

## FRIENDS OF 10TH STREET

### Survey Report and Recommendations

In the fall of 2007, Friends of 10th Street asked the Commission on Children and Youth for assistance in developing and implementing a plan of action and an organizational structure to assist the Coalition in meeting needs in this area.

#### **Survey**

The Commission responded favorably, and with assistance and guidance from the Friends of 10th Street executive committee, Commission personnel Brandy Smith and Gary Theilen carried out a survey with two components;

**A. Key Informant Survey** - The Key Informant Survey was used as a tool for developing consensus about priority needs and actions which should be taken. A wide range of leaders were given an opportunity to talk in depth about what they see as the major problems facing this community as well as their views on possible solutions. Leaders were asked the following three questions:

1. What do you see as the most important needs and problems in this community?
2. What do you see as the solutions to these problems?
3. If we are to succeed in dealing with these problems, who should be involved?

**B. Collateral Interviews** - As we identified needs and problems, we began contacting organizations with expertise and resources which might be used in solving these problems.

#### **Key Informant Interviews Conducted**

We have conducted a total of 21 Key Informant interviews with persons who are in leadership roles in this community. Leaders interviewed include:

- business leaders (4)
- city officials (2)
- neighborhood association leader (1)
- law enforcement officials at the Hefner Division (2)
- DHS administrator and staff, 10th Street office (2)
- faith-based leader (1)
- OSU/OKC (1)
- Francis Tuttle Vo-Tech, Reno Branch (1)
- ROC (1)
- apartment complex owner (1)
- Oklahoma City County Health Department administrator, 10th Street (1)
- Lions Club staff (1)
- local school administrators and staff (3)
- Community Action staff, northwestern office (1)

## **Collateral Interviews Conducted**

We have conducted 9 collateral interviews with agencies which might have resources to help solve some of the problems identified. These include:

- Neighborhood Alliance
- Action Center for Oklahoma City
- Oklahoma City Transit Authority
- Oklahoma City Housing Authority
- Oklahoma Health Care Authority
- Oklahoma City Foundation
- Metropolitan YMCA
- Youth and Family Services of Oklahoma County
- Community Action agency, Oklahoma County office

In addition, *many of the leaders listed under Key Informants above, had resources which could also be employed in solving problems.*

We asked the City Planning Department to develop a set of maps which will help Friends of 10th Street understand the way the area is currently organized and serviced. These maps include:

- school attendance areas
- apartment developments
- transportation routes
- parks and recreational facilities
- city wards

These maps and narrative information describing them are in Appendix A

### **I. Needs and Problems Identified through the Key Informant Survey**

The 21 respondents gave multiple responses to the question “what do you see as the most important problems and needs facing families and children in this area?” These responses, grouped in categories, are listed below in order of frequency:

#### **Safety and Security**- 15 responses

Problems listed in this category include:

- Crime
- Violence in apartments
- Lack of respect for property
- Danger to parents and students of college
- Prostitution
- Vagrancy
- "Seedy bars"
- Theft
- Gang activity
- Failure to enforce Section 8 Housing requirements

**Education and Family Support**- 13 responses

Listed in this category include:

- School failure and dropout
- Early childhood education
- School-based support services including counseling and nursing
- Parenting skills
- Single parents with insufficient resources for children
- Health services
- Language barriers in education
- Character development
- Dental services

**Low Standard of Living**- 13 responses

Problems in this category include (particularly among apartment residents):

- Hunger
- No furniture
- Frequent moves due to insufficient income
- No place for children to play
- Not enough income to pay bills
- Job loss
- Can't afford decent housing

**Beautification and Infrastructure Development**- 13 responses

Problems in this category include:

- Lighting
- Beautification
- Clean-up
- Develop sense of community
- Disconnect between residents and businesses
- No longer a positive "destination"

**Lack of Youth Recreation and Outreach Services**- 6 responses

Needs listed in this category include:

- Community center with supervised or structured activities
- Outreach to youth
- After-school programs

**Transportation**- 5 responses

- A demand-responsive system is needed to link residents to Vo-Tech, employment, medical care and child care.

## **II. Possible Solutions- Programs and/or Policies Solving Problems Needs**

The solutions listed below were suggested either by Key Informants or through Collateral Interviews with persons having resources or expertise in the areas identified.

The problems and need categories have been organized into three areas for action because:

1. The need areas are highly interrelated.
2. Subsequently in the report, we will be recommending formation of task groups and it is more feasible to operate three groups than six.

### **Safety and Security**

The highest priority need identified by 10th Street leaders is to **develop a community environment which is safe for residents, businesses and visitors to conduct their daily lives-** to rest, work, play, go to school and conduct business. Safety and security to the 10th Street area will not be achieved by a single-facet approach, but rather will require a comprehensive strategy. First and foremost, it will require follow-through from leaders within the community and from the City of Oklahoma City. It will require active participation and close collaboration among residents, businesses, apartment owners, schools, law-enforcement agencies, social agencies, churches and civic organizations. The following are some specific recommendations:

#### **1. Developing a comprehensive plan for a creating a physical environment that is conducive to safety.**

Many improvements are envisioned in this initiative. These include:

- a.) Lighting- eliminating "hiding places for crime" by making sure streets, parking lots, playgrounds, apartments and businesses are well lighted.
- b.) Eliminating physical barriers which hide criminal activities from observation, whether these barriers are in public places or in apartment developments.
- c.) Increase respect for property, discourage vandalism by immediate removal of graffiti, repairs of broken windows, removal of junk cars, and effective enforcement of codes and laws governing property violations.

Creation implementation of this plan will require collaborative action on the part of the City of Oklahoma City, local businesses, apartment owners and residents.

#### **2. Establish a Weed and Seed Program.**

The Weed and Seed Program has a proven record for reducing crime rates in Oklahoma City. This approach combines community policing with preventive services to youth and families. The community policing component of this program involves increasing police presence in the area. "Highly visible" police manpower is added in areas of the community which are identified as trouble spots. Officers frequently have a beat and develop problem-solving relationships with residents, apartment owners and businesses. They take action to enforce laws in areas which have lacked adequate enforcement. As a part of this effort, Weed and Seed officers with agreement from apartment owners can provide surveillance in selected apartment developments. The preventive aspects of this program

involve taking the lead in establishing activities which engage "at-risk" youth in positive recreational and educational activities, such as a Police Athletic League. The Director of the Oklahoma City Weed and Seed program states that the 10th Street area is a logical candidate for the program. He suggests the following approach for establishing a Weed and Seed program in the area;

- a.) Develop a "mini" Weed and Seed program by July 1, 2008. This would involve increasing police visibility and surveillance in a limited number of priority trouble spots. The mini program could cost as little as \$50,000, and be funded through a combination of sources including foundations, individual contributions and public agency support.
- b.) Propose development of a fully-funded Weed and Seed program to the Weed and Seed Advisory Committee at its March meeting. Gathering supporting statistical information and developing a strategy could be accomplished during the balance of 2008. A fully-developed proposal would be provided to the Advisory Committee for funding in March of 2009. If funded, the full program would begin July 1, 2009.

### **3. Dealing with problem apartment and trailer park properties.**

There are some apartment complexes, trailer parks and businesses which are a continuing problem for the 10th Street area, because they house, accommodate, and/or don't deal with drug dealers, prostitutes and other criminals. These properties should be identified and dealt with through a variety of strategies.

- a.) Reports of violations to Action (City of Oklahoma City) and/or the police department. Frequent and timely reports of this nature strengthen code enforcement.
- b.) Police department warnings and offers to assist apartment owners in voluntary compliance.
- c.) Use of Nuisance Abatement ordinance to close non-compliant properties down and exploring the possibility of ways to provide or establish limited safety improvement funding to area businesses and organizations.
- d.) Where desirable and feasible, purchase of problem properties by non-profit groups or public entities. ROC has indicated interest in purchasing apartment development(s). The Public Housing Authority has also indicated interest in this possibility, and has purchased such a development elsewhere in Oklahoma City.

### **4. Operation of Neighborhood Watch and voluntary patrols.**

In neighborhoods which currently enjoy a reasonable amount of security, operating Neighborhood Watch and voluntary patrol programs to prevent increases in crime is recommended. The Neighborhood Alliance indicates that it has supported operation of these programs and will provide support and assistance to groups in development of these systems.

### **5. Prevention through economic opportunity.**

Creation of employment and educational opportunities for youth and adults can help prevent crime. Friends of 10th Street should work closely with the local Workforce Investment Agency take advantage of special programs, including establishing a summer work and training program for youth, which can address these objectives.

### **6. Create a Friends of 10th Street Security Network.**

This network would link major providers of security services including: ( City Police Department, County Sheriff's Department, public schools, apartment owners, business owners, and neighborhood associations.) for the purpose of sharing information and development joint strategies for dealing with a wide range of security requirements:

- a. In-home security, including domestic violence services
- b. Apartment security
- c. School security
- d. Business security
- e. Security in public places

### **Education, Family Support Services and Employment**

This category of proposed solutions will deal with need areas listed above, including Education and Family Support, Low Standard of Living, Transportation, and Outreach Services for Youth.

Many families in the 10th Street area face the challenges of parenthood with limited income, education, parenting skills, recreational opportunities for themselves and their children, along with poor housing and inadequate transportation. They also have limited access to professional counseling and health services. Lacking also for many is participation in vocational programs which can enhance skills and increase income. External threats (crime and violence) add to already difficult situations.

The following are some proposed means for providing families support in dealing with these many demands:

#### **1. Expanding School Based Services.**

Schools provide an excellent place for providing support for families. Frequently children are having difficulty at school due to physical, emotional and economic problems. Professional counselors and school nurses can work as a team with teachers and administrators to assist families with dealing with these issues. Other agencies which provide these services can "out-station" them within the schools. For example: Youth and Family Services of Oklahoma County could place a licensed professional counselor in an elementary school in the area. Medicaid funds could pay a major portion of the cost for these services. Partnerships between public school systems, and the Department of Human Services could provide school social workers. We are recommending the Friends of 10th Street work closely with school districts in the area to develop comprehensive and coordinated school-based services.

## **2. Increasing income for adults through participation in Vo-Tech and OSU/OKC University programs.**

The hope and reality of greater income for families can be aided by participation in adult education programs. The following is proposed:

a.) OSU/OKC and the Reno Branch of the Francis Tuttle Vo-Tech program should do joint planning with agencies associated with Friends of 10th Street to facilitate linkage of adults who wish to improve their education. This could include ROC, DHS, and public schools. This partnership could address- kinds of education adults would utilize, payment for educational services, transportation and child care, and strategies for encouraging participation.

## **3. Early Childhood Services.**

Quality Early Childhood Services can greatly enhance the likelihood of success in school and prevention of illness. The Oklahoma City Community Action Agency Director has indicated a willingness to consider a collaborative effort for delivering Head Start and Pre-K educational services in conjunction with a local school system. The public school systems in this area should explore possible after-school contractual relationships with non-profit providers such as the Metropolitan YMCA for offering these services to children in the area. DHS funds can be utilized in these initiatives. In addition, application can be made to the Department of Education for Parents As Teachers funds.

Friends of 10th Street should also pursue development of an Educare Program with Western Heights School District. The Superintendent of that district has indicated an interest in such a collaborative effort. This is a comprehensive program that integrates child development, parent education, and health services.

## **4. Youth Outreach and After-School Programs.**

Supervised programs after school and in park facilities are greatly needed. A consortium made up of City of Oklahoma City, public schools, YMCA, and faith-based organizations could plan and implement these programs. The City could increase investment in staff for the recreation center at Greenville. The YMCA could request United Way funds to expand its outreach program for youth in the area. DHS funds could also be used to help pay for after-school programs. Faith-based groups could provide components of a total community program.

## **5. Transportation.**

Demand-responsive transportation programs should be developed and funded as part of other initiatives. For example: under the section above dealing with adult participation in Vo-Tech college programs, funding for transportation could be provided as part of the total cost of delivering these services.

## **Beautification**

This category includes two kinds of infrastructure that are important for solving problems identified through the survey.

**A. Physical Infrastructure-** to beautify and provide safety to the businesses and residents of the 10th Street area, and to make it a positive destination to persons outside the area. This includes lights, streets, medians, and related improvements.

**1. Comprehensive beautification and infrastructure planning.**

In the area of physical infrastructure, Friends of 10th Street should organize a collaborative initiative with partners including OSU/OKC Landscaping Program, the Neighborhood Alliance, Oklahoma City Foundation, and businesses within the area, to carry out a comprehensive assessment of beautification needed to complement improvement which will be made through the recently passes bond issue. Following that assessment specific projects should be identified which fit eligibility requirements of various foundation grants available. The Neighborhood Alliance recommends that several neighborhood associations develop complementary grants that fit requirements and limitations of these foundations and submit them simultaneously. Apartment and business owners would also be encouraged to plan improvements to their properties which could integrate into a total comprehensive community effort.

**B. Organizational Infrastructure** - this includes efforts to strengthen Friends of 10th Street as a vehicle for community building. Also included are organized clean-up campaigns and other activities which link residents and businesses together to achieve common goals.

**1. Community Building and Beautification Events.**

Friends of 10th Street should continue and expand successful programs such as clean-up days, community carnivals, and other activities which encourage positive connection of residents with each other, and with business owners of the area.

**III. Proposed Organization Structure for Friends of 10th Street**

Leaders of the Friends of 10th Street have shown broad concern and willingness to act to solve problems that face residents and businesses in the community. The problems, however, are both large and difficult, and will require sustained effort over time. To accomplish this, Friends of 10th Street needs an effective organizational structure. The following is a proposal for accomplishing this.

**1. Incorporation.**

Discussion with Neighborhood Alliance officials points to the benefits of incorporation. Incorporation with the State of Oklahoma can aid in securing Neighborhood Development grants, and in providing liability protection for board members. This is a simple and relatively inexpensive process (as contrasted with becoming a 501 C 3.) One requirement for becoming incorporated is the development of bylaws for the organization.



## 2. Board of Directors.

It is proposed the Friends of 10th Street develop a Board of Directors to conduct business for the association.

**a.) Membership.** The Board would have a limited membership of perhaps 12 to 18 persons, and include neighborhood leaders, business leaders, political leaders, and agency representatives. Board meetings would be open, and anyone with an interest in 10th Street issues could attend.

**b.) Board Task Forces and Committees.** The Board would establish Task Forces to address the three major issue areas listed above:

- **Safety and Security,**
- **Education, Family Support Services and Employment, and**
- **Beautification**

Task Force membership would be appointed by the Board Chairman, and include Board members and non-members. Task Force members should include persons with direct knowledge of the problem, persons with technical expertise, and persons who can influence decisions vital to the Task Force's work. Task Forces will be responsible for analyzing problems, identifying resources and policy changes needed, and developing proposals and recommended courses of action to the Board of Directors.

**c.) Staffing Task Forces.** The Board will assist Task Forces in securing staff support for their activities. Staff persons will:

- remind members of meetings
- write brief minutes of each meeting
- follow up with persons accepting responsibility for work between meetings

**d.) Permanent Committees.** Initially, only a Nominating Committee is recommended. This committee would:

- recommend members for the Board of Directors, and persons to fill vacancies in the Board
- recommend officers for election at the annual meeting

**e.) Meetings.** The Board would meet on a monthly basis; meetings would be limited in duration with an agenda to be set at the beginning of the meeting. In most instances, the meeting would not exceed one hour to one hour and 15 minutes. There would be time limits established for each agenda item. Meetings would include:

- reports of progress on decisions made at previous meetings
- decisions on recommendations from Task Forces and committees
- brainstorming on new issues
- agreement on responsibility for implementing decisions

**f.) Annual Meeting.** The Board would hold an Annual Meeting to elect members and officers, and to give awards to residents, businesses, governmental, agency, and community leaders who have made contributions toward improving the community

## Appendix A

### Map Summary

The following is a map summary of the NW 10<sup>th</sup> Street area that we have been asked to look at. The parameter of the area that was studied is Melrose to 16<sup>th</sup> from 1-44 to Lake Overholser and is show on the maps included in this report:

- 1) Map A shows the area by Wards. As you may note, part of the area is in Ward 1, under Commissioner Johnson. Most of the area, however, is in Ward 3, under Commissioner McAtee.
- 2) This area is also served by (3) elementary schools, which are shown in Map B:
  - Greenvale Elementary in the Western Heights School District
  - Council Grove Elementary in the Western Heights School District
  - Appollo Elementary in the Putnam City School District
  - The Oklahoma City School District is the east of Meridian and Portland, while the Bethany School District is north of NW 10<sup>th</sup> between MacArthur and Council
- 3) The NW 10<sup>th</sup> Street area has a high concentration of multi-family dwellings, including apartments and mobile home parks. Map C highlights all the multi-family dwellings; high concentration is noted in the following areas:
  - 12 units approximately on the square mile between NW 10<sup>th</sup> and Melrose, and between Rockwell and Council
  - 11 units approximately on the square mile between NW 10<sup>th</sup> and NW 16<sup>th</sup>, and between MacArthur and Rockwell
  - 9 units approximately on the square mile between NW 16<sup>th</sup> and NW 23<sup>rd</sup>, and between Meridian and MacArthur
- 4) Map D shows all of the public parks in the area:
  - There are approximately 9 public parks located in Ward 3
  - Melrose Park houses the Boys and Girls Club program and is located on the same block as Greenvale and Council Grove Elementary Schools
- 5) Ward 3 contains several public transit routes, as shown on Map E, including:
  - Route 23
  - Route 9
  - Route 38
  - Orange Trolley