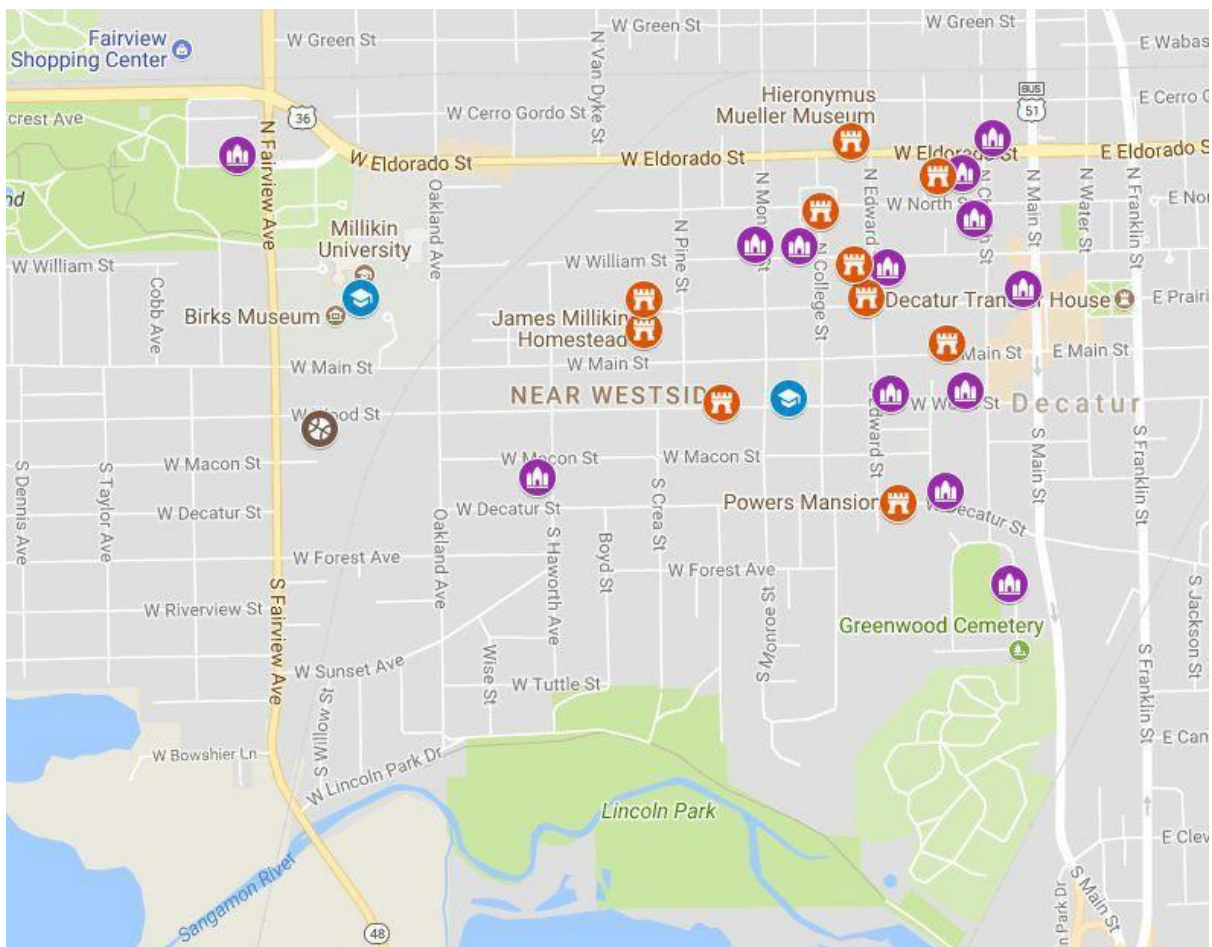


Millikin Heights Revitalization Plan

This plan provides information on the current state of the neighborhood, and more importantly, the direction we are headed as a community. It is a living document - as feedback is provided and resources are identified they will shape the opportunities and we will modify the plan accordingly.

Current copies of this plan and additional resources are available on the neighborhood website - www.millikinheights.org

Millikin Heights is Decatur's original neighborhood centered around the homestead of James Millikin and anchored by Millikin University, Oakwood Business District, the Decatur Historic District, and Lincoln Park. Our previous neighborhood name was Near Westside and Lincoln Park. Near Westside Restoration and Preservation Society (NWRAPS) is the name of our 501(c)3 Community Housing Development Corporation which we operate as Millikin Heights (i.e. DBA).



A Vision for Millikin Heights

We envision a vibrant healthy Millikin Heights neighborhood to be at its core **a place where people want to live**. We are **diverse** in age, income, ethnicity, and household composition. We endeavor to know our neighbors in order to build a community which contributes to a **safe environment to live, work, and play**. Pride in our neighborhood is demonstrated through **well kept homes, businesses, schools, and parks**. The pedestrian and bike friendly nature of our neighborhood supports **high impact amenities** such as restaurants, shops, schools, and parks.

There are **many reasons to live in Millikin Heights** including **accessibility, affordability, and amenities**. We are convenient to downtown for work or play. Housing is available in a wide range of styles and prices. The nationally ranked programs (e.g. fine arts, STEM) at Millikin University provide a multitude of cultural activities - plays, performances, lectures, and exhibits. Millikin Heights is also home to many museums offering glimpses into our storied past - Staley Museum, African American Museum & Genealogical Society, Oglesby Mansion and the James Millikin Homestead. Shopping, restaurants, and additional entertainment venues are located in the Oakwood Business District. Transportation in and around the neighborhood is facilitated through a network of streets, trails, sidewalks, and public transit.

Broader Community Issues

The issues listed below impact our neighborhood but are in many ways much larger than our neighborhood can improve solely on our own. We are ready to serve as one of many partners to work on improving these issues for all neighborhoods in the City of Decatur. In particular, the existence of NWRAPS as a 501(c)3 community housing development corporation positions us to partner with governmental agencies, private businesses, and other charitable organizations.

- 1) Jobs/Incomes - Meaningful employment with livable wages are critical to our neighborhood vitality.
- 2) City Employees, City Residents - We support a policy in which all city employees reside in the city. As taxpayers we are paying employees to work on our behalf and for the betterment of our community. It stands to reason that they should reside in the community they are working for and are being paid. Indeed, Millikin Heights welcomes every city employee to live in our neighborhood.
- 3) Education/Schools - Quality PK3-12 education is critical to attracting residents and positioning our students for personal and professional success. We believe

students in Decatur Public Schools can and have been as successful as graduates of any other school in the country. Strong parental involvement is critical for students to achieve at their highest levels. We are prepared to partner with the school district in ways that elevate the reputation of Dennis School and MacArthur High School. Specifically, we believe outreach to area realtors is needed to understand why other communities appear to be favored.

- 4) Drugs - There is no role in our neighborhood for illegal drugs. We are interested in partnering with the police and other city departments to rid our community of illegal drugs.
- 5) Crime - Lower crime will help boost property values and attract more residents.
- 6) Food scarcity - We know this is an issue not just for some of our neighbors but for many across the city. How can we partner with existing programs/services to help deal with this issue? Marie Foxx has volunteered to do some research on this issue.

Neighborhood Asset Inventory

We are fortunate to have many assets in our neighborhood. Below is an attempt to catalog the wide range of assets.

Education/Cultural

Millikin University

Dennis School - Kaleidoscope Campus

MacArthur High School*

Staley Museum

Mueller Museum**

African American Museum & Genealogical Society

Oglesby Mansion

James Millikin Homestead

Frank Lloyd Wright Homes

Culver House

Powers Mansion

Texaco Service Station

*Not physically located in the neighborhood but children are zoned to the school.

**Not physically located in the neighborhood but is just across Eldorado St.

Spiritual

Central Christian Church - Rev. Michael Karunas

First Presbyterian Church

First United Methodist Church

Central United Methodist Church

House of Miracles PC

Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church

First Church of Christ, Scientist

New Salem Baptist Church

Christ Tabernacle UPC

First Lutheran Church

Temple B'Nai Abraham*

St. John's Episcopal Church*

St. Peter AME Church*

*Located adjacent to the neighborhood.

Aesthetics/Parks/Amenities

Brick paved roads

Period street lights

Lincoln Park - largest neighborhood park in Decatur (99 acres) with pavilion, water fountain, restrooms, playground, tennis courts, basketball, ball diamond, tetherball, open space, and bike trail.

Calvary Cemetery

Decatur Historic District - listed in the National Register of Historic Places Sidewalks

Bike paths

Shopping

Restaurants

Donnie's

LSB

Winery

Subway

Headwest

Domino's

Jimmy John's

University Dogs

Garcia's Pizza
Pure Coffee
Wildflour Bakery
Services
Mane Event
Medical Staffing Network
Lyle Campbell & Son Realtor
Leo Berger - State Farm Insurance
M&M Motors
Kiku Health Spa
Mobil Circle K Gas Station
Agency One Insurance & Real Estate
Yunker House Bed & Breakfast
Blessingdales Thrift Shop
Larry Paul's Tanning
Dawson & Wikoff Funeral Home
Decatur Ambulance
University Service Station (first gas station in Decatur - 1915)
Marathon Oil Gas Station
Fleet Feet
Spin City Cycle
Oakwood Tattoo
Jurgens & Kneezel Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
Smokers Den
Studio 7 Salon & Day Spa
Board Knights
Smith Hearing Technologies
Lockhart's Barber Shop
Main Street Counseling
IBeautique
CVS
Staley Credit Union

Homes/Buildings

Millikin Heights operates a 501(c)3 Community Housing Development Corporation (CHDO) called NWRAPS (Near Westside Restoration and Preservation Society).

Range of sizes and architectural styles in residential housing
The Commodore & Lincoln Apartments (Co-op housing)

Social Services/Voluntary Associations

Salvation Army
Growing Strong
Boy Scouts
Masonic Lodge
Big Brothers Big Sisters
Catholic Charities

Demographics

See Millikin Heights demographics document dated March 13, 2018 available on millikinheights.org website.

Opportunities

Each opportunity below represents a step to enhancing our neighborhood and transform it into the future we desire. These opportunities are not listed in any particular order. For each opportunity to be most successful there will need to be an individual who takes a leadership role in working with a group of people to take ownership of the opportunity and work to develop and implement action plans that the neighborhood can move into reality.

1) Residential Restoration/Improvements

- A) Take Monroe Street back to two lanes in the neighborhood - South of Eldorado. Options include using the extra lanes for parking and/or as a dedicated bike path.
- B) Repair and maintain brick streets. Need to establish true cost for brick streets relative to concrete and asphalt. The lifespan for brick streets is significantly higher than asphalt.
- C) Expand traditional street lights. Work with Amren and the city to develop a replacement plan.
- D) Clean up wrought iron street signs. Replace and fix Decatur Historic District signs. Possible Eagle/Gold Scout project.
- E) Plant legacy trees. Look to see if Millikin University Environmental Studies students are able to conduct a tree survey and identify the best trees to plant as replacements/infill as well as where. You can receive 10 free trees if you join the Arbor Day Foundation. The cost to join is \$10 for a six

month membership. www.arborday.org Please inform a board member when you do this so we can keep track of how many and what types of trees get planted. Possible Eagle/Gold Scout project. Beautify Decatur is offering trees (e.g. Maples, Oaks) free to residents that will plant them in the easements or public spaces of their yards.

- F) Bury power lines. Work with Ameren and the city to develop a timeline and plan.
- G) Eliminate/reduce train horn noise. As the Midwest Inland Port grows it will become increasingly important to mitigate horn noise. Research on sleep productivity notes significant positive impact on wages with low sleep disturbance (<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8zp518hc>). With two tracks going through or near the neighborhood, implementing creative methods to eliminate/reduce horn noise will be critical to making the neighborhood a desirable living destination. A potential method is the establishment of “quiet zones”. A quiet zone requires additional safety measures to be implemented in place of train horn usage. There are over 700 quiet zones in the U.S. including the entire city of Chicago. A number of cities are working to improve the quality of life by creating quiet zones (e.g. Columbia, SC; Richmond, CA; Fort Collins, CO, Vermilion, IN, Springfield, IL). <http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article147738034.html>
- H) Increase residential and commercial density around Oakwood. Increased number of residents will help support existing and new businesses in the Oakwood Business District helping it to be a thriving business district. Work with the city and land owners to develop zoning (e.g. New Urban Design) which will support this growth while protecting the neighborhood.
- I) Establish subway style bus routes. This mode of transportation is vital to keep congestion from private vehicles low in the Oakwood Business District. In order to expand ridership there needs to be easy access - access not determined by having to plan your travel around the arrival of the bus but rather access that is perceived as convenient enough that you don't have to consider the bus arrival time in your planning as it comes frequently enough to not be a consideration.
- J) Hire neighborhood trash collectors.
- K) Partner with Millikin and local schools for neighborhood trash clean up. Owner - Krista Foxx, Chair Beautification Committee

2) **Neighborhood Branding** Owner: Alan Duesterhaus

- A) Change neighborhood name to reflect the residential and historic nature of our community. Identification with our neighborhood assets, especially

ones that are unique to our neighborhood. Neighborhood name change to Millikin Heights was approved at NWRAPS board meeting on March 13, 2018. Next steps in implementation include:

- a) Notify City to update their records - completed
- b) Notify CONO to update their records - completed
- c) Notify Google Maps to update their records (Alan Duesterhaus)
- d) Notify Nextdoor App to update their records (Mark Peters)
- completed
- e) Notify Realtors to update their records
- f) Update social media accounts - completed
- g) Determine locations into neighborhood for signage (Jim Hendren)
- h) Create press release regarding name change and revitalization plan - completed
- i) Work to get an article in the Herald & Review about name change and revitalization plan - completed

3) Housing Stock

- A) Conduct a housing stock census. This process will help us understand whether a house is “worthy” to fix or is deemed “unworthy” and should be torn down. *(Need to rate homes/lots by condition. Note whether they are owner/renter occupied or vacant. Note historic value.)* Charlotte Hanks, Rose Marie Thompson, Krista & Marie Foxx have volunteered to help conduct the housing stock survey.
 - a) Create Housing Grading Metric - complete
 - b) Conduct inventory - Summer 2018 & 2019
 - c) Prioritize homes to target for investment
 - d) Prioritize homes to demolish
- B) Fix up “worthy” houses.
- C) Tear down “unworthy” houses.
- D) Create an architectural salvage venue. As houses are torn down any salvageable items (e.g. doors, trim, flooring) should be saved first. Check with Habitat for Humanity’s ReStore to see if they are interested. Stephanie Stukins, Manager 217.330.5870. Old House Society in Bloomington operates a salvage warehouse. They may be a good partner as well (<http://www.oldhousesociety.org>).
- E) Create incentives to encourage young professionals to live in the neighborhood. President Reynolds from Millikin University has expressed interest in developing this opportunity.
- F) Use NWRAPS CHDO to facilitate renewal. Partner with like-minded organizations to help fund home purchases and restoration. Look at the

potential to establish a business which creates jobs and revenue for housing restoration.

- a) Have met with Damien Brown and Bennie Smith from Brown Beans Consulting to see how we can collaborate to revitalize S. Crea and other areas such as John's Hill.
- b) Purchased 124 N. Edwards Street house to restore. July 2020.
 - i) Clean out completed - September 2020.
 - ii) Roof repairs completed - August 2020.
 - iii) CHDO application submitted - August 2020
- G) Enforce regulations with landlords. Create new regulations as needed.
- H) More events that showcase our historic homes (e.g. Heritage & Holly).
- I) Utilize Abandoned Housing Rehabilitation Act (AHRA) to acquire and revive housing stock.
 - a) Board approved acquiring a home via AHRA
 - b) Need to develop a petition template to be used for future acquisitions across the city.

4) Parks

- A) Enhance Lincoln Park amenities.
- B) Create dedicated bike/walking path from Millikin University to Lake Decatur via Lincoln Park. Connecting Millikin University (and by extension the neighborhood) to Lake Decatur will enhance the perception of Millikin by prospective students and their families. It will also bolster neighborhood property values. Designate and mark bike lanes on Oakland Street from Main Street south to connect with Lincoln Park Trail. Extend Lincoln Park Trail to Chandler Park.
- C) Gardens/green spaces.

5) Build Community Engagement

- A) Know your neighbor, annual event, block parties, barn raising/education.
 - a) Set up a Summer Social at Millikin Homestead.
 - i) Supporting Millikin Homestead Lawn Party. Will hold a neighborhood membership drive as well as give away free ice cream to those who join the neighborhood association.
 - ii) Summer 2018 event was rained out.
 - iii) Summer 2019 event occurred successfully.
 - iv) Summer 2020 event cancelled due to Covid-19.
 - v) Summer 2021 event cancelled due to Covid-19.

- b) Sponsor Oakwood Street Festival
- c) Put on a social in Lincoln Park September 2021 (April Walker)
- d) In order for the neighborhood to be aware of what is occurring in the community and be represented it will be valuable to have representatives for the numerous governmental bodies. The commitment of a representative is to attend the particular board/commission meeting (typically monthly) and report back to the Millikin Heights Neighborhood Association board at the same frequency. The boards and commissions include:

Decatur City Council - 1st, 3rd & any 5th Monday of each month, 5:30 PM
 Decatur Housing Authority - 2nd Thursday of each month, 3:30 PM
 Historical and Architectural Sites Commission - 3rd Wednesday of each month, 4:00 PM
 Neighborhood Improvements Commission - Inactive?
 Plan Commission - 1st Thursday of each month, 3:00 PM
 Zoning Board of Appeals - 2nd Thursday of each month, 4:00 PM
 Decatur Board of Education - 2nd & 4th Tuesday of each month at 6:30 PM
 Decatur Park District - 1st & 3rd Wednesday of each month at 12:00 noon
 Economic Development Corporation of Decatur Macon County -
 Chamber of Commerce for Decatur and Macon County -
 Decatur Area Convention and Visitors Bureau -
 Macon County Board - 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:00 PM
 Macon County Regional Planning Commission -

- B) Activities/places for young people.
- C) Help Decatur Public Schools tell the positive stories of student success, especially by students in our neighborhood.
- D) Retired teachers mentoring neighborhood youth.
- E) Revitalize Neighborhood Association membership.
- F) Install Little Free Libraries (LFL) across the neighborhood. Owner - Charlotte Hanks.
 - a) Grant applied for and received for 10 LFL to be erected across the neighborhood. Nine have been set up so far.
 - b) Youth group from Central Christian Church decorated some of the libraries.
 - c) Neighborhood LFL locations listed on website

6) DMH/St. Mary's presence