Goal  To enhance and inform the delivery of municipal services and the investment of municipal, state, federal and private funding, and other resources in the McKnight neighborhood through collaborative planning and implementation between residents, including resident businesses and organizations, and other stakeholders and city departments.

Domenic J. Sarno, Mayor
Springfield City Council
Jesse Lederman, President
Melvin A. Edwards, Vice President
Tim Allen
Malo L. Brown
Lavar Click-Bruce
Sean Curran
Victor G. Davila
Michael A. Fenton
Zaida Govan
Justin Hurst
Maria Perez
Kateri Walsh
Tracye Whitfield

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McKnight Neighborhood Council
Office of Planning and Economic Development
PVPC and sub-consultants
ARPA funding language
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Neighborhood Description and Priorities

The McKnight neighborhood is a diverse community located about a mile west of downtown Springfield. It is one of four neighborhoods that comprise the Mason Square area, which has long been at the heart of the city’s Black community. McKnight residents take pride in the rich history of their neighborhood, including the distinctive Victorian architecture of its homes, and these qualities provide many opportunities to continue celebrating and strengthening the neighborhood.

Neighborhood History

During the early 19th century, the land that would become McKnight was a sparsely populated area on the outskirts of the city. Over time, it became home to a growing number of free people of color, in part because of Springfield’s support for abolitionism and involvement in the Underground Railroad. Among the early residents of McKnight was Jenny Cumfrey, who escaped from slavery in New York around 1800. She came to Springfield, where she married her husband Jack Williams and moved into a house near Goose Pond, near the present-day site of the Rebecca Johnson School. In 1808, her former enslaver tracked her down and demanded her return, but a group of 19 Springfield residents—both Black and White—pooled their money to purchase her freedom.

By the mid-19th century, the neighborhood had become known as “Hayti,” and it continued to attract people of color. Most famously, they included Primus Mason, who was originally from Monson. He came to Springfield in 1837, purchased a house in this area, and began building wealth through doing work that was unpleasant but in demand, including collecting old shoes to recycle the leather, and disposing of dead horses. Recognizing the potential for future development in the area, Mason began investing heavily in real estate. In 1860, he purchased a large tract of land here for just $150. Ten years later, when the McKnight brothers were starting to develop the neighborhood, Mason sold this property to them for $17,500.

The McKnights and other developers began eyeing this section of Springfield after the Civil War, when the city experienced rapid population growth. It was also during this time that the first street railway lines were opening in Springfield, which made it easy for people to live on the outskirts of the city and commute to work by trolley. As a result, McKnight became attractive to upper middle class families, leading to the construction of the large and elaborate Victorian homes that have since become defining features of the neighborhood.
One consequence of this real estate boom in McKnight was that it displaced the Black residents of the old “Hayti” community, many of whom relocated to the downtown area or to the Old Hill neighborhood along Eastern Avenue. Primus Mason was one of the few who remained, where he resided in his home at 830 State Street—directly across from the old Winchester Square fire station—until his death in 1892. In his will, he left a bequest to establish the Home for Aged Men, which stills exists today as the Mason Wright Foundation. The city subsequently named Mason Street in his honor, and then in 1982 Winchester Square—which he had sold to the city in 1860—was renamed Mason Square.

Over the course of the 20th century, the demographics of McKnight again shifted, and the neighborhood once again became a focal point for Springfield’s Black community. Today, most of McKnight is designated as a National Register of Historic Places historic district because of architectural significance, and the neighborhood is comprised of a diverse community of Hispanic/Latino, Black, and White residents.

Neighborhood Boundaries, Zoning, and Land Use
The McKnight neighborhood is defined by State Street to the south, Federal and Armory Streets on the west, the CSX railroad tracks to the north, and the former Highland Branch railroad right-of-way on the east.

The central part of the neighborhood is predominantly residential. Most of this is zoned Residence A, which allows for single-family homes (Figure 4). The Residence A section is primarily to the north of Bay Street, while the southeastern and southwestern parts of the neighborhood are primarily zoned Residence B, for single-family or two-family homes. There are also several scattered parcels of higher-density Residence C, which allows for a wider range of multi-family dwellings such as apartment complexes (Figure 5).

In contrast to the residential core of the neighborhood, the periphery has a variety of other uses. Parcels that abut Federal and Armory Streets are a mixture of industrial, commercial, and business. This includes the Springfield Technology Park, a business park with commercial and office space in repurposed former Armory buildings.

Properties along Albany Street on the north/northwest side of the neighborhood are zoned for industrial use. Much of this land is occupied by fuel storage facilities, but it also includes Gasoline Alley, a commercial property that is home to several small local businesses (Figure 9).
Figure 4: Single-family homes on Buckingham Street

Figure 5: Multi-family Residence C zoning on Bowdoin Street

Figure 6: Pedestrian-oriented business development on Bay Street, with high-density residential housing in the distance on the left and single-family homes on the right

Figure 7: Retail plaza at the corner of State and Catharine Streets

Figure 8: Auto-oriented business development on State Street

Figure 9: Albany Street, showing industrial development on the left and Gasoline Alley commercial property on the right
Properties along State Street are zoned for business uses (Figure 7). Most of the existing businesses here are chain retailers and fast food restaurants (Figure 8), but there are also several large apartment buildings on business-zoned parcels. In addition, there are several scattered Business A parcels within the residential core, mainly on Bay Street (Figure 6). These are primarily occupied by small markets and convenience stores.

Overall, the existing commercial development appears to be adequate for the current needs of the neighborhood. Particularly with regards to food access, residents have generally indicated that their preference is to work with existing markets to expand fruit and vegetable offerings, rather than trying to bring a large supermarket into the area. Residents also indicated support for mobile markets and/or farmer’s market.

Demographics
The residents of McKnight comprise approximately three percent of the city’s population. Of this population, 20% identify as white, 36% identify as African American, and 44% identify as other races, including people of multiple races. The population is 51% Hispanic of any race. The age distribution of the population is 23% children under 18 years old, 62% people of working age, and 15% people of retirement age or older.

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Much more information is available in the *Springfield Data Atlas*

Transportation
The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) provides bus service to the region, including five routes in McKnight. These are mostly in the western part of the neighborhood, and along the State Street corridor, although one route crosses through the central part of the neighborhood along Bay Street. This access to public transportation likely contributes to the fact that McKnight residents have a much higher rate of environmentally friendly transportation when compared to both the citywide and statewide averages.
There are 50 individual bus stops in McKnight, but only three of these are sheltered. This is an area for potential growth, as residents have expressed a desire for new shelters as well as improvements to existing ones.

The core residential area of McKnight is traversed by three main streets: Worthington Street, Saint James Avenue, and Bay Street. These are arterial streets that connect downtown Springfield to the neighborhoods to the northeast of McKnight, and residents have raised concerns about pedestrian safety and other quality-of-life issues caused by heavy traffic on these streets. In existing neighborhood plans, some of the recommendations have included traffic calming measures, along with signage encouraging truck traffic to use Albany Street as an alternative to the residential streets.

There are currently very few crosswalks across these arterial streets, and few of these have pedestrian signals. For example, there are only two crosswalks in the 1.2-mile section of Saint James Avenue between State Street and Tapley Street. Similarly, Bay Street (Figure 10) only has three crosswalks in the residential core of the neighborhood, and Worthington Street has one. This presents a significant obstacle to pedestrian travel in the neighborhood, especially for residents with mobility difficulties.

One particular area of concern is the five-way intersection of Saint James Avenue, Worthington Street, Dartmouth Terrace, and Dartmouth Street (Figure 11). The intersection is controlled by a four-sided traffic signal on a pedestal in the middle of the intersection, which is supplemented by a pedestal signal...
on the northeast corner of the intersection for traffic on Saint James Avenue. There are no pedestrian signals, and not all sides of the intersection have crosswalks. This means that, for example, a pedestrian wishing to walk from the north side of Dartmouth Street to the north side of Worthington Street would have to make four separate road crossings.

There is currently no bicycle infrastructure in the neighborhood, but one existing proposal is the McKnight Community Trail, a multi-use trail that would be built along an abandoned railroad right-of-way (Figure 13). The trail would extend from the Rebecca Johnson Elementary School in the southeastern corner of the neighborhood, to Armory Street on the western edge of the neighborhood. Along the way, there would be various access points, including at Bay Street, Berkeley Street, Saint James Avenue, Campus Place, and Glen Road. In the long term, it would also have the potential to be extended further south into other city neighborhoods, eventually connecting with the existing Redstone Rail Trail in East Longmeadow.

There is currently mixed support within the McKnight neighborhood for this trail, with abutters being concerned in particular about public safety and the potential environmental impact of the project. If this project was to move forward, it would be important to ensure that abutters are included in the design process and in the creation of a safety plan.

Housing and Income

The median household income in McKnight is $27,019, which is the sixth lowest among the city’s 17 neighborhoods. McKnight also has the second-highest levels of income inequality in the city, indicating that there is a significant gap between the most affluent and least affluent households in the neighborhood. Overall, 22.1% of McKnight residents live in households with incomes below the federal poverty line, which is slightly higher than the citywide rate of 19.9%. As a result, support for current McKnight residents should be a high priority for any long-term neighborhood plans.

Although McKnight is well-known for its historic housing stock, the neighborhood homeownership rate is just 31%, which is significantly lower than both the state (62.5%) and city (47.4%) rates. Many McKnight residents are considered to be burdened by housing costs, with 42.9% reporting that they pay more than 30% of their income towards either rent or homeownership. These housing costs include maintenance, which can be a considerable expense for owners of historic properties. Older homes in general tend to
require more upkeep than newer construction, and there are often added expenses related to health and safety hazards such as lead paint, asbestos, and outdated electrical systems. However, maintenance costs can be even higher for residents within the Local Historic District, where exterior changes that are visible from the street must be approved by the Historical Commission. Historic district guidelines generally require historically appropriate windows, doors, porches, and clapboards/shingles, all of which tend to be more expensive to purchase, install, and maintain than modern materials such as vinyl.

Currently the Local Historic District covers only a portion of the much larger National Register district. The area of the National Register district that falls outside of the Local Historic District has been federally recognized for its historic significance, but these houses are not currently protected from exterior changes, up to and including demolition. Because of this, existing neighborhood plans have included recommendations for expanding the boundaries of the Local Historic District, in order to ensure the long-term protection of the historic streetscapes in the neighborhood.

Because of the expense in maintaining these houses, many recommendations over the years have involved establishing funding sources that homeowners can access in order to make historically appropriate repairs. One recent program that has been established is the Historic Home Restoration Program, which is administered by the Springfield Community Preservation Committee. Under this program, homeowners in many of the city’s local historic districts, including McKnight, may apply for up to $30,000 in grant money to fund exterior restoration work. This program was piloted in McKnight in 2020, and expanded to include other historic districts in 2022, resulting in a large number of applicants. Grant recipients were selected by lottery in 2022; out of 197 applicants, seven were selected in the lottery. Of these, 67 applicants were in McKnight, and three were among those who were selected.

The large pool of applicants indicates that there is significant demand for such programs in McKnight and elsewhere in the city. However, as of right now the Historic Home Restoration Program is limited in its funding and also in its scope of who is eligible. Because applicants must live in owner-occupied homes in the historic district, and because fewer than a third of McKnight residents are homeowners—and many of them live outside the historic district—it means that only a small portion of the neighborhood’s residents can access these funds.

In addition to the challenges of simply maintaining and rehabilitating the historic homes in the McKnight neighborhood, homeowners may also be challenged by the added cost of the need to transition away from fossil fuel-based energy sources. This is part of a broader effort to reduce Green House Gas emissions, as the city of Springfield and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are committed to net zero energy by 2050. Preserving the rich architectural heritage of the neighborhood while ensuring energy efficiency and decarbonization is a delicate balancing act. Residents and the city government are striving to promote sustainable practices and retrofitting solutions that align with historic preservation.
guidelines. The Massachusetts Clean Energy Center and the MA Department of Energy Resources, along with the federal government, recognize the importance of incentivizing homeowners to invest in energy-efficient upgrades and incorporate renewable energy sources to reduce carbon emissions while maintaining the neighborhood’s unique character. Collaboration among residents, local organizations, and city, state, and federal resources will be important as the neighborhood implements comprehensive strategies that foster a greener, more resilient McKnight community for generations to come.

Parks and Open Space

Compared to other neighborhoods in the city, McKnight has a limited amount of public open space, with six sites totaling just 9.32 acres. On a spring 2023 survey conducted as part of this neighborhood investment process, McKnight residents did indicate that they believed there was a need for new parks in the Mason Square area, but they ranked this as a relatively low priority.

Of the existing parks in McKnight, the largest is the 3.13-acre Magazine Park near the southwest corner of the neighborhood, which has a baseball field, two basketball courts, and a playground. This park is included in the city’s 2024-2028 Capital Improvement Plan, with an estimated $1.2 million in proposed improvements.

Other recreational facilities include the 2.25-acre Rebecca Johnson Park on the eastern side of the neighborhood, which has playground equipment and a baseball field. A more recent addition to the neighborhood is the 0.25-acre Westminster Street Children’s Park, which was constructed on a vacant lot at 44 Westminster Street. It features a variety of playground equipment, although nearby residents did express concern about nighttime security in the park, noting that there was no lighting to discourage illegal activity.

The other open space properties in McKnight are intended primarily for passive recreation. Among these is the Thompson Triangle between Worthington Street and Saint James Avenue, which has a fountain and benches. There is also a smaller triangle at the corner of Buckingham and Bay Streets. There are also two other triangles along Bay Street, along with a landscaped median on Dartmouth Terrace although these are not included in the city’s count of open spaces. The remaining 2.45 acres of city-owned open space in the neighborhood is the McKnight Glen, a wooded area in the northern part of the neighborhood. The glen is currently undeveloped, so this could be a potential area for investment to better utilize this as public parkland.

Based on the 2020 census, the McKnight neighborhood is considered to be an environmental justice population, as defined by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA). The EEA defines an environmental justice population as a census block group that meets at least one of four criteria relating to median household income, minority population, and limited English proficiency.
The EEA considers such groups to be most at risk of being unaware of or unable to participate in environmental decision-making, or to benefit from environmental resources. Of the four census block groups that are located entirely within the neighborhood, one block group meets all of the criteria, two meet the criteria based on income and percentage of minority residents, and the fourth block group, which consists primarily of the more affluent area within the Local Historic District, qualifies based only on percentage of minority residents.

![Figure 17: Magazine Park](image1)

![Figure 18: Westminster Street Children's Park](image2)

**Neighborhood Investment Process**

Creating a strong link between the community and the everyday work done by the city’s many departments is essential for successful neighborhood planning. This plan must be an integral part of the strategic management, budgeting, and daily operations of city departments interacting with the McKnight neighborhood. The city Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED) maintains outreach to other departments while overseeing neighborhood investment planning and implementation. As neighborhood investment plans are completed, OPED staff ensure discussion of recommendations with relevant departments as they may be incorporated into their work plans. Ongoing communication and collaboration between Neighborhood Services, the McKnight Neighborhood Council, and all residents in the neighborhood is necessary.

In 2022, as the city and the nation emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, the city of Springfield allocated $746,340 of American Rescue Plan Act funds to facilitate development of twelve Neighborhood Investment Plans in neighborhoods where residents experienced disproportionately high rates of COVID-19 infection, hospitalization, and death. The city engaged the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) to both update the city’s Neighborhood Data Atlas and facilitate development of these 12 plans. PVPC engaged Way Finders Community Building and Engagement via a competitive procurement process to lead engagement focusing on residents, local businesses, and community-based organizations.

**Community Engagement**

The community engagement process began by focusing on project kick-off and soliciting residents’ thoughts on key issues for city investment, along with lifting up concerns, ideas, and issues. Phase Two shifted focus to prioritizing draft solutions identified out of Phase One input. In total, PVPC and Way
Finders hosted five in-person meetings and five Zoom meetings, tabled at two community events, and administered three sets of on-line surveys, engaging an estimated 150 people in meetings with an additional 263 people completing surveys, for a total of approximately 400 people.

Phase One
The first phase of resident engagement began with two in-person Community Kick-Off Meetings in February 2023, the first at the Mason Square Library and the second at the Bay Area Neighborhood Council meeting space. The Community Kick-off events introduced residents to the Springfield Neighborhood Investment Plan project and engaged them to identify issues, concerns, and ideas for investment in their neighborhood.

On March 9, residents participated in an on-line Wiki-mapping workshop to share locations of issues and potential solutions and see their contributions mapped in real-time. Residents could also interface directly with the Wiki-mapping portal to share their thoughts independently.

In April, an in-person Community Mapping Workshop was held which further engaged residents to identify issues, concerns, and ideas for investment in their neighborhood.

In May 2023, PVPC and Way Finders worked with the local organization Stone Soul to run an in-person Community Conversation and Networking Event which specifically focused on small business owners and community-based organization engagement.

Between March 16 and June 12, an online survey, which was offered in both Spanish and English, was available for residents to complete. In total, this survey had 160 respondents. In early June 2023, PVPC and Way Finders tabled at the Springfield Neighborhood Housing Services Annual Block Party at which many people completed the survey. Understanding that some residents did not have 15 minutes to complete the full survey, PVPC and Way Finders developed a micro-survey that engaged 103 residents to indicate priority resident recommendations.

Phase Two
The prioritization process for actions to include in the Mason Square and Maple High/Six Corners plans began in June 2023 with neighborhood meetings and another round of surveys. During this phase, we hosted a series of four community meetings on zoom for residents to both prioritize top recommendations and build their capacity by learning from city department heads (or delegates) about how the city works and prioritizes action in their neighborhoods and throughout the city.

After each meeting the polls from these meetings were turned into on-line surveys and emailed to Neighborhood Councils and CBOs to engage more residents and community leaders in completing the prioritization process.

June 21 - Housing and Energy with Gerry McCafferty, Housing Director

June 28 - Parks and Recreation/Open Spaces with Pat Sullivan, Director of Parks, Recreation & Building Management

July 12 - Arts & Culture/Economic Development/Food Access with Tim Sheehan, Chief Development Officer
PVPC posted recordings of Zoom meetings and presentation slides to the Springfield Neighborhood Investment Plan webpage for residents who missed the meetings.

In late June, PVPC tabled at a Bay Area Neighborhood Council community event as an opportunity for residents to fill out polls about the topics at two of these neighborhood planning meetings.

Goals and Strategies
The Springfield Neighborhood Investment Planning process is built upon years of planning efforts across the city. Over the past decade, city-wide planning efforts have engaged residents and stakeholders in planning for a more resilient and equitable future, often in direct response to crises such as the 2011 tornado and COVID-19 global pandemic. Within these many plans, goals for neighborhood-specific projects and programs have been integrated with broader city goals.

Goal 1: Improve transparency, trust, and communication between the city and the McKnight neighborhood.
One of the keys to fostering a strong neighborhood is to ensure that there is active and ongoing communication and collaboration between the neighborhood residents, the Neighborhood Council, and the city government. As such, it is vital to ensure that residents feel empowered to bring concerns and ideas to their local government, and also to participate in the decision-making process.

Strategies:
- City, neighborhood council, and residents collaborate to design, create, and implement an equitable and inclusive neighborhood planning process in McKnight, ensuring consistency with city’s values of climate resilience and sustainability.
- City communicates all aspects of the Targeted Neighborhood Investment Plan update process and implementation by posting all materials on the city website-or linked to it-and providing paper copies at City Hall, Neighborhood Council offices and other locations as determined by residents and NC representatives, and to people who request them, including calendar of meetings scheduled, plan template, access to the Data Atlas and expanded GIS maps website, zoning regulations, related city plans, draft products, deliverables, notes from meetings and any other draft and final work products.
- Build the capacity of residents and the city staff to understand how each other ‘works’ and the forces limiting, constraining, and facilitating each group’s ability to act.

Goal 2: Identify, prioritize, and implement investments in the McKnight neighborhood.
In creating this neighborhood plan, the goal is to not only involve residents in the process of identifying and prioritizing needs in the neighborhood, but also to ensure ongoing collaboration as the city works to implement this plan over the next ten years.

Strategies:
- City, neighborhood council, and residents identify long-term (8+ years), short-term (6 months to 3 years), and mid-term (4 to 8 years) priority projects for neighborhood stabilization, equity, sustainability, and resiliency.
• City and Neighborhood Council collaborates to conduct work on a neighborhood level that is reflective of larger city-wide planning practices, such as ReBuild Springfield, the Urban Renewal Plan, the Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP), the Complete Streets Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan, the Economic Development Plan, the Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Hazard Mitigation Plan, and any other relevant plans.

**Goal 3: Maintain the quality of the neighborhood’s housing stock.**
The historic homes of the Mc Knight neighborhood are among its greatest assets, but they can also pose a considerable expense for residents to maintain. On the 2023 survey, respondents from Mc Knight placed a high priority on housing, with more than half ranking it as either their first or second priority out of seven categories. Specifically, they expressed a preference to maintain existing houses, rather than to focus on new construction, and they chose rehabilitation as their top housing-related priority. This is consistent with the findings and recommendations of earlier neighborhood plans, which have highlighted the need for financial assistance to homeowners, as well as the need to address vacant and deteriorated properties.

**Strategies:**
• City and collaborators expand funding and/or programs to provide financial assistance for maintaining, rehabilitating, and renovating houses in the Mc Knight neighborhood.
• Neighborhood Council identifies and prioritizes vacant and/or deteriorated properties for rehabilitation.
• City and Neighborhood Council collaborate to create a process for reporting and resolving code violations.

**Goal 4: Expand opportunities to walk, bike, and take public transportation.**
Given that over 30% of Mc Knight residents utilize some form of environmentally friendly transportation, it is important to ensure that this continues to be a viable option. When asked about transportation priorities on the 2023 survey, Mc Knight respondents indicated a particular preference for improving public transportation in the neighborhood, along with improving walkability. Prior neighborhood plans have similarly indicated a need for improving walkability and pedestrian safety.

**Strategies:**
• Neighborhood Council works with city to identify and prioritize locations for new crosswalks and/or pedestrian crossing signals.
• Neighborhood Council works with city to identify and prioritize sidewalks that are in need of replacement.
• Neighborhood Council identifies priority streets for traffic calming measures, and city explores possible solutions.
• Neighborhood Council works with PVTA to prioritize locations for new bus shelters.
• City and MassDOT advance the implementation of the Mc Knight Community Trail.
• City works with abutters in the design process of the Mc Knight Community Trail, including developing a safety plan as part of the design.

**Goal 5: Build community and pride in neighborhood**
The Mc Knight neighborhood benefits from a strong sense of community, as well as pride in its heritage and historic architecture. In addition, it is served by an active and well-organized neighborhood council.
The following strategies are some of the ways that city, neighborhood council, and other stakeholders can continue to support these areas of strength and further develop the sense of community in the neighborhood.

**Strategies:**
- Neighborhood Council acquires property to create a meeting space and community center for the neighborhood.
- Neighborhood Council and city collaborate to explore the possibility of expanding the Local Historic District to encompass the entire National Register Historic District.
- Neighborhood Council develops new programs, activities, and celebrations for McKnight residents.
- Neighborhood Council identifies ways to highlight the history of the McKnight neighborhood and the stories of the people who have lived there.
- Neighborhood Council advocates to the city in favor of historically appropriate street lighting within the boundaries of the Local Historic District.

**Goal 6: Strengthen economy of neighborhood**

As indicated in the spring 2023 surveys, McKnight residents are generally more favorable to working to support existing local businesses, especially in the area of food access. In that regard, the survey respondents preferred actions that would improve fresh fruit and vegetable offerings at existing stores, and also bringing mobile markets into the neighborhood, rather than establishing a full-line supermarket in the neighborhood. In addition, the 1994 neighborhood plan included recommendations about zoning changes to business parcels, in order to ensure that future business development was appropriate for the neighborhood. Not all of these recommendations appear to have been carried out, since many of the parcels that were recommended for change are still zoned the same as they were prior to 1994, so this may be an area for the Neighborhood Council and residents to examine whether there are areas where zoning changes could help support existing and future local businesses in McKnight.

**Strategies:**
- Neighborhood Council and city collaborate to develop strategies for supporting existing local businesses and encouraging other businesses to invest in McKnight.
- Neighborhood Council and city examine existing zoning in McKnight and identify areas where rezoning could help support appropriate business/commercial use.
- Neighborhood Council and city collaborate to bring mobile markets and farmers markets to McKnight.
- Neighborhood Council and city collaborate to encourage local markets to expand offerings of fresh fruits and vegetables.

**Recommendations and Prioritization**

These recommendations and prioritizations will be added following input from residents and Neighborhood Council.
Short-Term Projects (6 months–4 years)
Mid-Term Projects (4–8 years)
Long-Term Projects (8+ years)
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McKnight Neighborhood Zoning Map
Parks and Open Space in McKnight

McKnight Neighborhood Parks and Open Space Map

- McKnight Neighborhood
- MCKNIGHT_OPENSPACE
- PROPOSED_Highland-McKnight_RailTrail

Legend:

- McKnight Neighborhood
- MCKNIGHT_OPENSPACE
- PROPOSED_Highland-McKnight_RailTrail

Map credits: HERE, Garmin, OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community.
Appendix B: Summaries of existing city and neighborhood plans

City-wide Planning Efforts

Prior to the Neighborhood Investment Planning process, the City of Springfield has included neighborhood-level planning objectives as a part of several city-wide plans, projects, and programs. Neighborhood-specific goals, recommendations, and strategies are highlighted in the “Summary of Existing Conditions” section of this report.

Rebuild Springfield (2012)

- The Rebuild Springfield initiative was created in response to the June 1, 2011 tornado that struck the City of Springfield and produced a four-part comprehensive planning response to the natural disaster. The Rebuild Springfield plan includes a city-wide overview and three district plans for neighborhoods directly impacted by the tornado. The Citywide planning process is organized according to the six Nexus Domains of a healthy and vibrant community. These domains include the physical, cultural, social, organizational, educational, and economic components of a community while listing twenty-one total recommendations. More neighborhood-specific recommendations and strategies are outlined in the district plans: District One (Metro Center and South End), District Two (Maple High-Six Corners, Upper Hill, Old Hill, and Forest Park), and District Three (Sixteen Acres and East Forest Park).

Pedestrian and Bicycle Complete Streets Plan (2014)

- Developed in 2014, “The City of Springfield Pedestrian and Bicycle Complete Streets Plan” was adopted to realize the city’s vision for bicycling and walking. The plan aims to “complete the streets” of Springfield, making public ways accessible to all residents regardless of age or ability through a series of priority projects, programs, and policies. Central to the city’s vision is the Complete Streets Network, a recommended city-wide network of streets designed to allow for safe, easy movement of pedestrians, bicyclists, users of public transit, and motorists. To assist in the realization of the Complete Streets Network, the “Complete Streets Implementation Guide” was developed in addition to the plan and provides specific design elements, key dimensions, and considerations for constructing the recommended Complete Streets infrastructure.

Local Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (2023)

- The City of Springfield’s latest hazard mitigation plan presents a thorough summary of community features and risks posed by natural hazards. The planning document identifies and prioritizes forty-four total mitigation actions for the City to implement. While many of the included strategies are city-wide in scope, several features are identified as priorities within specific neighborhoods.

Strong, Healthy, and Just: Climate Action and Resilience Plan (2017)

- Springfield’s first climate action and resilience plan in name, “Strong, Healthy, and Just: Climate Action and Resilience Plan” (SHJ) was developed in 2017 to provide a path for the City of Springfield to reduce overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and to enhance urban resilience. The SHJ plan builds upon over 15 years of climate action by the City and first recommends the City to conduct an analysis of the progress that had been made on previous plans and their climate-related strategies. A second priority recommendation presented is for the City to better communicate the ongoing and planned climate action and resilience work, especially in neighborhoods with high concentrations of chronically stressed residents. Additionally, the plan expands on ten recommended Action Categories with goals and strategies to reduce GHG emissions and enhance resilience.
Springfield Complete Streets Prioritization Plan – 2020 Update
- Expanding on the 2017 Springfield Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, the latest update provides an examination of more recent data and a list of projects developed through various engagement efforts. The updated plan identifies previous priority projects that have been completed both city-wide and within individual neighborhoods.

Local Rapid Recovery Plan (2021)
- Springfield’s Local Rapid Recovery Plan was the result of the Commonwealth’s Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program intended to provide every municipality in Massachusetts the opportunity to develop actionable, project-based recovery plans tailored to the unique economic challenges and COVID-19 related impacts to downtowns, town centers, and commercial areas. The LRRP focuses on Springfield’s Main Street Convention Center District (MSCC) in the Metro Center neighborhood. Through the LRRP process, fifteen projects were identified as priority opportunities for investing the city’s initial American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding.

Open Space and Recreation Plan (2022)
- The Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) developed in 2022 outlines a comprehensive park and conservation land improvement program and establishes a framework for guiding city expenditures through Fiscal Year 2027. The plan establishes six broad goals that were developed through input from each City department involved in managing open space.

Safety Action Plan (2022)
- Collaborating with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the City created the Safety Action Plan to provide information and direction on strategies and treatments most likely to improve roadway safety performance within the city. The plan addresses citywide crash patterns and trends and systemic treatments that can be used to address those trends. The content of the plan establishes a vision and goals specific to roadway safety performance and establishes a basis for informing roadway safety performance improvements over the next three to five years. Strategies for addressing roadway safety improvements are separated into “engineering” and “non-engineering” countermeasures. Specific countermeasure locations are identified for intersections, signalized and unsignalized, along with corridors throughout the city.

Capital Improvement Plan, FY 2024-2028 (2023)
- The City of Springfield’s annual update of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) acts as a roadmap for the acquisition, renovation, or construction of new or existing facilities and infrastructure. As part of the City of Springfield’s continuing efforts to develop robust long-term strategic planning initiatives, the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for Fiscal Years 2024-2028 lists all capital improvement needs throughout the City, and the estimated cost associated with those projects. The estimated cost for all 477 projects totals $1.3 billion, with the highest priority projects totaling $182 million. These 18 “Grade A” projects include investments in public safety, upgrades to schools and municipal buildings, road resurfacing, city-wide systemic safety interventions and numerous projects aimed at driving economic development, while improving the safety, mobility, and the quality of life of the residents of Springfield.

Existing Neighborhood Plans
The City of Springfield has a long history of engaging its residents through neighborhood planning efforts. In the 1980s and 1990s there were dedicated and continual efforts from City planning staff to collaborate with neighborhood councils and associations to create Neighborhood Plans. Much of the progress initiated through neighborhood planning projects was halted in the early 2000s, while the city was under receivership.
While the City regained its financial autonomy in 2009, the economic impacts of the Great Recession and the devastation caused by the 2011 tornado presented opportunities to refocus neighborhood planning in the 2010s, which centered on the redevelopment of downtown neighborhoods. In early 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic forced planning efforts to pause and pivot to supporting residents and businesses most at risk. Federal funding made available through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has renewed the City’s capacity and commitment to neighborhood planning.

McKnight Neighborhood Plan (1994)

- This neighborhood plan evaluates several different urban renewal projects that were implemented in McKnight between 1974 and the early 1990s. Each project includes a description and a map, along with an update of the ongoing status of the project. The neighborhood plan also includes an overview of the demographics, existing housing stock, economic development, and community facilities in the neighborhood. At the time, neighborhood concerns centered around the condition of houses, the existing zoning of the neighborhood, traffic congestion, and a lack of community facilities. The neighborhood plan concludes with a series of recommendations, which focused on rezoning, expanding recreational opportunities, reducing heavy truck traffic, encouraging economic development, and improving existing housing stock.

2008 Revitalization Plan

- This revitalization plan was developed by the McKnight Neighborhood Council, and it identifies eight areas of concern for McKnight residents. Many of these concerns centered on the visual appearance of the neighborhood, including repaving streets, installing historically appropriate lighting, restoring distressed properties, and enforcing existing zoning ordinances and historic district regulations. Other items in the plan focus on addressing public safety concerns, promoting businesses and economic development, constructing a rail trail, and acquiring a community center for the neighborhood.

McKnight Safe Streets Initiative

- This initiative, which was summarized in the Springfield Complete Streets Prioritization Plan 2020 Update, featured a series of recommendations relating to traffic calming and pedestrian safety improvements. Among these were raised crosswalks at key intersections, traffic calming measures on main arteries, and a redesign of the intersection of Dartmouth and Worthington Streets.

A Plan for Springfield’s McKnight Neighborhood (2022)

- This draft plan was created by consultants Scott Hanson and Peter Gagliardi with the support of the McKnight Neighborhood Council and community stakeholders. A “Vision” for the neighborhood was crafted, and three categories of recommendations were presented. The “low hanging fruit” consisted of four initiatives that were ongoing or considered achievable within a 12-month period. Three projects were identified as “Projects That Could Move Forward by 2026.” Two additional initiatives were identified as projects to be completed “In the Longer Range,” sometime within the next decade: completion of a rail trail from McKnight to the East Forest Park neighborhood, and the development of a supermarket to serve the Mason Square neighborhoods.