

# Planning Commission Staff Report

July 18, 2019



**Case No: 18NEIGHPLAN1007 & 18NEIGHPLAN1008**  
**Project Name: Vision Russell Neighborhood Plan**  
**Applicant: Louisville Metro**  
**Jurisdiction: Louisville Metro**  
**Council District: 4 (Barbara Sexton Smith)**  
**Case Manager: Kendal Baker, AICP, Neighborhood Planning Manager**

## REQUEST

- Review and Approval of Vision Russell Neighborhood Plan
- Executive Summary of Plan to be Amendment to Plan 2040

## **CASE SUMMARY**

### Background

On January 16, 2015 the Louisville Metro Housing Authority (LMHA) was awarded a Choice Neighborhoods Initiative planning grant for the Russell Neighborhood. LMHA, Louisville Metro Government, and its Choice Neighborhood partners worked diligently for two years to complete a Transformation Plan for Russell and that was submitted to, and approved by, HUD. The Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) is a HUD-funded grant program that began in 2010, and replaced the HOPE VI Revitalization program. The 2-tiered grant program awards both Planning and Implementation grants.

The Choice Neighborhoods Initiative program has three broad goals:

- 1) To transform distressed public and assisted housing like Beecher Terrace, into energy efficient, mixed-income housing that is physically and financially viable over the long term;
- 2) To support positive outcomes for families who live in the target development and surrounding neighborhood;
- 3) To transform high poverty and/or distressed communities into viable, mixed-income neighborhoods with access to well-functioning services, high quality schools and early learning programs and services, public assets and transportation and improved access to jobs.

### Planning Grant Goals

The goals of the Choice Neighborhood planning grant are to develop a community-endorsed, implementable, and financially feasible Transformation Plan to:

- Transform Russell into a neighborhood of opportunity and choice
- Revitalize Beecher Terrace as part of an overall plan for improving the Russell Neighborhood
- Attract investments to the Russell Neighborhood to improve quality of life for all residents

## **Russell Neighborhood**

Russell was one of Louisville's earliest and most desirable neighborhoods, a racially diverse area with a range of housing types from elegant mansions to shotgun cottages. Beginning before the devastating floods of 1937 and 1945, many white residents moved out of Russell to higher ground away from the river. By the 1940s, Russell was known as "Louisville Harlem" for its strong African American business presence along Walnut Street (today Muhammad Ali Boulevard) between 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Streets. Theaters, restaurants, grocers, professional offices, and nightclubs thrived in this area. Neighborhood decline began after World War II and intensified during misguided urban renewal efforts in the 1960s that demolished the commercial area along Walnut Street. Beecher Terrace was built in 1941 replacing seven traditional neighborhood blocks, including four along Walnut Street, with large "superblock" public housing.

Russell, with a population of nearly 4,000 households, is one of nine neighborhoods that make up West Louisville. The Russell neighborhood is 1.4 square miles and is situated immediately west of downtown. It is bounded by Market Street on the north; 9<sup>th</sup> Street on the west; Broadway on the south; and I-264 on the east. The Russell neighborhood has 9,590 residents which represents approximately 15% of the total West Louisville population.

Russell residents are predominantly Black (91%); most Russell households have children (41%) and the population tends to be younger (median age of 28.5 vs. 37.0 for all of Louisville). The poverty rate among households is 3.5 times higher than the general Louisville population (60% for Russell vs. 17% for all of Louisville). The median household income for Russell is \$14,209 (\$44,159 for all of Louisville) and the unemployment rate is 30% vs. 17% for Louisville.

There are four public schools in Russell: Byck Elementary, Coleridge-Taylor Elementary, Roosevelt Perry Elementary and Central High School. Collectively, they enroll 29% of Russell's 2334 school-aged children. The remainder are bussed to 122 additional schools; the school with highest enrollment of Russell children are: Ballard High School; Eastern High School; Crosby Middle School; and Highland Middle School.

## **Advisory Groups and Community Participation Process**

The planning process sought to build strong relationships with community members and stakeholders in order to develop and sustain long-term, productive partnerships committed to implementing the programs presented in this Transformation Plan. Considerable effort was made to ensure that residents and community stakeholders had multiple opportunities to engage in the planning process as well as to expand their capacity for sustained engagement over time. More than 600 individual Russell residents, stakeholders, and community members have participated in at least one Vision Russell activity; additionally, 544 of Beecher Terrace households completed a one-on-one resident survey and 532 neighborhood households and stakeholders completed a neighborhood survey, and the planning team conducted a total of 81 meetings during a two-year planning process.

## **Vision Russell Neighborhood Plan Vision Statement**

*Attractive, accessible and culturally-vibrant, Russell is recognized for its diversity, multitude of economic, educational and housing opportunities, and sustainable residential and business environment – all of it rooted in Russell's unique history as the heart of Louisville's African American community.*

*Creativity, innovation, and sustainable investments are welcome here, making Russell and appealing place to live, work, worship and celebrate.*

## **NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES**

The Vision Russell Transformation Plan contains four broad components:

- **People:** Plans to improve community and supportive services that are delivered to youth and their families.
- **Education:** Plans to improve children's ability to succeed in school and to find occupations where they will thrive financially.
- **Housing:** Plans to transform distressed public and assisted housing and create high-quality, energy-efficient, mixed-income housing that responds to the needs of the neighborhood.
- **Neighborhood:** Plans to create the conditions necessary for public and private reinvestment in Russell that will offer the kinds of amenities and assets, including safety, good schools, and commercial activities, that are important to families' choices about their community.

A coordinated set of goals and strategies were developed during the planning process. These strategies are aligned with projects already underway, recently completed or in the pipeline. These priorities emerged from the work of the community and task forces and they are driven by needs that have been expressed, and tempered by market reality, timeline and financial capacity.

Below is a summary of the Russell Transformation Plan priorities and goals:

### **Priority A Improve education outcomes for children.**

- Goal A.1 Russell children enter kindergarten ready to learn
- Goal A.2 Russell school age children are proficient in core academic subjects, and graduate high school college- or career-ready.

### **Priority B Improve health and safety.**

- Goal B.1 Residents enjoy good health and a strong sense of well-being.
- Goal B.2 Russell's built environment supports health and safety.

### **Priority C Create strong retail/service centers and expand economic opportunity for all.**

- Goal C.1 Russell residents are financially secure.
- Goal C.2 Existing Russell businesses are encouraged to stay and grow, and new commercial activities are drawn to the area to further stimulate growth.

### **Priority D Increase the availability of high-quality, mixed-income housing.**

- Goal D.1 Beecher Terrace replacement housing is located in vibrant, sustainable, mixed-income communities that serves as catalysts for new investment.
- Goal D.2 Russell offers a variety of high-quality, affordable, and market-rate homeownership and rental housing opportunities.

### **Priority E Improve community connectivity.**

- Goal E.1 Russell residents are engaged in their community, civic life, and connected to resources.
- Goal E.2 Residents have safe and convenient multi-modal transportation options to access services, amenities, and jobs.\

Goal E.3 Russell residents have the skills, tools, and ability to access and use modern technology and the internet.

The plan outlines objectives to further define the above goals. Specific strategies are presented to implement each objective, including metrics, lead agency, timeframe and leverage resources.

### **Executive Summary**

Consistent with the format of all neighborhood/small area plans (and as required in Chapter 161, the Neighborhood Plan Ordinance), the executive summary includes the vision statement for the Russell Neighborhood Plan and the recommendations from the plan specifically related to Plan 2040 and the Land Development Code. (Executive Summary document is attached.)

### **Staff Findings – Plan 2040**

The Russell Plan is in conformance with the Plan 2040 comprehensive plan. More specifically, the recommendations support the following goals, objectives and policies of the comprehensive plan:

#### **Community Form Goal 1 Community Form**

The proposed recommendations in the Plan guide the form and design of development to be responsive to the distinctive physical, historic and cultural qualities of Russell.

#### **Community Form Goal 4 Authenticity**

The Plan promotes historic resources that contribute to neighborhood authenticity.

#### **Community Form Goal 5 Art and Creativity**

The Plan encourages the integration of art in public spaces in Russell.

#### **Mobility Goal 2 Safe, Accessible and Efficient Transportation**

The Plan promotes a safe, accessible and efficient transportation system in Russell.

#### **Mobility Goal 3 Connectivity**

The Plan encourages land use and transportation patterns that connect the neighborhood and support future growth.

#### **Community Facilities Goal 2 Community Facilities Quality of Life**

The Plan recommendations support community facilities to improve quality of life.

#### **Economic Development Goal 1 Economic Growth and Opportunity**

The Plan supports an economic climate that improves growth, innovation, investment and opportunity for all residents in Russell.

#### **Economic Development Goal 2 Economic Quality of Life**

The Plan promotes enhanced quality of life in the Russell neighborhood and the development of a highly-skilled workforce

#### **Livability Goal 2 Health and Safety**

The Plan recommendations promote equitable health and safety outcomes for all residents in Russell.

#### **Livability Goal 4 Sustainability and Resilience**

The Plan promotes land use patterns that will provide mobility choice and access to multi-modal transportation options.

**Housing Goal 1 Diverse Housing**

The Plan promotes a diverse range of housing choices in Russell.

**Housing Goal 2 Connected, Mixed-Use Neighborhoods**

The Plan supports the development of connected, mixed-use neighborhoods in Russell.

**Housing Goal 3 Fair and Affordable Housing**

The Plan promotes long-term affordability and livable housing in Russell.

**STAFF CONCLUSIONS**

Staff finds that the proposed goals, objectives, recommendations in the Russell Neighborhood Plan and the Executive Summary are in conformance with the Neighborhood Plan Ordinance (Chapter 161) and Plan 2040. Based upon the information in the staff report, the testimony and evidence provided at the public hearing, the Planning Commission must determine if the proposal is in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan.

**NOTIFICATION**

Date	Purpose of Notice	Recipients
July 5, 2019	Public Hearing before PC	Legal Advertisement in the Courier-Journal

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Vision Russell Neighborhood Plan
2. Vision Russell Neighborhood Plan Executive Summary