RESTORING THE HEART: A COMMUNITY VISION FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF ALDENVILLE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Fall 2017, 7 Peaks partnered with the City of Chicopee to create a public engagement campaign for the neighborhood of Aldenville. 7 Peaks created a brand – “Create Our Chicopee” – and promotional items with the brand and survey link. The goal of this campaign was to collect residents’ opinions and use the results of a community survey to inform planning recommendations for the neighborhood as well as guide future citywide engagement efforts. The community survey received 375 responses, including 182 Aldenville residents. These responses were used to inform three land-use proposals in Aldenville.

The Aldenville Commons were identified by residents as being key to the once and future vibrancy of Aldenville, and are central to our land-use recommendations. First, to restore the “Heart” of Aldenville, 7 Peaks recommends zoning and programmatic changes to the Aldenville Commons and surrounding areas. Second, street improvements around the Aldenville Commons would increase neighborhood safety and accessibility. Finally, a proposed Field and Farm pedestrian path connects several of Aldenville’s greatest assets to allow safe walkable paths. These mitigations work together to help connect and promote Aldenville as a destination in the City, and revitalize “The Heart of Chicopee.”

AROUND ALDENVILLE COMMONS

Existing Conditions: The Aldenville Commons and its immediate surroundings are critical to the well-being of the whole neighborhood, containing both important assets and challenges. This area developed as a distinct downtown and was once the focal point for community life and economic activity.

Purpose: The Field and Farm Pedestrian Path will link Ray Ash Park, McKinstry Farms, and other neighborhood assets while creating a safer environment for students and residents to traverse the neighborhood. Wayfinding and historical signage will be incorporated in order to guide users along the path, while highlighting the assets and attractions.

Recommendations:
- Create a 1.5-mile path that will link community-identified assets with wayfinding signage
- Use historical signage on the Commons to show residents what Aldenville used to look like, while providing vision for the future
- Provide students and residents with safe pedestrian routes to Chicopee Comprehensive High School and Lambert-Lavoie Elementary School

SAFE STREETS THROUGH THE HEART

Existing Conditions: A majority of survey respondents identified streets and traffic problems as a priority for future improvements in Aldenville. Streets in Aldenville are characterized by wide travel lanes that encourage motorist speeding.

Purpose: The mitigation strategies proposed by 7 Peaks Planning would reduce the speed by which traffic operates in Aldenville. Improving and expanding the existing sidewalk and bicycle networks in Aldenville would increase the opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists to travel throughout the neighborhood.

Recommendations:
- Repaint crosswalks and paint temporary bump-outs to calm traffic along McKinstry Avenue and to improve pedestrian safety
- Use a Variable Message Sign to inform drivers to reduce their speed
- Conduct a Traffic Study of McKinstry Avenue to inform future safety treatments
- Install HAWK systems at high usage crosswalks for safer pedestrian passage

FIELD + FARM PEDESTRIAN PATH

Existing Conditions: Ray Ash Park and McKinstry Farms were identified as community-assets by the survey results. The two locations are currently not well connected, with McKinstry Farm being isolated from the Aldenville Commons, the heart of the neighborhood.

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