Roadmap to Revitalization
Southern Gateway Executive Summary
May 2014

IN AUGUST 2011, Mayor Michael B. Coleman committed the City of Columbus to working with residents of the South Side to revitalize their neighborhood. He then recruited a number of businesses and individuals with ties to the South Side to be “Champions” of this public-private partnership known as the Southern Gateway. These Champions, along with the City and engaged, dedicated residents, are making the investments needed to move the neighborhood forward.

Investments Underway

- **Housing stock improvements** through acquisition and rehabilitation or demolition of abandoned and vacant properties
- **Facade improvements for homes** occupied by people who lack the resources to keep up with the demands of exterior maintenance
- **Infrastructure enhancements** such as new sidewalks, re-paved streets and curb cuts
- Opening of the new **John Maloney Health Center**
- Enhancement of **South East Lions Park**
- Acquisition and **renovation of the former Reeb Elementary School**
- **Creation of a project team** to lead the community input effort, develop a revitalization plan and secure prospective tenants for the new Reeb Center
WHERE IS THE SOUTHERN GATEWAY?

The Southern Gateway is part of the South Side of Columbus. It includes historic neighborhoods like Reeb-Hosack/Steelton Village, Hungarian Village and Stambaugh-Elwood. It is bounded by Moler and Frebis on the north to State Route 104 on the south, and from S. High Street on the west to S. Champion Avenue on the east. This is an area of approximately 1.9 square miles.
Despite its many assets, the community has been in a period of decline since the late 1970s when the factories that employed so many South Side residents and attracted so many thriving businesses began disappearing. The closure of the nearby Lockbourne Air Force Base starting in 1978 also resulted in the relocation of thousands of military personnel and civilian support jobs. Today the South Side is known more for its:

- High crime rate (twice the average Columbus rate)
- High infant mortality rate (one of the highest in the United States)
- Absentee landlords and vacant/abandoned properties (three times the Columbus average)
- Low rate of educational attainment (26% of youth ages 16-19 are not in school and not high school graduates (five times the Columbus average); 12% of adults have a bachelor’s degree or higher which is about one-third the Columbus rate)
- High number of births to teenage mothers (twice that of Columbus)
- High number of people with very low incomes (72% of residents live below the sustainability threshold of 200% of poverty)

The Southern Gateway area encompasses 1,229 acres and is home to nearly 6,900 residents (4,964 adults/1,931 children) and numerous assets such as:

- A rich history with ties to great pioneering families and businesses (such as Donatos and the Crane Group)
- Its proximity to downtown Columbus and Nationwide Children’s Hospital
- Columbus Castings (formerly Buckeye Steel), a key, 100-year-old business
- Over 30 faith-based entities, some occupying buildings of historical significance (The Hungarian Reformed Church and St. Ladislas Catholic Church)
- Great parks and recreation facilities such as Barack Recreation Center, Lincoln Park and Southeast Lions Park
- A culture of diversity including ten civic association areas, each with its own distinctive history
- A core of dedicated, talented, tireless, involved residents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING PROCESS

From November 2012 until September 2013, the Southern Gateway Project Team worked diligently to involve residents in the planning process resulting in many positive outcomes:

• Development of a community vision: The Southern Gateway is a vibrant, thriving area that attracts, retains, involves and provides opportunities for success of residents and businesses and that invites, entertains, informs and delights visitors

• Creation of an Oversight Committee, Work Group, and ten committees studying every area of the community (Arts, Culture and Entertainment; Basic Needs; Buildings and Streets; Business and Economic Development; Community Engagement; Education, Employment; Health and Wellness; Housing; and Safety); each committee included residents and subject matter experts as co-chairs

• Written input on surveys from 500 residents

• Attendance at over 250 community events listening to concerns from 300 residents and key informants

• Recommendations from each committee that have community support

• Recruitment of eight service organizations to be the first tenants in the Reeb Center expected to open in 2015

• Implementation of a capital funding campaign to raise $12.1 million for the Reeb Elementary School renovation
Community-Supported Committee Recommendations

Supporting and Developing People

Currently, an underutilization of human capital contributes to high crime rates and low levels of education and employment among South Siders. The Southern Gateway public-private partnership aims to change this for the better by building the capacities of residents to make their community a place where families want to live, work and play.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Completing the renovation of the former Reeb Elementary School and filling it with tenants offering education-related support services
- Implementing an asset-based approach to building community involvement including door-to-door outreach to encourage all residents to identify and use their skills, knowledge and abilities on behalf of the neighborhood
- Enhancing communications to, and among, all residents especially through the development of a community newspaper and use of social media
- Enhancing collaboration among all service providers, faith-based entities, schools and organizations
- Strengthening the capacity of each civic association to communicate with and involve residents in activities beneficial to them
- Adopting strategies to improve the health and wellness of residents
- Engaging in substantial efforts to improve the educational attainment and actual employment of residents in jobs at or above living wage

Supporting and Developing a Safe, Vibrant and Thriving Community

The South Side is plagued by crime rates more than twice that of the City. The number of vacant and abandoned properties is three times that of Columbus. Deteriorating or missing sidewalks, poor street lighting and lengthy distances across intersections make residents feel unsafe when walking or biking. The Southern Gateway is working to address residents’ #1 concern – safety and crime reduction – by helping locals who contribute to illegal activity choose a different path and by repairing deficient infrastructure.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enhancing crime enforcement efforts, including police, community crime patrols and block watches
- Instituting a court watch process to encourage more stringent sentencing
- Increasing the quality and number of drug and alcohol programs and services, and reducing waiting time to access current services
- Increasing code enforcement and decreasing the amount of time remediation of code violations takes
- Continuing community clean up/fix up efforts and beautification projects such as Plant Pride on Parsons
- Changing the regulations regarding properties held by banks to hold them as responsible as property owners (not just lien holders) in maintaining properties
- Continuing and strengthening efforts to enhance physical infrastructure, adding street lights, security cameras and working with property owners to better maintain their properties and the surrounding area
- Implementing recommendations to attract and retain business and industry to the Southern Gateway area.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Supporting and Developing Businesses

Historically, the South Side was home to thriving manufacturing and industrial companies that employed residents and supported their robust shopping, dining and entertainment needs. The community was steeped in diversity as immigrants from other countries and migrants from across the United States moved into the area. At one time, 12 different languages were spoken in businesses along Parsons Avenue.

Today, much of the industrial and manufacturing space is outdated and underutilized. Retail primarily consists of dollar stores, used car lots and carryouts. Many residents lack the education, skills and abilities required to fill 21st century jobs and 30% of those who are employed are in traditionally low paying service jobs. The Southern Gateway effort is marshalling the resources necessary for economic redevelopment.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

• Development of an agreed-upon South Side area branding strategy to attract businesses, residents and visitors
• Aggressive recruitment of businesses and industries to locate in the South Side especially in the Parsons Avenue Corridor, the Marion Road Corridor and the former Technegas site
• Continued investment in South Side infrastructure upgrades and maintenance
• Improved transit options
• Enhancing communication and collaboration among South Side businesses and the organizations that work with them (PAMA, PARC, etc.)
• Inventorying businesses along Marion Road and considering locating a business incubator there focused on manufacturing and light industrial
• Establishing targeted financing and technical assistance programs to support small business formation and growth
• Establishing a Business Retention and Expansion program
• Employing strategies to equip residents with skills, knowledge and abilities employers want
THE SOUTH SIDE IS A “CAN DO” NEIGHBORHOOD

As concerns have been identified, numerous people and organizations have stepped forward to address them.

Crime and Safety
Discussions are underway to reduce crime and increase safety. Ideas include adding surveillance cameras, enhancing police patrols, instituting court watches and increasing the number of block watches.

Arts, Culture and Entertainment
A newly formed arts committee is working on ways to fully utilize Barack Recreation Center arts programs and to create spaces for performance arts.

Infrastructure
The City of Columbus has started sidewalk and curb modifications, park renovations, and street repaving and upgrades; the Parsons Avenue upgrades are scheduled for 2016; Reeb-Hosack/Steelton Village and Hungarian Village were both named Pride Neighborhoods in 2013.

Housing
Community Development for All People with a number of public and private investors, Nationwide Children’s Hospital and the NRP group have taken the lead in building 40 new homes, renovating the exteriors of over 100 owner-occupied homes and building a new 56 unit senior housing complex; the City has placed over eighty Southern Gateway area properties on the expedited list to be adjudicated and potentially renovated or razed and rebuilt.

Community Engagement
Residents who served during the planning stage are recruiting additional members for the Community Engagement committee and will continue meeting; Reeb-Hosack/Steelton Village Committee members are delivering welcome baskets to all new Southern Gateway Home residents; a Merion Village resident with a print media background is working on plans for the area newspaper and PAMA has developed an “All Things South” website that has links to everything there is to know about the South Side.

Business and Economic Development
Community Development for All People has established a business CDC to be known as the Parsons Avenue Revitalization Corporation (PARC); PAMA has added board members and is developing a member recruitment campaign; the Columbus Metropolitan Library is finalizing plans for its new South Side branch, two new businesses have opened in the South Side and two more are under development.

Employment
COWIC has started delivering employment services in the South Side; Nationwide Children’s Hospital is emphasizing hiring South Side residents. Columbus Castings is hiring.

Education and Outreach
The United Way of Central Ohio has secured two VISTA volunteers and is convening a group to discuss how to most effectively engage parents in their children’s education; South Side STAY is planning outreach efforts to engage residents of the Southern Gateway area.

Health and Wellness/Basic Needs
The new John Maloney Health Center will hold community discussions regarding substance use and abuse and will house the Moms2Be program, primary care physicians, specialty clinics and mental health services; Columbus Public Health has convened a work group focused on reducing the infant mortality rate and the Franklin County ADAMH Board has started community conversations regarding mental health; Neighborhood Design Center is working with Stambaugh-Elwood to develop a community playground, and several area parks are being upgraded.

Reeb Center
The design for the renovation is underway and more than $8.6 million toward the $12.1 million in renovation costs has been raised. Prospective Reeb tenants have been identified.

THE RESIDENTS OF THE SOUTHERN GATEWAY are ready and willing to assist with community revitalization efforts. Such efforts need to maintain the rich diversity and honor the history of the community while reducing crime and improving infrastructure, housing, communications, business development and employment opportunities. Efforts should also provide healthy options for residents of all ages and make needed services readily available in the newly renovated Reeb Center.
SOUTHERN GATEWAY PROJECT TIMELINE
August 2011 – December 2012

- Mayor Coleman commits to South Side revitalization
- Monthly stakeholder updates begin
- Public search for consultants to develop South Side Plan launched
- Consultant team retained
- Begin inventory of South Side assets/resources
- Finalize definitions of study and target areas
- Begin meetings with Southern Gateway funders, City, residents, key informants to develop vision, mission and goals
- Finalize committee structure, recruit committee co-chairs, members
- City acquires Reeb Elementary School via land trade with Columbus City Schools
- First South Side Champions meeting
- Senior Housing Tax Credits application submitted
- South Side Renaissance begins exterior home repair program
- John Maloney Health Center groundbreaking
- First meetings with consultant and key informants
- Begin attending Columbus South Side Area Commission meetings
- Begin Reeb Center planning, team meetings, tenant recruitment
- South Side Renaissance begins exterior home repair program
- Senior Housing Tax Credits application submitted
- John Maloney Health Center groundbreaking
- First meetings with consultant and key informants
- Begin attending Columbus South Side Area Commission meetings
- Begin Reeb Center planning, team meetings, tenant recruitment
### SOUTHERN GATEWAY PROJECT TIMELINE

January 2013 – October 2013

**January 2013**
- Complete Neighborhood Profile, develop inventory of schools and performance, obtain health statistics
- State of City Address rolls out South Side revitalization plans
- Meeting of faith-based entities
- Begin Workgroup meetings (co-chairs of all 10 committees)
- Finalize Southern Gateway vision, mission, goals
- Establish Facebook page message line, community calendar, news stories

**February 2013**
- Community meetings and targeted outreach to special groups/public places (Tee Jaye’s, library, etc.) starts
- Committee meetings
- South Side Settlement House demolished, introcenter staircase securely stored

**March 2013**
- Finalize Reeb Center prospective tenants
- First tenants move into Southern Gateway Homes
- Reeb-Hosack welcome committee begins work
- End community surveys
- Committees submit findings and recommendations for Workgroup review
- Joint economic development/workforce review of committee findings and recommendations
- Senior housing tax credit package approved

**April 2013**
- Finalize survey results; create and give presentation on results to civic associations, and other community groups
- Oversight Committee met with Mayor Coleman to review results and plans
- Reeb Center investor recruitment meeting

**May 2013**
- WOSU Neighborhood Series highlights South Side
- Continue community meetings to review results, gain input
- Reeb Center building design approved

**June 2013**
- Continue community meetings to review results, gain input
- Community meetings

**July 2013**
- John Maloney Health Center opens

**August 2013**
- Continue community meetings to review results and obtain additional input

**September 2013**
- End community surveys
- Committees submit findings and recommendations for Workgroup review
- Joint economic development/workforce review of committee findings and recommendations

**October 2013**
- Finalize Southern Gateway logo
- Begin Southern Gateway Homes construction
- Begin attending civic association meetings
- Begin attending monthly area committee/organization meetings (PAMA, SSHAC, Block Watch)
- Finalize committee co-chairs, tasks, deadlines
- Input session with area employers, workforce development organizations
- Publicize community meetings with 3100 flyers, auto call to homes
- Collect survey input at first South Side Housing Expo
- Begin series of six meetings to obtain/discuss community input
- Committee meetings
- Continue community input
- Committee meetings
- WOSU Neighborhood Series highlights South Side
- Continue community meetings to review results, gain input
- Reeb Center building design approved