

IV. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT

A. Pedestrian Safety:

Site visits to the neighborhood indicate that there is a fair amount of pedestrian activity throughout the day. Concerns have been raised by residents that pedestrian crossings along N. Hollywood and Springdale Street are not very visible or are non-existent in key crossing areas.

The safety of school age children is a major concern as there does not appear to be a safe designated walking route to the neighborhood schools. The intersection at Howell and Springdale streets is a key crossing area for students who attend Cypress Middle School. The crosswalk is not as visible as it could be to motorists and the crosswalk does not have a school crossing guard.

A safe route to school grant was submitted in the Spring of 2007 for Springdale Elementary School located off N. Hollywood Street. The grant application put an emphasis on infrastructure improvements along Hollywood that would create a pedestrian bridge over Cypress Creek. The grant application was recently not selected for funding but improvements to the area still need to be pursued.

Other areas of concern include poorly marked crosswalks near key activity centers such as the Hollywood Community Center that also includes a branch of the public library and the Health Loop.

Table 15
Vehicles per Household

Census tract	Total housing units	Percent Occupied Housing Units with			
		no vehicles available	1 vehicle available	2 vehicles available	3 vehicles available
6	1,290	26.4	49.6	17.4	6.6
7	2,551	19.7	49.6	23.3	7.4
8	1,263	33.2	43.8	19.1	3.9
9	1,528	32.0	43.7	18.7	5.6



Missing crosswalk at intersection N. Hollywood Street sidewalk Hollywood & Peres near community crossing Cypress Creek center.

The conditions of sidewalks in the neighborhood are substandard in most areas. In the City of Memphis, adjacent property owners are responsible for maintaining the sidewalks. Signs of neglect such as cracked and weeded sidewalks can be seen throughout the neighborhood. The City will need to address sidewalks that are not ADA compliant. Obstructions such as fire hydrants and utility poles placed in the path of

pedestrians present accessibility problems to people in wheel chairs. Tip downs at curbs also need to be brought into ADA compliance in some areas throughout the neighborhood



West side of Springdale Springdale St. near Cypress Middle School northbound. Fire hydrant crossing and utility pole create obstruction.

B. Traffic Circulation

Major roads in the study area include Jackson, Chelsea, and N. Hollywood Street. According to recent traffic counts, the total volumes of traffic has remained fairly constant over the past three years. Roads in the study area do not exceed capacity levels. Residents have expressed concern about speeds along Hollywood although no formal study has been done to determine if the concerns are valid.

Because of the sizeable amount of pedestrian activity and traffic along Hollywood and the recent re-pavement of the street, traffic calming measures that provide pedestrians with more security such as pedestrian refuges or curb extensions at

major pedestrian crossings need to be explored and implemented.

C. Environmental Hazards

Problems with trash and litter are common throughout the neighborhood with 10% of parcels showing some type of problem with overgrown vegetation or litter. Vacant lots and abandoned buildings are a major contributor to the problem. The abandoned Tupelo Apartments property was one of the worst examples of illegal dumping but is being razed by the City.



On site junk storage in the neighborhood.

Heavily polluted areas such as Cypress Creek and the Wolf River are two waterways that residents have not been able to enjoy the natural habitat due to contamination. Industrial pollution over the years has severely impacted the safety of these waterways. The North Hollywood Dump was on the

National Priority Superfund list; the dump is located on a 70 acre site along the Wolf River. The site has been fenced off in order to limit access to the river from the neighborhood. Pesticide-related compounds and heavy metals have been detected on the site beginning in the early 1980's. Contamination was found in drums that were removed from the site. By the mid 1990's capping and grading of the landfill was completed and the site was removed from the National Priority List. Long term monitoring of groundwater, surface water, and fish near and at the site continues to this day. It is not clear if this site could someday be opened for some public use.

Cypress Creek is a concrete channel that travels across the neighborhood south of Chelsea Avenue and eventually carries storm water runoff into the Wolf River. To improve drainage and control flooding, a concrete liner was installed and the creek channel was straightened in the mid 1960's. During the construction of the liner, some sediment from the bottom of the creek was used to fill in low spots along the bank of the creek. Prior to 1963, industries in or near the study area, most notably Velsicol Chemical Company had discharged wastewater into Cypress Creek. In 2005, the Tennessee Department of Health investigated the possibility of contamination along the creek and identified pesticide and chemical contamination in the soil. Velsicol has been working on remediating the problem on residential properties where concentrations of chemicals were determined unsafe. Once those properties are mitigated Velsicol will then begin the removal of contaminated soil along non-residential areas.



Cypress Creek



Cypress Creek near Cypress Middle School

D. Illegal activity:

Crime activity was a common subject at several neighborhood meetings. The most frequent complaint with neighborhood residents and business owners alike is in regard to the illegal activity centered at the Hollywood Car Wash. During the day

and evening, people loitering around the area are visible from the street and it appears that drug transactions are taking place. Other problems include people setting up couches and chairs on vacant lots or loitering near the B-52 Market on Hollywood.

People have also expressed concern that there is not enough police presence in the neighborhood and citizens in the study area are afraid to call the police because they fear retribution from the criminals.



Activity at the Hollywood Car Wash



Drug house closed by Operation Blue Crush

Economic Stability

Although there is much industrial activity in the area with high paying jobs at Velsico Chemical and Buckman Laboratories, these jobs no longer serve the residents living nearby. One of the issues preventing business to locate into the area is the lack of skilled labor with only 58% of persons over 25 years of age with a high school diploma.

A retail study conducted by the University of Memphis in 1998 for the North Memphis Planning District, indicated the need for miscellaneous repair services along with other services such as pest control services. Apparel & accessory stores, furniture and home furnishings, and shops selling used merchandise & antiques are also needed according to the study's research. The study also indicated a high abundance of beauty and barber shops, auto repair, and liquor stores in the North Memphis neighborhoods.

Housing

As noted earlier approximately 14% of the housing stock is either deteriorating or worse. Due to City Code Enforcement budget constraints and manpower needs, the demolition of hazardous property is slow and the abandonment of these properties has had a severe impact in the neighborhood increasing blight. There have been recent efforts to rehab multi-family residences by new ownership include the Goodwill Village Apartments off Peres and Merton and the "A New Place Apartments" off of Howell Avenue. These efforts show m promise that similar projects could be done successfully in this neighborhood.

The demolition of deteriorated housing stock raises the concern of many residents. They would like to see homes fixed up and provide the community with a source of affordable housing rather than have them demolished. The demolition of the Tupelo Apartments off Tupelo Street also presents some new problems. Efforts will be needed to redevelop the site. The parcel is located in a Light-Industrial zone and a discussion will need to take place regarding how to encourage redevelopment of the site and what type of development to

attract. Rezoning of the site could possibly encourage the redevelopment for a more compatible use.



Houses in need of demolition



Dumping at Tupelo Apartments

V. PLAN RECOMMENDATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

As part of the public planning process, concerned area residents and stakeholders helped devise strategies to achieve the goals that were identified early on in the planning process. These strategies include recommendations for the neighborhood, local business owners, and various city/county departments.

Building Community Pride: Change image of community and work together as an all-inclusive/diverse organization building neighborhood pride.

- **Pursue partnerships with private and public entities.**
- **Tap into community resources and talent that include historical, art and agricultural resources.**

Recommendation: Develop a steering committee as part of the Mid-Town North Community Association to focus on creating a more positive image for the neighborhood. This includes hosting a series of workshops that help residents including school age children understand their history of the neighborhood and how it has developed over time. Other steering committees will be needed to organize neighborhood events and festivals as they are developed.

Background: A lack of neighborhood pride and involvement from business owners and residents has been a part in the overall general decline of conditions in the Midtown North neighborhood. The Rhodes Hollywood Springdale Partnership has spurred the development of the Mid-Town North Community Association. Those in the association recognize the need to change the neighborhoods image. The community

association has already begun by expanding the boundaries they serve to include the area as far west as North Watkins Street and as far north as James Road. Along with being more inclusive with the surrounding neighborhoods, they have changed their name and want to be known as Mid-Town North.

Implementation Strategies:

- Develop neighborhood history through oral histories, videos and photos. Focus should be placed on the people, business owners and the ethnic origins of the neighborhood.
- Make physical improvements to the Hollywood and Chelsea intersection making the intersection a “Gateway” to the community. “Come Home to Hollywood” could be the theme to encourage revitalization and build pride.
- Establish a venue for arts and history along with a place to hear local gospel and blues musicians as part of the revitalization.
- Host a street festival with sponsorship from local corporations to participate in a sustained effort.

Responsibility: Midtown North Community Association will be responsible for the implementation of this recommendation.

Community Safety: Provide a safe environment for community residents and businesses.

- **Investigate and identify opportunities to enhance public improvements along major corridors in the neighborhood including**

Hollywood, Jackson, Chelsea, and Springdale Streets.

- **Keep neighborhood streets pedestrian/bike friendly and safe.**
- **Build leadership at street level to get people to know each other and look out for each other.**

Recommendation: Educate, encourage, and develop a traffic management program and adopt a policy that will allow neighborhoods and the City to work together to address the needs for pedestrian and other multi-modal transportation safety. Develop a traffic calming toolbox that will employ various forms of traffic calming and pedestrian safety devices in lieu of the current program that institutes speed humps as the means to slow traffic in neighborhoods. Traffic calming features such as curb extensions, pedestrian refuges, and higher visibility crosswalks would be ideal. Crosswalks at major intersections can be created using paving blocks, contrasting color concrete or zebra striping to highlight key crossing areas. The installation of Driver Feedback Signs could tie in with a Safe Routes To School grant application.

Background: The Midtown North Neighborhood has the potential to be a pilot project for implementing a city wide traffic management program. Pedestrian activity centers such as the Hollywood Community Center, school crossing areas, and commercial nodes at Chelsea and Hollywood offer an opportunity to provide a safer environment for pedestrians utilizing these social centers. Integrating traffic calming devices can also greatly enhance neighborhood beautification

and streetscape by providing additional greenspace and street trees. Grass medians along Jackson Avenue in the Rhodes College area have made a dramatic difference in the city streetscape of that area.

Implementation Strategies:

- Create dialogue with City Engineer to review traffic concerns near schools, public centers, and shops. Do a traffic study for major roads and identify where key pedestrian crossings should be located.
- Work with traffic engineers to design/develop “Stop for Pedestrian” crossing signs and utilize other measures such as driver feedback signs near schools.
- Host workshops on pedestrian and bike safety including what to do in dangerous situations (i.e. unleashed dogs).

Responsibility: City Engineering Office, City of Memphis Housing and Community Development, Memphis and Shelby County Office of Planning and Development, Memphis City Schools, and Mid-Town North Community Association will be responsible for this program.

Recommendation: Provide workshops between the neighborhood residents and business owners with the City Police Department to educate how the neighborhood can play a role and partner with the City Police to deter crime. Also, provide workshops between the neighborhood residents and business owners with the City/County Code Enforcement, Fire and Health Departments to educate the importance of maintaining a safe neighborhood and how to report unsafe and unsanitary conditions.

Background: Discussions with members of the community indicated a fear of reporting crime to the Police because of retaliation from the accused. Residents claim that there has been incidents in the past where calling the police has put them in a situation where they become harassed by the criminals. Citizens believe they are being identified even when they choose not to be through caller identification. They are unaware of how to make an anonymous phone call to the police.

Implementation Strategies:

- Encourage residents to become Street Leaders to help organize involvement on a street by street basis.
- Encourage business owners to become facility leaders to help organize businesses.

Responsibility: Mid-Town North Community Association, Memphis Police Department, Memphis Fire Department, Shelby County Health Department, Shelby County Code Enforcement, and City of Memphis Code Enforcement will be responsible for the implementation of this recommendation.

***Business and Economic Development:* Attract and support business and development that meet the needs of the community, that encourage employment opportunities and provide livable wages.**

- **Seek grant opportunities for façade improvements.**
- **Attract a grocery store that provides the neighborhood with healthy choices and fresh meat and produce.**

- **Encourage small business development.**
- **Encourage opportunities for a community market.**
- **Eliminate problems associated with incongruous businesses.**

Recommendation: Develop a strong working relationship with local church leaders, business owners, community organizations and city departments to foster a Business Development Committee that will provide resources, develop business portfolios, and business plans. Once a plan is developed, the committee needs to work with a local non-profit organization to apply for Strategic Community Investment Funds that will target neighborhood, economic, and community development projects or programs.

Background: Businesses in the area are mostly locally owned, with a few franchise businesses such as Walgreens, Mapco, Church's Chicken, and Kentucky Fried Chicken serving the neighborhood. Most of the local businesses have been located in the neighborhood for a long period of time, some have had a turnover in ownership such as Big Jet Supermarket. The Retail Study performed by the University of Memphis indicates that there is definitely a need for more retail to serve the neighborhood and surrounding area.

Implementation Strategies:

- Develop a working relationship with local colleges and universities that will foster and educate local businesses and entrepreneurs in how to develop a sound business plan.

- Develop a community food/grocery co-op that provides healthy alternatives and is run by the community business and residents. Encourage volunteer time to run store.
- Invite local developers to meet with residents to learn neighborhood needs.

Responsibility: Local business owners and the Mid-Town North Community Association City of Memphis Housing and Community Development, Memphis and Shelby County Office of Planning and Development, local churches, colleges and universities will be responsible for implementation of these recommendations and strategies.

Recommendation: Conduct a parking survey for the commercial node at Hollywood and Chelsea and examine configuration for on street parking in the area. Possible parking opportunities may also present themselves in vacant or underutilized land in the area.

Background: Business owners have suggested that there is a parking issue that needs to be addressed in order for this commercial node to thrive. Businesses will not move into northwest corner of Hollywood and Chelsea because there is a lack of available parking in front or behind the building.

Responsibility: Local business owners and the Mid-Town North Community Association City of Memphis Housing and Community Development, Memphis Engineering Department will be responsible for implementation of these recommendations and strategies.

Recommendation: Conduct a commercial corridor study of N. Hollywood Street between Chelsea and Winnona streets. The study should look at street enhancements and façade improvements to existing businesses. Consider making the intersection of Chelsea and Hollywood a gateway into the community.

Background: Abandoned properties along N. Hollywood and lack of adequate landscaping has made the street unattractive to those passing through the neighborhood from other parts of the City. N. Hollywood Street carries a significant amount of traffic on a daily basis that stems from accessibility onto Interstate 240.

Responsibility: City of Memphis Housing and Community Development, Memphis and Shelby County Office of Planning and Development, local business owners and the Mid-Town North Community Association will be responsible for implementation of these recommendations and strategies.

Recommendation: Once the Unified Development Code has been formally adopted a review of the zoning of commercial property along N. Hollywood Street and Chelsea Avenue needs to be revisited.

Recommendation: Change zoning of commercial area along Springdale Street that is currently zoned Single-Family Residential (between Brown and Howell Avenue) to be more conducive with the existing land use.

Background: The drafting of the Unified Development Code is still undergoing the public process while this document was being written. Proposed new zoning codes may encourage

commercial development in the area that will benefit the community and serve resident's needs.

Responsibility: Memphis and Shelby County Office of Planning and Development, local business owners and the Mid-Town North Community Association will be responsible for implementation of these recommendations and strategies.

Parks and Green Space: Explore and encourage the addition of green spaces and better utilize our existing neighborhood parks.

- **Explore opportunities to extend the V & E Green line into the neighborhood.**
- **Explore opportunities to reclaim vacant land for community gardens.**
- **Increase community and recreation services for the elderly and youth.**

Recommendation: Formalize an open space committee that will focus on working closely with the City Park Services Division, Shelby County Health Department, and local non-profits geared toward recreation and encouraging health and fitness in the community.

Background: The Midtown North neighborhood is located in a unique area of the city that can take advantage of an abandoned railroad line and the Wolf River Greenway and trail system. Unfortunately, some of the biggest challenges occur along the Wolf River where access has been limited in the past due to contamination. The former Hollywood Dump site along the river has since been cleaned-up and is no longer on the National Priority List. Fishing in the pond is still prohibited

and remains fenced in, with another study to monitor the extent of remaining contamination due in September 2010.

Implementation Strategies:

- Work with the Wolf River Conservancy to develop walking trails along the Wolf River in the study area.
- Educate and inform the public regarding the benefits of expanding the VECA line and creating other neighborhood walking trails.
- Develop an adopt-a-spot program and a good citizenship program.
- Co-op with businesses to reclaim vacant land for community gardens.

Responsibility: City Park Services Division, Shelby County Health Department, and Mid-Town North Community Association will be responsible for the implementation of this recommendation.

Housing: Ensure safe and affordable housing for all families and individuals in the neighborhood.

- **Utilize resources and develop programs to rehabilitate housing before homes become abandoned or an eyesore.**
- **Encourage developers and landlords to invest in the neighborhood and attract responsible tenants and homeowners.**
- **Develop senior housing opportunities for community style living.**

- **Pursue grant opportunities (including but not limited to Strategic Community Investment Funds).**

Recommendation: Develop a neighborhood housing committee that will host workshops regarding responsibilities of home ownership, financing opportunities, and encourage first time home buyers to invest in the neighborhood.

Background: The majority of the housing stock in the neighborhood was built prior to 1960 and requires the necessary maintenance of an older home. A high percentage of homes are renter occupied and some buildings have been neglected by the property owners to the point where they either need to be demolished or need major rehabilitation. The high incidence of poorly maintained homes has severely impacted the neighborhood and is one of the leading factors of blight.

Implementation Strategies:

- Provide learning workshops for financing from Memphis Area Legal Services, first time buyer programs and sweat equity programs.
- Develop a partnership with City of Memphis Housing and Community Development and invite them to participate in housing workshops.
- Educate public of all city/county programs available including purchases of tax lots on vacant property.
- Invite discussion with local housing developers.
- Work with Hyde Park CDC to develop housing opportunities.

- Provide an assistance program for elderly population facing a tax sale.

Responsibility: City of Memphis Housing and Community Development, City Code Enforcement, Hyde Park Community Housing Development Organization, and the Mid-Town North Community Association will be responsible for the implementation of this recommendation.