



## Fischer & Harrison Task Team

### Executive Summary

#### Overview

The intersection of Fischer and Harrison Avenues was identified as one of three Westwood hot spots with a high concentration of violent crime in 2015 based on CPD crime data and community input. 2015 data revealed the Fischer & Harrison vicinity experienced 7 violent assaults & robberies. The only commonality of these crimes was the general location (i.e., proximity to the intersection, no specific location) and the involvement of guns. In contrast to the other “hotspots” at McHenry and Boudinot this area has no obvious destination or “hangout”. The area is a primarily residential area, largely single family homes as rentals and owner-occupied. There are many vacant and/or neglected properties, and a general lack of investment in the neighborhood evidenced by blight, building code infractions, and few community amenities. Many residents reported they are fearful and afraid to report or engage with their neighbors. Feeder streets provide cut through access from Harrison Ave to Montana, and Harrison to Bracken Woods via Shafer. Ryan Park, the only greenspace/ recreation space in the area, also provides cut through access from several directions. A CRC pool operates in the summer with good attendance. Ryan Park lost its playground to vandalism and is generally not heavily utilized as there are few amenities and concern for criminal elements. The park is situated in a basin, creating partially obscured public location for vandalism and other criminal mischief. Residents report gun shots are frequently heard coming from the directions of Harrison Ave or Ryan Park.

Of the residential properties in the area, 2880 Harrison, a large apartment building, had the highest number of repeat calls for service. Service calls, arrests and drug activity are concentrated around higher density housing particularly on Harrison. These buildings for most part are in poor, unkempt condition, possible code violations, frequent changes in ownership, and no onsite management. 2910 Mignon Ave., a duplex, also stood out for numerous infractions involving drugs, weapons, and violence. At the time of our assessments that property appeared vacant. There are no concerns associated with the few commercial properties in the vicinity (a Quick Shop on Wunder Ave., and two automotive repair shops on Harrison Ave. (one of which, Christian Automotive, recently closed).

#### Methods

- Made visual assessments of the physical environment on foot and by car
- Reviewed crime statistics by CPD for the streets surrounding Harrison & Fischer intersection
- Reviewed county auditor data to evaluate home value and ownership statistics



- Created a questionnaire to guide and facilitate conversations with residents within a radius of Fischer & Harrison (see attached). Individual, face to face interviews were conducted with 70+ residents representing home owners and tenants from Shaffer, Mignon, Harrison Ave. apartments, Bracken Woods, Ratterman, Kling, and Wunder, as well as St. Catharine of Siena (Wunder Ave.), Triends Automotive (Harrison Ave.), and Christian Automotive (Harrison Ave.).
- Discussed interview responses and observations of the neighborhood to formulate the recommended strategies for reducing opportunities for violent crime.

### **Analysis & Findings**

Data from the discussion and surveys with residents revealed some common themes.

1. People generally felt safe in the neighborhood until about 2008. Since then they report a dramatic increase in crime.
2. Home values have steeply declined, creating a downward spiral. Many people feel they are prisoners of their environment and have no reason to invest in their homes and can't sell them.
3. Blight and property neglect are major issues.
4. Auto thefts and burglary are common experiences.
5. The sound of gunshots is very frequent, coming from Harrison Ave. or Ryan Park.
6. Parents do not feel safe letting their children play in the park or in front yards for fear of them being caught in crossfire.
7. Several homes on Shafer have bullet holes on doors and interior walls.
8. Others are afraid to engage with their neighbors because some neighbors are the ones causing problems. Several expressed the sentiment that it is safer to keep to yourself whether you live in a house or apartment.
9. Lack of confidence in the city and police to address problems and resolve criminal issues due to poor experiences where there is no outcome or no feedback. Feelings of despair and hopelessness were common.
10. The majority of residents were happy to have someone speak with them directly, and to *listen* and *hear* their concerns. It's important that the city and community continues to engage with residents and make a long term commitment to addressing the issues and concerns in these areas.

### **Conclusion**

No single factor, property or person defines violent crime in this area. Rather, there appear to be a number of factors that make this location an attractive *opportunity* for criminal behavior.

- Vacant houses ( fewer eyes and feet on the street)
- Blight (litter, dumping, and lack of investment by homeowners and landlord suggests lack of attention or concern for the neighborhood )



- Fear—known problems and lack of enforcement/police response
- Lack of engagement/empowerment—fear, hopelessness, lack of knowledge about resources and rights

While these are location-specific factors that attract criminal behavior, it must also be acknowledged that there are additional factors that attract *individuals* to engage in criminal behavior such as lack of education and economic opportunities, among others. This activity focused on the location-specific factors that *attract* crime. Though beyond this scope of this analysis, addressing the larger socio-economic factors that drive individuals to engage in criminal activity and gun violence is equally important for mitigating violent crime.

### **Recommendations**

Our recommendations for reducing the opportunity for violent crime in the Fischer & Harrison area are centered on the following goal: *To engage and empower residents; to connect them to their community while reducing the factors that attract criminal activity.*

Our recommendations fall into three target areas: *Blight Abatement, Engagement, and Empowerment.*

#### **Blight Abatement, Beautification, and Public Safety**

1. Co-ordinate with residents to facilitate a neighborhood clean-up/dumpster day;
2. Identify properties whose owners/residents may need assistance in addressing home maintenance issues and connect them with People Working Cooperatively, or similar resources);
3. Improve the safety and facilities of Ryan Park to provide a safe, attractive, recreation for children and families (there are some improvements which are in progress or proposed):
  - a. Restrooms;
  - b. multi-age playground; ball courts;
  - c. hosting public activities to activate/populate the space;
  - d. Develop a safety improvement plan through city-police-community collaboration.
4. Focused building code assessment and enforcement with special attention to vacant properties;
5. Pro-active police reporting to include citations for speeding, tinted windows, disruptive behavior, and drug dealing/use;
6. Refer and enlist apartment owners to the Landlord Education program;

#### **Resident Engagement**

1. Connect residents who expressed interest in becoming involved with like-minded neighbors;
2. Invite residents to WUSTV community meeting in July;
3. Support and facilitate neighborhood events at Ryan Park or St. Catharine of Siena
  - a. Neighborhood forum
  - b. Street fair/ know-your-neighbor event



- c. Clean-up Days
- d. Facilitate organization of a neighborhood watch FB page for homeowners and tenants
- 4. Establish WCA Youth Council to invite and encourage Westwood teenagers to become involved in community issues and service;
- 5. Improve community-police relations:
  - a. Strengthen positive community engagement and responsiveness;
  - b. Seek input from police and residents during community forums to develop specific goals for improving police-community relations;
  - c. Clarify protocol and expectations for different types of calls for service.

### **Resident Empowerment**

- 1. Develop a Resident Resource Guide/Citizen Education Campaign--Inform residents of city public services for help and reporting violations through printed material
  - a. Provide residents with a quick reference list of useful city services contacts;
  - b. Comprehensive list to empower residents to report issues with crime, blight, code violations;
  - c. Clearly emphasize the rights and roles of residents in reporting these issues and how reports will be used (expectations);
  - d. Provide information on tenant rights and landlord responsibilities;
  - e. Inform residents about local resources-Westwood Civic Association, block watch formation.
- 2. Provide landlords with a tip sheet for securing buildings and improving property safety

## Harrison & Fischer Resident Questionnaire

Explain that in response to a dramatic increase in shootings in Westwood we are involved with the community initiative Westwood Uniting to Stop the Violence which aims to develop strategies and implement plans to reduce gun violence and address contributing factors in Westwood. Three 'hot-spot' areas were identified from available crime data: Harrison & McHenry, Harrison & Fischer and Harrison & Boudinot. The three intersections identified had the highest concentrations of fatal and non-fatal shootings, drug arrests, and reported criminal behavior.

Our group is focused on developing strategies to reduce such activity surrounding the Harrison & Fischer intersection.

The following questions will help initiate and guide conversations with community members, organizations, and business owners in the area. These questions are intended to facilitate a conversation but hopefully will lead to a deeper conversation and invitation for continued engagement with people in the neighborhood.

1. What are your perceptions of crime in the area?
2. What elements do you believe contribute to violent crime in this location? What is it about this area that attracts problem
3. What local-level actions/changes would help reduce the problems and improve safety in the area?
4. What have you tried to implement to address problems or criminal behavior? What was the effect?
5. Would you be interested in becoming involved in community efforts to address these issues or attending a meeting provide more input on these issues?
6. Would you be interested in opportunities for positive community/neighborhood engagement such as street festivals, block watches?



## Harrison & Fischer Task Team Asset/Solution Mapping

<b>Goal: To reduce the opportunity and environment for criminal activity by engaging and empowering residents and supporting beautification and blight reduction</b>			
<b>Location</b>	<b>Analysis &amp; Interpretations</b>	<b>Potential Responses</b>	<b>Potential Partners</b>
<b>Shafer Ave.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longest street in area</li> <li>• Situated between Ryan Park and Harrison Ave. with deep, wooded ravine behind some properties</li> <li>• Few homes have garages- driveway and street parking</li> <li>• 118 properties, mostly single-family</li> <li>• 21 management companies</li> <li>• Turnover of 53 properties since 2008 (45%)</li> <li>• Thoroughfare between Bracken Woods/Gobel to Harrison or Montana</li> <li>• Speeding-cars ignore speedbumps</li> <li>• Two large columns remain from former gate/barrier blocking access from Shafer to Gobel</li> <li>• Many homes in neglect/disrepair</li> <li>• Sidewalks and driveways are in poor condition</li> <li>• Parents are afraid to let their children to play outside for fear they'll caught in stray gunfire</li> <li>• Rubbish &amp; litter everywhere</li> <li>• Garbage cans left at curb</li> <li>• Tall grass, unkempt yards</li> <li>• Many vacant homes</li> <li>• Junk in yards and on property</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate block watches</li> <li>• Host neighborhood social events and clean-ups</li> <li>• Inform residents of sex offenders living within vicinity</li> <li>• Educate tenants and residents of their rights</li> <li>• Educate landlords on good property management and responsibilities</li> <li>• Improve safety and facilities of Ryan Park to provide a safe recreation for children and families</li> <li>• Report blight and code violations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cincinnati Islamic Center</li> <li>• St. Catharine of Siena</li> <li>• Westwood Civic Association</li> <li>• City of Cincinnati</li> <li>• Code Enforcement</li> <li>• CRC &amp; Parks Board (Ryan Park)</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2755 Shafer three room house operating as a mosque. Traffic takes up street parking when people come for services. Possible fire code violation. Huge volume of people come for services.</li> <li>• Residents interviewed felt hopeless, prisoners of their environment</li> <li>• Residents express lack of engagement and response from police and city services</li> <li>• Residents report hearing gunshots daily from Harrison and Ryan Park areas</li> <li>• Absentee landlords/landowners- lack of maintenance</li> <li>• 2855 Shafer-Section 8 family living in house without working doors, no furniture, bullet holes in door, interior wall, lack of proper maintenance by owner yet owner gets full rent of about \$950/mo</li> <li>• Unruly, unsupervised youth in yard and road from two houses on street</li> </ul>		
<p><b>2880 Harrison Ave. and neighboring apartment complexes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Litter everywhere</li> <li>• Residents of apartments don't know what their rights are</li> <li>• Residents in more secured buildings feel more satisfied yet several had unsecure main doors</li> <li>• Several out of state owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better management to include security measures and on-site property managers</li> <li>• Inform tenants of their rights</li> <li>• Inform apartment owners of their responsibilities</li> <li>• Encourage participation in Landlord Education Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CPD</li> <li>• Police Partnering Center</li> <li>• CMHA-Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority</li> <li>• Residents</li> <li>• Street workers from CIRV</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mignon</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents afraid of engaging with neighbors; afraid to bring on trouble</li> <li>• Divided street: one end, near Kling has friendly,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate block watches</li> <li>• Connect neighbors who want to improve neighborhood</li> <li>• Facilitate know-your-neighbor events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents</li> <li>• Police Partnering Center</li> <li>• CPD</li> </ul>



	<p>caring neighbors who want to be more engaged; other end closer to Fischer has more hostile residents not willing to talk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2910 Mignon is now vacant duplex with history of drug, weapons, and violence</li> <li>• Absentee landlords/landowners- lack of maintenance</li> <li>• Residents express lack of engagement and response from police and city services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report blight and code violations</li> <li>• Provide information to residents on how to report criminal activity, code violations, etc.</li> <li>• Host discussion with CPD on improving community relations and responsiveness</li> </ul>	
<b>Ryan Park</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only greenspace in vicinity</li> <li>• Gun shots common</li> <li>• Litter</li> <li>• Connects to Bracken Woods-cut through area</li> <li>• Uneven terrain blocks visibility</li> <li>• No bathrooms</li> <li>• Under-utilized space</li> <li>• Perception as unsafe</li> <li>• Adjacent to Fisher Ave rehab house</li> <li>• Public pool</li> <li>• Gamble Montessori School situated beside park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase patrols and monitoring</li> <li>• Improve recreation facilities at park to attract more use</li> <li>• Meet with CPD and community to discuss and develop plan focused on improving safety and use of Ryan Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marvin Lewis NFL Foundation (planning to build playground and other recreation facilities at Ryan and Gamble Montessori in October 2016).</li> <li>• Cincinnati Reds Community Foundation</li> <li>• City on a Hill (operates the rehab house)</li> <li>• St. Catharine of Siena</li> <li>• Cincinnati Recreation Commission/Parks Board</li> <li>• CPD</li> <li>• Gamble Montessori</li> <li>• Residents of neighboring streets (Fischer, Meyer, Wunder)</li> </ul>
<b>Kling Ave.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two separate residents tried to start block watches previously but no interest from neighbors</li> <li>• Code violations on properties</li> <li>• Some residents concerned about decline in neighborhood but don't know what to do</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate block watches</li> <li>• Connect neighbors who want to engage</li> <li>• Invite residents to WCA meetings and other community events</li> <li>• Report code violations and blight</li> <li>• Provide information to residents on resources for reporting crime and blight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Westwood Civic Association</li> <li>• City of Cincinnati-Code Enforcement</li> <li>• CPD</li> <li>• Police Partnering Center</li> </ul>

**WESTWOOD**  
**UNITING TO**  
**STOP THE**  
**VIOLENCE**  
*a call to action*

<p><b>Fischer Ave</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People are afraid of being involved</li> <li>• Drug deals and traffic very common in cars</li> <li>• Many vacant houses</li> <li>• 3 vacant homes in a row near Fischer &amp; Harrison Ave., one has a side yard that backs to Harrison Ave. apartments creating a discrete spot for illegal activity</li> <li>• City on a Hill runs a residential heroin rehab facility across from St. Catharine church</li> <li>• Many properties in disrepair, e.g. garage falling in</li> <li>• Absentee landlords/landowners- lack of maintenance</li> <li>• Residents report hearing gunshots from Ryan Park area almost daily</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate block watches</li> <li>• Host neighborhood social events and clean-ups</li> <li>• Inform residents of sex offenders living within vicinity</li> <li>• Educate tenants and residents of their rights</li> <li>• Educate landlords on good property management and responsibilities</li> <li>• Improve safety and facilities of Ryan Park to provide a safe recreation for children and families</li> <li>• Report blight and code violations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St. Catharine of Siena</li> <li>• Westwood Civic Association</li> <li>• City of Cincinnati</li> <li>• Code Enforcement</li> <li>• CRC &amp; Parks Board (Ryan Park)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Overall neighborhood</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents feel surrounded by crime</li> <li>• Modify behavior to avoid certain streets and areas</li> <li>• Don't allow children to play outside for fear of being shot</li> <li>• Unsupervised children roaming neighborhood</li> <li>• Curfew violations</li> <li>• Residents express frustration with law enforcement (ineffective response, lack of response, disrespectful treatment, lack of engagement with citizens-no foot patrols) to point of not bothering to report</li> <li>• Residents complain of lack of police enforcement for minor violations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pro-active reporting to include citations for speeding, tinted windows, disruptive behavior, and drug dealing/use</li> <li>• Focused building code assessment &amp; enforcement</li> <li>• Citizen Education Campaign-- Inform residents of city public services for help and reporting violations through printed material</li> <li>• Resident resource guide</li> <li>• Recruit volunteers for clean-ups</li> <li>• Community gathering to engage residents with neighborhood event to report on WUSV, unite residents, call to action, and to empower residents and youth, with performance</li> <li>• Support formation of block watches</li> <li>• Street Clean-ups</li> <li>• Promote and raise profile of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Health Department</li> <li>• Building Inspection</li> <li>• CMHA</li> <li>• Keep Cincinnati Beautiful</li> <li>• High school students</li> <li>• St. Catharine of Siena</li> <li>• Elements.org (youth group in OTR)</li> <li>• Business/Local partners for sponsorship of resources</li> <li>• City of Cincinnati Asset Forfeiture Grant</li> <li>• Cincinnati Islamic Center</li> <li>• Interfaith Groups: Greater Cincinnati Interfaith Alliance, MARCC, Bridges</li> <li>• Westwood Civic Association</li> <li>• Westwood Town Hall</li> <li>• Cincinnati Park Board</li> <li>• Cincinnati Recreation Commission</li> <li>• Gamble Montessori</li> </ul>

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		<p>WUTSV initiative, branding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertise positive community events at Town Hall</li> <li>• Promote participation in Landlord Education Training events hosted by CPD and PPC</li> <li>• Community policing/ foot patrols</li> <li>• Recommend to re-convene community meeting to share results of this work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CPD</li> <li>• Police Partnering Center</li> <li>• CMHA-Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority</li> <li>• CPD resources</li> <li>• Schools for volunteers or community meetings: Westwood elementary, gamble Montessori, St. Catharine</li> <li>• Cincinnati Human Relations Commission (to facilitate Peacemakers youth program)</li> <li>• People Working Cooperatively (property repair assistance)</li> </ul>
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