be accounted for. His end statement was "If we don't build cities worth human affection, we will have cities no one cares about. We will have 1 million (more people) in 30 years, please don't displace new families or new faces."
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- **World Cafe:**
 - The World cafe was basically an exercise for mental health and creating better event (potentially meeting) environments. The following statements are a quick summary of what was taught/learned.
 - Learn by doing.

- Hone our knowledge into specific questions.
- Cross generational boundaries.
- Listen and speak with intention.
- Design principle is set by context. The main question behind the conduct of events should be why are we bringing people together?
- Create a hospitable space meaning create a space where people feel creative and comfortable.
- Explore questions that matter. The questions can be deep or shallow as long as they have purpose.
- Encourage everyone's conversation. Contributions are important because they create an equity of voice.
- Connect diverse perspectives. Connecting to different perspectives gives us wholeness in thought.
- Listen together for patterns and insights. Look for larger roles and the bigger picture.
- Think of the empty spaces. Share collective discoveries and notice the little things.
- Create meetings worth going to and create realities out of discussion.

- **State of Housing (Affordable Housing) presented by Erin Prosser and Carlie Boos:**

- Their goal is to make affordable housing more accessible.
- Affordable Housing Alliance of Central Ohio is a nonprofit that seeks to help all walks of life to find housing that is affordable to them.
- It was expressed that we have a national crisis when it comes to affordable housing.
- Affordable housing minimum wage is at 30% Area Median Income (AMI). A white collar worker is at 120% AMI.
- 54,000 people pay more than 50% of their income on housing. Despite this, it is known that using more than 30% of one's income is not sustainable. Most who pay over 30% are likely to have trouble with affording medicine, food, water, utilities, and water.
- Boos stated that most low income residents have to work 2+ jobs to sustain housing.
- There was much concern because there is an affordable housing crisis. There are only 32 affordable homes per 100 low income individuals.
- The average home sale is \$337,963 in Central Ohio. This means that an individual or household would have to make \$126,000 to afford it. For one

person, they would have to work 285 hours per week at minimum wage to afford the average home. (There are only 168 hours in a week)

- Vacancy plays a huge role in the lack of affordable housing. Columbus has one of the worst housing markets in the United States. Despite vacancy being the usual culprit in the lack of housing, vacancy is down in Columbus. It is estimated that Columbus is at a 5% vacancy rate meaning that there is genuinely no housing.
- Scarcity allows for the escalation of rent pricing and the amount of affordable housing is limited.
- Investors are taking hold of housing. Columbus lost 20,000 units that used to sell for \$900 or less. These same units now sell for about \$1,200-1,300. It was also noted that 98% of housing is made by the private sector.
- Affordable housing has a legal covenant. Thus meaning, developers are required by law to enforce standards and they are held accountable by city code.
- According to Boos and Prosser labor and housing shortages produce high costs in housing. They noted that the average single family house costs about \$250,000 to make.
- People are coming faster than the rate of building homes. There is 1 home per 5 new residents.
- Intel is projected to bring 20,000 more jobs which will bring new residents, but new homes are not being made. According to Prosser and Boos 19,000 new homes on average need to be made per year to sustain growth. A better estimate of how many homes Columbus should be making per year should be 14,000-21,000. However, all estimates in this range suggest that we are chronically underbuilding.
- As a point of reference the city of Columbus has a similar growth rate to Austin Texas. Austin Texas has a population of around 2.5 million and Columbus has a population of 2.2 million people. Columbus produces 15,000 homes a year in contrast to Austin Texas which makes about 50,000 homes a year. Boos and Prosser even report that Columbus makes less homes than Des Moines Iowa which has a lower population in comparison.
- To add, it was said that 20% of Ohioans said that they can not meet rent next month and this number has been exacerbated by COVID-19. Continuing this train of thought, 39,000 evictions have been made post COVID. To put into context, that is larger than the population of Hilliard Ohio per 2021 census data.
- Rent increase has raised 18% in the past decade as compared to 2-4% in previous decades.
- House sales are up 127% in the past 10 years, but minimum wage is \$10 less per hour per an average modest 2 bed house. \$19.50 would be required to afford

a modest 2 bed house, but minimum wage is \$9.30. (Side interjection from me this is projected to change by 2023 to \$10.10, but their point still stands. The point of me putting this in there is to remind the Commission that the data points they gave us are subject to change).

- They believe that there is still hope for Columbus to build more affordable homes and to eliminate the shortage in housing. Austin was late to the party when it came to development and it was even unaffordable for them, but persevered and created more homes for continuing and future residents.
- Columbus is still on the front end of development and Columbus has the ability and resources to develop according to the population growth. Over the next 15 years, we need to double the amount of housing.
- We need to make residential construction easier and we need to diversify the types of housing available. It might also be beneficial to support small and medium sized developers.
- They really emphasized that we need to ensure that our residents are stably housed. The ways that they suggested we do this is by preserving existing affordable units, minimizing displacement, preventing evictions, and by ensuring that our neighborhoods are economically diverse and that everyone has access to opportunities.
- Prosser mentioned that Columbus does not support accessory flats and that Area Commissions need to partner with the city to have a voice in their updated zoning code. As a special mention, they believe that Area Commissions should call code enforcement when they notice when developers break their word or develop against their plans.
- Prosser and Boos also highlighted that senior citizens have an inability to find new homes because they can't afford it.
- Another way that they suggested that we help with the affordable housing crisis is by funding affordable homeownership and supporting households that make less than \$50,000 a year. Lastly, they suggested we support the City's bond package.
- They concluded their presentation with the statement that keeping a job is impossible without stable housing. Columbus needs to work on prosperity with purpose.
- **Redlining Vague Notes:**
- In Wilkos presentation it was recommended that in our free time we visit Mitchell Hall's Redlining exhibit. Considering Mitchell Hall is on Columbus State's Campus, I took it upon myself to both take some pictures and give a quick little summation on what I've learned that could benefit the group.

- As we know, our city Zoning code was made in the 1950's, some of the code was explicitly racist with how they created segregation within its zoning. Its goal was to reduce and displace African Americans. They did this by destroying neighborhoods of people of color to construct highways and upper class housing and creating laws that would dissuade people of color from buying houses in white neighborhoods.
- Despite this being seen as a part of the past, redlining still has some very real effects today. Although redlining was made illegal, our neighborhoods had already been segregated and homogenized. This can still be seen in certain neighborhoods like Upper Arlington or Worthington according to Wilkos as mentioned earlier.
- I have many photos but I will attached the summarized version to the email