

# Rimmon Heights Neighborhood Initiatives





Dear Friends:

As Mayor of Manchester, it is a pleasure to lend my support to the revitalization of the Rimmon Heights District, a culturally and historically important neighborhood on Manchester's West Side.

Since assuming the Office of Mayor last year, I have continually stressed the importance of restoring our city's diverse neighborhoods in order to improve the quality of living for our citizens. Strong and healthy neighborhoods are the hallmark of a successful city, providing our residents with safe streets, quality housing and convenient amenities.

I am extremely proud that the city's first neighborhood revitalization project has been embraced by the residents and business owners of the Rimmon Heights District. In the coming months and years, we will witness the transformation of this neighborhood into the envy of the West Side, encouraging other neighborhoods and residents to step forward to take back their neighborhoods' in similar fashion.

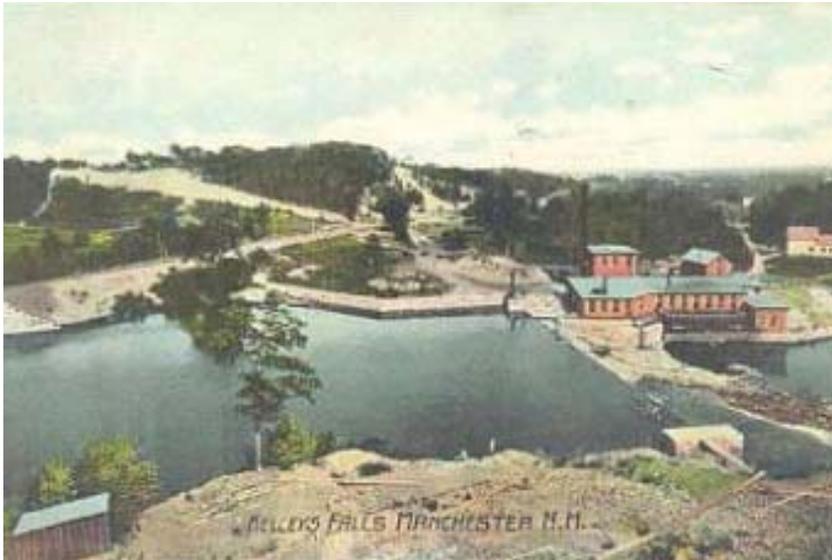
I thank you for your efforts and want to encourage each of you to make the Rimmon Heights District the very best neighborhood that it can be. I look forward to seeing the fruits of your collective labor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank C. Guinta". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Frank C. Guinta  
Mayor





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June, 2007

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Department

### In partnership with

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Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission  
The Citizens of Rimmon Heights



**RIMMON HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVES**



## Introduction

A city's downtown is often the first impression a visitor has when entering a new city. As such, Manchester has worked hard to create a vibrant first-class downtown. This effort has been necessary to insure that Manchester survives as a competitive city. In order to make Manchester a truly great city, however, we must insure that our neighborhoods are vibrant, livable areas since these are the portions of the city where most of the residents spend their time living, playing, shopping and going to school.

### *Defining Rimmon Heights*

The first neighborhood to be reviewed for a comprehensive neighborhood strategy is the Rimmon Heights area in the vicinity of Kelley Street. Rimmon Heights developed as the mills along the river grew, creating demand for workers and the housing necessary to support the population growth.

### *Geographic Context*

Rimmon Heights is located in the center of Manchester's west side. The neighborhood is bounded by the Merrimack River to the east, the Piscataquag River to the west, Rock Rimmon Park and Dexter Street to the north and Putnam Street to the south. This topography has created dramatic breaks in the landscape, developing natural boundaries for the neighborhood. Most of Rimmon Heights is located on a large plateau-like flatland above the flood plains of the Piscataquag and Merrimack rivers, but below the towering "Rock Rimmon." Because the majority of Rimmon Heights is largely flat, implementing the city's grid pattern was easier here than in most areas. The neighborhood is accessed from downtown by the Notre Dame Bridge (Bridge Street bridge), the Nazaire Biron Bridge (Kelley Falls bridge) from the west to access Pinardville and Goffstown and by a handful of connecting streets along its northern and southern borders.



There are several distinct development patterns and styles in Rimmon Heights. First, the neighborhood is served by two “Main Street” style arteries, Kelley and Amory streets. Both pedestrian friendly thoroughfares cater to the basic needs of residents in terms of retail, restaurants, shops and businesses. Next, the western and northern portion of the neighborhood is made up of single- and two-family homes while the eastern and southern portions are a mix of large apartment flats and multi-family homes. As a whole, these areas create a healthy mix of housing styles and lifestyles options for the neighborhood..



## Historic Context

Manchester was settled by the Pennacook Indians, who called the area “Namoskeag” or “place of many fish.” The name Amoskeag is derived from that word. Due to the abundance of fish at the falls, the Pennacook found the area to be an ideal location for their seasonal fishing camps.

Europeans would also find it an attractive fishing spot and would eventually settle a village on the bluffs next to the falls that still bear the name Amoskeag today. A road, roughly the path of Main, Front, and McGregor streets on the west side, would also connect another emerging village, Piscataquag Village at the mouth of the Piscataquag River, a few miles south of Amoskeag Village.

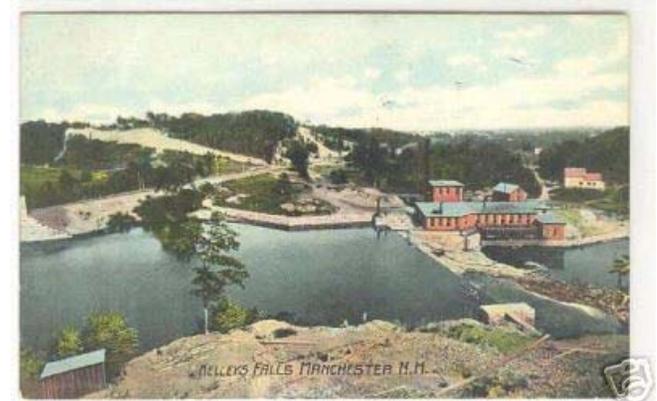
With the new village beginning to form on the east bank of the river and the transportation links to the outside world on the west bank, a crossing was inevitable. The nucleus of a third village was formed at what is now Bridge and McGregor streets. As early as 1792 a crossing has existed in the area of what is today Bridge Street forming the heart of McGregorville. Located between the two fast growing villages and at the crossing point of the river, McGregorville grew quickly. McGregorville, Piscataquag Village and Amoskeag Village were not originally part of Manchester, but because of their importance and interdependence with the city of Manchester they were annexed in 1853. With the organic pattern of growth in the villages up to this point, the city’s grid pattern was stamped on the newly added land above McGregorville, paving the way for Rimmon Heights. With the addition of street car service in 1877, growth was able to extend farther away from the mills than previously. Rimmon Heights was developed largely in tandem with the mass immigration of the Quebecois which is still reflected in part by the street names of today. As the textile industry started to wane in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, so did the living conditions, and by the mid twentieth century they were so bad the government stepped in to try and disperse some of the pressures applied to the old McGregorville section of the



neighborhood. With the swing of the wrecking ball, the area was taken apart and reassembled to its modern appearance. With the dramatic decrease in population of McGregorville, the Kelley's Falls Project on Kimball Street rose in its place.

Many of the neighborhood's street names are memorials of people who left their mark in some way on the neighborhood, city, or country. Cartier Street is named in honor of Jacques Cartier, the famous French explorer who discovered Canada in the early 1500's. Hevey Street was named in honor of Pierre Hevey who, with Alphonse Desjardins, founded St. Mary's bank in 1908. Lafayette Street as well as Lafayette Park on Notre Dame Avenue, was named in honor of the Revolutionary War hero Marquis de Lafayette.

Any history of Rimmon Heights would be incomplete without mentioning a few of the neighborhood's many historic sites. For example, the Merci Boxcar located on Reed Street was a gift from the French government after WWII. The boxcar, one of many, was originally filled with war relief and sent to France. After the war, it was sent back to the U.S., filled with gifts and art treasures, which are on display at the Franco-American Center in downtown. Another older site is the recreation building at the pool bordering Rock Rimmon Park which is a WPA building dating from 1939.



## Demographic

At almost 7800 people per square mile, Rimmon Heights is more than twice the density of the city as a whole. Despite this density the neighborhood has seen a 12.3% increase in population from 1990 to 2000, compared to the cities 7.4% increase. Most of this increase is a result of filling in vacant units as well as an increase in the size of households in the neighborhood. As the population continues to age and older residents are moving into assisted living or in with family, new units become available and are filled with larger sized families or households. As a result of this natural process, the neighborhood is getting “younger.” Rimmon Heights has a higher percentage of 18-24 year olds than the cities average, as well as a lower percentage of people over the age of 65. Most of the higher density areas of east and southeast Rimmon Heights have a generally lower median age (around 30) than the west and northwest parts (around 35).

Income levels tend to follow similar patterns, the southeast has the lowest median income per year (around \$28,000) while the north and northwest (excluding the Kimball Street projects) have the highest (around \$50,000).

The east and southeast portion of Rimmon Heights is the most diversified with the population reflecting similar patterns of other parts of Manchester’s more dense neighborhoods. The west/ northwest tend to be the least diversified and still retain their strong traditional French/ Canadian background. This is where Rimmon Heights emerges to the scene. In 1877 the street railway was extended to the area of McGregorville which pushed the developed area ever farther into the then wilderness. As development had crested the hill that Notre Dame Avenue now crests, the land was wide open and flat – ripe for development.

The section of road between Amoskeag and Piscataquag villages would be connected to the east bank of the Merrimack River in many places over time, but ultimately it would be the Notre Dame Bridges that would carry traffic across the river. The current span connects the section of West Manchester known as McGregorville, a neighborhood that developed initially as a result of its proximity to the mills across the river, but became a destination in its own right with the locating of mills on the west bank. With the intense growth of the textile mills, the local population would not be enough to operate the ever expanding mills and soon people from all over the world would come to work in the city. Rimmon Heights became home to a large population of French-Canadians which is still evident today.

## RIMMON HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

	<u>RIMMON HEIGHTS</u>		<u>MANCHESTER</u>
	Number	Percentage of Citywide	
<b>TOTAL POPULATION</b>			
2000	5,835	5.45%	107,006
1990	5,192	5.21%	99,567
Percent Change 1990-2000	12.30%		7.40%
<b>LAND AREA</b> (Sq. Miles)	0.75	2.20%	33.1
<b>DENSITY</b> , Persons per Square Mile			
2000		7,780	3,319
1990		6,922	3,107
<b>OPEN SPACE</b> , Percent of land area		17%	11%
<b>RACE &amp; ETHNICITY</b> , 2000 Number and Percentages			
White	5,089 (87%)		98,178 (92%)
Black	93 (2%)		2,246 (2%)
Hispanic	153 (3%)		4,944 (5%)
Asian	80 (1%)		2,487 (2%)
Native American	17 (<1%)		326 (<1%)
<b>TOP FOUR LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME</b> , For those 18 and older, 2000 Number and percentages (Sorted by most prevalent within neighborhood)			
English	4,324 (74%)		64,449 (79%)
French and French Creole	1,131 (19%)		7,992 (10%)
Spanish and Spanish Creole	140 (2%)		3,064 (4%)
Vietnamese	73 (1%)		480 (<1%)

**AGE, 2000 Number and Percentages**

Under 18	1,427 (25%)	25,358 (24%)
18-64	3,619 (62%)	67,819 (63%)
65+	726 (12%)	13,829 (13%)

RIMMON HEIGHTS

MANCHESTER

	Number	Percentage of Citywide	
<b>MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 1999</b>	\$36,108	89%	\$40,774
<b>POVERTY, 1999, Number &amp; Percentages</b>	745 (13%)	15%	11,103 (11%)
<b>LOW/MODERATE INCOME PERSONS, 1999, Number and Percentages</b>	3,217 55.1%		52,038 49.0%
<b>LOW/MODERATE INCOME HOUSEHOLDS, 1999, Number and Percentages</b>	1,101 (43.9%)		23,702 (51.6%)
<b>HOUSEHOLDS &amp; TENURE, 2000</b>			
Occupied Housing Units	2,505	6%	44,247
Percentage Owner-Occupants	31.2%		46.0%

## **GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTION STEPS**

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTION STEPS

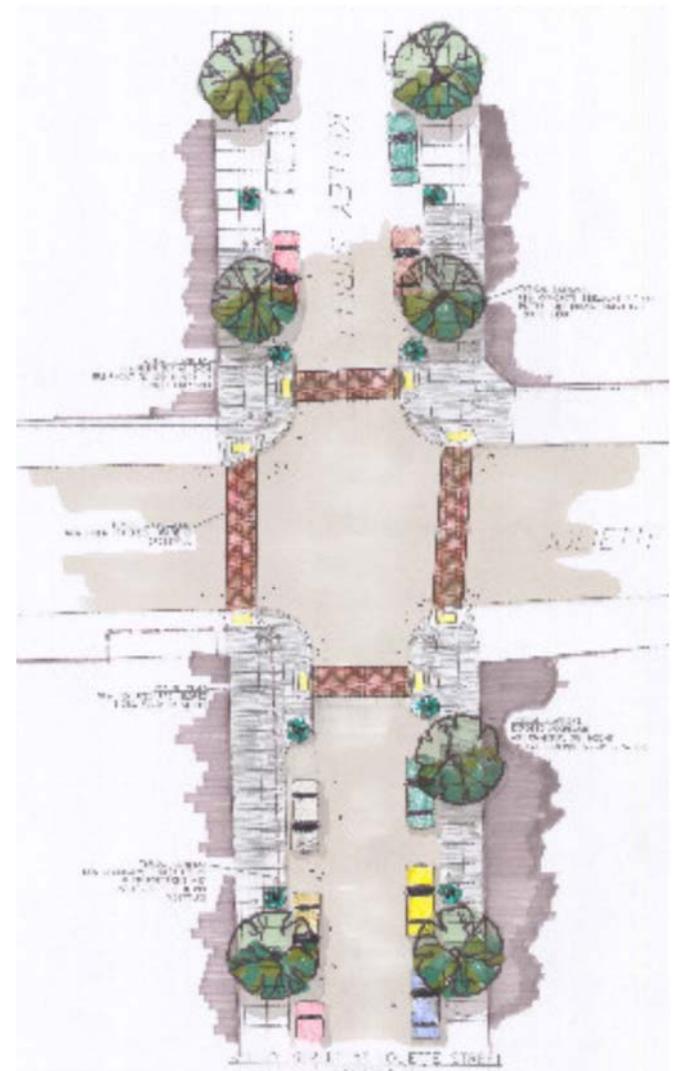
### Infrastructure

Goal: Improve the quality and character of the public infrastructure including streets, sidewalks and streetscape.

Both the streetscape and transportation system in a neighborhood provide a statement about the area, allow efficient movement of people, and supports the local business owners.

### Steps and Strategies

1. Transit. There is a need to improve bus service in the area. Currently the service is a one-way system. It runs through the neighborhood but does not return through the neighborhood. Two-way service would improve ridership and service.
2. Streetscape
  - Work towards upgrading the quality and extent of sidewalks.
  - Look at key interchanges where there seems to be traffic issues to see how we can reduce them, e.g. Bartlett and Amory.
  - Adopt set standards for sidewalk materials, green strips and curbing according to the type of uses in the area.
  - Keep the 50/50 sidewalk program along with identifying selected areas for building or rebuilding that would be paid 100% by the City.
  - Continue with the green streets program that the Parks and Recreation Department currently handles. Plant trees where needed. Encourage businesses and property owners to green their spaces. Use Bremer Street as a pilot program to expand street trees. Add additional 15 trees a year in this pilot area.
  - Creation of a streetscape plan that incorporates lights, arches, planters, trees for major roa



Kelley Street traffic calming

- Landscape automobile parking lots. Establish a cost sharing incentive program to make permanent site improvements to help buffer parking lots from pedestrian sidewalks. Install trees, hedges, and appropriate walls or fences for site improvements. An example would be the St. Jeans parking lot on Kelley Street.
- Reduction of regulatory Street signs within the right of way. Too many signs can reduce the effectiveness and make the area more unsightly.
- Have a long-term goal of reducing the number of overhead wires.

### 3. Traffic Issues

Promote safe pedestrian crossings and traffic calming of roadways in the area with high pedestrian and automobile traffic. Safety and traffic calming methods may include pedestrian crosswalks, improved street signage, and street throathing. Implementation will start at the highest priority sites.

- Review Parking needs.
- Aesthetic enhancements – bollards, arches.

### 4. Connections. Improve pedestrian connections in the following areas:

- Amory Street Connection to Bartlett Street-
- Improve StaircaseStreet Pedestrian Connection from Kelley Street to Park
- Construct Sidewalks on Bremmer East on Coolidge to McGregor
- Reconstruct Piscataquog river pedestrian bridge
- Create a connection from Congress Street to Douglas Field



## Housing

Goal: Make Rimmon Heights a supportive community for residents throughout their lives.

The neighborhood is already fairly built out in terms of housing with moderately high-density development that offers a variety of housing options. Many of the people are long term residents of the neighborhood. Generations have grown up in the area and although some leave, many return at a later time. There is both a sense of heritage and sense of community. Providing a full range of housing options is an important part of making a healthy and vibrant neighborhood. Single-family, two-family, apartments and even condominiums can play a role in allowing kids to grow up, young adults to find affordable housing, families to begin and seniors to retire.

### Steps and Strategies

1. Promote owner occupied housing options. At approximately 70%, the neighborhood has a relatively high rate of renting households. Encouraging increased homeownership can promote neighborhood stability and options for young families who would like to move from an apartment to an owner unit. Neighbor Works of Greater Manchester can assist families in understanding how to purchase their first home. Additional financing for homeownership is also required.
2. As the State's population ages, additional housing and housing options for seniors will be required. Providing senior housing in the neighborhood for individuals who have spent much of their life in the area can maintain their support network and allow them to remain living in familiar place. The O'Malley high rise is a good neighborhood resource, but the renovation of the Brown School into senior housing will provide another option right in the heart of the area.
3. Improve housing conditions in the neighborhood by assisting homeowners to maintain and improve housing through a homeowner rehab loan fund available through the city and other sources.



Homes found in the neighborhood



4. homeowners to maintain and improve housing through a homeowner rehab loan fund available through the city and other sources.
5. Support the removal of lead paint hazards in the housing stock. Rimmon Heights, as with other areas of the City, has a relatively large percentage of units with lead paint due to the older nature of construction in the area. The City has recently been awarded a major HUD program to assist property owners in the mitigation of lead paint hazards.
6. Promote the cleanup of neighborhoods through the cleanup of garbage and other neighborhood hazards, particularly in the alleys. The City's Neighborhood Enhancement Team can assist in correcting code violations. A neighborhood effort could also go a long way in improving the cleanliness of the area.
7. Support mixed uses along major streets such as Kelley and Amory Streets. Neighborhood retail and services can make buying a home and living in the area more attractive and convenient.



Brown School

## Parks, Recreation and Green

Goal: To provide access to neighborhood parks and recreational opportunities and promote the general greening of the area including the streetscape.

The Rimmon Heights neighborhood has an abundant amount of green and natural areas in the district. From the Piscataquog River Park, the bicycle trail system, Rimmon soccer fields, West Side Ice Arena, Dupont Pool as well as several small parks, the green areas allow for a variety of activities for not just the neighborhood residents but also the City. The neighborhood spans from the Merrimack River on the east to the Piscataquog River on the west – both of which are valuable assets. Green space, whether active parks, forested areas or simply street trees, is an asset in this neighborhood.

There are certain concerns in the area including illegal dumping in certain remote areas and a general lack of street trees. Certain parks need to be upgraded and maintenance improved and there are limited connections from certain parts of the neighborhood to parks.

### Steps and Strategies

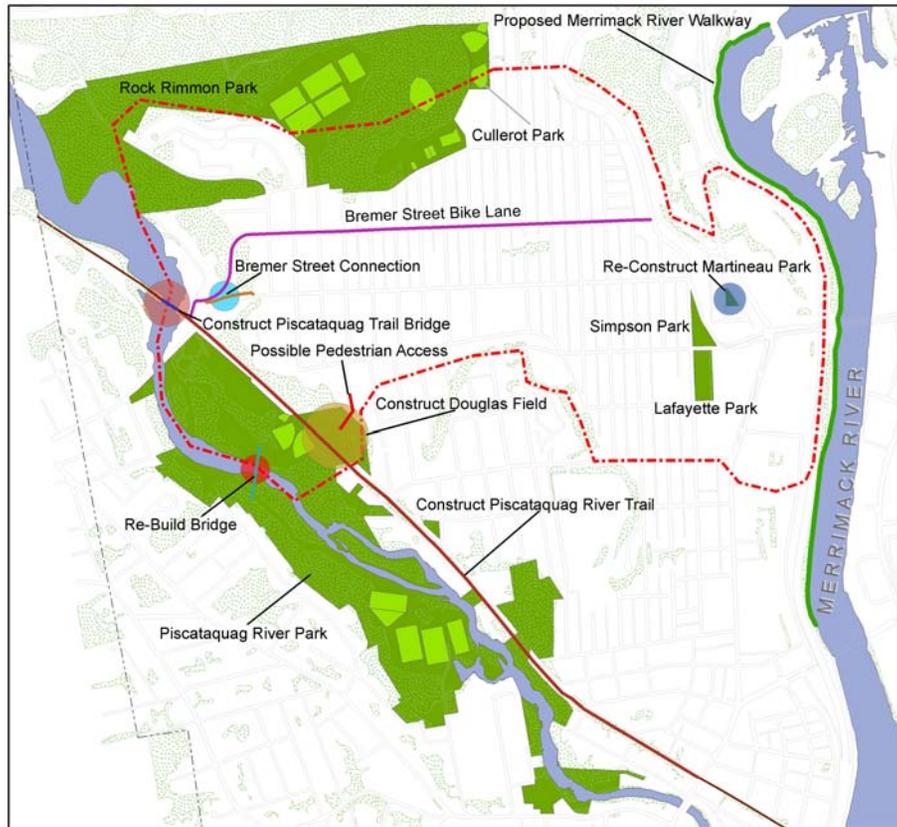
#### 1. Parks Projects

- Douglas Field – A multi-purpose field is planned for the 'Sandpit' area below the hill from Congress Street and adjacent to the West Side Ice Arena.
- The trail system along the Piscataquog River will eventually connect south to the Hands Across the Merrimack Bridge and the east side and north into Goffstown across the old trestle bridge.
- The Piscataquog Park was recently damaged by flooding. With improved connections it can be a neighborhood gathering spot and connection across the Piscataquog River into other neighborhoods and fields.



*Douglas Field Development Plan*





Proposed parks projects.

- Martineau Park – a small neighborhood park in the McGregorville area is planned for improvements.
- Simpson and Lafayette Parks have recently been improved and are in good shape.
- Develop a bicycle transportation system that runs through the neighborhoods with supporting bicycle racks at key commercial districts, public spaces and parks.

## 2. Connections

- Create possible direct access from Congress Street to the Piscataquog River Park system.
- Clean up existing pedestrian ramp from Kelley Street to Bremer Street and the River.
- Rebuild the Piscataquog River pedestrian bridge.

## 3. Neighborhood Greening and Cleanup

- Add more street trees
- Clean up existing forested and other green spaces where there is illegal dumping
- Creation of a neighborhood green team to identify and assist with neighborhood cleanup projects. The team would also watch out for illegal dumping in targeted areas. Partner with local churches, schools and volunteer organizations to help with cleanups and adopting 'spots'.

## Business Assistance

**Goal:** Improve the business climate in the neighborhood offering local businesses the chance to grow and attracting selected new businesses into the area.

Mixing businesses into the neighborhood on key streets such as Kelley and Amory has several advantages. It provides convenient access to services and goods for the neighbors, provides a central gathering spot for the neighborhood, provides for jobs and allows for entrepreneurial growth.

### Steps and Strategies

1. Support Neighborhood Businesses - Retention
  - Kelley Street should not be just a through street for traffic from the west to get to downtown. The function and design should encourage people to stop for the businesses.
  - Improve the commercial district parking availability. Promote shared parking alternatives by facilitating formal discussion on shared parking options and strategies between neighborhood businesses and nearby institutions
  - Encourage growth of existing businesses through programs such as the revolving loan program, façade improvement program and rehab loan programs.
2. Recruit and retain businesses that help with the goals of the neighborhood.
3. Enhance and improve the visual character of the commercial districts through:
  - Façade improvement – maintain and expand the façade improvement program to assist businesses with exterior façade improvements through a matching grant program.
  - Assisting with defensive design without looking defensive.
  - Encourage Planters, window boxes, and adopt a spots
4. Develop Business Activism. Develop activities that increase business in the area including: a local business directory, special event nights, and joint marketing. Consideration could also be given to creating either a business association for the area or a neighborhood association.
5. Encourage Pedestrian activity scale
  - Promote special uses and events that encourage economic development and attraction to the neighborhood. An example could be relocating the Majestic Theatre Company into the neighborhood.





## Neighborhood Identity and Design

Goal: Improve the image and identity of the neighborhood through signs, events and strong neighborhood design.

### Steps and Strategies

1. Make streetscape attractive with unified:
  - Lighting
  - Trash barrels
  - Sidewalk design
  - Removing unnecessary street and regulatory signs
2. Adding Banners along Kelley Street area supported by businesses and institutions in the city and neighborhoods.
3. Add arches in key entryways to the area signifying that they are entering a distinct and special neighborhood.
4. Use art, history and heritage to build community
  - Walking tours highlighting people, historic places, events and things.
5. Place markers in the community to identify significant events and individual places.
6. Building design to respect the neighborhood character
  - Encourage parking in the rear with new buildings being designed to cater to pedestrians walking from front instead of drivers.
  - Build on the Façade Improvement Program
  - Promote mixed-use along arterial streets
  - Do not allow the main streets to become commercial strips – building first, parking second.





Create a landscaped buffer between parking and sidewalk along the St. Jean Baptist parking lot

7. Evaluate potential projects for the future Redevelopment of St. Patrick's
8. Neighborhood Involvement – Assist with creation of better sense of community and welcoming the new into the area.
  - Provide opportunities for neighbors to get to know each other and get involved.
  - Assist in the maintenance and growth of the neighborhood crime watch team.
  - Provide for ongoing neighborhood communication – assist and promote the communication system established by the neighborhood watch teams.
  - Creation of newsletter for the neighborhood.
  - Work with other neighborhoods to address common issues.
  - Have an bi-annual neighborhood cleanup project modeled after adopt-a-block day.



## 9. Security

Goal: Insure a secure environment for living and working in the neighborhood

A sense of security is a prerequisite for revitalization of a neighborhood. This can be accomplished through increased police presence, a neighborhood commitment to watch out for itself, an image of an improving area, design upgrades (such as lighting improvements) and programs to reduce the seeds that allow crime to develop. Improved communications and better governmental relations can also be agents to improve security.

Steps and Strategies

1. Support and strengthen the neighborhood watch groups.
2. Locate and sustain a police sub-station in the area that is accessible to the residents.
3. Make sure that graffiti is quickly removed with the assistance of property owners and the city.
4. Improve lighting in public areas such as alleys.
5. Provide space for youth to gather where they feel comfortable. Use this as a site to facilitate services that may be required, provide a safe haven for them and give them a sense of ownership of neighborhood.
6. Utilize Police department officers for the crime prevention through design program. Encourage defensible design of buildings which do not give the appearance of fortress construction





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