



PLACE MATTERS

10 YEAR RETROSPECTIVE



“simultaneously focusing on housing, community engagement, education, workforce, and health”

In 2007, United Way of Greater Cincinnati was in the midst of transformation. The City of Cincinnati's population was in decline, the foreclosure crisis was looming, and families in many places were struggling. We wondered how a comprehensive investment strategy focused on neighborhoods hit hardest by these challenges could create positive changes in our region's income, education, and health outcomes. Thus, Place Matters was born. Place Matters built on the accomplishments of a number of prior initiatives, including Community Investment Partners.

With United Way as the largest funder, a core group of funders came together to participate in this new endeavor, including the Greater Cincinnati Foundation and SC Ministry Foundation, along with bank partners JPMorgan Chase, US Bank, and PNC Bank and community partners LISC and NeighborWorks America. Together with the Community Building Institute, a partnership of Xavier University and United Way, we identified three neighborhoods to pilot the strategy: Avondale, Price Hill, and Covington. In each of these neighborhoods, a community-based organization served as a convener and trusted community resource that would lead the comprehensive efforts, often driven by a plan created by community residents. Our hope was that by simultaneously focusing on housing, community engagement, education, workforce, and health in these place-based efforts – by supporting each neighborhood as it developed a strategic plan – we could have impact in a more meaningful way.

Also key to our approach was the role of the funding collaborative. We acknowledged from the outset that we couldn't expect to undo decades of disinvestment in a few short years. Place Matters is built around the core principle that neighborhood change takes time. This group spent many hours working on the design and evaluation of the initiative. How would we know we were successful? How do we respond to trends emerging from these places? How can we influence system change to impact disinvested communities?

Over time we expanded the work to more neighborhoods and engaged more funding partners to have an even greater impact in the region. By focusing on community-led goals for the neighborhoods, the Place Matters partners are shining a light on the assets of each community. This attracts the investment of other key partners like the City of Cincinnati and Interact for Health, in support of the shared community goals.

On behalf of United Way of Greater Cincinnati, I want to congratulate the Place Matters communities and partners on ten years of dedication to their neighborhoods. There still is much work to be done so that all families can have an opportunity to thrive. But in the following pages you will see how far we have come.

Robert Reifsnyder
President and CEO
United Way of Greater Cincinnati

PLACE MATTERS 10 YEARS LATER

■ Origins

By the early 2000s, philanthropy in Cincinnati had been working in communities for decades and wanted to generate more impact in the places they were investing. The **“place-based” approach** introduced in 2006 built upon this idea. Social service agencies have a “client-based” service model that follows people. Real estate investments follow markets. But people live in places, and the health and vitality of places is critical to the health and vitality of the families who live in them.

Place Matters started as a patient investment strategy in some of Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky’s most disinvested communities. The long-term investment engaged residents and focused on mobilizing assets to create positive, vital places for people to live throughout the region. This **comprehensive model** grew out of an **innovative funders’ partnership between United Way of Greater Cincinnati, the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, SC Ministry Foundation**, and other corporate and philanthropic partners. By working with intermediary organizations like LISC and the Community Building Institute, the funders collaborative aimed to layer investments and technical assistance to connect people in communities to the solutions they wanted.

■ Early Work

In 2006, the Place Matters funding collaborative worked with LISC, the Community Building Institute and the communities of Avondale, Price Hill, and Covington, Kentucky to engage residents and produce the first set of community driven plans, coordinated by a lead organization in each of these places. These became the blueprint for early activity. We learned that a **shared vision**, strong community-based **“lead agencies”** ability to **align our resources** with others, and **patience** were all critical to success.

Strong lead organizations are essential to making sustainable community change. Residents are the drivers of their community vision, but the support of professional staff is key to achieving lasting success. The Place Matters funders collaborative has made a clear commitment to creating and supporting community based organizations that are accountable to residents and that bring stakeholders together to get things done.

These communities, over time, leveraged significant dollars from local and federal sources, faced the housing crisis head-on and worked through some of the most difficult economic headwinds in a generation. They improved children’s school readiness, created new health care options and connected people to existing resources. They helped stabilize housing markets, developed Financial Opportunity Centers, and kick-started the process of revitalizing local business districts. We asked “lead agencies” to do a lot, and realized that a comprehensive approach to community investing was going to require **partnerships** that perhaps did not yet exist.

■ A Maturing Initiative

As Place Matters expanded to Walnut Hills and Madisonville in 2012, all of the communities were working to form partnerships with neighborhood institutional assets such as schools, arts organizations, recreation centers, libraries, and churches in ways they had not in the past. Lead agencies became conveners, and sometimes mediators. **Relationships are critical** to effective community change.

The initiative added two additional communities in 2016: Newport, Kentucky, and the West End. These communities have real need, demonstrated by high poverty rates, but they are also places where there is a capacity and desire in the community, among residents and local organizations, to work together towards positive change. Because of the shared community vision and priorities in Place Matters neighborhoods, they are well-positioned to take advantage of **additional funding opportunities**. Connecting grassroots leadership with city-wide, regional and in some cases national resources has made a huge difference.

Ten years later, the Place Matters partners have invested **nearly \$10 million** in the health and vitality of first three, then five, and now seven communities in the region. We have worked with the people who live in these communities to create new housing, increase physical and mental health options, connect families to schools, enhance business districts, improve access to healthy food, and stabilize residents’ financial health. In all of this work, neighbors are at the center of solutions and community engagement is the foundation of everything we do. The model has elevated the **strategic value of concentrated investments** focused on place.



■ Beyond the Neighborhood

Some of these communities' most significant challenges over this ten-year period stem from the biggest economic downturn in a generation, and the housing crisis at its center. Real hardships tied to the recession, like wage deterioration, job loss, housing insecurity, displacement and all the associated stresses, were deeply felt across Place Matters communities. The ripple effects of low wages, weak transportation infrastructure, insufficient supply of affordable homes, disparate access to health care, and inequitable education outcomes collectively destabilize neighborhoods.

Residents in partnership with a strong community organization, no matter how engaged and committed, cannot make change alone. **We cannot blame poor outcomes in poor communities on the people who live there when larger systems impact them.** Even so, local residents and community organizations can push these systems to change. There are some big system changes that will be critical to truly realize the potential of Place Matters, and input and participation from affected community members is essential.

Momentum is building for change at the system level, including the recent establishment of an **Affordable Housing Trust Fund**, success of the **Preschool Promise** levy, a **Vacant Building Maintenance License** policy, creation of a **Land Bank**, and lawsuits holding landlords and banks accountable for their actions and protecting residents.



■ Reflect and Grow

A critical component to Place Matters is the journey of **continuous improvement**. We have collected metrics about how children are doing in school, how many houses have been built and renovated, how many people have been involved in events. In addition, we have been talking to people about their experiences and how they see their communities changing.

The ongoing evaluation process for Place Matters includes both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Our lead agencies and partners implement annual work programs that are based on each community's "theory of change" – an understanding of what needs to be done to create positive change. We are tracking program outcomes and community accomplishments, conducting social capital surveys every other year, hosting resident and partner focus groups every year, and keeping track of larger demographic trends, and health and educational outcomes in our communities.

It is impossible to understand what these places might be like today if there had been no Place Matters, but we know that in all seven places **people feel more connected and hopeful** about their neighborhoods, and their own futures.



PLACE MATTERS

NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILES

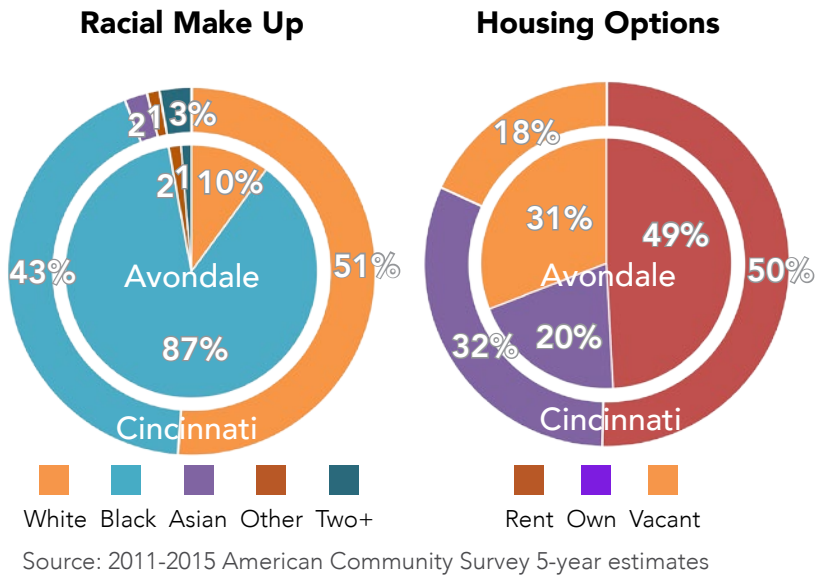
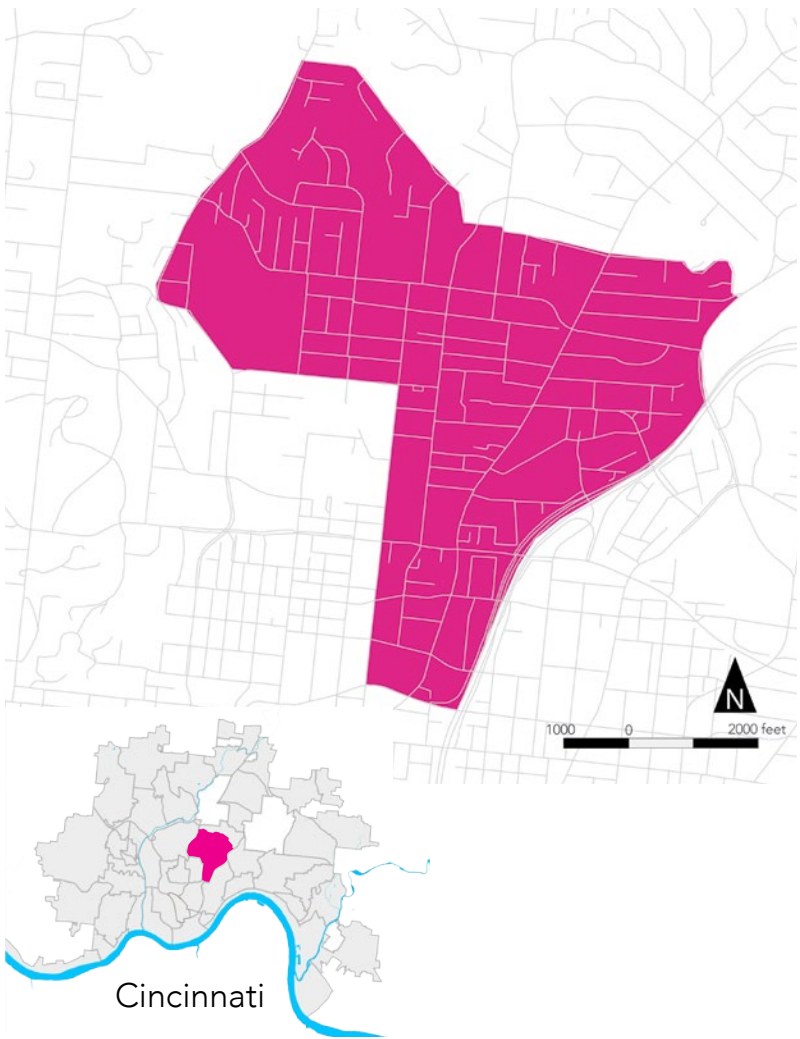


Price Hill celebrates Las Alfombras
photo credit: Tina Gutierrez

AVONDALE

Joined in 2007

- Long-standing African American neighborhood
- Home of many large anchor institutions
- Adjacent to Cincinnati's second largest employment center
- Large, aging housing stock
- 2015 Population: **11,959**
6% decrease since 2010
- Median Age: **35.7**
32.5 across Cincinnati
- Median Household Income: **\$19,738**
\$33,604 across Cincinnati



“ACDC is really a partner with the community council. We count heavily on the council to be the voice of the community. But we do have staff whose job it is to engage residents, to listen and to change perceptions about the community.”

- Henry Brown, ACDC board member

Fixing One Little Piece At A Time

Most Wednesdays and Fridays, Michael Pinkston is at the clothing pantry in the basement of Carmel Presbyterian Church in Avondale. You might find him, too, at the weekly children's reading group. He used to run a fatherhood program. He has served on community committees working with Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. He's drumming up support for the annual Avondale Feet in the Street 5K, which raises money for community initiatives.

Residents like Pinkston drive the transformational work of the Place Matters initiative. Place Matters connects residents and community nonprofit organizations to the resources they need to improve their neighborhood's quality of life.

“Change happens slowly, but it does happen.”

- Michael Pinkston



Highlights

- Lead organization: Avondale Comprehensive Development Corporation
- Awarded \$29.5MM federal grant to improve distressed housing and support positive outcomes for families
- Focus on “Cradle to Career” education programs
- Emphasis on youth activities supporting leadership are central to community engagement
- The community enjoys a number of healthy eating and active living programs
- Block groups have partnered with police to address crime hot spots



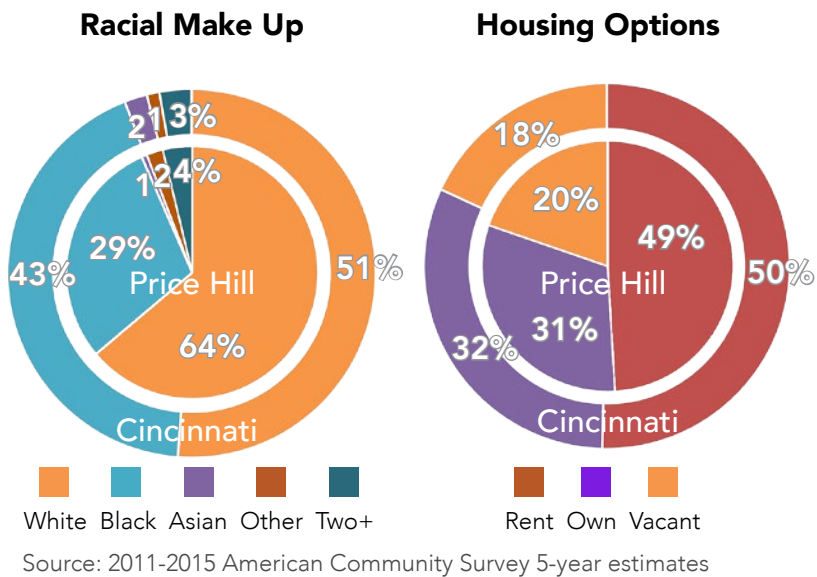
PRICE HILL

Joined in 2007

- Made up of three distinct neighborhoods
- Mainly single-family homes; hard-hit by foreclosure crisis
- Gateway for immigrants
- Growing Incline Business District
- 2015 Population: **34,976**
4% decrease since 2010
- Median Age: **38.2**
32.5 across Cincinnati
- Median Household Income: **\$29,579**
\$33,604 across Cincinnati



MYCincinnati



Finding New Talents and Neighborhood Ties in Price Hill

Thanks to MYCincinnati, a free music program for Price Hill children, 11-year-old Trinity now plays the viola and 10-year-old Jayden plays both cello and guitar. They are enrolled in the School for Performing and Creative Arts.

“The great thing about MYCincinnati is that it’s not needs based,” Thrasher said. “It’s just, these are the kids who have the interest and who will show up and put in the work. And then, while we’re getting these kids together, why not get the parents together, too?”

- Tamara Thrasher

MYCincinnati staff teach parents how to play the same instruments their children are learning. Thrasher played violin in the parents’ orchestra, until her schedule got too busy. Yet she still is a MYCincinnati board member. She also loved being part of a cooking club where families welcome others into their homes to learn how to prepare a favorite meal.



Highlights

- Lead organizations: Price Hill Will and Santa Maria Community Services
- Cultivated new relationships through cultural programming and youth engagement
- Long standing community action teams focused on youth, development and safety
- Mitigated effect of foreclosure crisis by focusing on blight and vacancy to help stabilize property values
- Lead abatement program resulted in dramatic decline in measured youth lead levels
- Brought new investment to community spaces, including St. Lawrence Square and Percussion Park
- Opened an International Welcome Center, which connects immigrants and refugees to services



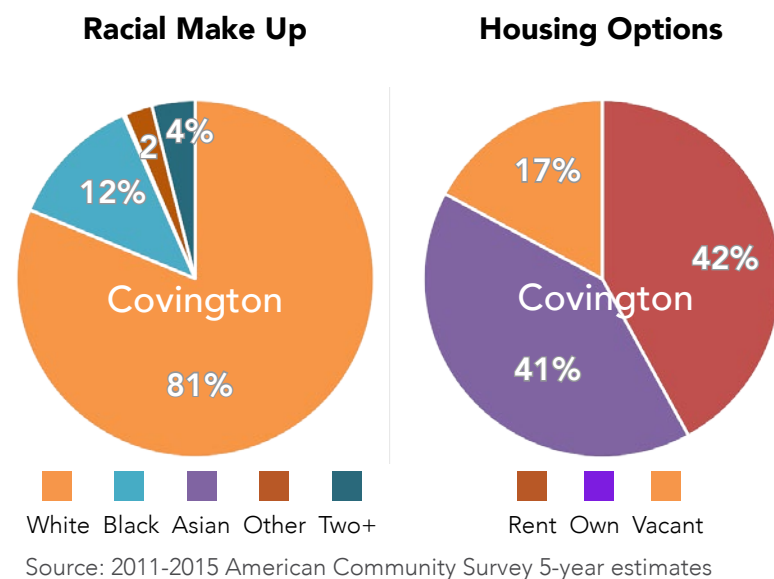
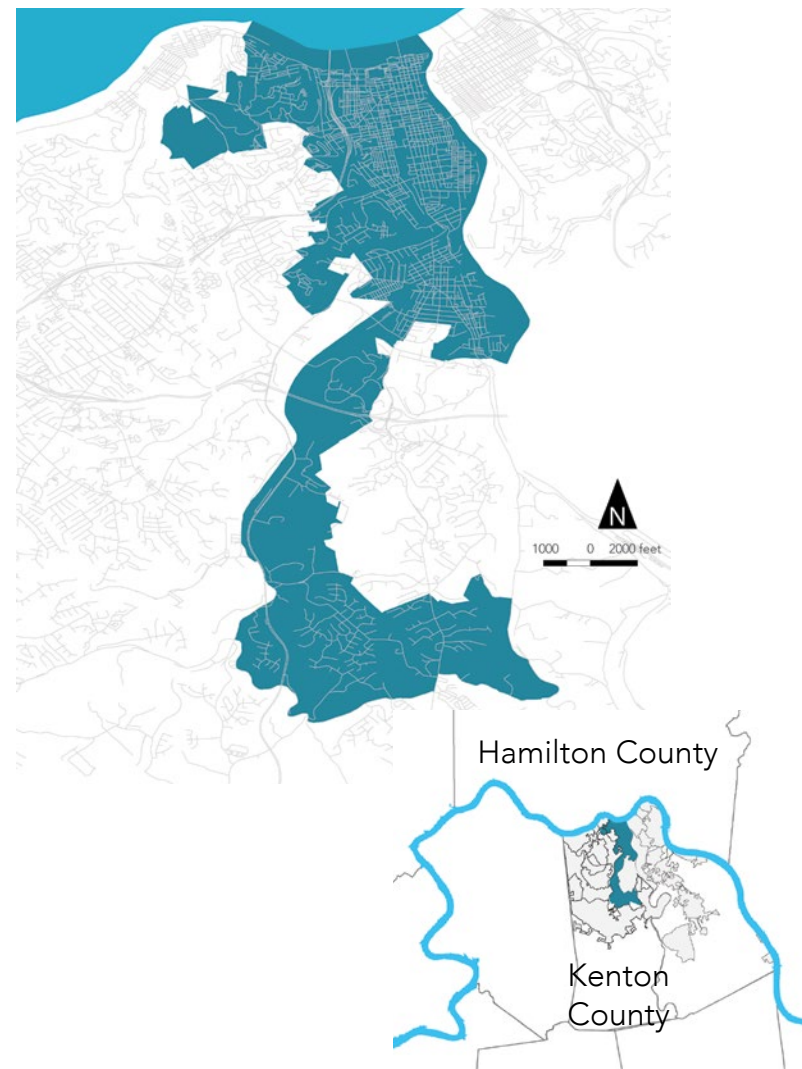
“I love music, but I never did it. My kids are phenomenal musicians. Everywhere I go, people say, ‘Wow! Your kids are awesome.’”

- Tamara Thraser, MYCincinnati board member

COVINGTON

Joined in 2007

- Fifth largest city in Kentucky
- Comprised of 19 neighborhoods
- Rich cultural history
- Aging historic housing stock
- 2015 Population: **40,845**
1% decrease since 2010
- Median Age: **35.6**
- Median Household Income: **\$35,664**



“ I love [the Center for Great Neighborhoods]. They really got me the house of my dreams at a time when I never thought it was possible. ”
- Michelle Hilvert, Covington resident

Bringing People Together at The Center

When 48-year-old Ronnie Kays was young, The Center for Great Neighborhoods was still known as the Covington Community Center, serving emergency needs of low income residents, providing recreation activities for youth and helping residents address community issues. The Center's name changed, and the mission shifted to focus on community development work, but for residents like Kays, the Center is simply **an engine for good** in Covington.

Robert Brown takes tai chi at the center. Ai Li Brown runs a music workshop at the center thanks to a Nano grant. Their 9-year-old daughter attends summer camp there. The Empower tool library, a partnership between the Center and the library system, loaned the Browns the tools they needed to create a garden in their backyard.

“ They have so many programs and they're so open to programming. You can go in and say you have an idea. They'll say, 'We'll do whatever it takes to get you in.' ”
- Ai Li Brown



Highlights

- Lead organization: The Center for Great Neighborhoods of Covington
- Boasts a strong network of resident leaders across 19 neighborhoods
- Community-police partnership has improved safety
- National leader in creative placemaking
- Hellmann Creative Center opened in 2016 and serves as a community gathering space
- Deployed over 290 community mini-grants to support resident led projects
- Played key role in foreclosure prevention work



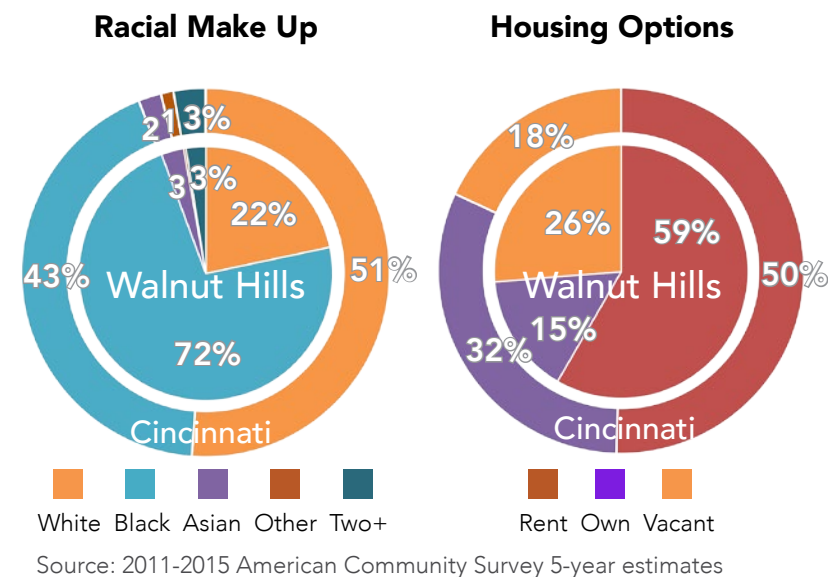
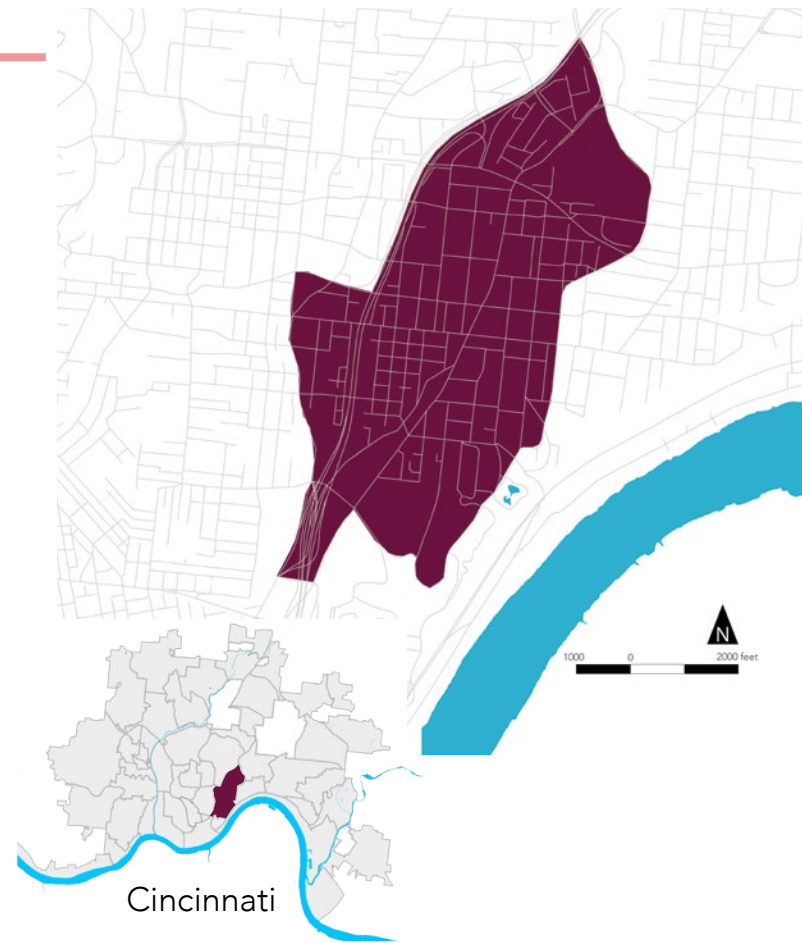
Hellmann Center, photo by: Frank Doring



WALNUT HILLS

Joined in 2012

- Was once City's second downtown
- Rich African American history
- Historic business district
- High unemployment rate
- Close to major employment centers
- 2015 Population: **6,425**
11% increase since 2010
- Median Age: **38.2**
32.5 across Cincinnati
- Median Household Income: **\$20,430**
\$33,604 across Cincinnati



“Walnut Hills has always been a diverse community. But it had been a segregated community. That’s the evolution you’re seeing.”

- Kathryn Gardette, Walnut Hills resident

Figuring Out Equitable Development Together

Leading the Place Matters initiative in its community, the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation has worked to attract development and build a neighborhood revitalization plan centered around the needs of existing residents.

The Foundation looked at demographic statistics to uncover the average Walnut Hills resident — a black single mother — and is working to create a neighborhood that works for her as well as new residents. They have taken time to reach out to neighborhood leaders, talk face-to-face with residents, and share and solicit information in community gathering places.

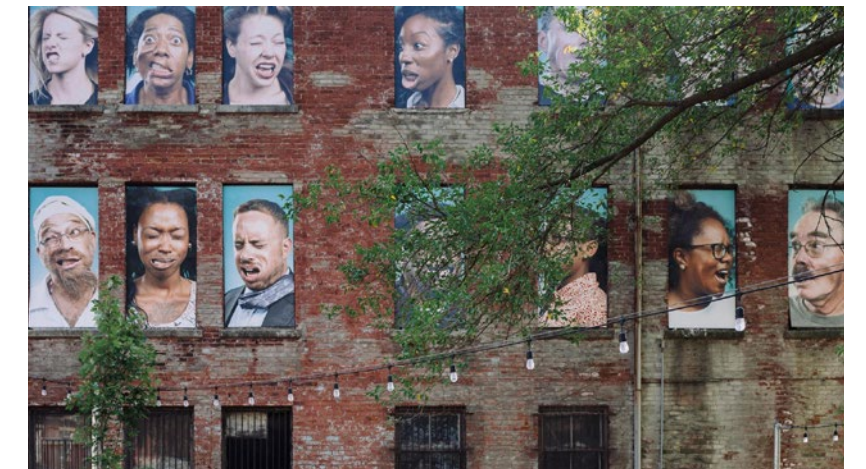
“We’re trying to figure out, out loud, what it means to be an equitable community development corporation.”

- Christina Brown



Highlights

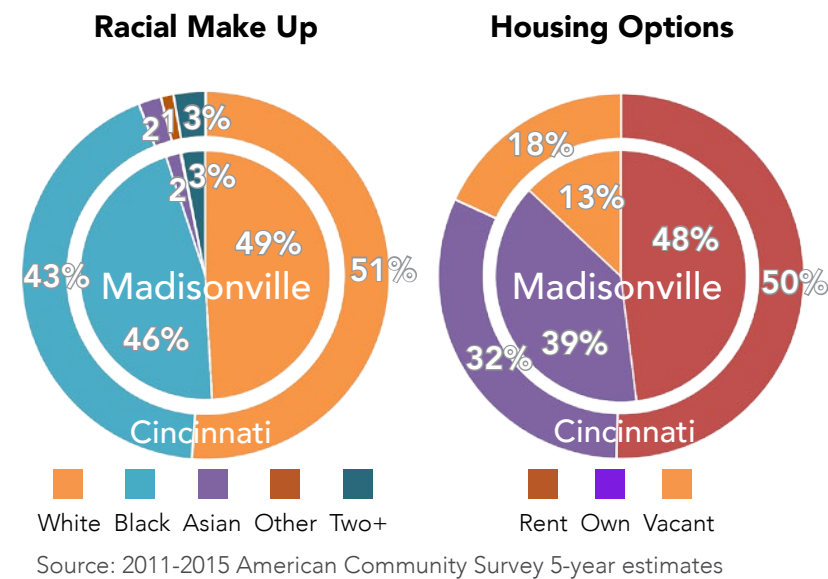
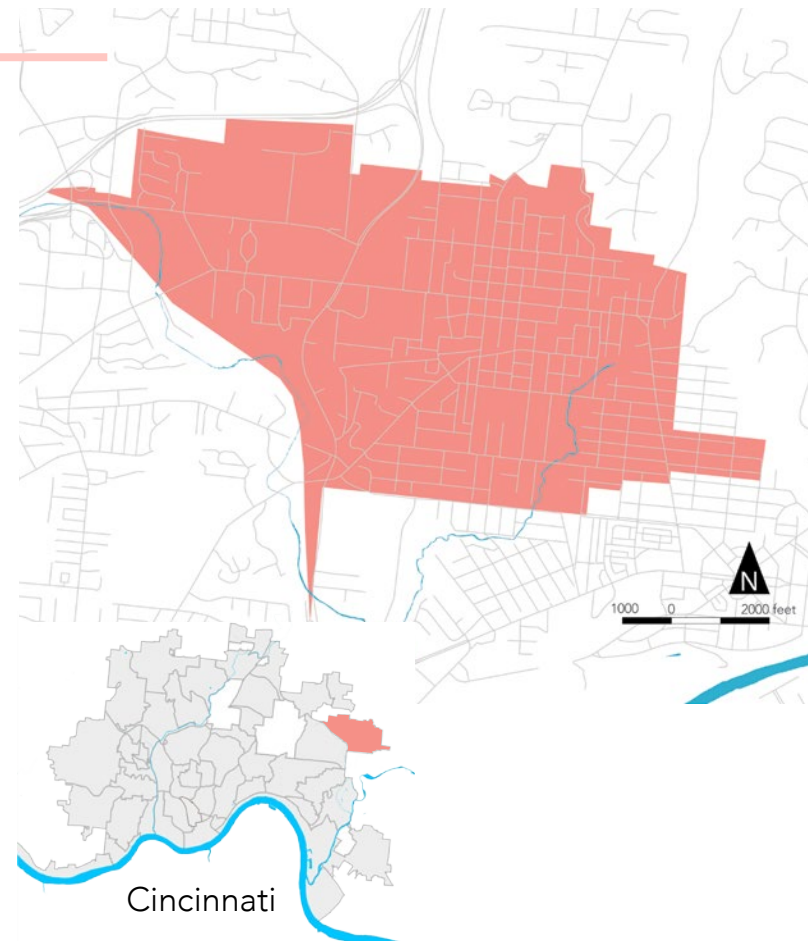
- Lead organization: Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation
- Successfully advocated for two-way traffic on McMillan Street, kick-starting commercial corridor revitalization
- With growing investment and rapid change, the neighborhood is advocating for equitable development
- Created and activated community gathering spaces such as Green Man Park and 5 Points Alley
- Connected neighborhood residents to local construction jobs
- Community focus on food access and active living



MADISONVILLE

Joined in 2012

- Rich history of cultural and racial diversity
- High vacancy in commercial corridor
- Many outdoor recreation opportunities
- Surrounded by affluent communities
- 2015 Population: **10,439**
4% decrease since 2010
- Median Age: **34**
32.5 across Cincinnati
- Median Household Income: **\$37,916**
\$33,604 across Cincinnati



“ [The Madisonville Community Urban Redevelopment Corp.] got all the daycare providers to come together to talk about standards. ”

- Tina Holmes, Madisonville resident and small business owner

Growing a Community by Deepening Roots

Kayla O'Neal is a third-generation Madisonville resident, and her roots are growing deeper.

Her grandfather built the big blue house her parents still live in. Her father transformed his father's landscaping business into a concrete demolition business that still is headquartered in the community. The first house she and her husband called a home is in the community, too.

“ I have a 3-year-old. I want a community that would change for the better for him, down the line. ”
- Kayla O'Neal

The hope is that the Madisonville that O'Neal helps to shape will continue to be a diverse community with room for everyone.



Highlights

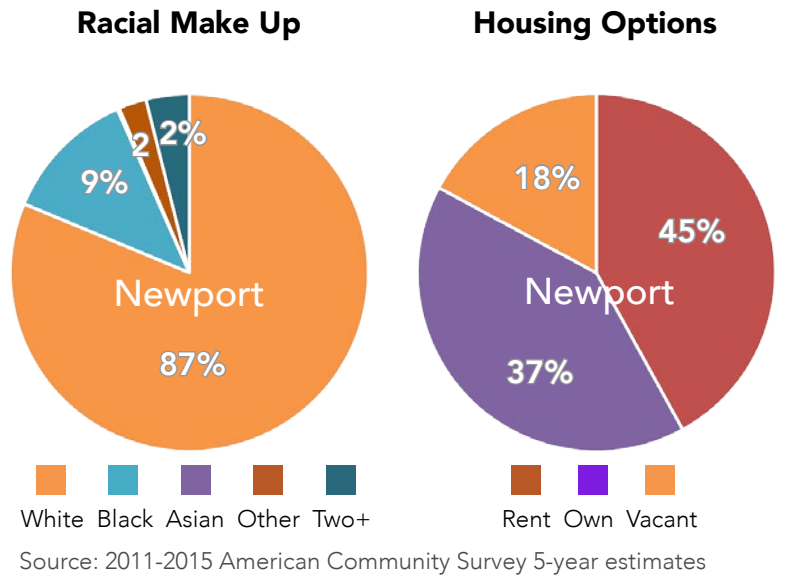
- Lead organization: Madisonville Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation
- Large scale developments taking shape at the main intersections of the business corridor, attracting new businesses
- Ongoing community gatherings around health and wellness
- Expansive gardening program leads to hundreds of backyard gardening plots
- Growing interest in new and rehabbed homes
- Active education committee that connects more families to the local elementary school



NEWPORT

Joined in 2016

- Across the Ohio River from downtown Cincinnati
- Stable commercial corridor
- Historic housing stock
- Retail and entertainment destination
- 2015 Population: **15,428**
0% change since 2010
- Median Age: **35.7**
- Median Household Income: **\$34,734**



“Once I started getting more involved in the community and heard all the plans, I was like, ‘Oh man! Everyone should be here!’”
- Michelle Corbett, Newport resident

Newport Native Never Wants to Leave

Michelle Corbett has lived in Newport most of her life, and thanks to the results of the ongoing Place Matters initiative, she has no intention of leaving.

Corbett hopes to open an art gallery in a building her family owns in Newport. She is thinking about starting a public art committee. She wants to be a part of Newport’s future because she knows the city is on the rise.

“It’s a beautiful town. It’s walkable. It’s a great location. The people — there’s a bit of everybody. We’re taking care of what we have and we just have to make sure what we are putting into the city is unique.”

- Michelle Corbett



Highlights

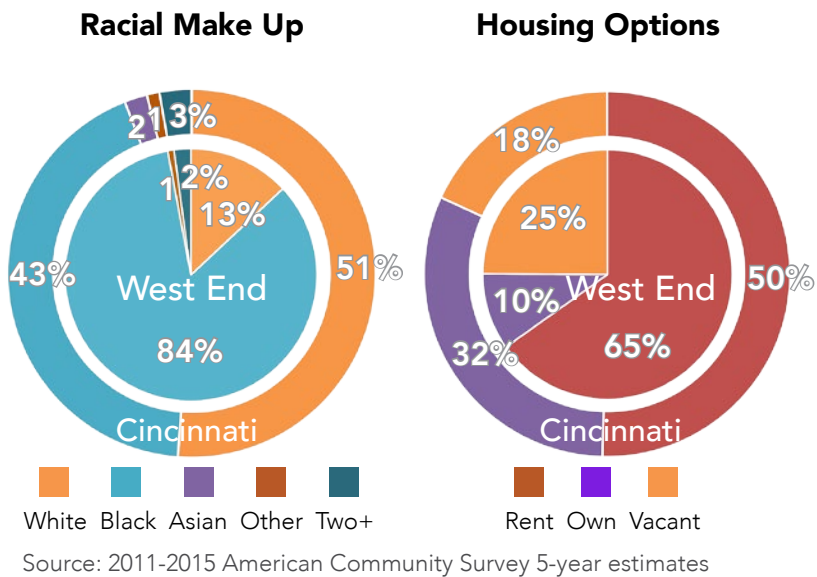
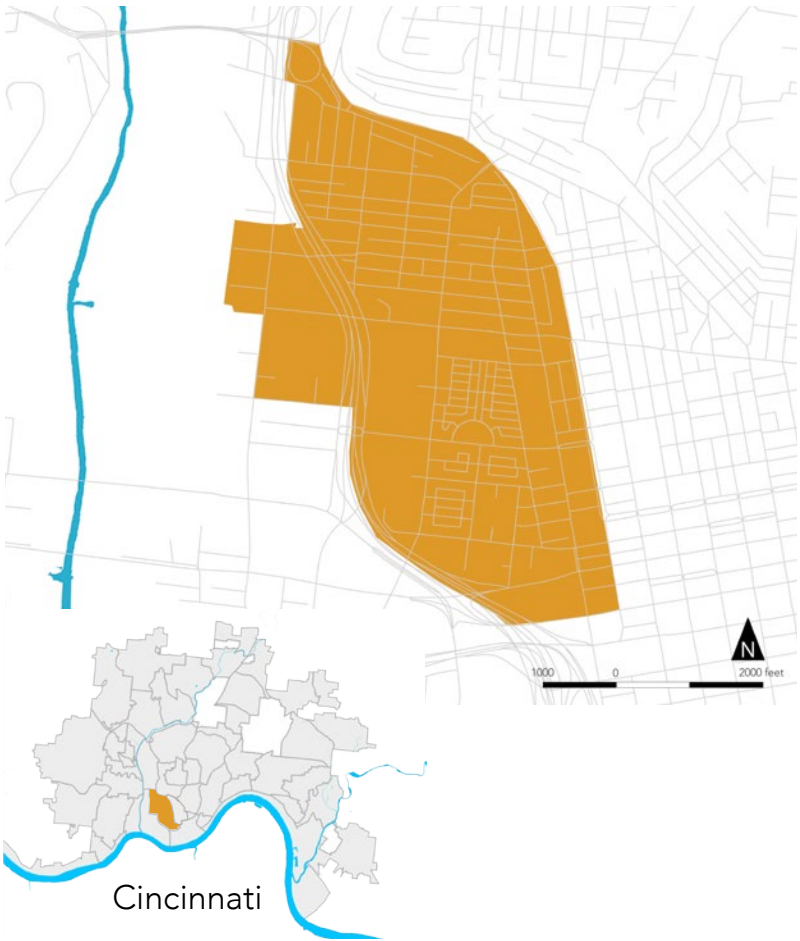
- Lead organizations: ReNewport with Brighton Center
- Completed the ReNewport community plan in 2016, which guides community work
- Large network of active volunteers engaged in community activities
- Strong neighborhood relationships with schools, businesses and local government
- Progress in bridging historic divides between the east and west sides of Newport



WEST END

Joined in 2016

- Adjacent to downtown and Over-the-Rhine
- Historically significant African American neighborhood
- Large portions razed by urban renewal of 1950s
- Mix of residential and industrial uses
- 2015 Population: **5,946**
10% decrease since 2010
- Median Age: **33.3**
32.5 across Cincinnati
- Median Household Income: **\$13,960**
\$33,604 across Cincinnati



Re-energized and Ready for Development

Keith Blake has lived in the West End for two decades and has been involved with the community council for most of that time. He and others have worked hard to make the neighborhood a good place to live, to solve problems in their community and celebrate to successes.

Place Matters and a partnership with LISC of Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky has re-energized and amplified these efforts, according to Blake.

“It’s a base for building more community involvement. There are connections that are being made, that are coming out of the energy of Place Matters.”
- Keith Blake

Neighborhood programming is increasing, communication with residents has improved, and community leaders are focused on building the infrastructure needed for more redevelopment, Blake said. A youth council and expanding the capacity of the lead organization are both in the works.



Highlights

- Lead organization: Seven Hills Neighborhood Houses
- Completed the West End Speaks community plan in 2016
- Growth of community organization to lead and guide the implementation of the plan
- Attracted investment of the City and other institutional partners to the neighborhood
- Resident leaders drive community work
- Expanding opportunities for youth leadership



“There’s active interest — with Over-The-Rhine getting to critical mass, there’s a renewed interest in development in the West End. We’re preparing for that.”
- Keith Blake, West End resident



..... Place Matters

Since 2007

investments
made across

7

NEIGHBORHOODS

Avondale *Madisonville*
Price Hill *Newport*
Covington *West End*
Walnut Hills

126,018

RESIDENTS

served by
Place Matters
investments, up
from 86,676 in 2010



**\$44.9
million**

in funds leveraged for
Place Matters projects

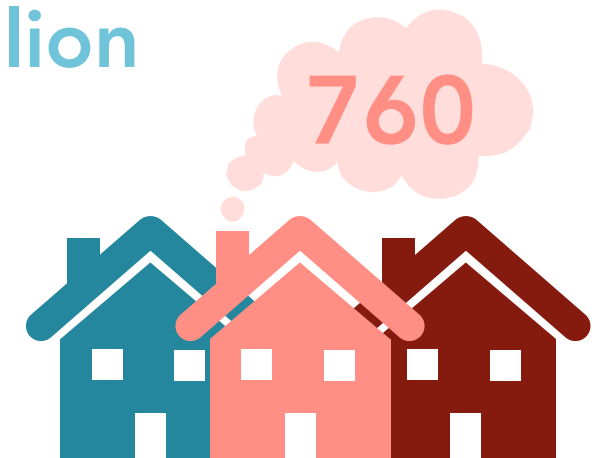
**\$482.3
million**

for major affiliated
projects

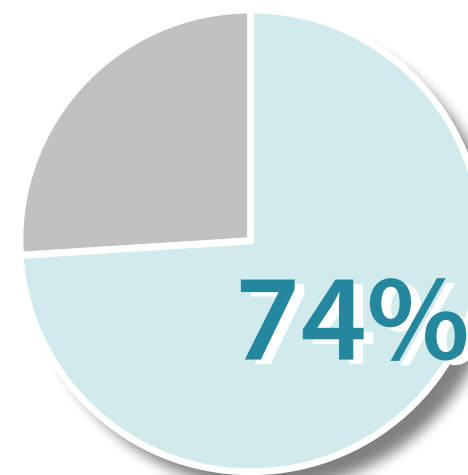


16,800

people actively
engaged in their
community

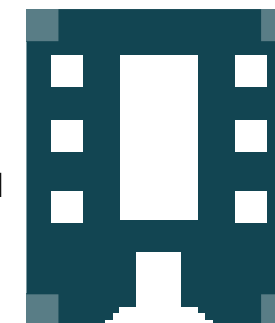


new & renovated housing units



74%

10
new
cultural
venues



of Place Matters community
residents report their
**neighborhoods are getting
better or staying the same**



420

neighborhood based
partnerships

10 LESSONS WORTH SHARING

- Choose neighborhoods based on need, capacity and opportunity
- Support a strong community-based organization to lead the work
- Build on neighborhood assets for maximum impact
- Relationships matter: actively engage all stakeholders in the community and enable development to be driven locally
- Residents developing a unified, inspiring vision for community change is the foundation for moving forward
- Show results early through easy wins like community-led mini-grants
- Measure progress and impact at the neighborhood level
- Communicate successes far and wide
- Partnerships with neighborhood institutions and beyond are essential
- Change is incremental: place based work requires patience

THE NEXT 10 YEARS

Place Matters has accomplished a great deal in the first ten years, but we are not done yet.

This work is relational and based on trust and requires effort to create and nurture the relationships that allow the work to be done.

What started as a new idea for generating community change has been successful in ways that has re-defined how community revitalization and engagement work. Over the next ten years, we will work on challenges and continue to spread successes to even more places. It is clear to our communities, our funders and our partners that we are on the right track.





THE FUTURE OF PLACE MATTERS

Funders and Partners

Funders Collaborative

- United Way of Greater Cincinnati
- The Greater Cincinnati Foundation
- SC Ministry Foundation
- PNC Bank Foundation
- U.S. Bank
- The Carol Ann & Ralph V. Haile Jr./ U.S. Bank Foundation
- Fifth Third Bank
- First Financial Bank
- BB&T Bank
- JPMorgan Chase Foundation
- NeighborWorks® America
- Local Initiatives Support Corp.

Neighborhood Partners

- Avondale Comprehensive Development Corporation
- Price Hill Will
- Santa Maria Community Services
- The Center for Great Neighborhoods of Covington
- Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation
- Madisonville Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation
- ReNewport
- Brighton Center, Inc.
- Seven Hills Neighborhood Houses

Major Partners

- Community Building Institute
- Interact for Health
- Duke Energy Foundation
- City of Cincinnati
- Hamilton County
- ArtsWave
- Art Works
- All In Cincinnati
- Catalytic Development Funding Corp. of Northern Kentucky
- Child Poverty Collaborative
- Cincinnati Development Fund
- Cincy Stories
- The Community Builders
- Greater Cincinnati Redevelopment Authority
- MORTAR Cincinnati
- Legal Aid Society
- Partners for a Competitive Workforce
- Success by 6



photo by: Lauren DiFulvio



photo by: Tine Gutierrez



Santa Maria Community Services



Hellmann Center, photo by: Frank Doring



Cincy Stories

