

Bolling Heights Neighborhood Assessment Report



Neighborhood Workshop: April 21, 2007

**Workshop Facilitated by:
Carolyn Vellar, Vellar Consulting
Vicki Noteis, Collins Noteis and Associates**

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Bolling Heights – A Neighborhood On The Move *“Neighbors Making a Difference”*

A Pilot Project Sponsored by the City of Gladstone MO

In 2003, a group of more than 100 volunteers known as Gladstone on the Move . . . Citizens Making a Difference spent over a year meeting and visualizing what Gladstone could and should be in 20 years. They identified six areas of concern: business and economic development, neighborhoods, civic and community center, city services, education and identity and regionalism. After much research and discussion, the end result was the creation of a strategic plan to take Gladstone into the future.

The plan recommended many improvements and stated that all neighborhoods in Gladstone should have established neighborhood groups. The plan recognized that “when neighbors agree on their own needs, they become part of the solution.” Bolling Heights is the first neighborhood to benefit from this recommendation.

In Spring 2006, Gladstone city staff held several meetings with Bolling Heights residents to discuss development and redevelopment plans for Gladstone; the age and condition of Bolling Heights housing; crime statistics, property maintenance, and property values.

Several residents volunteered to serve on a board of directors and work with a community development consultant to organize an active neighborhood association. Over the last year, there have been monthly neighborhood and board meetings; events organized to help residents get to know each other; a parade, a block party and a newsletter delivered monthly by volunteers to every home in the neighborhood.

Neighborhood leaders have established relationships with city staff and officials; publicized neighborhood events in the newspaper and neighborhood newsletter. Residents are volunteering to serve on various neighborhood committees and are involved in city processes. Several neighborhood cleanups have been held and volunteers helped twenty-six residents with property maintenance projects.

The final project for the group during its first year was to take part in a neighborhood assessment workshop to create a plan with priorities for the next five years. The following is a summary of the neighborhood assessment workshop, held on Saturday, April 21, 2007 at Gladstone City Hall.

Carolyn Vellar
Vellar Consulting
Community Development Consultant

Workshop Overview

On a beautiful sunny Saturday morning (Saturday, April 21, 2007) twenty-five residents from Bolling Heights Community Link gathered at Gladstone City Hall for a neighborhood assessment workshop. This was an excellent opportunity for residents to discuss where they lived, what they liked about where they lived and what they could do better in their neighborhood and community.

After introductions, the participants created a timeline highlighting significant events that had impacted their neighborhood over the last sixty (60) years. Then they gathered around large maps that had been placed on tables and engaged in a neighborhood mapping exercise. Using colored markers they highlighted landmarks, walking and driving paths, activity centers, edges, barriers and features in their neighborhood.

The participants reviewed crime statistics, housing sales, census data, and code violations and were encouraged by the low number of rental properties (14%) and low crime rate. Housing sales indicated that Bolling Heights is a stable neighborhood and the sale prices of homes continue to increase each year.

A review of Gladstone census data indicated that, in general, the population is aging. One of the issues that post WW II communities face is that there are residents who have lived there up to 50 years and may be selling or moving to other residences. Based upon the experience of similar Kansas City area neighborhoods, there is a concern that many of the homes could become rental. Workshop participants were encouraged to consider strategies that would attract new homebuyers and also make renters feel welcome and part of the neighborhood. They discussed ways to keep property values up, crime rates down, how to keep the neighborhood attractive so that when a house sells, the neighborhood attracts new residents who want to live in a well-kept neighborhood that is close to amenities.

Not only did the residents talk about the positive things about the area, they also noted the challenges and realized they need to be proactive and are currently involved in addressing some of the challenges.

Bolling Heights Community Link has been a pilot project for the City of Gladstone with their Neighborhood Development Initiative. Carolyn Vellar, a Neighborhood Development Consultant, was hired to assist residents in creating a strong active neighborhood association, with residents directing the future of their neighborhood in partnership with the city.

The purpose of the workshop was to help residents clarify what they want their neighborhood to be in the future and the steps they must take to have the neighborhood they envision. If the accomplishments over the last year are any indication of what can be achieved in the future, then Bolling Heights is definitely "A Neighborhood on the Move!"

PRIORITY PROJECTS

The following projects were identified by the workshop participants as important to improving their neighborhood. Projects are listed in order of importance under each category.

Neighborhood Beautification:

1. Work with city to increase bulky item collection for neighborhoods. Create volunteer base to assist residents who need help removing items.
2. Work with the city to enforce stronger code enforcement and educate residents on ordinances.
3. Create a Beautiful Backyard Program so backyards are attractive. May need to revisit codes re: sheds and create incentive program with partners.
4. Create skills list of residents so those with specific skills can assist those that need help.
5. Work with city to create more brush and leaf collection dates. Create volunteer base to assist residents who need help with brush and leaf collection.
6. Design property maintenance program with criteria to help residents who need assistance.

Create a Stronger Neighborhood Identity:

1. Build a monument sign at entrance to the neighborhood.
2. Create events to bring neighborhood together such as: block parties, parades, seasonal activities, “mobile” pub crawls, holiday lighting contest, holiday candles in windows and craft sales.
3. Design fundraising plan to fund neighborhood activities and projects.
4. Create a park/meeting place in neighborhood where people can gather for events.

Infrastructure Improvements:

1. Work with City to create plan for sidewalks and walking paths in neighborhood. Prioritize and map out key routes to schools, churches, city hall etc. Priority should be where possible versus where wanted.
2. Work with City to assess which streets should have parking on one side only so it is safer to drive and walk in neighborhood.
3. Create repair program for driveways, curbs, sidewalks and front steps.

Gladstone Development and Redevelopment:

1. Continue partnership with Gladstone’s - Neighborhood Development Initiative and be a resource to other neighborhoods as they organize.
2. Increase participation of residents at city meetings and hearings.
3. Appoint committee to work with City on codes, zoning, development and redevelopment of commercial areas around edges of neighborhood.

Bolling Heights Neighborhood Boundaries, Neighborhood Association Name, Slogan and Mission Statement

Neighborhood Boundaries:

North Oak on the West, 64th Street on the South, N. Flora on the East and 68th Street on the North.

Name of Neighborhood Association:

Bolling Heights Community Link

Neighborhood Slogan:

“Bolling Heights Community Link: A Circle of Family, Friends and Neighbors.”

Neighborhood Mission Statement (DRAFT):

To link together those living within the Bolling Heights subdivision so that they become members of a neighborhood in the true sense of the word. Members will be joined through the links of communication, beautification and safety. Helping one another to live fuller, more productive lives and advancing a plan that is ongoing and continuously evolving to fit members needs.

STEP 1: Neighborhood Landmarks, Paths, Activity Centers, Edges or Barriers:

The workshop participants gathered around large maps at their tables and used colored markers to identify those things they wanted to protect, preserve or enhance in Bolling Heights. They discussed landmarks, the walking and driving paths, activity centers, edges or barriers, and features.

Definitions:

Landmarks are significant buildings or signs.

Paths are routes people use to get places.

Activity Centers are gathering places to do some activity.

Edges or Barriers are limitations or boundaries that prevents people from enjoying the neighborhood or something in it.

Features are things people like and would like to preserve or enhance.

Results of Mapping Exercise:

Landmarks – Gladstone City Hall, Rod's Hallmark, Santerra, Oakview, Gladstone Plaza, Block Buster, Wal-Mart, Price Chopper, St. Charles, Worth's Harley Davidson, Radio Tower

Paths – Walking and driving main roads in neighborhood.

Activity Centers – Gladstone City Hall, local churches, neighborhood homes and yards

Edges or Barriers– Traffic- Cars move fairly easy through neighborhood but drive too fast “because no one is watching them.” Vehicles get lost because most streets are not through streets. Walking can be dangerous due to lack of sidewalks and cars parked on street. Bus stops located at edges of neighborhood but don't always go where we need them to go.

Features - Lots of trees and affordable homes!

Step 2: If I Could Fix Just One Thing

Every neighborhood has things that need to be fixed or changed. Sometime these issues can inhibit residents from enjoying their neighborhood, being involved in their neighborhood or doing the things they like to do.

Below is the list of “fixes” that the workshop participants said they would like to see in Bolling Heights neighborhood:

1. Neighborhood Park – need one so neighborhood can gather for events.
2. Stop cars from speeding down main roads in neighborhood.
3. Need sidewalks for safety of residents and children who walk.
4. Need more streetlights so can walk at night and feel safe.
5. Decrease the noise from motorcycles driving through the neighborhood.
6. Want more residents involved in neighborhood association.
7. Need codes changed to apply specifically to type and age of housing in Bolling Heights neighborhood.
9. Need street repairs on 66th Terrace and 67th Terrace.
10. Restrict parking to only one side of the street along 66th Terrace.
11. Better enforcement of illegally parked cars and cars without current tags.
12. Create stronger identity for Bolling Heights neighborhood with monument sign and identification on Gladstone maps.
13. Create repair program for driveways, curbs, sidewalks and front stoops.
14. Create shed repair/replacement program.

Step 3: Our Neighborhood Assets

The workshop participants identified the assets in their neighborhood and community. These assets could include people, places, groups, organizations, skills, abilities, or any thing that can add value to the neighborhood.

Community

- Great active neighbors like Winnie Estep and other residents!
- Quiet peaceful calm neighborhood
- Seeing kids playing in front and back yards
- Bolling Heights Community Link neighborhood and newsletter
- Centrally located neighborhood
- Close to highways, schools, churches, Gladstone City Hall, new community center, pool, churches and airport
- Easy access to everywhere we want to go!
- Low Crime
- A walkable community – easy to get to city hall, parks, schools and churches
- Trees! Lots of big trees!
- Well built affordable homes
- Amenities of larger city while living in a smaller community
- Low cost utilities

Government

- Gladstone government responsive to citizens
- Great programs sponsored by the city
- Good response times from Gladstone Public Safety, Fire and Ambulance
- Gladstone's assistance with organizing our neighborhood

Step 4: Making My Neighborhood Better

Bolling Heights neighbors talked about specific actions they could take to address the issues and challenges identified earlier in the assessment. They brainstormed ideas, concentrating on those actions that could be performed to improve their neighborhood. Listed below are ideas mentioned by the workshop participants.

Things we can do Ourselves:

- Post meeting signs to remind residents of community meetings
- Organize more block parties and parades
- Recruit volunteers for block captains and other projects
- Create stronger partnerships with city and other Gladstone neighborhoods
- Continue monthly newsletter, welcome baskets, current and seasonal neighborhood activities
- Promote name of Boling Heights as an active leader in Gladstone development and growth
- Create committees to focus on codes, development, neighborhood advocacy, and other outreach activities
- Create resident skills list
- Create list of who needs help
- Create neighborhood directory
- Communicate neighborhood priorities to City Hall
- Meet with each household to increase participation in neighborhood

Things we can do with a Partner:

- Create a Bolling Heights “Back Yard Beautification Program”
- Establish a Door Prize Program with Local Businesses
- Design and construct a Bolling Heights monument entrance sign
- Organize meetings with realtors who have homes for sales in neighborhood
- Create program for replacement/repair of curbs, driveways, sidewalks to door and front step replacement
- Create program that teaches children about walking and biking safety
- Increase volunteer base for Bolling Heights projects by recruiting nonprofits, Churches, schools and others

Things we think the City should do:

- Establish additional bulky item pickup dates
- Review how and when street maintenance is performed in city/neighborhood
- Replace light bulbs in streetlights and add more streetlights in neighborhood
- Review code enforcement ordinances as they pertain to age and type of housing in Bolling Heights
- Build sidewalks or walking paths in neighborhood
- Sponsor more Gladstone Beautification days
- Put info about Bolling Heights neighborhood on Channel 2 and city website

Neighborhood Assessment Participants:

Ken Barrows
Jim Clark
James Donelson
Winnie Estep
Frank Gabel
Mike Knuff
Paul Mabrex
Jerrie McGovern
Carolyn Meyer
Ron Murphy
Alan Napoli
Chris Reeves
Debbie Roberts
Jack Roberts
Jeanine Sifers
Harold Snapp
Norma Snapp
Diana Snyder
Ginger Stone
Jim Tierney
Joan Tierney
+4 others who did not sign in

Getting Involved:

For information about the Bolling Heights Community Link, contact Carolyn Meyer, President at (816) 436-1108.

For information about how to organize your neighborhood, contact Sgt. Richard King, Gladstone Public Safety at (816) 436-2200.

For information about neighborhood assessment process, contact Carolyn Vellar, Vellar Consulting at 816-830-9124.

Acknowledgements:

Thank you to the City of Gladstone for the donation of meeting space, refreshments and materials used during the neighborhood assessment workshop. Thank you to Sgt. Richard King and Alan Napoli for planning assistance, Carolyn Meyer and Joan Tierney for information used during the workshop.

Information About to Gladstone & Bolling Heights

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Gladstone Crime Stats 2001-2006

Crime	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Homicide	0	0	0	0	0	0
Robbery	4	8	7	12	11	21
Robbery Strong Arm	8	10	18	12	6	6
Burglary-Residence	107	75	126	103	79	86
Burglary-Non-Residence	23	36	48	28	37	34
Larceny - Felony	156	136	155	172	141	137
Larceny-Misdemeanor	513	419	387	500	501	403
Auto Theft	100	91	97	117	99	93
Rape	2	12	3	4	1	4
Assault-Common	232	262	252	277	239	176
Assault-Aggravated	37	14	25	40	38	33
Fraud	50	43	50	73	76	105
Forgery	157	94	81	75	68	35
Arson	10	8	9	6	1	1
Arrests	2026	1967	2030	2149	1841	1817

Gladstone and Bolling Heights - Crime Trends and Statistics

Crime is a transient problem that comes and goes with people as they move through an area. At the same time, crime becomes relative to the overall care and upkeep of the community. As people change, property changes and when property is not kept up, it becomes an apathetic target for crime of all types. While the numbers of specific incidents vary from year to year there are a number of constants.

It is often difficult to label a community or neighborhood as being over run by a specific crime. Suffice to say the most prevalent crime issues facing Bolling Heights are very similar to what is seen throughout Gladstone and the Northland.

It appears that, minus a detailed review of each **Bolling Heights** address, the most common concerns are for stealing (also referred to as larceny). The majority of these events is misdemeanor in nature (under \$750.00 in loss value) and involves theft from auto, sometimes an open garage and even from the yard. It is difficult to explain why the drop in this event is prevalent since 2001, but I would like to think that is because citizens are calling the police more frequently when they see something out of place or suspicious and that there is a greater police presence in the neighborhoods.

I know the department does try to have directed patrol assignments based on perceived patterns of crime in a specific neighborhood or area. While there have been some burglaries in **Bolling Heights** neighborhood, the most prevalent issue is the stealing/larceny from auto. Much of this can be corrected by parking in the driveway or garage, getting the vehicle off of the street and not leaving valuables in plain sight in the vehicle. That is an invitation to theft!

Probably the next highest area of concern is domestic violence. There is those days that this type of police call dominates the officer's time. A great deal of these calls result in a common assault, which generates an arrest.

A common assault is anything from the simple push and shove to striking a person with your fist, hitting someone with another object or instrument, etc. This is an education piece and one that needs to be addressed. People need to find better ways to handle or deal with their problems or differences without becoming physical, let alone abusive.

The next area of concern for **Bolling Heights** deals with disorderly conduct. We make a number of calls into the neighborhood for noise complaints, loud parties, unruly behavior, and things of that nature. This really amounts to a true lack of respect for your neighbors when the police must be called because a person can't control their noise levels. It is okay to have fun, but lets keep it to a dull roar. If you can hear it outside your house it is too loud and yes, if you can hear the stereo in a passing car, it is too loud and in violation of city ordinances.

There have been felony larceny cases (loss value exceeds \$750.00) as well as cars stolen and burglaries committed. If the people who live in an area fail to maintain their property it leads to a perception that no one really cares. When a neighborhood begins to look that way, the transient crime problem begins to identify with that area and believes it to be “easy pickings”. Even for the more prevalent crime concerns that we have for the neighborhood, if we keep the neighborhood up, maintain the property and show our pride there is less likelihood that we will have as large a problem as we do.

Robbery refers to the act of stealing that, which belongs to another. Specifically, stealing money or merchandise with the threat of a weapon. A portion of this increase is related to the number of armed robberies that have occurred at payday loan outlets in the city. With several of these throughout the community they become easy targets. As a result there has been an increase in this type of crime.

Strong Arm Robbery makes reference to the same style of stealing without the use of a weapon, rather the use of physical force. Purse snatching fall into this category and we have had some of those over the last few years. This category also includes shoplifting when the subject becomes confrontational with employees who are trying to stop the theft.

I think we established what common assault is already and aggravated assault implies that a weapon was used or there was serious bodily harm or injury as a result of the assault.

Fraud and Forgery are two crimes that go hand in hand with identity theft. Forgeries more specifically refer to forging a document, a signature, a prescription and things of that nature. Why those are specifically down is hard to measure and to actually put a reason to. Fraud has increased because of identity theft, counterfeit bank drafts, checks, money orders - all things made simple with computers, the right software and paper.

These two crimes simply tell us that we must protect our personal information. Shred credit card offers, shred old bills and checks that we are disposing of and take our mail to the post office to send out. People will actually drive by and steal your outgoing mail, take the checks you are sending to your creditors, chemically wash them and change the payee line, the amount and then cash them with your signature on them. This is not uncommon and runs in cycles that are unpredictable.

Sgt. Richard King
Gladstone Public Safety
816-436-2200

Most Common Code Violations in Gladstone

Weeds

Accessory Structures

Motor Vehicles

Parking surfaces

Vehicles for Sale

Accumulated Rubbish and Garbage

Storage of Rubbish and Garbage

Prohibited Signs

Bolling Heights Home Sales Information 1-1-04 to 1-1-07

63 homes sold in Bolling Heights over last three years.

Average sales price-\$103,647.

Homes sold for asking price – 12

Homes sold for **less than asking price - 33**

- \$4000 to - \$7000 10 homes
- \$2000 to - \$4000 12 homes
- \$0 to - \$2000 11 homes

Homes sold for **more than asking price - 18**

0 to + \$3000 14 homes
+ \$4000 to + \$5000 2 homes
+ \$5000 to + \$8000 2 homes

Days on Market

1 - 40 days – 34 homes
41 - 80 days – 20 homes
81-120 days – 5 homes
121-180 days – 4 homes

<u>2004</u> – 22 homes were sold	average sales price was \$100,739
<u>2005</u> – 24 homes were sold	average sales price was \$103,004
<u>2006</u> – 17 homes were sold	average sales price was \$107,197

Lowest priced home sold:

\$65,000, which was \$5000 **less** than asking price.

Sold in 5 days. No basement, 1 bath, 3 bedrooms and a garage

Highest priced home sold:

\$137,450, which was \$7500 **more** than asking price.

Sold in 14 days. Basement, 2 baths, 3 bedrooms and a garage.

Type of Financing

FHA – 12 homes
Conventional – 42 homes
Cash – 4 homes
VA – 5 homes

**Gladstone:
Current and Future Development and
Redevelopment Projects**

Municipal Swimming Pool

Gladstone Community Center/Natatorium

Gladstone Plaza redevelopment

Downtown Village Center

Tower Plaza

57 Antioch

4 Apartment Complexes – rehabbed inside and out with Chapter 42 tax credits

Santerra – retirement patio homes

Several housing developments

Bolling Heights Community Link A Year of Success!

In early 2006, Gladstone city staff held several meetings with Bolling Heights residents to discuss property maintenance, code enforcement, crime and safety issues in their neighborhood. Staff encouraged residents to participate in a pilot project to improve their neighborhood by working with a community development consultant to organize a neighborhood association. In July 2006, several residents volunteered to serve on the first neighborhood board and since then – so much has been accomplished since then!

1. “Bolling Heights Community Link” was chosen as the official name of the new neighborhood association.
2. Residents volunteered to serve on five different committees: Newsletter Committee, Beautification Committee, History Committee, Special Projects Committee, Block Watch and Safety Committee.
3. Bylaws for the association were written and approved by the board and neighborhood and a bank account was opened at Lawson Bank.
4. There have been monthly board meetings (12); the Association held nine (10) meetings and committee’s have met numerous times.
5. Volunteers deliver monthly newsletter (written by Chris Reeves, Secretary of the Association) to every household (all 400 of them!)
6. A Bolling Heights Resource Guide is being researched, designed and will be published by the Special Projects Committee this spring.
7. Four residents are participating in Gladstone’s Future Leader’s Academy.
8. The Beautification Committee designed a program to increase resident participation in Gladstone’s Beautification Days. Volunteers helped over 30 residents with property maintenance issues – donating over 130 hours of work!
9. In December, the Special Projects Committee sponsored a holiday decorating contest and awarded three homes for outstanding holiday decorations. This year they will be awarding four homes for curb appeal, maintenance, and appearance.
10. Welcome New Neighbor baskets were designed and delivered to over thirty (30) new residents by the Special Projects Committee.

11. **Bolling Heights neighbors participated in the “1st Annual Bolling Heights Halloween Parade and Bake Sale”; awards were given for best costumes and the bake sale raised funds for neighborhood projects.**
12. **Residents donated funding to pay for twelve block watch signs that are now posted throughout the neighborhood, thanks to the hard work of the Block Watch and Safety Committee!**
13. **The History Committee has been researching Bolling Heights history and will be publishing the results this fall.**
14. **Official board elections were held in February 2007 with several new volunteers serving on the board. Each committee is busy making plans for the coming year!**
15. **Residents have become better educated on property maintenance issues and code violations. A committee of the board is working with the city to review current codes.**
16. **Twenty-five (25) residents participated in a half-day neighborhood assessment workshop on April 21st, which are creating a plan to guide the neighborhood for the next five years.**
17. **A year ago, residents who have lived in the neighborhood for over 50 years and did not know each other – are now friends and share a common bond - a love for their neighborhood and community!**

**Carolyn Vellar
Vellar Consulting
Community Development Consultant
For Bolling Heights Neighborhood
City of Gladstone**