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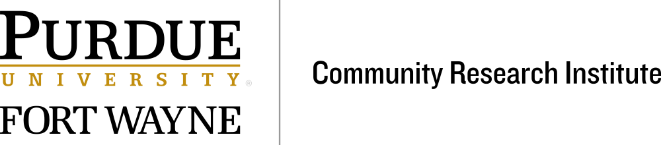
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What makes a healthy neighborhood?

*A Quantitative and Qualitative Assessment of Five Fort Wayne Neighborhoods: West Central*



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# Executive Summary

What constitutes a healthy neighborhood? Is it a location with rising home values? Does it have an active neighborhood association? Do neighbors get together for block parties or fundraisers? What about crime like thefts from vehicles or more violent acts? This project attempts to answer these questions to help NeighborLink Fort Wayne develop community development strategies and partner with neighborhoods.

This report has quantitative and qualitative data from West Central.

Additionally, CRI provides information about Asset Based Community Development and Middle Neighborhoods to guide NeighborLink and neighborhoods in how to grow and make strategic decisions. Asset Based Community Development is a method that focuses on building on existing community strengths and using internal resources. Middle Neighborhoods is a concept not yet adopted in Fort Wayne, but it applies to the neighborhoods of this report and other Fort Wayne neighborhoods.

The Healthy Neighborhoods project does not rank neighborhoods. Rather it shows the variations among five of Fort Wayne’s Middle Neighborhoods, and what opportunities may exist to strengthen these places.

Highlights of the Healthy Neighborhoods findings:

* These neighborhoods tended to have lower socioeconomic status than Fort Wayne as a whole, especially for household income and the share of adults without a high school diploma.
* Most of these neighborhoods were more racially and ethnically diverse than Fort Wayne.
* People like where they live, and appreciated the low cost of living, sense of community, and convenient location.
* Neighborhoods desire well-kept homes free of trash and debris, low crime rates, and welcome engaging more residents in the neighborhood association.
* Residents believe the public’s negative perceptions of their respective neighborhoods are misplaced.
* A desire for high-quality retail, especially neighborhood grocery stores, existed across neighborhoods.
* Asset Based Community Development and Middle Neighborhoods provide a ready-made framework for this work.
* Revitalizing neighborhoods is both complex and complicated, especially with varying demographics and financial limitations of many households. This will require engaging neighborhood associations and residents to develop strategies and implement tactics for the respective locations.

In sum, creating and sustaining healthy urban neighborhoods is not easy, but pathways exist to move forward. This is not the kind of project that shows results in months. It will take years, but Fort Wayne cannot afford to leave these locations behind, and NeighborLink is prepared to be a partner, collaborator, and convener.

# About NeighborLink Fort Wayne

NeighborLink Fort Wayne connects neighbors at an individual level to encourage relationships and healthy neighborhoods for Fort Wayne. Small things change neighborhoods, and the organization has seen simple projects like yard mowing turn into multi-year relationships between neighbors.

Founded as a 501(c)3 nonprofit, NeighborLink’s mission is practical, neighbor-to-neighbor expressions of God’s love. Its vision is to build bridges between needs and resources, between volunteers and those in need, as well as providing a way for people to give back to their community. NeighborLink volunteers help hundreds of senior citizens, people with disabilities, low-income families, and people facing life's circumstances with tangible home repair projects every year. After 15 years of direct service, NeighborLink’s leadership is interested in exploring more strategic opportunities for community development.

# Introduction

This report provides information gathered as part NeighborLink Fort Wayne’s Healthy Neighborhoods project to understand what makes healthy neighborhoods healthy. This project evaluated five urban Fort Wayne neighborhoods:

1. Hoagland Masterson
2. North Highlands
3. Pettit-Rudisill
4. West Central
5. Williams-Woodland Park

Each of these neighborhoods had a different demographic and socioeconomic profile, with populations ranging from just over 700 residents to more than 5,200 in 2018.

CRI used a mix of quantitative data from Esri, a proprietary database that uses user-defined geographies, for the demographic, income, and socioeconomic measures, compared against the data for the city of Fort Wayne. CRI then coupled that information with qualitative data collected from a series of participatory workshops held in each of the neighborhoods. From there, CRI included research about Asset Based Community Development and Middle Neighborhoods to inform NeighborLink’s work to strengthen and enhance these neighborhoods as part of a two-year Inspire grant from the Foellinger Foundation.

The quantitative data are compiled for the neighborhood with Fort Wayne as the comparison. Qualitative data are listed in their own section, with an explanation of Asset Based Community Development. CRI offers a summary of the general themes that emerged across neighborhoods and then a qualitative assessment for WC neighborhood that looks at what is going well, existing challenges, and opportunities for improvement. The qualitative section concludes with the findings from the “what makes a healthy neighborhood healthy” question.

The report then transitions to information about Middle Neighborhoods and how that can be applied to these five neighborhoods. It concludes with CRI’s six recommendations for NeighborLink, based on the research contained herein.

# Methodology

This project used a combination of quantitative data, qualitative data, and literature review to assemble this report. NeighborLink Fort Wayne identified the five neighborhoods to be evaluated in Healthy Neighborhoods project. CRI elected to use Fort Wayne as the benchmark data.

The five neighborhoods were:

1. Hoagland Masterson
2. North Highlands
3. Pettit-Rudisill
4. West Central
5. Williams-Woodland Park

For West Central, CRI and NeighborLink cooperated to create a subsection of that neighborhood, termed West Central CDAP by CRI. It was selected by NeighborLink and WCNA leadership with consultation from CRI to reflect portions of the neighborhood that are predominantly residential, since a significant portion of West Central is within the central business district, i.e. downtown Fort Wayne. Using the maps from the 2004 community development area plan (CDAP), West Central CDAP reflects zones 2, 3, and 5 as listed on p. 3 of that plan.[[1]](#footnote-1) It has 2,550 residents, making up about 70 percent of West Central’s residents.

CRI used Esri, a proprietary database that allows users to create their own geography rather than using U.S. Census Bureau’s geographies, to draw each neighborhood’s boundaries, using neighborhood maps from the City of Fort Wayne. The Esri data reflects conditions in 2018.

CRI did its own calculations for educational attainment to create the following groupings:

* Less than High School: Combined Esri’s categories of Less Than 9th Grade and 9th-12th Grade, No Diploma
* High School Diploma (Including Equivalency): Combined Esri’s categories of High School Graduate and GED/Alternative Credential
* Some College/Associate Degree: Combined Esri’s categories of Some College, No Degree and Associate Degree
* Bachelor’s Degree or Higher: Combined Esri’s categories of Bachelor’s Degree and Graduate/Professional Degree

CRI gathered qualitative data from neighborhood association meetings that were held in April and May 2019. At these meetings, CRI presented the respective neighborhood’s quantitative data benchmarked against Fort Wayne. From there, attendees worked in small groups to complete a questionnaire, based on Asset Based Community Development principles. The full questionnaire is listed in the qualitative data section.

CRI used its discretion in listing answers from the workshop responses in this report. They are meant as a sufficient overview of the responses but do not include every answer. CRI did provide a complete list of answers received from all five workshops without attendees’ names to NeighborLink. CRI gave the full dataset from Esri for the neighborhoods and city, which included data not used in this report.

For literature review, CRI researched Asset Based Community Development, at the request of NeighborLink, and then independently discovered information about Middle Neighborhoods, which is also included in this report.

## West Central

The largest geographically of the neighborhoods with 0.96 square miles, West Central encompasses the western portion of downtown Fort Wayne and the residential neighborhoods to the immediate west and south of downtown proper with almost 3,600 residents. With the revitalization of the central business district in the past decade, West Central has enjoyed a resurgence in popularity as a place to live, either as a homeowner or renter. Guldlin, Moody, and Swinney parks are located in the neighborhood as well as Promenade Park.

Most West Central houses were built from the 1860s through the 1930s, although some new construction has occurred in the neighborhood in the past 10 years, indicating the market viability of this near-downtown location.

West Central contains the West Central Local Historic District, which encompasses the primarily residential section that is immediately west of downtown. The local historic district comprises a small part of the overall neighborhood. Individual properties are also individual local historic districts. West Central is home to the National Register of Historic Places’ West End Historic District, with its period of significance from 1840 to 1930, with many architectural styles of significance.

A listing on the National Register of Historic Places does not limit the activities of the property owner. The local historic district designation requires approval from city government for exterior alternations or improvements.

The City of Fort Wayne’s Planning Department in cooperation with the West Central Neighborhood Association produced a community development area plan (CDAP) for the neighborhood in 2004.

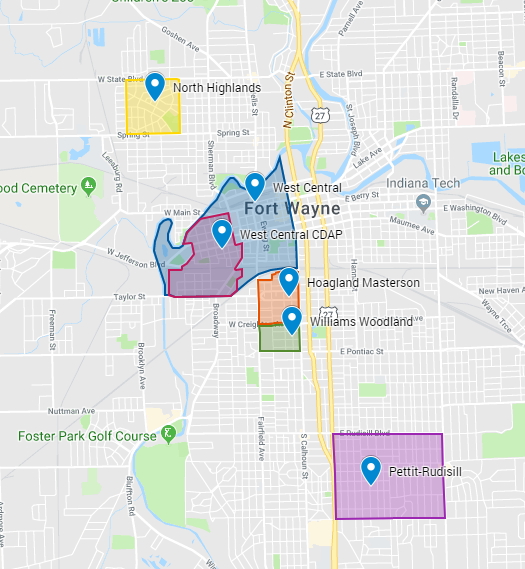
The West Central Neighborhood Association (WCNA) is an active neighborhood association and hosts the annual West Central Home and Garden Tour in September. WCNA has used its funds for neighborhood improvements and signage.

### West Central CDAP

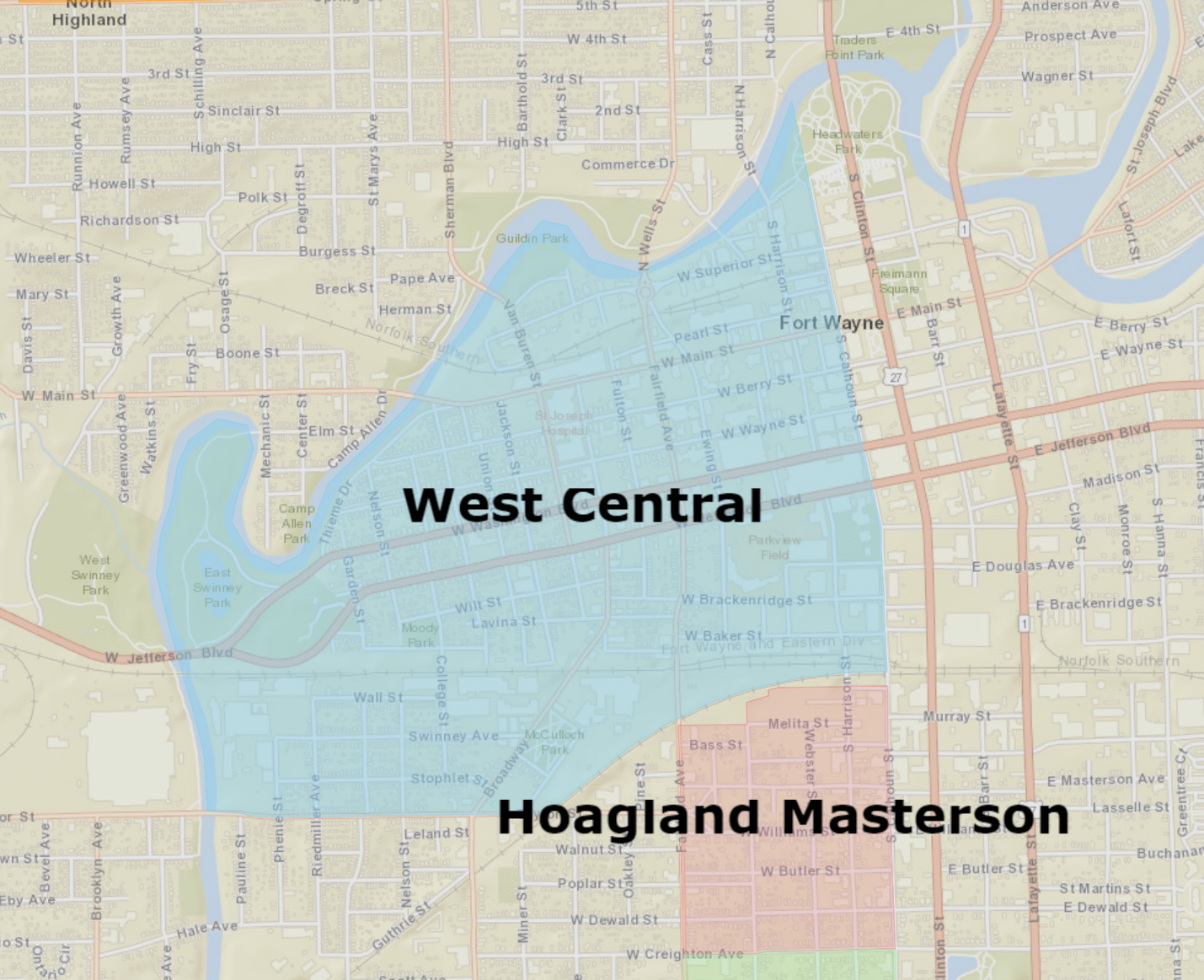
West Central CDAP is a sub-area within the West Central neighborhood selected by NeighborLink and WCNA leadership with consultation from CRI to reflect portions of the neighborhood that are predominantly residential, since a significant portion of West Central is within the central business district, i.e. downtown Fort Wayne. Using the maps from the 2004 CDAP, West Central CDAP reflects zones 2, 3, and 5 as listed on p. 3 of that plan.[[2]](#footnote-2) It has 2,550 residents, making up about 70 percent of West Central’s residents.

# Map

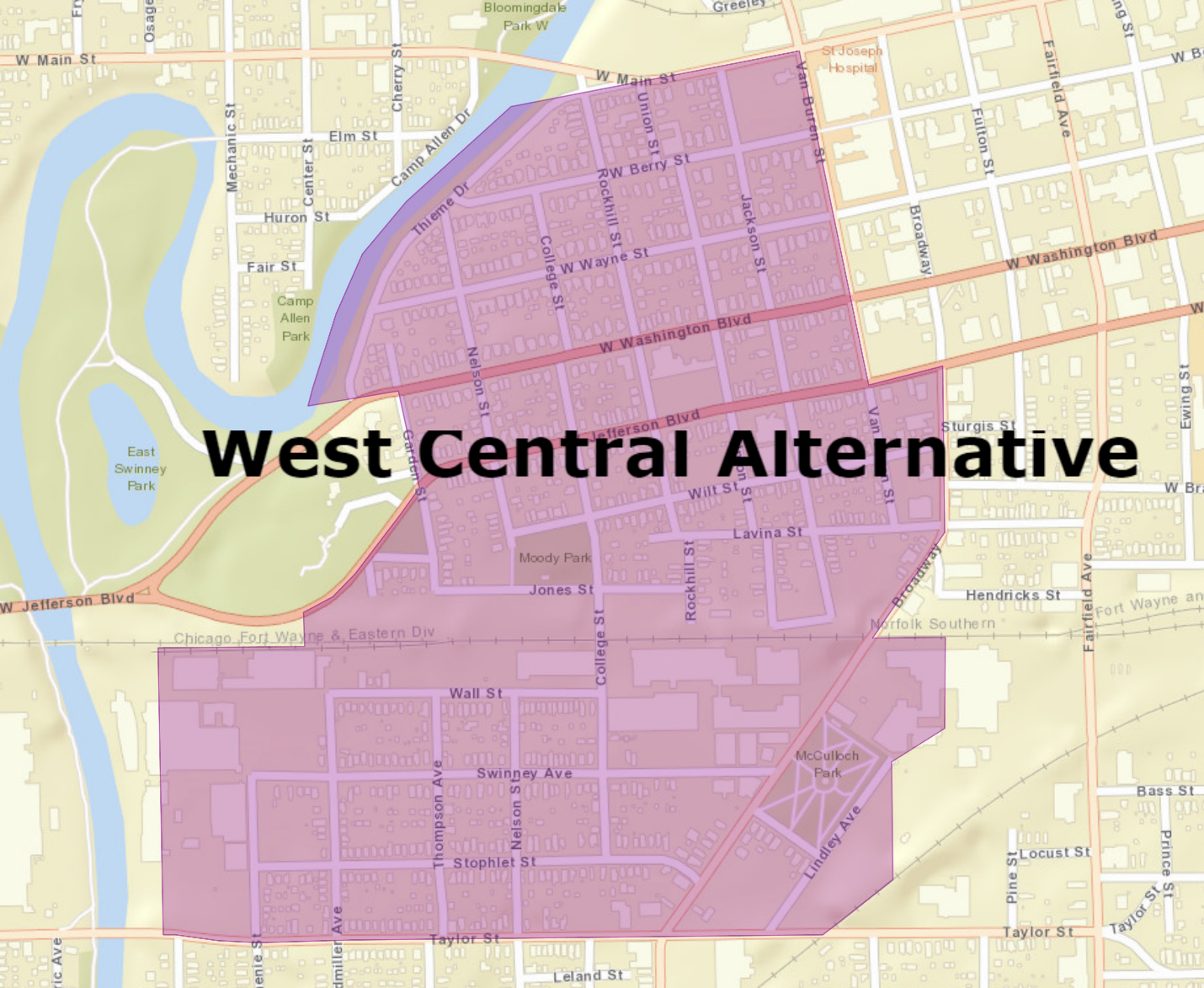
Here is a map of the neighborhoods’ boundaries as defined by the city of Fort Wayne for the respective neighborhood associations[[3]](#footnote-3). There are also maps to show the two boundaries of WC neighborhood for this research.



### Map 2a: West Central (0.96 square miles)



### Map 2b: West Central CDAP (0.36 square miles)



# Data indicators

This section defines each of the quantitative indicators used in the Healthy Neighborhoods project.

# Population

Population is the number of people who live within a defined geography. A wide distribution of population size exists among these neighborhoods. This difference in population should be considered when creating neighborhood programs and services. Small neighborhoods enable a far more intimate neighborhood association – regardless of other factors like the share of housing units that are occupied by renter or homeowners – as compared a large neighborhood like West Central. In larger neighborhoods, people are still connected to their neighbors and association, but it is mathematically impossible for all neighbors to know each other.

## Households and families

Households and families are separate but complementary units. All people who occupy a housing unit constitute a household. Families require the members of a household to be related by blood, marriage, or adoption. Individuals living alone in a housing unit are a household but not a family because families require at least two related people living together. Therefore, all families living in a house, apartment, or other rooms designed as separate living quarters are households, but not all households are families. Since people living alone are never a family for statistical purposes, the average household size is always smaller than the average family size.

West Central and West Central CDAP have the smallest average household sizes respectively, reflecting the small share of family households. The neighborhoods with larger average family sizes reflect families that have either children or additional family members living in the house or apartment. Fort Wayne had 109,379 households and 64,497 families for 2018, with about 59 percent of households consisting of families.

# Age

With the “graying” of America as the Baby Boomers and Gen X’ers – and the Millennials too – age, often with smaller cohorts of younger people coming behind them, the median age of a population is revealing about a location. It can be a useful indicator about the larger story of age distribution, however it doesn’t tell the whole story[[4]](#footnote-4). What is interesting with these neighborhoods is the variation, plus how they are mostly younger than Fort Wayne. The youngest median is nearly a decade below the highest.

West Central and West Central CDAP skews heavily to the late 20s/early 30s groups, with about a quarter of residents being in the 25-34 age. Residents 65 and older are consistently underrepresented in these neighborhoods when compared to Fort Wayne. The age grouping with the most consistency among neighborhoods and the city is 55 to 64.

Understanding a neighborhood’s age distribution can enable NeighborLink, other social service agencies, or local government to provide services or respond to known needs based on age. For example, recognizing that the age distribution skews younger for these five neighborhoods, the need based on total numbers for older residents is lessened.

# Sex

West Central and West Central CDAP have markedly more males than females. Without doing significantly more research, CRI is not prepared to speculate to why. The remaining neighborhoods are fairly consistent with Fort Wayne’s split.

# Race and ethnicity

The U.S. Census Bureau uses the following racial categories: White; Black or African American; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; and Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander; or Some Other Race. Respondents can chose more than one race on the survey, which is reported as two or more races. Esri makes slight modifications to the racial classification names with black, American Indian, and Pacific Islander.

Race does not include Hispanic or Latino heritage since that is captured separately in ethnicity.

Ethnicity collects information about the respondent’s Hispanic or Latino heritage and is reported as Hispanic and Non-Hispanic. Hispanics or Latinos who identify with the terms “Hispanic,” “Latino,” or “Spanish” are those who classify themselves in one or more of the specific Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish categories listed on the questionnaire (“Mexican,” “Puerto Rican,” or “Cuban”) as well as those who indicate that they are of “another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.” People who do not identify with any of the specific origins listed on the questionnaire but indicate that they are “another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin” are those who identify as Argentinian, Colombian, Dominican, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Spaniard, or other Spanish cultures or origins.

People identifying as Hispanic can be of any race. Unlike Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) data, Esri does not provide a separate table on Hispanic and non-Hispanic origin so CRI created a single chart with race and Hispanic origin.

Since race and ethnicity are separate classifications, adding the Hispanic origin share to the racial percentages will total to more than 100 percent. ‘Some other race’ is not defined and self-selected by respondents, so it may reflect a significant share of the Hispanic or Latino populations within the respective geographies.[[5]](#footnote-5) This phenomenon is somewhat reflected in this data.

# Marital status

A person’s marital status is counted starting at age 15. It is divvyed up among the never married, married, widowed, or divorced. This is useful as an insight into the structure of households and families. Since this measure includes some teenagers and Americans’ trend for marriage at older ages, the never-married group may be overrepresented in locations with large populations of teenagers or young adults. Never-married people are overrepresented in all but one neighborhood. The share of divorced people is fairly consistent with Fort Wayne. Widows or widowers are a small group in all locations.

# Educational attainment

Educational attainment is a critical measure of understanding the earning potential of workers, since people with more credentials and skills typically command higher wages in the job market. It also helps community leaders understand local workforce skills in general terms. As neighborhood measure, it provides a key data point to understand a location’s socioeconomic status. Census Bureau data for the city of Fort Wayne show lower unemployment and higher labor force participation rates for increasing levels of education for working-age adults.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The information here reflects the population 25 years and older, which is the standard universe for this measure, to reflect the age where many people have completed or are no longer participating in formal education. The category shows where the person stopped his or her education. CRI computed each of these four categories, combining respective categories from Esri data to better reflect common educational thresholds.[[7]](#footnote-7)

No neighborhood exceeded Fort Wayne’s rate of bachelor’s degree or above. Since educational attainment is strongly related to earning potential and income, especially as it pertains to those without a high school diploma or those with a bachelor’s degree or higher, the low educational attainment in some of these neighborhoods foretells lower household income, which is included later in this report.

# Employment

Employment data for this report reflects the share of people ages 16 and older who are working or looking for work. For Fort Wayne, the unemployment rate being below 5 percent in 2018 reflects full employment, which as a practical matter means anyone who wants a job should be able secure employment.

## Employment status

The unemployment rate is the percent of the labor market who are classified as unemployed. Employment status is calculated for people ages 16 and older. Those who are not working and not actively seeking employment – including retirees, caregivers, or students – are not in this universe and do not appear in these numbers.

The monthly unemployment reports come from the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD), using different data collection. The 2018 DWD unemployment rate for Fort Wayne was 3.5 percent, according to the Local Area Unemployment Status report. Esri’s unemployment rate is modeled from the Census Bureau’s unemployment data, which uses the same category definitions as DWD but typically has a higher unemployment rate.

## Employment by industry

Industry is the kind of business conducted by the employer and is separate from occupation. Some occupations tend to land in a particular industry, such as nurses in healthcare or team assemblers at manufacturers. However, accountants and maintenance workers are found in most any industry. This data reflects where the worker lives, not the site of the employment. Like employment status, it reflects the population ages 16 and older.

Esri use the following industry sectors:

* **Agriculture/Mining**: Combines production agriculture of crops and livestock and mining operations
* **Construction**: Includes commercial and residential construction
* **Manufacturing**: Comprised of industries that produce durable and non-durable goods
* **Wholesale Trade**: The intermediate step between the production and final sale of durable and non-durable goods and typically operates from warehouses
* **Retail Trade**: The sale of durable and non-durable goods to the final user, which may or may not operate from a storefront
* **Transportation/Utilities**: Transportation is the movement of goods or people; utilities are the traditional utilities of electricity, natural gas, and water and sewer service
* **Information**: This broad category includes everything from publishing to broadcasting to internet- or network-related services
* **Finance/Insurance/Real Estate**: Banks, insurance carriers and brokers, and the sale and rental of real estate are part of this sector
* **Services**: This far-reaching sector covers professional, business and technical services; waste management; management of companies; education; healthcare; leisure and hospitality services; and other services like religious or grantmaking organizations
* **Public Sector**: This sector covers all three levels of government (local, state, and federal)

This information at the neighborhood level complements educational attainment and household income. It provides a better understanding of the professional lives of residents. It may also provide some value when going through periods of rapid economic expansion or contraction since manufacturing is particularly prone to the ups and downs of the national economy.

Fort Wayne’s three largest industries are services (48 percent), manufacturing (17.5 percent), and retail trade (11.9%) and represent more than 75 percent of the city’s workers.

## Employment by occupation

If industry is the employer’s business, occupation looks at the role of the worker. Some occupations are tied very closely to certain industries; others are found in every sector.

There are three large occupational categories: white collar, blue collar, and services. The following table shows what occupations make up those respective categories.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| White Collar | Management, Business/Financial, Computer/Mathematical, Architecture/Engineering, Life/Physical/Social Science, Community/Social Service, Legal, Education/Training/Library, Arts/Design/Entertainment/Sports/Media, Healthcare Practitioner/Technician, Healthcare Support, Sales and Sales Related, Office/Administrative Support |
| Blue Collar | Farming/Fishing/Forestry, Construction/Extraction, Installation/Maintenance/Repair, Production, Transportation/Material Moving |
| Services | Protective Service, Food Preparation/Serving Related, Building/Grounds Cleaning/Maintenance, Personal Care/Service |

# Household income

This report has two income-related indicators, both reporting household income. The first is median household income. The second shows the household income distribution across the neighborhood.

## Median household income

Median household income is the midpoint where half the households are above and half are below. It is the not the same as the average, which would take all of the income divided by all the households. The median, by mathematical design, ignores the very top and the very bottom numbers. CRI’s experience with median vs. average when it comes to household income is that the average is higher than the median. However, for this data set, the average is not available. No neighborhood was less than half of the city’s, but two were in the mid 50-percent and the remaining three were in the mid 60-percent range. In addition to the median, CRI calculated the respective neighborhood’s share of Fort Wayne’s median.

## Household income distribution

Household income distribution shows the percentage of households in each neighborhood living within the following annual income brackets:

* Less than $15,000
* $15,000-$24,999
* $25,000-$34,999
* $35,000-$49,999
* $50,000-$74,999
* $75,000-$99,999
* $100,00-$149,999
* $150,000-$199,999
* $200,000 and greater

This information shows the significant economic constraints of many neighborhood residents. West Central had nearly half their households with incomes below $25,000. Even for a person living alone, this creates a significant financial limitation, and as explained in the next paragraph, may indicate a large share of households below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).

The share of people or households below FPL is not available from Esri, but the income distribution provides some guidance. FPL is calculated based on the size of household. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Census Bureau use slightly different thresholds and methodologies,[[8]](#footnote-8) but a good approximation is a household income for a four-person household or family below $25,000 places all members of that household below FPL.

Many of these neighborhood residents are struggling economically, based on this data. From a neighborhood revitalization perspective, the limited economic capacity of homeowner residents will constrain maintenance and improvements of their respective homes, especially if the owner needs to hire contractors to perform the work.

This limitation will be compounded in neighborhoods with local historic districts (LHDs), which have very specific rules about maintenance and upkeep, such as no vinyl siding to preserve the historic character. Those restrictions result in more costly repairs and upkeep, as noted in the qualitative data collected in the neighborhood meetings. CRI is not arguing for the elimination LHDs; they are a valuable urban planning tool for preserving and promulgating historic neighborhoods and structures. Rather for NeighborLink, it is an important requirement to consider for specific locations.

Obviously for renters, home maintenance is the duty of the landlord and not the tenant, but if tenants are paying below-market rates for their respective units, it may not provide sufficient revenue to the owner for routine maintenance. Additionally, some landlords are not interested in maintaining or improving their properties to the standards desired by neighborhood leadership.

# Owner-occupied home value

This Esri data uses modeled data. In contrast, the section using information from the Wayne Township Assessor is the full panel of houses, ranging from single-family houses to four-plex structures, regardless of whether it is owner- or renter-occupied. All of these neighborhoods have their median homeowner value below the city’s $112,062. The highest is West Central CDAP at $86,620 and 77.3 percent of the city, with West Central right behind at $84,956 and 75.8 percent.

With the strong seller’s market for housing in Fort Wayne, the medians may look surprisingly low to those who have seen houses for sale in West Central in the high $100’s. These values were tempered by being the median, rather than average. Additionally, houses that are not for sale may have lower values because they have not had improvements to get them ready to sell, which help them command higher prices in the market.

Reflecting what was seen in the median value, more than half of the owner-occupied houses in all of the neighborhoods are valued at less than $100,000. In contrast, 43.5 percent of Fort Wayne’s owner-occupied houses were in that price range. West Central neighborhood had some of the most homes valued at more than $500,000. That full panel of information is included in the Wayne Township Assessor Data in a later section. A cursory review of other neighborhoods shows some differences between the modeled data and AVs. However, because the differences in how these values are calculated, the inconsistencies are anticipated.

# Housing tenure

Housing tenure is the Census Bureau’s nomenclature for owner-occupied and renter-occupied structures. Esri’s data also includes information about vacant structures. Since some structures will house more than one household, it cannot be considered a direct proxy for households or families.

The lowest share of homeowners was in West Central, followed by West Central CDAP, with over half being renters. West Central and West Central CDAP also had vacancy rates above one in five structures.

Working from the theory that renters are not as invested – financially or emotionally – in a neighborhood in the same way as their owner-neighbors, the large share of renters in all but one neighborhood, creates challenges for neighborhood engagement. Some renters are long-term neighborhood residents who elect to rent for any number of reasons and care deeply about the place where they choose to live. However as a practical matter, renters often have a transient nature because of leases and changes in their respective households, such as opting to become homeowners in another neighborhood or using this location as a stopover before moving on to another life stage, such as recent college graduates living with roommates before moving out on their own or moving in with a partner or spouse. Additionally, the landlords of some rental properties may not be maintaining their houses to the standards other residents would prefer, as noted in the qualitative information.

CRI has noticed a small but nevertheless noticeable increase in the share of people transitioning from homeownership to renting in Allen County and across northeast Indiana in Census Bureau data from other projects. This shift may not be happening in these neighborhoods, but recognizing the market’s interest in rental units, that may factor into trends NeighborLink and the respective neighborhood associations see going forward.

# Wayne Township Assessor Data

This project reflects the 2018 assessments. CRI asked the Wayne Township Assessor for neighborhood-level data, thus only West Central is reflected in this data; no West Central CDAP.

The Healthy Neighborhoods project evaluated just over 4,600 parcels, with nearly half being in Pettit-Rudisill. The residential properties have an AV of more than $226 million.

Since the average includes vacant lots, which may be valued at a few hundred dollars, vacant lots may be driving down values.

Wayne Township Assessor data is listed in the neighborhood section, which has tables listing the number and types of residential parcels and the average assessed value of each parcel type.

## Age of structures

All houses are aging, and aging structures make demands on the owners’ resources, whether the owner is the occupant or a landlord. Understanding the average age also informs NeighborLink about the neighborhoods’ needs. A location with homes built as part of the post-World War II housing boom may not be built with the same craftsmanship and materials as the houses built before 1900 for the neighborhoods in this project.

The Census Bureau asks a question on the American Community Survey about the age of the structure where the respondents live. However, the answers are capped at 1939 or earlier. Therefore, CRI opted to get information from county government about structure age, because property tax records contain the year built. This is especially valuable because many of the homes in these neighborhoods were built long before World War II.

Allen County property tax cards list the year the structure was built. Anecdotal information collected during the qualitative phase indicates that some property tax cards have incorrect year-built data; specifically that it lists the house as built in 1900 even if other information indicates it was built earlier. Some records list construction dates before 1900 so this is not a universal condition. Therefore the year-built average may be artificially young for the neighborhoods that contain houses built before 1900. Without a full analysis of the data, which is outside the scope of this project, CRI cannot definitively say how large the skew is. For West Central, Williams-Woodland Park, and Hoagland Masterson, the true average may be older than what is listed here because of the share of structures that were constructed before 1900 but listed as 1900.

None of the neighborhoods have the average construction year after World War II. Although North Highlands and Pettit-Rudisill have construction year averages during the middle of the war, very little construction was occurring at that point. Rather they had significant construction activity before and after the war, especially benefitting from the post-war economic expansion. Hoagland Masterson, West Central, and Williams-Woodland Park all have essentially equivalent average construction years.

# West Central, includes West Central CDAP

For this section, West Central and West Central CDAP will be considered two neighborhoods, but all of West Central CDAP’s data are included within West Central as well. Stated more succinctly, West Central CDAP is a subarea within West Central.

## Population

West Central and West Central CDAP were the second- and third-largest neighborhoods. West Central CDAP’s 2,250 residents constituted 62.7 percent of West Central’s population.

### Table 1: West Central, West Central CDAP population

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | West Central | West Central CDAP | Fort Wayne |
| 2018 Total Population | 3,589 | 2,250 | 264,159 |

## Number of households, families; average household, family sizes

West Central had the smallest average household and family size of any neighborhood. West Central CDAP had the second smallest average household size. The two locations were the only ones to have an average household size below 2.0.

Since households include people living alone, but families do not, the average household size below 2.0 indicates a large segment of West Central and West Central CDAP residents who live alone. Esri data does not include further segmentation about the composition of single-person households, but Census Bureau data does. If NeighborLink or West Central leadership would like to know more about this population, they will need to use Census-defined geographies, probably Census tract, to learn more about the single-person households such as age. If the single-person households are recent college graduates, they will have different needs than people 65 and older.

### Table 2: West Central, West Central CDAP households, families

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | West Central | West Central CDAP |
| 2018 Households | 1,894 | 1,119 |
| 2018 Average Household Size | 1.73 | 1.96 |
| 2018 Families | 461 | 360 |
| 2018 Average Family Size | 3.00 | 3.02 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Fort Wayne | |
| 2010 Average Household Size | 2.44 |
| 2018 Average Family Size | 3.08 |

## Median age

West Central had the second-highest neighborhood median age, behind North Highlands, but being a year below Fort Wayne. West Central CDAP was almost 2.5 years younger.

### Table 3: West Central, West Central CDAP median age

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Median Age | West Central | West Central CDAP | Fort Wayne |
|  | 35.0 | 32.7 | 36.0 |

## Age distribution

West Central and West Central CDAP had a larger share of adults ages 25 through 44, especially for those 25 to 34. Children were underrepresented in both locations, which would contribute to a higher median age. West Central had a larger share of adults ages 45 and older, when compared to West Central CDAP, but both locations had smaller shares of adults ages 55 and older than Fort Wayne.

### Chart 1: West Central, West Central CDAP age distribution

## Sex

West Central had the largest share of males of any neighborhood. West Central CDAP’s male majority was less pronounced. The only other majority-male neighborhood was Hoagland Masterson. Fort Wayne and the remaining neighborhoods all had more women and girls than men and boys.

### Chart 2: West Central, West Central CDAP sex

## Race

The racial composition of West Central and West Central CDAP had slight variances, but generally looked the same. Furthermore, West Central and West Central CDAP had very similar racial compositions when compared to Fort Wayne.

### Chart 3: West Central, West Central CDAP race

## Ethnicity

Like race, West Central and West Central CDAP most closely matched Fort Wayne on the share of residents with Hispanic or Latino origin.

### Chart 4: West Central, West Central CDAP ethnicity

## Marital status

The majority of West Central and West Central CDAP residents have never married, putting these locations at the top for the share of never-marrieds. Less than a quarter of West Central residents and just below 30 percent of West Central CDAP residents were presently married in 2018. The low rates of married people should be expected based on the average household size for West Central and West Central CDAP.

### Chart 5: West Central, West Central CDAP marital status

## Educational attainment

The educational attainment of West Central and West Central CDAP was very similar to each other and the city as a whole. People without a high school diploma are slightly overrepresented and those who ended their education with high school graduation were just below the city’s numbers. The share of adults with bachelor’s degrees or higher were just below the city’s rate.

### Chart 6: West Central, West Central CDAP educational attainment

## Employment status

The share of employed people creates a small stairstep when comparing West Central, West Central CDAP, and Fort Wayne. West Central had the highest unemployment rate of the three locations listed here, followed by West Central CDAP. This is consistent with the educational attainment levels.

### Chart 7: West Central, West Central CDAP labor market

## Employment by industry

Like other indicators, industry employment for West Central and West Central CDAP was more alike than different. When compared to Fort Wayne, West Central and West Central CDAP had fewer people working in manufacturing and construction, but more in retail trade and transportation/utilities.

### Chart 8: West Central, West Central CDAP employment by industry

## Employment by occupation

West Central CDAP and West Central, respectively, had the highest share of white collar workers and the lowest share of blue collar workers of the neighborhoods when compared to Fort Wayne. The share of service occupations were similar to the city.

### Chart 9: West Central, West Central CDAP employment by occupation

## Median household income

West Central’s median household income was 55.1 percent of Fort Wayne’s, putting it as the second lowest in this study. In contrast, West Central CDAP was 67.2 percent of Fort Wayne’s median, placing as the second highest location. West Central’s low median is slightly unexpected based on the share of adults with bachelor’s degrees, however the share of single-person households, which cannot have a second income earner, may have driven down the midpoint.

### Chart 10: West Central, West Central CDAP median household income

## Income distribution

Income distribution is where West Central and West Central CDAP did not align. West Central had the highest share of any neighborhood with household incomes below $15,000 annually. West Central CDAP had far more even income distribution between less than $15,000 and $74,999. West Central had 42 percent of its households with incomes below $25,000. West Central CDAP had 29.6 percent below the $25,000 mark. West Central and West Central CDAP were below Fort Wayne’s share for household incomes $50,000 and above.

### Chart 11: West Central, West Central CDAP household income cohorts

## Median owner-occupied housing value

West Central CDAP had the highest share of Fort Wayne’s median for owner-occupied home values at 77.3 percent. West Central was close behind at 75.8 percent. These estimates are consistent with the average assessed values from tax records.

### Chart 12: West Central, West Central CDAP median owner-occupied home value

## Housing tenure

Despite or perhaps because of the enthusiasm for downtown and urban neighborhood living that has emerged in the past decade, West Central and West Central CDAP were dominated by rental housing units, with more rental units in West Central than West Central CDAP than any other neighborhoods. Interestingly, slightly more than a quarter of housing units in West Central CDAP were vacant in 2018, which was the highest of any location, compared to 21 percent for West Central and 10 percent in Fort Wayne.

### Chart 13: West Central, West Central CDAP housing tenure

## Wayne Township Assessor Data

West Central had the largest variety of parcel types of any neighborhood, with single-family homes making up about 55.7 percent of the lots. Vacant lots comprised about 7.6 percent of the parcels. The residential other structures is explained in the indicators section.

West Central CDAP data was not requested for this portion of the work.

As for average AVs, the range varied, depending on parcel type. Note that many of the types of have a handful of parcels, making them subject to price swings because of the small sample size.

### Table 3: Number, types of residential parcels

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| West Central | 1046 |
| RESIDENTIAL CONDOMINIUM UNIT FAMILY DWELLING ON A PLATTED LOT | 104 |
| RESIDENTIAL CONDOMINIUMS | 2 |
| RESIDENTIAL ONE FAMILY DWELLING ON A PLATTED LOT | 583 |
| RESIDENTIAL OTHER STRUCTURES | 92 |
| RESIDENTIAL PARCEL CLASSIFIED AS VACANT BUT IS PART OF THE SUPPORT LAND FOR ANOTHER PARCEL | 1 |
| RESIDENTIAL THREE FAMILY DWELLING ON A PLATTED LOT | 42 |
| RESIDENTIAL TWO FAMILY DWELLING ON A PLATTED LOT | 142 |
| RESIDENTIAL TWO FAMILY DWELLING ON UNPLATTED LAND OF 0-9.99 ACRES | 1 |
| RESIDENTIAL VACANT PLATTED LOT | 79 |

### Table 4: Average assessed value of residential parcels by type

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| West Central | $78,941 |
| RESIDENTIAL CONDOMINIUM UNIT FAMILY DWELLING ON A PLATTED LOT | $111,344 |
| RESIDENTIAL CONDOMINIUMS | *No AV listed on property records* |
| RESIDENTIAL ONE FAMILY DWELLING ON A PLATTED LOT | $79,683 |
| RESIDENTIAL OTHER STRUCTURES | $113,716 |
| RESIDENTIAL PARCEL CLASSIFIED AS VACANT BUT IS PART OF THE SUPPORT LAND FOR ANOTHER PARCEL | $0 |
| RESIDENTIAL THREE FAMILY DWELLING ON A PLATTED LOT | $77,826 |
| RESIDENTIAL TWO FAMILY DWELLING ON A PLATTED LOT | $71,593 |
| RESIDENTIAL TWO FAMILY DWELLING ON UNPLATTED LAND OF 0-9.99 ACRES | $178,000 |
| RESIDENTIAL VACANT PLATTED LOT | $2,895 |

# Qualitative data

The information contained in this section was gathered in a series of meetings with each neighborhood. NeighborLink and CRI teamed up for a presentation of the neighborhoods’ quantitative data contained within this report and then attendees teamed up in small groups to answer questions about where they lived. Attendees only saw the data for their neighborhood and the city of Fort Wayne.

The meetings were held in late April or May 2019. Most but not all workshops were part of regularly scheduled neighborhood association meetings.

## Asset Based Community Development

The questions were developed to align with the theory of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD). ABCD is designed as a sustainable development model, using existing assets within a community by leveraging the connections of individuals, associations, and institutions.[[9]](#footnote-9) Instead of relying on outside professionals and resources to come in to solve the location’s problems, local residents have active participation in moving the community forward using existing assets and stepping away from a deficiency-based model of community development.[[10]](#footnote-10)

ABCD’s 12 guiding principles[[11]](#footnote-11) are:

1. Everyone has gifts that can be contributed, but these gifts must be discovered.
2. Relationships build a community with an intentional effort to build them.
3. Citizens are at the center of ABCD, rather than customers or consumers.
4. Leaders involve others as active members of the community.
5. People care about something, so the challenge is to identify motivations.
6. Look what motivates action within the community.
7. Listen through one-on-one dialogue or small groups for intentional listening and relationship building.
8. Ask and invite people to participate in this work.
9. Ask questions rather than give answers.
10. Develop a citizen-centered “inside-out” organization where local people control the organization and set its agenda.
11. Institutions have reached their limits in problem solving and need to engage communities to solve problems.
12. People are better than programs in engaging the community. Institutional leaders should lead by stepping back to create opportunities for care and democracy.

The five key assets of ABCD[[12]](#footnote-12) are:

1. **Individuals**: All residents of a community have gifts and skills to be identified and recognized.
2. **Associations**: Small, informal groups like clubs working with a common interest.
3. **Institutions**: These are the formal organizations with paid employees including private business, schools, and government agencies.
4. **Physical assets**: This includes money, land, and buildings.
5. **Connections**: This is the exchange of assets between people.

CRI simplified the five assets to be physical assets and human assets in the questionnaire.

## Respondent survey questions

The respondent survey had the following questions with the neighborhood’s name listed on the sheet:

1. What surprised you about the data presented tonight?
2. Why do you live in [neighborhood name]?
3. What do you like about living in [neighborhood name]?
4. What is problematic for you about living in [neighborhood name]?
5. What are the present strengths of [neighborhood name]?
   1. Physical assets
   2. Human assets
6. How could [neighborhood name] be stronger?
   1. Physical assets
   2. Human assets
7. What are the present challenges facing [neighborhood name]?
   1. Physical assets
   2. Human assets
8. How could [neighborhood name] overcome these challenges?
   1. Physical assets
   2. Human assets
9. How can [neighborhood name] improve its assets using its own, existing resources?
10. How can [neighborhood name] improve its assets using outside, external resources?
11. What do you wish people who don’t live in [neighborhood name] understood about your neighborhood?
12. Assuming the best possible outcome, what would [neighborhood name] look like in three years?
    1. Physical assets
    2. Human assets
13. How do you define or describe a “healthy” neighborhood?

CRI selected answers that best identified the larger themes that emerged from these workshops in each neighborhood. CRI provided a complete set of responses to NeighborLink but is not publishing the full set of answers because of space and its desire to provide a general overview of the findings.

## General themes

The following general themes emerged across neighborhoods from the answers received at these meetings:

* People liked where they lived, often citing knowing their neighbors, historic character in older neighborhoods, walkability, family ties to the neighborhood, mature trees, and affordable housing costs.
* Location was positively noted in every neighborhood, including frequent references about being close to downtown and neighborhood-level amenities like business corridors or library branches.
* All neighborhoods expressed frustration about the lack of high-quality retail, especially grocery stores, in or near their neighborhoods. Some neighborhoods also noted the lack of neighborhood restaurants, but that was not universal.
* They thought people not living there had unreasonably negative perceptions about their neighborhood.
* Attendees would like to see more people involved with their respective neighborhood associations.
* Residents were often surprised at the share of rentals and would like to see fewer rental properties, renters more engaged in the neighborhood, and rental properties better maintained.
* Attendees were concerned about trash and debris littering their neighborhood and emphasized the need for maintenance and cleanliness of properties.
* Other concerns included crime, typically non-violent offenses like drug use or garage break-ins; vacant properties; need for alley maintenance; and low educational attainment levels.

## West Central

The West Central Neighborhood Association had strong attendance for this meeting, although it was a lengthy meeting because of other agenda items before the NeighborLink presentation and workshop.

West Central’s unique responses during this workshop included the loss of historic properties, lax enforcement of historic district requirements, a desire for a dog park, the need for neighborhood amenities like coffee shops and a pharmacy, the need to attract more families and children to the neighborhood, and supporting adjacent redevelopment projects (riverfront and Electric Works),

### Positive attributes of West Central

* Historic homes with character
* Sense of community
* West Central Neighborhood Association
* Clean, friendly, social
* Safer than people think
* How it has changed for the better
* Close to downtown and the downtown amenities
* Well-connected neighbors
* Engaged homeowners
* Friendliness/neighborliness
* Inexpensive in some locations
* Diversity
* Front porches/porch parties
* Bicycle, pedestrian friendly
* Tree-lined streets
* Parks
* Brick streets
* Washington School
* Detached garages

### Challenges facing West Central

* Gentrification
* Vacant houses
* Noise, fireworks
* Crime, drugs
* Condition of alleys and sidewalks
* Loss of historic assets; deteriorating properties in areas 4 and 5 in the CDAP
* Abandoned cars
* Traffic
* Difficulty parking
* Transients
* Lack of needed services
* Lack of grocery store
* Absentee landlords
* Increasing assessed values/property taxes
* Slack Historic Preservation Commission enforcement

### Improving West Central

* Promote historic character
* Restore brick streets and alleys
* Fix, occupy vacant houses
* Grow West Central Neighborhood Association
* Pursue grant opportunities
* Partner with city government on projects
* Encourage more improvements to attract new residents
* Invest in trees, sidewalks, parks with Home & Garden Tour funds
* Add dog park
* Attract more amenities: coffeehouse, grocery store, pharmacy
* Attract more families and children
* Have good schools
* Support riverfront revitalization
* Replace, plant trees
* Clamp down on slumlords and illegal land use
* Greater participation by non-owner residents
* Better communication from neighborhood association
* Support Electric Works/former GE campus
* Partner with Fort Wayne Police Department, start neighborhood watch
* Improve lighting in alleys, train underpasses

## What makes a healthy neighborhood healthy?

Since this project focuses on understanding healthy neighborhoods, CRI asked each of the neighborhoods what makes a healthy neighborhood healthy. CRI researched if such metrics have already been established, but did not find a definitive list of attributes that directly applied to the kind of neighborhoods being studied here. In many ways, the health of a neighborhood can and should be defined by its residents, rather than imposed from an outside organization.

Since this exercise wasn’t designed to put the neighborhoods in competition with one another, CRI opted to provide the answers to this question in the aggregate. Additionally, the commonalities across neighborhoods in responses to other questions were sufficient enough to indicate that this question should not be isolated.

### Characteristics of a healthy neighborhood as identified by neighbors

Much of what attendees identified as a healthy neighborhood were attributes they ascribed to their own neighborhood or what they desired to see where they lived. Two neighborhoods were called out by name as a healthy neighborhood. For this question, CRI did not provide any hints or suggestions so these recommendations were derived organically from attendees.

**Neighborhood pride:** A sense of pride about where people live was hinted at, more often than directly stated, but the concept wove through answers. As one sheet said, “good people make good neighborhoods.”

**Connections and relationships among neighbors:** Knowing one’s neighbors was mentioned repeatedly, but many wanted it to be beyond friendly neighbors. Respondents wanted neighbors who care about each other and look out for each other. Collaboration and cooperation between and among neighbors was listed. This may also be interpreted as part of the work of the neighborhood association. Some neighborhoods indicated the value of their association, but this was not universal.

**Neighborhood safety:** Reflecting the concerns about crime happening in their respective neighborhoods, residents wanted low crime rates and safe neighborhoods. Simply stated, criminal activity diminishes neighborhoods.

**Well-maintained homes:** Houses that were well kept were listed repeatedly as a sign of a healthy neighborhood.

**Clean, welcoming neighborhoods:** This is an extension of the well-kept houses and neighbor relationships. Recognizing the concern about trash and debris that was mentioned in all neighborhoods, the lack of such was listed as an attribute of a healthy neighborhood. The welcoming characteristic was related to the neighbors-knowing-neighbors comment. A few comments were made about a healthy neighborhood having racial, economic, religious, age, occupational, and lifestyle diversity.

**More homeowners living in the neighborhood:** Attendees had a strong preference for owner-occupied residences and would like to see more rental properties converted to homes where the owner lives as an indicator of neighborhood health.

**Collaboration with city government, other institutions:** Although not listed for all neighborhoods, the desire for collaboration with organizations beyond the neighborhood was listed multiple times.

**No economic measures listed:** Interestingly, no mention was made of increasing home values or any other economic measure was listed on any survey. This was especially curious since gentrification was listed as a concern so residents are aware of increasing property values.

# Middle Neighborhoods: A concept worth considering

Middle Neighborhoods may be better recognized in larger industrial, legacy cities like Cleveland or Baltimore, but this concept can inform the work of those interested the health and vitality of urban neighborhoods.

No bright-line definition exists for Middle Neighborhoods, but they tend to be located in older, industrial cities with a population greater than 50,000 – legacy cities – in the northeast and Midwest.[[13]](#footnote-13) Without a definitive definition, the five neighborhoods for this project could be classified as Middle Neighborhoods based on the neighborhood age and housing styles.

Middle Neighborhoods can be determined using a market value analysis of residential sales prices, foreclosures, building permits, land uses, and vacancy rates.[[14]](#footnote-14) They are neighborhoods on the edge: the edge of improving or the edge of economic decline. A viable real estate market exists but irreversible decline could occur without appropriate supports and interventions.[[15]](#footnote-15) Significant shares of a city’s population tend to live in these neighborhoods: 42.9 percent of Philadelphia, 37 percent of Milwaukee, and more than 50 percent of both Baltimore and Detroit in the early 2010s.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Middle Neighborhoods offer a strong “value proposition,” according to economist Charles Tiebout, with their attractive but affordable housing stock for middle- and modest-income households and families [[17]](#footnote-17) However attracting a city’s most educated residents to these neighborhoods can be difficult because they have more options on where to live.[[18]](#footnote-18) Furthermore, the desirable Millennial population may be difficult to attract to Middle Neighborhoods unless it’s already a superstar location because of young adults’ preference for downtown or urban living.[[19]](#footnote-19) Suburban locations offer an attractive option for the middle-income families that these neighborhoods once housed.[[20]](#footnote-20)

As seen with the data for this project, income segregation is a real and significant force, where families sort into neighborhoods based on household income.[[21]](#footnote-21) Additionally this housing stock is old (typically built before 1900 through the 1960s), regardless of architectural style, and largely remains without significant updates to reflect current demand for amenities.[[22]](#footnote-22) The ability to secure public funding for these kinds of repairs and updates isn’t likely to come from the federal government or if it does, it will be means tested by household income.[[23]](#footnote-23) Private developers will need to have market demand to respond, but the low market value works against this scenario.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Despite neighbors’ desire for more owner-occupied houses, the overall decline of homeownership works against this transition.[[25]](#footnote-25) Lower homeownership rates lend to high turnover rates in neighborhoods.[[26]](#footnote-26) Middle Neighborhoods need to strategize about how to move their communities forward. The “Strategies to Improve Middle Neighborhoods” paper by David Boehlke, contained within “On the Edge: America’s Middle Neighborhood” from The American Assembly of Columbia University offers a guide on how to stabilize and strengthen these neighborhoods, creating a viable and realistic housing market to attract new residents. It indicates that solid relationships among neighbors can revitalize Middle Neighborhoods that then support investment.[[27]](#footnote-27)

A key strategy to revitalize these neighborhoods is to create market demand for this kind of housing stock.[[28]](#footnote-28) It’s not only a marketing and branding problem, although that’s part of it, but also financing and economic incentives to have buyers perceive this neighborhood as on an upward trajectory.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Highlighted in a Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco article, the Healthy Neighborhoods model, which was used in Milwaukee and Baltimore, offers some places to start.[[30]](#footnote-30) The model uses the following strategies, which are further outlined in the article:[[31]](#footnote-31)

1. Starting with the neighborhood’s strongest features to build on existing assets, rather than working on the largest problems first.
2. Have residents work together to develop and strengthen neighborhood identities and positive messaging.
3. Empower residents to be ambassadors and salespeople for the neighborhood, including communicating with real estate agents.
4. Offer economic incentives including reduced interest rates to encourage people of all income levels to invest their homes.
5. Identify the market likely to move into the neighborhood and market accordingly.
6. Aggressively address crime since people won’t choose to live in an unsafe neighborhood.
7. Remedy physical problems with the neighborhood like overgrown lawns, vacant structures, and abandoned vehicles.
8. Encourage small inexpensive block improvements that directly involve residents.
9. Use neighborhood events like picnics and block parties to build community.
10. Use tactics designed specifically for the unique characteristics of each neighborhood but make sure they fit together within the neighborhood.
11. Measure the impact to provide feedback to residents and leaders.

Looking at these 11 strategies, some have been implemented in the five neighborhoods studied here, but not all neighborhoods are using all 11. The strategies provide a ready-made framework that can be adapted and modified for local conditions. They largely rely on active and engaged neighbors but outside help is needed, especially as it relates to Neighborhood Code Compliance violations and help on crime investigations.

# CRI’s strategic recommendations

CRI offers the following six strategic recommendations to NeighborLink based on the research to date as the organization works to strengthen neighborhoods and enhance its community development role.

1. **Own and activate the principles of Middle Neighborhoods in Fort Wayne:** CRI was surprised to discover that the Middle Neighborhoods framework hasn’t been embraced locally. Fort Wayne’s housing development patterns are an ideal fit for these concepts. Furthermore, the published recommendations, which are listed in this report, couple residents with market forces and external partners to improve quality of place. As NeighborLink looks to create community development strategies, Middle Neighborhoods offer a unique way to advocate for people who may feel overlooked.
2. **Address neighborhood curb appeal:** Qualitative data showed neighbors in all five locations want their neighborhood to look good. The comments centered around 1) removing trash and debris and 2) home maintenance and upkeep. Operationally they are separate issues, but both have a collective force to improve or diminish a neighborhood. With NeighborLink’s history of helping homeowners maintain their homes, upkeep is already in its wheelhouse. Neighborhood-specific trash and debris removal strategies could be an ideal second phase for the Healthy Neighborhoods project.
3. **Recognize the dual challenges of aging structures and low-income households:** The character of older houses presents charm and challenges. These structures have experienced varying degrees of maintenance and routinely demand expensive repairs that are part of homeownership. Local Historic District requirements add complexity and cost such as a requirement for wood windows instead of the cheaper vinyl version. However the neighborhoods’ share of annual household incomes below $25,000 present significant economic constraints. Some of the low-income residents are renters so these repairs are not the tenants’ responsibility, but expensive maintenance may prompt landlords to raise rents that displace existing residents. There are no easy solutions to this bifurcated problem, but failing to acknowledge both will complicate matters.
4. **Leverage neighborhood location but appreciate the dynamics of gentrification and displacement:** Neighbors love their location, according to their survey responses. They appreciate proximity to local amenities like library branches or commercial corridors. Closeness to downtown Fort Wayne, which has enjoyed a renaissance in the past decade, was also referenced in four neighborhoods. What these neighbors already know about location may increase home values, which is great for owners but may prompt landlords to sell. As property values escalate, it can also displace longtime renters who find their landlords making improvements and raising rents to match the market. West Central has experienced this, and it’s not unforeseeable in other locations, especially those closest to downtown. However these desirable locations also create unique opportunities for neighborhood revitalization with homeowner improvements that felt financially reckless just a few years ago. In sum, how does a neighborhood balance the needs of existing residents with the potential of new investment? The answers will be distinctive for each one.
5. **Scale projects and initiatives to neighborhood size and association involvement:** While all five neighborhoods have active neighborhood associations to leverage these ideas, there are varying degrees of resident engagement. Additionally, the largest neighborhood is more than seven times as large as the smallest when measured by population. Accordingly, whatever projects and tactics come out of this data, they need to be tailored for the realities – good and bad – of the location. Some can have application regardless of size, such as bringing in dumpsters for a neighborhood cleanup, but realistically they need to be designed for the particular location.
6. **Start with existing strengths**: Social service agencies often want to address the most pressing problem first. While that may make sense for some situations, especially those that relate to physical health or safety, it is not the appropriate first step for neighborhoods. As evidenced with the qualitative analysis, residents know what the problems are. However they tend to be complex – many parts within the system – and complicated – a high level of difficulty. Using a strengths-based approach can build on what is going well, which may make the other problems less challenging. It will also allow neighbors to build those desired relationships with one another. Getting an early win builds momentum for the hard work that’s ahead.

On the issue of improved retail options within neighborhoods, CRI believes that national or regional retailers use a specific methodology about where they place their locations. It would be unhelpful and misleading for CRI to advise NeighborLink to use its limited resources to advocate for more retail. Rather, NeighborLink’s energy should be devoted to creating vibrant, revitalized neighborhoods, which in turn could garner attention from the retailers that neighbors want.

# Conclusion

Ultimately NeighborLink is well positioned to go forward, so long as it doesn’t try to do too much too fast. It will have to balance a slow-but-steady approach vs. quick change that can fizzle out before sustainable transformation occurs. Working with the existing relationships of neighborhood leadership plus its experience of working with vulnerable homeowners in need should help NeighborLink find the right pace and tactics.

1. The 2004 West Central CDAP is available here: <http://www.fwcommunitydevelopment.org/images/community_planning/docs/West_Central_Plan.pdf> (Accessed July 25, 2019) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The 2004 West Central CDAP is available here: <http://www.fwcommunitydevelopment.org/images/community_planning/docs/West_Central_Plan.pdf> (Accessed July 25, 2019) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The recorded or legal name of a neighborhood may not match with the neighborhood association’s name. For example West Central is not a platted neighborhood, but rather a neighborhood association construct. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The U.S. Census Bureau published an article in June 2019 that shows how different age distributions can create the same median age. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/06/median-age-does-not-tell-the-whole-story.html>. (Accessed June 29, 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In the 2010 census, nearly all people who selected “some other race” without an additional racial category also identified as Hispanic or Latino, according to “Seeking better data on Hispanics, Census Bureau may change how it asks about race” from the Pew Research Center. *See* <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/20/seeking-better-data-on-hispanics-census-bureau-may-change-how-it-asks-about-race/>. Accessed July 24, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Table B23006 using 1-year data. Of the 33,445 bachelor degree holders ages 25 to 64 in Fort Wayne in 2017, only 4,894 were either unemployed or not in the labor force. In contrast, 6,591 of the 15,273 Fort Wayne residents without a high school diploma in the same age group were unemployed or not in the labor force. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. CRI’s recalculations are explained in the Methodology section of this report. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Health and Human Services’ poverty framework is calculated on the number of people within the household. The Census Bureau uses a combination of household size and age of household members. See American Community Survey and Puerto Rico Community Survey 2017 Subject Definitions available at <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/tech_docs/subject_definitions/2017_ACSSubjectDefinitions.pdf?>. (Accessed July 25, 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
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15. Ibid. p 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid. pp. 33, 32, 30 and 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid. p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ibid. p 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Ibid. 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Ibid pp. 54-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ibid. p. 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ibid. p. 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Ibid. p. 68 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Ibid. 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Ibid. p. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. M. Sissman and D. Russell, “The Healthy Neighborhoods Program: A Middle Neighborhoods Improvement Strategy,” Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco (August 23, 2016). Available at <https://www.frbsf.org/community-development/publications/community-development-investment-review/2016/august/the-healthy-neighborhoods-program-a-middle-neighborhoods-improvement-strategy/> (Accessed August 3, 2019) [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)