



24:1 COMMUNITY VISION REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BEYOND
HOUSING

24:1





NEIGHBORLY COMMUNITIES INVESTED FAMILIES SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSES

The 24:1 Community's Vision
and Priorities for the Next Decade

Creating real change starts with active participation from a community's residents.

This belief is at the center of the “Ask, Align, Act” model that guides our work at Beyond Housing. We’ve seen it succeed over the past 10 years in the 24:1 Initiative, focused on developing and improving the communities in the Normandy Schools Collaborative footprint. And it’s why we launched an engagement campaign called “CE 2.0” for residents of the 24:1 Community the fall of 2018.

The 24:1 Community’s vision for the future came through loud and clear from the 1,500 residents who provided feedback during the “CE 2.0” process. They told us they envision neighborly communities, invested families, and successful businesses.

In addition to describing these long-range goals, the Community Vision Report lays out five priorities for achieving them—and residents’ ideas for how to get started. Many of those priorities are already being implemented, and this summary includes an overview of some of the initiatives that are currently creating real change in the 24:1 Community.



THE VISION:

- Neighborly Communities
- Invested Families
- Successful Businesses

For the last 10 years, the vision statement for the 24:1 Initiative was “Strong communities, engaged families, successful children.” Our recent engagement process uncovered a new vision of “Neighborly communities, invested families, and successful businesses.” This vision serves as a north star for what the 24:1 Community feels should guide the change work done in their neighborhoods over the next few years.

The 24:1 Community described a **neighborly community** as one that feels safe, welcoming, and connected. Residents wave and speak to one another. They feel comfortable speaking to one another's children. They do their best to be “good neighbors” by treating interacting with respect, by taking care of their own homes and property, and by looking out for their neighbors' well-being.

Neighborly communities welcome newcomers to the area, host regular community events, and make a concerted effort to spread the word about their assets and amenities. As part of the unified local network, businesses demonstrate accessibility, trustworthiness, and care for nearby residents.

Finally, neighborly communities are physically inviting—bright, clean, and well-manicured. They are places where residents can walk around, sit on their front porch, or convene with neighbors for a block party.

Any resident can be engaged—come to a city government meeting and participate, for example—but then go home and do nothing for the community. By contrast, **invested families** feel a sense of ownership over the 24:1. They are committed to ensuring their neighborhood and its institutions function at their best. They stay and put down roots.

A recurring theme during the community engagement process was the importance of **successful businesses**, particularly retail options. Residents value opportunities to shop, dine, and take their children on outings near their homes. Increased retail and dining options in the 24:1 Community would positively affect the area's quality of life in many ways, from employment opportunities to entertainment options to a stronger local tax base.

In particular, residents place a great value on small-scale retail over big-box stores. And in their long-term vision, a large portion of these new businesses would be owned by Black entrepreneurs.

To bring their vision to life, the 24:1 Community members identified five priority areas on which to focus:



Community Unity



Economic Opportunity



Neighborhood Safety



Community Vibrancy



Youth Achievement

01

COMMUNITY UNITY

Communities are stronger when they work together and support one another.

Communities are stronger when they work together and support one another. In the 24:1, however, three major factors negatively impact unity: a lack of spaces and places encouraging connectivity, weak neighborhood attachment, and an abundance of municipalities, each with different priorities.

In some cases, cities with more resources are perceived to avoid associating themselves with cities and villages with fewer resources. In particular, residents noted a strong division east and west of Lucas and Hunt Road.

Many residents “live” outside of the 24:1. They shop, dine, seek entertainment, and spend family time in other neighborhoods and cities. Some factors that may contribute to this include a heavy police presence in areas where community members try to congregate, poor promotion of existing community spaces and activities, and a lack of engaging community events.





ACTIVE INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS:

- Develop Wellston.
- Focus on the quality of municipal services and products.
- Share positive news and uplifting stories.
- Promote volunteerism.
- Increase resident participation on neighborhood social media networks.
- Consider additional city mergers.
- Convene a community-wide event planning group.
- Promote the 24:1 Community via strategies like a place-branding campaign, support for local businesses, etc.
- Host 24:1 Community town halls and improve the feeling of inclusivity at existing events.
- Increase communication between residents and elected officials.



02

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Almost a quarter of our households survive in poverty.

Almost a quarter of our households (22%) survive in poverty, and many of them come from generational poverty, defined as a family having lived in poverty for two or more generations.

At the end of 2019, the unemployment rate was 14%, almost twice that of St. Louis County; the homeownership rate was 51%, compared to 72% for St. Louis County and 65% for the United States; and the percent of residents who've attained a postsecondary degree was 25%, compared to 43% for St. Louis County overall.

Residents, 85% of whom are Black, cited racial bias as the major contributing factor to high poverty rates. This can impact workers in a variety of ways that include wages, performance reviews, pay increase decisions, choices of occupation, overall career opportunities, and lending practices.





ACTIVE INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS:

- Develop a coordinated 24:1 Land Use and Economic Development Plan based on municipal partnerships.
- Create a “hire local” business campaign.
- Support start-ups, entrepreneurs, and Black-owned businesses.
- Counter voter suppression and increasing voter turnout.
- Better utilize the community’s assets, including the University of Missouri-St. Louis.
- Facilitate free landlord-tenant mediation and launch a housing court.

03

NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY

The community's role in preventing and reducing crime is as critical as that of law enforcement.

In some areas of the 24:1 Community, violent crime occurs at almost three times the national rate and property crime at almost twice the national rate. Currently, there are ten police departments—Bel-Nor, Bel-Ridge, Hillside, Normandy, North County Police Cooperative, Northwoods, Pagedale, St. John, St. Louis County, and Velda City—only four of which are accredited.

Research demonstrates that the community's role in preventing and reducing crime is as critical as that of law enforcement's. Residents acknowledge that they needed to do more to assist with crime prevention. However, they felt hampered by cultural norms, particularly among younger residents, that discourage talking to or cooperating with the police.

These norms stem from long-term issues such as race-based profiling and harassment, poor response times, and the racial composition of police departments. Still, residents did not solely blame the police for the distrust. They recognize that their own wariness to call the police sometimes stems from a reluctance to expose the perpetrator of a crime to justice systems that they believe are not designed to be fair for Blacks. In addition, officers have been shot by local citizens, and violent incidents like those, coupled with other factors like negative media coverage of community-police relations, have given both groups ample excuses not to trust one another.

Finally, residents believe that a lack of resources in the 24:1 hampers municipal governments from attracting highly qualified and talented officers and impacts police departments' access to newer, better equipment, technologies, and training opportunities.





ACTIVE INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS:

- Distribute video doorbell cameras to residences.
- Expand access to care for behavioral health.
- Increase engagement between residents and police.
- Increase participation in neighborhood watches.
- Implement best practices for police professionalism and internal investigations.
- Expand civilian oversight of local law enforcement and court systems.
- Counter bias with improved training for law enforcement.
- Provide counseling to police officers.
- Advocate for reform and civilian oversight.
- Train residents about non-emergency police numbers.



04 COMMUNITY VIBRANCY

*More than
20% of
homes in
the 24:1
are vacant.*

The quality of the built environment was a recurring theme. Specifically, residents mentioned the community's appearance, its housing stock and condition, and its amenities as areas where improvement is needed. The housing crisis of 2008-2009 had a significant impact because many residents, facing foreclosure, abandoned their properties, leaving behind vacant buildings and homes in need of repair.

The possibility that “slumlords” might purchase properties as older adults in the community transition to alternative housing during the next 25 years greatly concerns community members.

Many property owners and investors do not live in the community and rarely monitor their properties. Furthermore, a lack of uniform building codes has resulted in many homes and buildings failing to meet basic standards—which in turn has challenged municipal leaders with limited resources to ensure proper code enforcement and secure the funds needed to support adequate upgrades. Leaders are also challenged by the upkeep of public infrastructure such as lighting, streets, sewers, sidewalks, playgrounds, green spaces, and public transportation.

Ultimately, poor-quality housing results in negative impacts on residents' overall well-being. Effects range from lower property values and decreased business development to residential instability and decreases in individuals' physical health.

Finally, residents expressed a wish for city leaders to do more to market their neighborhoods and remove the stigma of moving to and living in the 24:1 Community.





ACTIVE INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS:

- Invest in culture and arts.
- Re-purpose vacant lots.
- Develop a home repair program.
- Help create homeowners.
- Launch an adopt-a-lot program.
- Deliver ongoing education about housing rights, responsibilities, resources, and how-to demonstrations.
- Develop a coordinated community development plan and effort to fight blight.
- Set up home remediation programs, home repair programs, first-time homeowner programs, and annual Realtor summits.
- Develop a “downtown” walkable retail destination.
- Encourage landlord monitoring.
- Invest in place-making (intentionally created public spaces).
- Launch a place-branding campaign.
- Update and align building codes across the 24:1.



05 YOUTH ACHIEVEMENT

Children help to unify the community.

Children under 18 years of age constitute almost a quarter of the 24:1 Community's population. They help drive commerce, shape the community's culture and reputation, and mobilize community action. They also help to unify the community.

Residents do not feel that their fellow families in the 24:1 embrace the concept of being a "village" for raising children. They say they are reluctant to get involved because neighbors, educators, and leaders often do not know and trust one another.

Residents expressed tremendous concern over NSC's provisional accreditation and about the lack of strong parent engagement within the school system.

To support fully their children, residents feel that continued improvements within the Normandy Schools Collaborative are needed, as are stronger community supports for youth, a larger number of engaging activities, and more preparation for college and/or career.





ACTIVE INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS:

- Host fatherhood support groups.
- Work with entire families in schools.
- Add child-friendly retail options.
- Encourage the use of innovative teaching methods.
- Launch community-based recognition programs.
- Encourage parent-teacher partnerships.
- Support NSC teachers, strengthen parent associations, and improve communications.
- Offer additional youth programming.
- Increase teacher engagement in the community at events and as residents.



CONCLUSION

The arrival of the coronavirus pandemic in early 2020 exacerbated many of the challenges that previously existed in the 24:1 Community, including economic insecurity, health concerns, and educational opportunities for young people.

The official launch of the Community Vision Report serves as a reminder of the willingness of residents and leaders to share their ideas, communicate effectively with each other, and work toward the neighborly communities, invested families, and successful businesses at the heart of their vision for the future.

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