

SUMMIT LAKE

CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS
TRANSFORMATION PLAN

Draft June 2022



DANIEL HERRIGAN, MAYOR

acknowledgements

Akron Civic Commons Core Team (Steering Committee)

Akron Civic Theatre
Akron Community Foundation
Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority
Akron Zoo
Alpha Phi Alpha Homes
Amp Strategy
ArtsNow
City of Akron
County of Summit, Ohio
Downtown Akron Partnership
GAR Foundation
Heart to Heart Leadership
Kenmore Neighborhood Alliance
Knight Foundation
METRO Regional Transit Authority
Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition
Reach Opportunity Center
Say it Loud Akron
Summit Lake BUILD CORPS
Summit Lake Community Center
Summit Lake Community Development Corporation
Summit Lake Residents
Summit Metro Parks
The National Center for Choreography at the University of Akron
University of Akron

Neighborhood Task Force

Akron City Council - Ward 3
Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority
Akron Police Department
Alpha Phi Alpha Homes
City of Akron
Development Finance Authority of Summit County
GAR Foundation
Growing Mindz
Kenmore Neighborhood Alliance
METRO Regional Transit Authority
Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition
Open M
Reach Opportunity Center
South Street Ministries
Students with a Goal
Summit County Council - District 5
Summit County Land Bank
Summit Lake BUILD CORPS
Summit Lake Community Development Corporation
Summit Lake Residents
Summit Metro Parks

People Task Force

Akron Area YMCA
Akron Children's Hospital
Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority
Akron Public Schools
Akron Urban League
Akron-Summit County Public Library
AMHA Jobs Plus Program
Boys and Girls Clubs of Northeast Ohio
City of Akron
Community Action Akron Summit
ConxusNEO
County of Summit ADM Board
Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities
Goodwill Industries of Akron
Ohio Means Jobs
Open M
Project Learn
Reach Community Center
South Street Ministries
Stark State College
Students With A Goal
Summit County Public Health
Summit Education Initiative
Summit Lake Community Development Corporation
Summit Lake Residents
Summit Metro Parks
United Way of Summit & Medina

Housing Task Force

Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority
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Summit County Land Bank
Summit Lake Apartments Residents
Summit Lake Community Development Corporation
Summit Metro Parks

Choice Neighborhoods Planning Team

Lead Grantee: Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority
Co-Grantee: City of Akron, Long-Range Planning Division
EJP Consulting Group LLC
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Interface Studio LLC

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*View of Summit Lake from
the Towpath Trail*





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

coming soon

*Summit Lake Community Boating
Program (Credit: Tim Fitzwater)*





1

INTRODUCTION

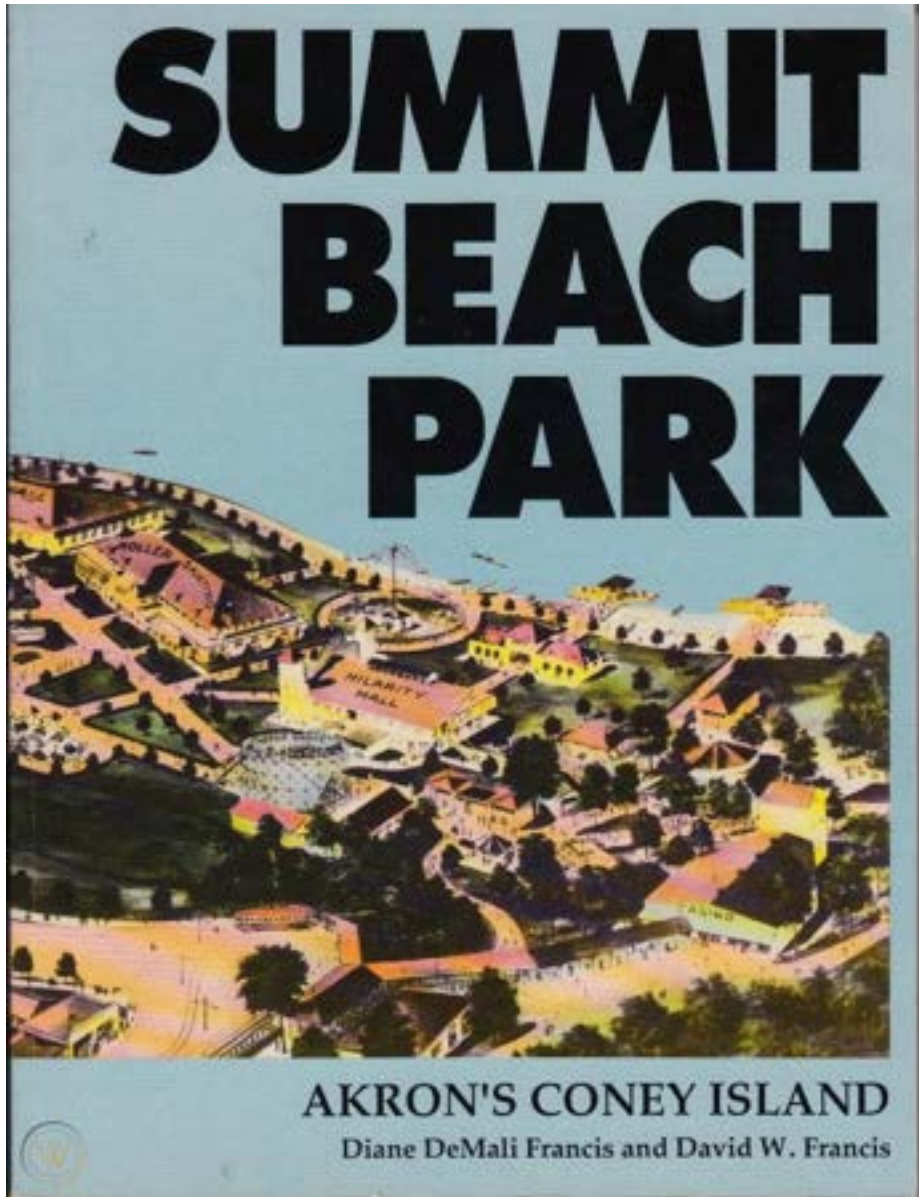
Close your eyes and listen.

Listen to the sounds of children splashing on the water's edge, of oars dipping into the water by canoeists, of food sizzling on the grill, of couples gently rocking back and forth on the swings, of crackling fire pits surrounded by friends and neighbors enjoying the weather.

Now open your eyes. What you heard was not a dream, but a reality that was hard to imagine at Summit Lake just 10 years ago. Made possible through the hard work of local residents and stakeholders convened by the Akron Civic Commons, the shores of Summit Lake will continue to be transformed in the near future with the construction of the Ohio & Erie Canal Summit Lake Trail and development of the northern shore.

Now close your eyes and listen again. Really listen. Hear the sounds of hammers fixing roofs and framing new homes, of lawn mowers keeping yards tidy, of bits of conversation from pedestrians walking by, of neighbors visiting and checking in on one another, of story time at the community center, of keyboard taps during a computer class.

When you open your eyes now, this is not the current reality before you, but it is a future hoped for by residents who call Summit Lake home. This Transformation Plan captures the vision of the Summit Lake community and provides a road map to bring about long sought after changes. The plan builds on the energy and momentum that continues to grow around the lake.



Advertisement for Summit Beach Park

The Summit Lake Transformation Plan was borne out of and grounded in the work of the Akron Civic Commons. With millions of dollars of additional planned investment along the shores of Summit Lake, the residents in the area began to ask, “what about the rest of the community?”

Immediately to the east of the lake, the Summit Lake neighborhood was once home to a destination amusement park - Summit Beach Park - more fondly called “Akron’s Million Dollar Playground”. The neighborhood boomed during and after World War I and housed workers from nearby plants like Goodyear and Firestone. Tree-lined streets featured single-family homes with front yards, a neighborhood elementary school, and active commercial districts.

The fortunes of Summit Lake began to turn in the mid-1930s as the lake became extremely polluted. Coupled with redlining practices, suburbanization, and the decline of the tire industry, Summit Lake experienced growing disinvestment. In 1958, Summit Beach Park closed its doors and was demolished, and in 1965, the Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority (AMHA) acquired Summit Lake Apartments that had been built by a private developer on the former amusement park site, to serve as a family public housing site.

Today, Summit Lake is a shadow of its former self. With only about 2,500 residents, which is 42% fewer than in 2000 alone, neighborhood streets are overwhelmed by vacant homes and vacant lots. Commercial storefronts have been transitioned into other uses, and over one-third of the population lives in poverty.

Despite this grim reality, there is a new energy and hope. There is commitment. There is determination. There is resilience among the long-time residents of Summit Lake, which is being embraced by newcomers to the area.

Adopting the “shared values” from the Akron Civic Commons work, AMHA and the City of Akron launched a holistic, resident-centered planning process to answer the question, “what about the rest of the community?”

Supported by a FY 2020 Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Summit Lake Transformation Plan is the result of two years of intensive work by AMHA and the City in partnership with residents and stakeholders to develop a future vision for the community including physical and social investments to elevate neighborhood-wide outcomes.

From community workshops to one-on-one interviews, focused discussions and resident surveys, the Summit Lake Transformation Plan reflects the community’s voice, goals, interests and priorities gathered through these various venues.

The completion of the Summit Lake Transformation Plan is just the first step in making the community’s preferred future a reality. AMHA, the City, and their public, private and non-profit partners will use the Transformation Plan as the road map for what, where, and how to invest, and how to do that in cooperation with the people who matter the most - the residents of Summit Lake.

Shared Values with Akron Civic Commons:

- *Transparency and honesty are essential.*
- *Everyone will be respected and valued.*
- *This is a resident-led process.*
- *We have to build trust first.*
- *We will work to engage those who are not in the room.*
- *We will use plain language.*
- *We will encourage residents to raise questions.*

The Summit Lake Transformation Plan is organized into the following chapters:

Chapter 2: Summit Lake Overview A snapshot of Summit Lake today and highlights of the planning process;

Chapter 3: The Vision for Summit Lake The community's preferred future and what actions and investments are needed to achieve that vision;

Chapter 4: People Spotlight A focus on strategies to enhance individual and community well-being;

Chapter 5: Summit Lake Neighborhood Spotlight A focus on targeted investments to uplift the community's quality of life;

Chapter 6: Summit Lake Apartments Spotlight A focus on the redesign of the AMHA site and expansion of housing opportunities;

Chapter 7: Getting from Today to Tomorrow Outlines next steps to move the Transformation Plan from paper to reality.

The Summit Lake Transformation Plan focuses on the portion of Summit Lake that is bounded by I-76 to the north, South Main Street to the east, Kenmore Boulevard/Ira Avenue to the south, and Summit Lake Boulevard/State Highway 93 to the west.

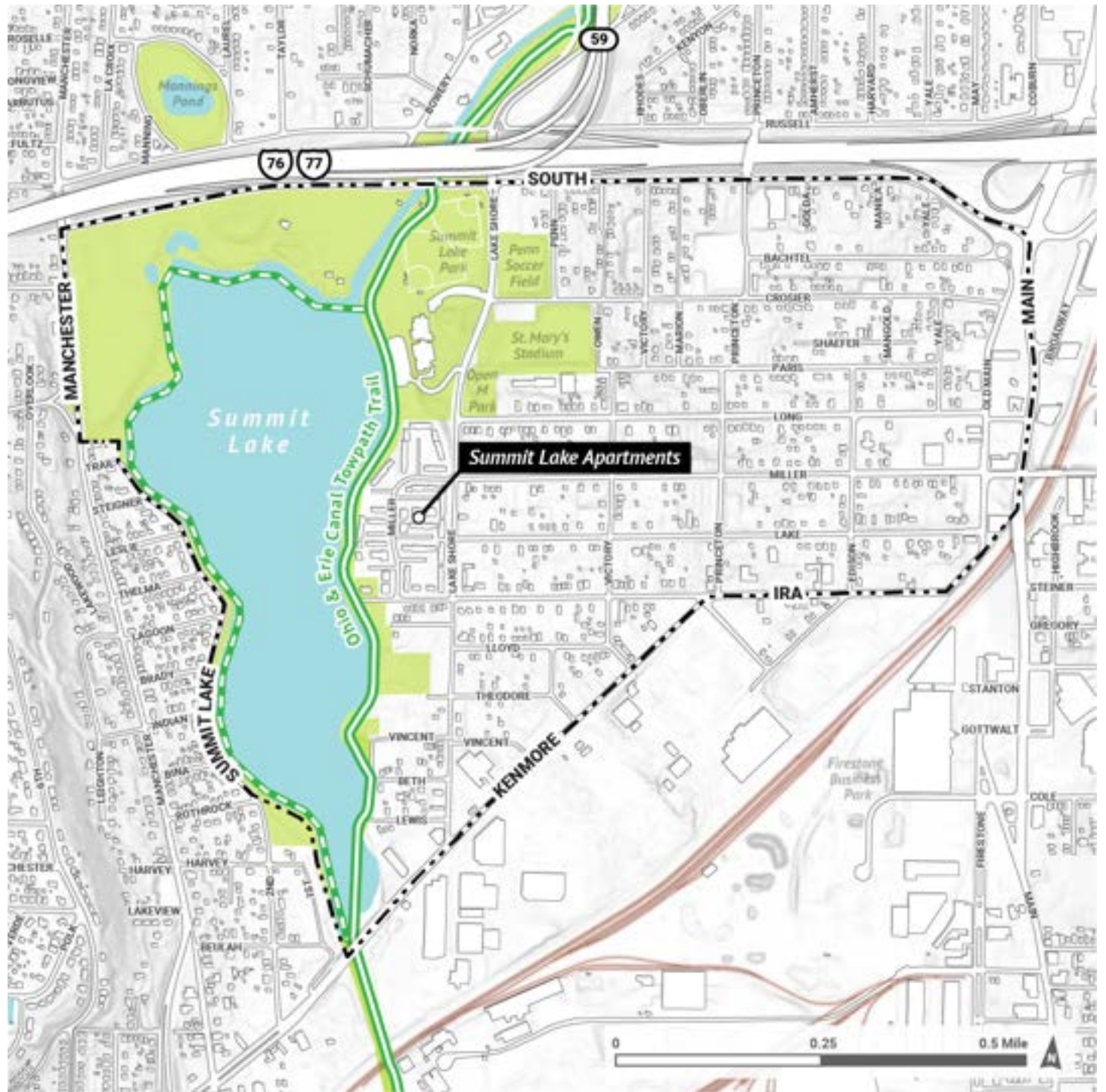


Resident's license plate illustrating the community's pride in their neighborhood

Figure 1: Target Neighborhood

Source: City of Akron GIS

- Choice Target Neighborhood
- Lake/River/Pond
- Parks/Open Space
- Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trail
- Proposed Summit Lake Trail
- Railroad







2

SUMMIT LAKE OVERVIEW

From growth to decline to resilience and renewal.

Summit Lake, located in the southwestern part of the City of Akron, lies along the Ohio & Erie Canalway and was so named because this glacial lake is located at a high point along the canal. The neighborhood adjacent to Summit Lake boomed during and after World War I as workers, including blacks from the South, flocked to the area to work in nearby plants like Goodyear and Firestone. Towards the end of World War I, Summit Beach Park - more affectionately known as “Akron’s Million Dollar Playground” - opened on the shores of Summit Lake, and thousands came to ride on roller coasters like “The Whip” and swim in the “Crystal Pool” when the lake was unsafe for swimming due to chemical runoff from the nearby factories.

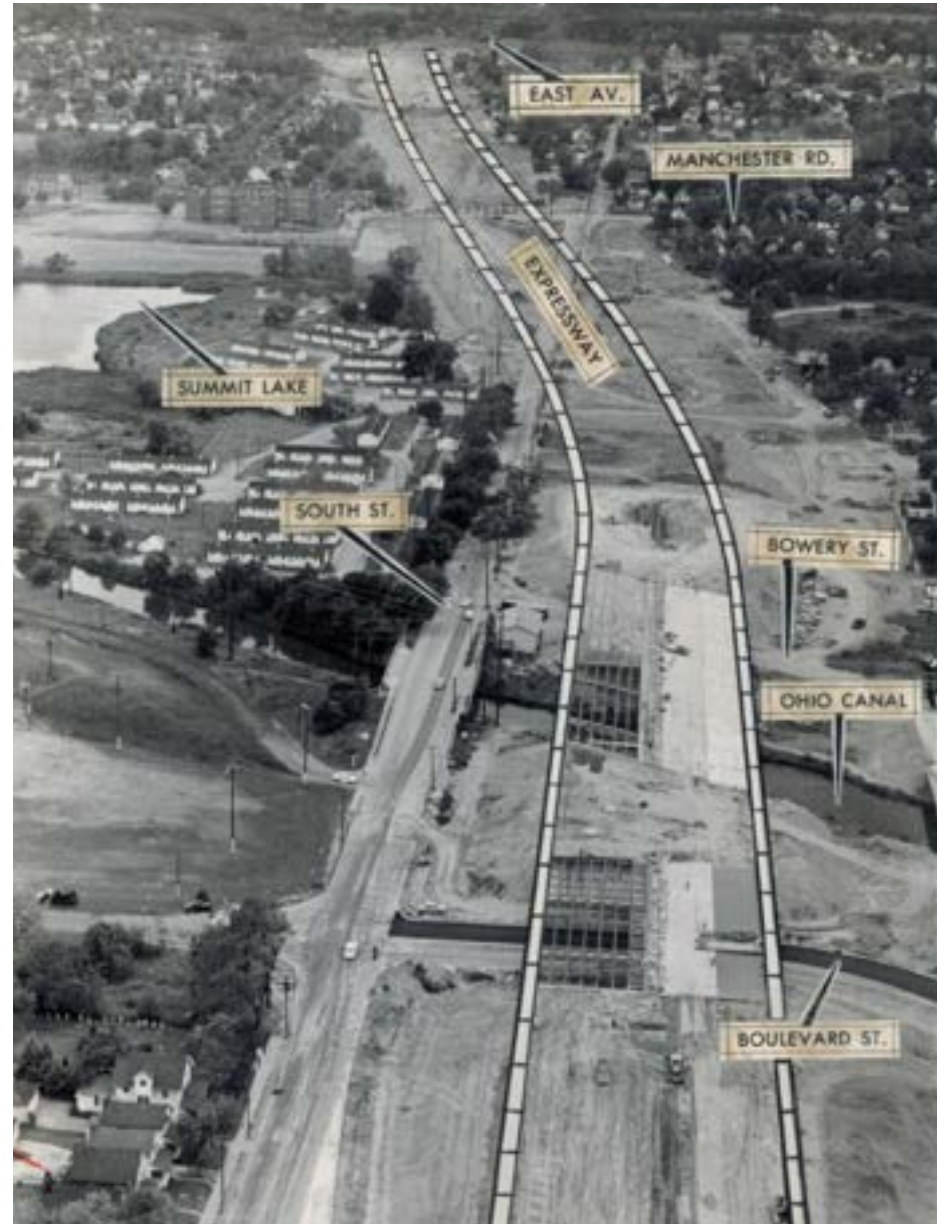
The heyday of the area continued through the 1930s and early 40s, but started to take a downward turn as the impact of redlining practices made it difficult for racial minorities to receive mortgage loans in the neighborhood. Coupled with continued pollution of the lake, volatility in the labor market, and the growth of the suburbs, the decline of Summit Lake was signaled by the closing of Summit Beach Park in 1958. The amusement park was demolished and the apartment complex built in its place would eventually be acquired by the by the Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority (AMHA) in 1965 and become Summit Lake Apartments, a family public housing community.

Left: The houses of Summit Lake



In the years that followed, the Summit Lake community was dealt one blow after another. In the early 1960s, the I-76/I-77 highway was built through the middle of the community, bisecting the neighborhood and displacing hundreds of mostly minority families. The decline of the tire industry due to foreign competition led to significant job losses that hit the already depressed community even harder. Residents fled to the suburbs leaving behind empty homes with low market values that fell into disrepair, foreclosure and/or tax delinquency. Schools were closed as the population shrank, and businesses shuttered their doors.

Today, Summit Lake is a shell of its former self - 50% of the land is vacant, which equates to 83 acres or 63 football fields. Of this vacant land, half is publicly-owned by the City of Akron or the Summit County Land Bank. The increase in vacancy is reflected in the concurrent population decline - between 2000 and 2019, Summit Lake lost 42% of its population. The remaining population tends to be young and poor - over one-third of residents are under the age of 18 and over one-third of households are living in poverty with a median household income of less than \$25,000.

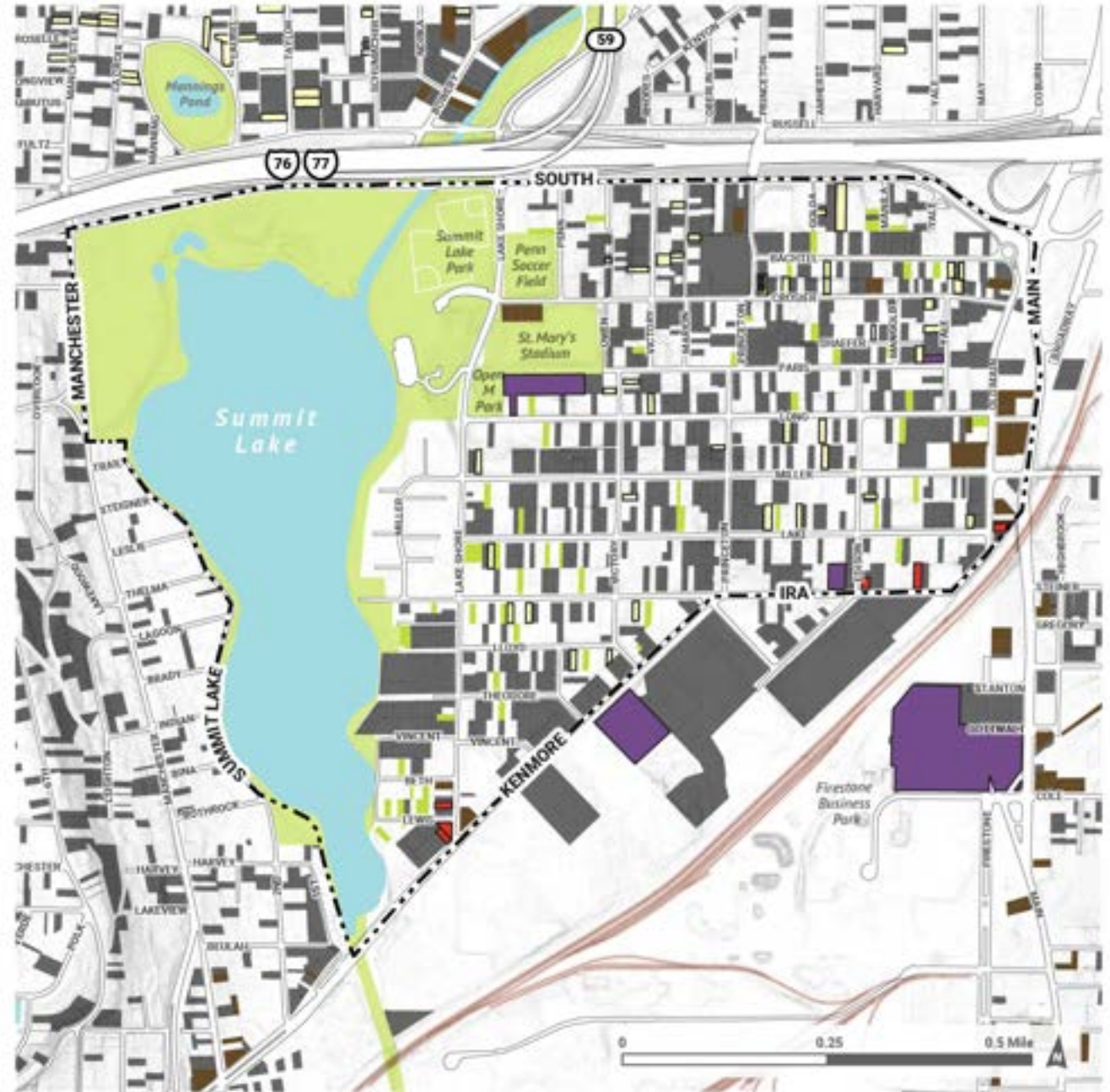


Aerial diagram of the construction of I-76/I-77 from 1962

Figure 2: Vacant Land and Buildings, 2021

Source: City of Akron GIS, Akron Fiscal Office, 2021 Field Survey

-  Choice Target Neighborhood
-  Vacant Residential Building
-  Vacant Commercial Building
-  Vacant Industrial Building
-  Vacant Land
-  Parking Lot
-  Side Yard



The fortunes of the community started to shift in 2010 when the section of the Towpath Trail that ran through Summit Lake was opened. A part of the Ohio & Erie Canal system, the Towpath Trail runs for 87-miles along the long-abandoned canal from Lake Erie and Cleveland in the north to New Philadelphia in the south. With more than 2.5 million Towpath users annually, Summit Lake, which had been disconnected, hidden, and forgotten began to get noticed as an untapped asset in Akron.

The Towpath Trail was featured prominently in the City of Akron's Reimagining the Civic Commons (RCC) initiative. Jointly funded by the JPB, Knight, Kresge and William Penn Foundations, RCC challenges cities to transform public spaces with the goal that the work advances engagement, equity, environmental sustainability and economic development. In Akron, the City selected civic spaces along three different sections of the Towpath – Downtown, Park East and Summit Lake.



The Towpath Trail helped reconnect Summit Lake to the region, and runs alongside the Summit Lake Apartments

Launched in 2016 with the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition (OECC) as the convener of partner organizations, coordinator of civic engagement, and administrator of the initiative, the Akron Civic Commons established a resident-first approach to hear what residents wanted and what their concerns were before any planning began.

With a goal of turning resident wants and priorities into actual investments, the first Akron Civic Commons' project in Summit Lake was to create a waterfront sitting area with picnic tables, grills, benches, and shade. Since then, several additional projects have come to fruition: a pop-up nature center at the Reach Opportunity Center that now has a new permanent home in the former Summit Lake Pump House after \$2.5 million in renovations by Summit Metro Parks; the demolition of vacant buildings along the northern shore of the lake including the closed Margaret Park Elementary School at a cost of nearly \$1 million; and the Summit Lake Community Portrait Project featuring photographs of community residents along the Towpath in Summit Lake. A water quality study completed in 2018 also demonstrated that the lake water was safe for certain recreation and had a water quality similar to other inland lakes in Ohio.

The Summit Lake Community Portrait Project featured photographs of residents along the Towpath Trail





One of the first Akron Civic Commons' projects completed, a gathering space along the waterfront, was directly informed by early feedback from neighborhood residents. (Credit Tim Fitzwater)

In 2018, the Akron Civic Commons completed the community-led Summit Lake Vision Plan. Two projects identified in the plan and prioritized by the community include the creation of a 2.25 mile trail around Summit Lake connected to the Towpath and development of the northern shore of the lake (North Shore). The Ohio & Erie Canal Summit Lake Trail was piloted during the summer of 2019 using mowed paths and signage, and permanent construction of the \$2.5 million loop trail will begin beginning in mid-2022.

The North Shore project is estimated to cost \$7.5 million and is currently under design with construction anticipated to start in 2023. The North Shore will feature a picnic pavilion, boat launch, kayak storage facility and concession stand.

Aside from these capital projects that will transform the shores of Summit Lake as they are implemented, the most important outcomes from the Akron Civic Commons' work were the development of a mutual understanding and respect for resident-voice and the understanding that progress only moves as fast as the speed of trust. Over the years, the community heard a lot of promises that were not fulfilled, and residents were not consulted about decisions that impacted their neighborhood.

The process established by the Akron Civic Commons was the first time residents were at the table with decision-making input about what happens in their community. Building and maintaining resident trust is an on-going effort that continues to infuse the work of the Akron Civic Commons today.

Sign at one of the entrances to the Ohio & Erie Canal Summit Lake Trail during the pilot phase



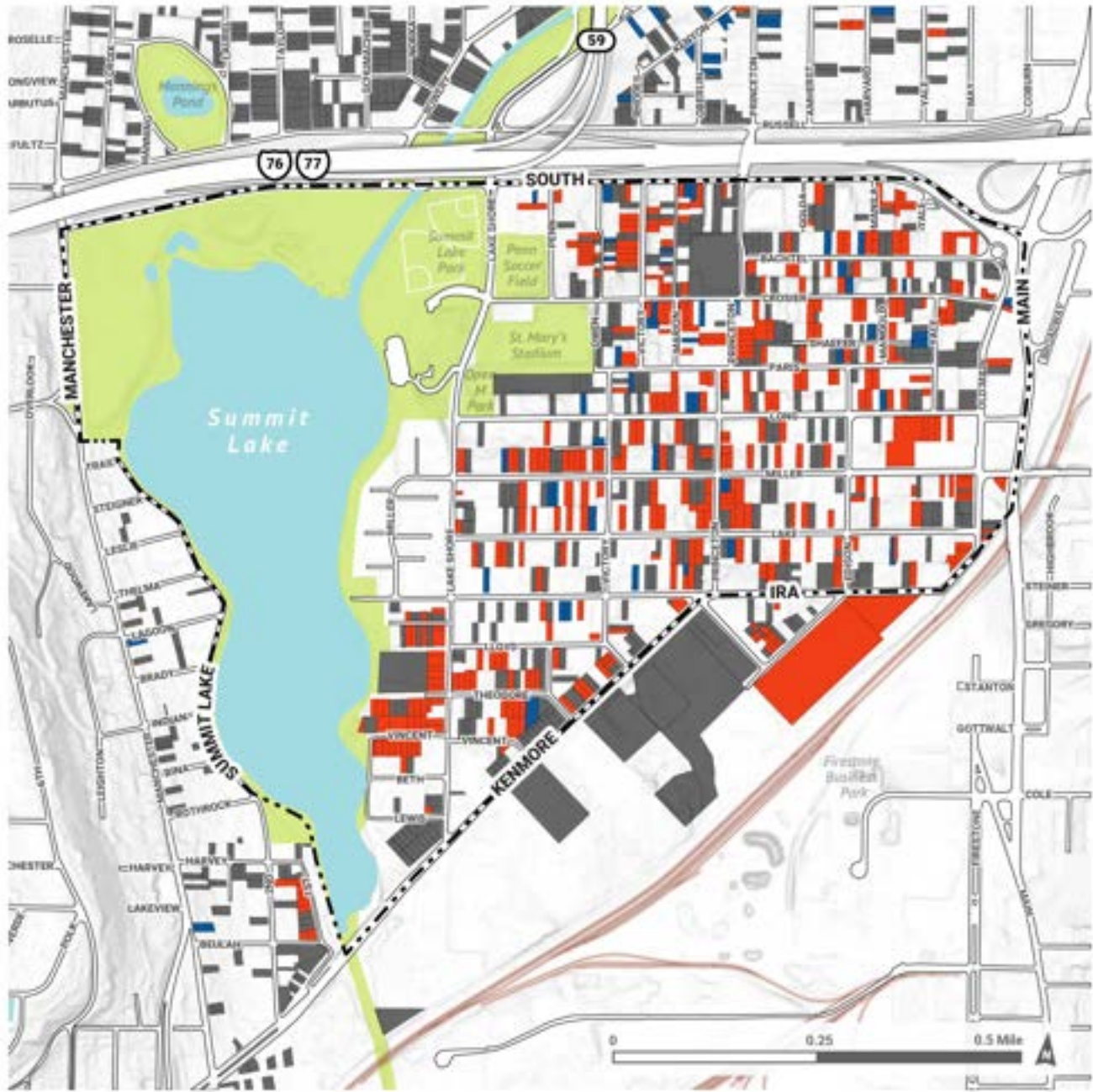


Figure 3: Vacancy by Ownership, 2021

Source: City of Akron GIS, Akron Fiscal Office 2021

- Choice Target Neighborhood
- Lake/River/Pond
- Parks/Open Space
- Railroad
- Privately Owned - Vacant
- Summit County Land Bank - Vacant
- City of Akron - Vacant

Summit Lake Land Use Update

Aside from the activity happening in and around the lake through Akron Civic Commons, the City had been doing work in the community for the last 15 years, much of which was centered around acquisition and blight removal. Using Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) 1 and NSP 3 funding, the City spent over \$2.9 million acquiring land, demolishing blighted buildings, rehabilitating older homes and constructing new housing. The City also used a \$235,000 Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) grant to acquire over 30 parcels adjacent to the lake for future open space.

As the largest land owner in the neighborhood with 350 properties in hand, the City initiated a Land Use Study in early 2021 to determine the future of the City-owned parcels. With an intent to facilitate new development in the area and transition the vacant lots back into productive use, the City will also update their zoning code as appropriate to achieve that goal.



Logo developed by the City in partnership with Summit Lake residents to brand the Land Use work.

Summit Lake Apartments

Located on the lakefront adjacent to the Towpath, Summit Lake Apartments (Apartments) has a prominent presence in the Summit Lake community. With a repetitive design and superblock configuration, the Apartments are readily identifiable as public housing. The Apartments suffers from significant structural issues due to the soils on which the units are built. The buildings have been experiencing differential settlement for decades and AMHA demolished 14 units back in 1996 because the settling was so severe. Today, with 239 units, structural issues continue to plague the site with 7 more buildings exhibiting signs of differential settlement. Despite these issues, the Apartments maintains a 98% or higher occupancy rate because of the extreme need for affordable housing in Akron.

With the continued decline of the Apartments' physical condition and in light of the successes that have been achieved along the shoreline by the Akron Civic Commons and the City's initiation of a land use study, AMHA and the City saw the opportunity to leverage the land use work for the neighborhood with a concurrent comprehensive planning process to determine the future of the Apartments.

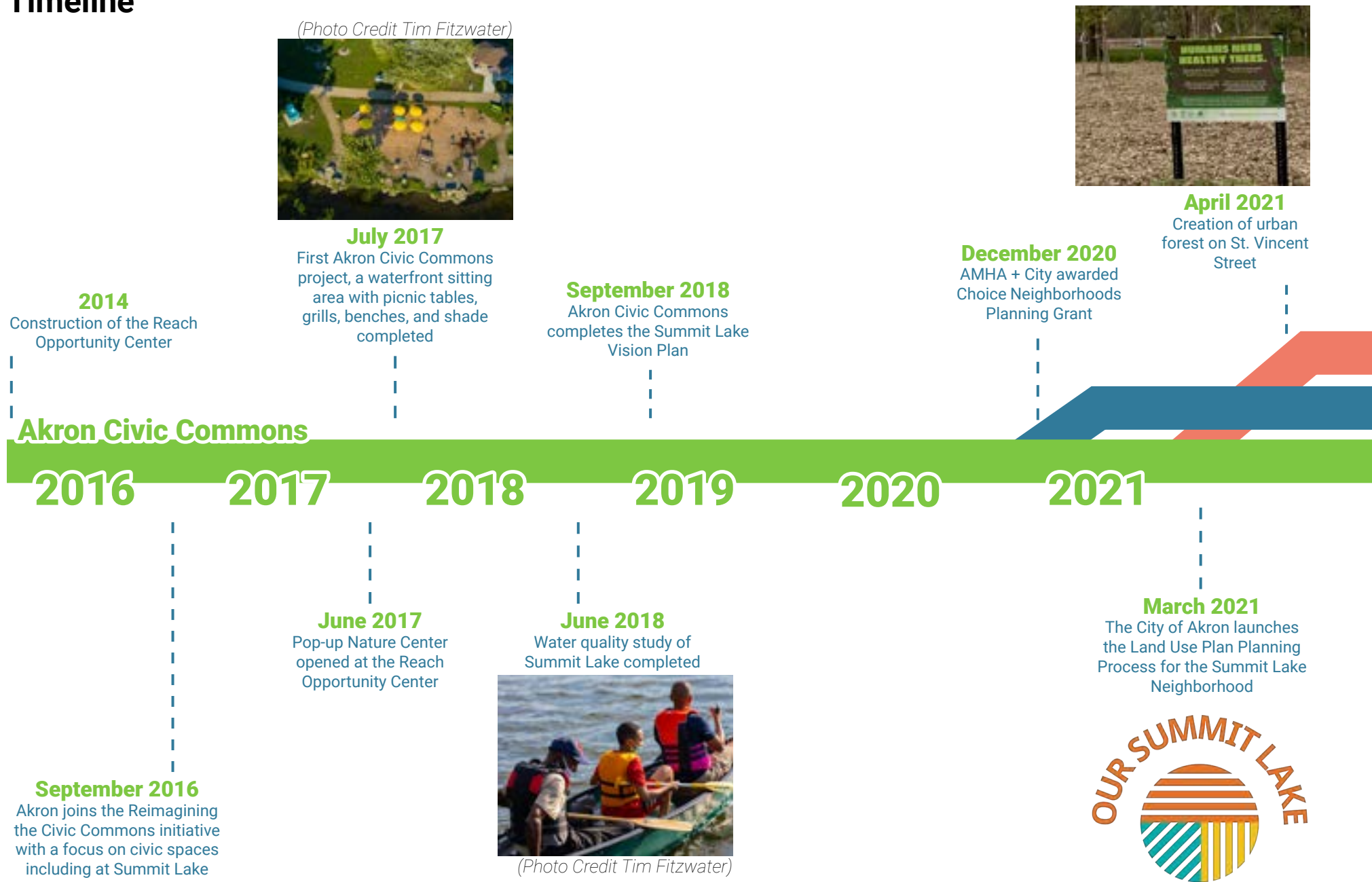
In 2020, AMHA and the City applied for and were awarded a FY2020 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant to support the development of a Transformation Plan for the Apartments and the greater Summit Lake community.

*The Summit Lake Apartments
(Credit Tim Fitzwater)*





Timeline





July 2021

Community Workshops
Round 1



October 2021

Community Workshops
Round 2



March 2022

Community Workshops
Round 3



June 2022

Community Workshops
Round 4

September 2022

Community Workshops
Round 5

Future
Development
of North Shore
of Summit
Lake

May 2021
Walk audit with
neighborhood residents

Land Use

Choice Neighborhoods

2022

2023

July 2021

Ohio & Erie Canal Summit
Lake Trail is piloted around
Summit Lake

July 2021

Summit Lake Nature Center
opens in old pump house



Dec. 2021

Land Use Plan
completed

March 2022

Resident / Provider
Focus Groups

July 2022

Construction begins on
\$2.5 million loop trail
around Summit Lake

July 2022

Pilot Gathering Space
opens next to Summit Lake
Apartments

Dec. 2022

Community Workshops
Round 6

Sustaining Civic Engagement & Stewardship

A principal Akron Civic Commons goal is to build lasting civic engagement and stewardship of the community. While Akron Civic Commons provided the space and opportunity for the residents to engage, residents had to rise to the occasion and make the decision to engage – and they did. The accomplishments of the last few years would not have been possible without the community's ideas, participation, commitment and growing notion that they can change and determine the future of the place they call home.

Building on the strength of the approach to community engagement established by the Akron Civic Commons, AMHA and the City committed to adhering to the same shared values to ensure meaningful community involvement at every step of the process. These shared values guided the approach to resident engagement, ensuring that the public process was transparent, inclusive, built trust, and respected and valued the time and knowledge of Summit Lake residents.

Community engagement activities included community workshops, pop-up events, focused discussions, one-on-one interviews and resident surveys. Done at strategic points during the planning process, these activities provided venues to gather information, share ideas, and collect feedback.

To maximize resident participation, each round of community workshop was held in two locations - one by the lake near the Apartments, and one in the heart of the Summit Lake community at the Front Porch Fellowship on Miller Avenue.

Workshop #1 - July 2021



The first round of workshops focused on gathering resident experiences living in the neighborhood using a collaborative map and spin wheel to record issues and ideas, and a personal history postcard.

Workshop #2 - October 2021



The second round of workshops took the key themes from the previous workshop and had residents prioritize their vision for the community plus potential neighborhood activities and investments.

Workshop #3 - March 2022



The third round of workshops presented two different roadway options for the redevelopment of Summit Lake Apartments, a refined vision for community acceptance, and possible amenities in a new gathering space.

Workshop #4 - May/June 2022



The fourth round of workshops asked residents to prioritize neighborhood improvements, state their architectural preferences, and weigh in on different unit densities for the redevelopment of Summit Lake Apartments.

Workshop #5 - September 2022 (anticipated)



The fifth round of workshops will collect input on the updated site plan for the redevelopment of Summit Lake Apartments including conceptual unit types and building elevations.

Workshop #6 - December 2022 (anticipated)



The final event will be a celebration of the completion of the Transformation Plan and kick off the implementation phase to bring the community's vision for Summit Lake to life.

Planning During the Time of COVID-19

AMHA and the City of Akron were awarded a Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant during the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Being sensitive to the reality that COVID-19 vaccination rates were low in Summit Lake and that access to reliable internet service was a challenge, community engagement activities were either held outside to decrease the chance of transmission or if it had to be held inside because of inclement weather, all local COVID-19 protocols were followed.

COVID-19 also required creativity to facilitate resident involvement. In October 2021, the Choice planning team participated in a Halloween “parade” with sandwich boards that went door-to-door to solicit resident opinions about the community’s vision, options for open space improvements and ways to build community pride.



Overseeing the planning and community engagement process was a Steering Committee plus three Task Forces - one each for Housing, People and Neighborhood. Each group was composed of Summit Lake Apartments and neighborhood residents, place-based organizations, local stakeholders, and City and County departments.

The Akron Civic Commons Core Team, an established group of stakeholders convened by Akron Civic Commons to guide and oversee the work at Summit Lake, served as the Steering Committee for the Transformation Plan to avoid duplication and build on the Akron Civic Commons process. AMHA and the City attended these convenings on a monthly basis to provide updates as the planning process proceeded.

The Housing Task Force focused on the redevelopment of Summit Lake Apartments, while the People Task Force worked on assessing the services landscape in Summit Lake and how to connect Summit Lake Apartments residents with programs and resources they need.

The Neighborhood Task Force was intentionally convened as a joint effort between the City’s Land Use Plan and Choice Neighborhoods to coordinate activities and provide a unified approach to neighborhood investment.

Task Forces were convened on a regular basis, whether monthly (Neighborhood) or bi-monthly (Housing, People) as needed. Each task force served as a sounding board to review and provide feedback on existing condition analyses, community engagement, and ideas and options as they were developed.

Neighborhood children participate in a kids’ outreach activity at the first planning workshop in July 2021





Participants during Community Workshop #1

3

THE VISION FOR SUMMIT LAKE

Summit Lake is a safe, welcoming and family-friendly community with quality housing and local businesses, where new and long-term residents, proud of their community, work side-by-side to improve the neighborhood.



Summit Lake Guiding Principles:

- *Residents are involved in all aspects of the work and guide the selection of community priorities.*
- *Investments and programs will address the needs and interests of both existing and future residents.*
- *Residents are supported to take a leadership role in all investments.*
- *Sustainability and resilience will be included in all neighborhood improvements.*

Crafted and refined by the community, the vision statement captures how residents see themselves and how they want the community to be seen in the future. It reflects their long-term intent to be a part of the change, commitment to see the improvements through, and openness to work with others who share their vision.

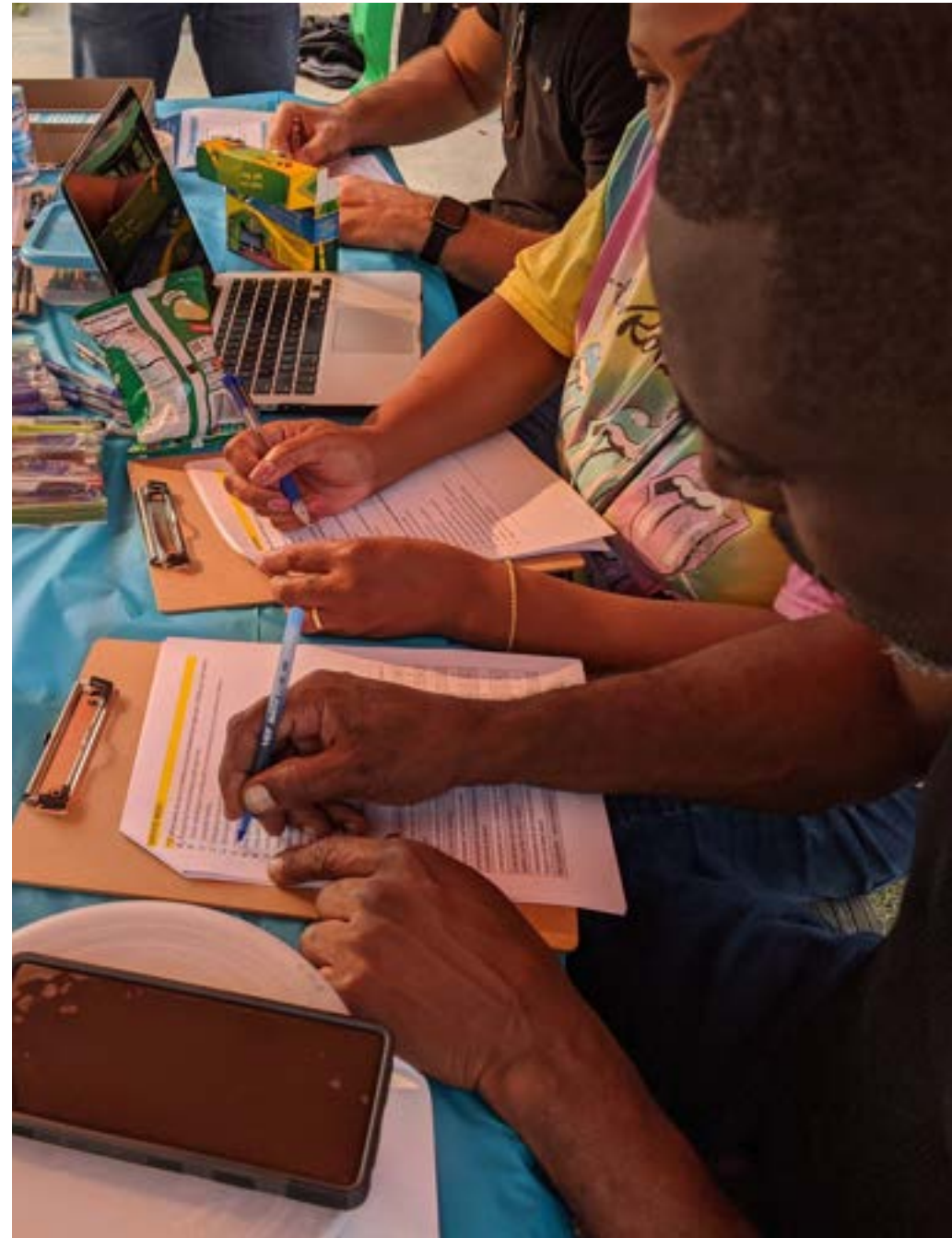
The guiding principles for the community served as a “North Star” for the selection of the goals and strategies to move Summit Lake closer to its preferred future.

To inform the selection of strategies, AMHA and the City undertook several studies and facilitated numerous resident gatherings to develop a clear picture of where the community is today - physically, socially, and individually. This information served as the basis for what strategies were most appropriate as well the baseline from which progress can be judged.

The completed studies can be found in the Appendix:

- **Summit Lake Data Book** (Appendix A) - comprehensive compilation of on-the-ground, in-person, and technical studies of the community including:
 - information on the history and physical context of the community including amenities plus socio-economic data
 - summary of 53 stakeholder interviews completed with residents, service providers and community partners
 - results from the 158 Summit Lake Apartments resident surveys and 140 Summit Lake neighborhood surveys completed
 - Phase 1 and Phase 2 Environmental Assessments for Summit Lake Apartments commissioned by AMHA

- **Analysis of the Residential Market Potential for Summit Lake** (Appendix B) - assessment of the market potential for new rental and homeownership units in the community including target market households and annual absorption rates
- **State Historic Preservation Review** (Appendix C) - consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office as to the potential historic impacts of any future redevelopment of Summit Lake Apartments
- **Summit Lake Workshop Summaries** (Appendix D) - results from all six rounds of community workshops held during the planning process
- **LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) Checklist** (Appendix E) - scorecard for how the Transformation Plan is designed to be eligible to secure LEED-ND designation from the U.S. Green Building Council



Summit Lake Apartments residents completing the resident survey during the first Community Workshop

Residents are proud to live in Summit Lake with its strong sense of community and neighbors who look out for one another.

This goal focuses on the strengths and benefits that accrue from residents feeling they are a part of and belong to a “community.”

The strategies to achieve this goal are separated into ones focused on the **entire Summit Lake community** that address strengthening the overall sense of community and connections between residents and ones specifically focused on **Summit Lake Apartments** that reassess the overall approach to supporting residents living at the site.

Community-focused strategies

- Increase safety and perceptions of safety
- Create opportunities for residents to socialize and strengthen their community relationships

Apartments-focused strategies

Guiding Framework: Prioritize relationship and trust building

- Support a culture of self-care
- Design services that meet residents where they are
- Commit to investing in the whole child

“The social ties that accompany a sense of belonging are a protective factor helping manage stress and other behavioral issues. When we feel like we have support and are not alone, we are more resilient, often coping more effectively with difficult times in our lives. Coping well with hardships decreases the physical and mental effects of these situations.”

- The Mayo Clinic Health System, “Is having a sense of belonging important?” by Angela Theisen, December 8, 2021

Meeting residents where they are



As part of Workshop #2 and being mindful of increases in COVID-19 cases at the time (October 2021), the Planning Team in partnership with the AMHA Jobs Plus and Resident Services teams conducted a Halloween "Parade" that brought the planning process to the people. The group went door-to-door through the entire Summit Lake Apartments site to obtain resident input while handing out goodies and candy.



Doing While Planning - Ongoing and Completed Neighborhood Improvements



Clockwise from left:

- ***Creation of a 40' x 120' urban forest on Vincent Street adjacent to Summit Lake***
- ***Installation of speed tables on Miller Avenue east and west of Victory Street***
- ***Curb ramps installed during Phase 1 of crosswalk improvements at Long Street and Lakeshore Boulevard which provides access to the neighborhood asset the Reach Opportunity Center. New roadway striping will be completed as a part of Phase 2 by October 2022.***

Summit Lake is a connected community with quality housing, streets and public spaces that support active and healthy lifestyles as well as protect the natural environment.

This goal focuses on ensuring that all residents of Summit Lake experience a higher quality of life through targeted investments in the physical fabric of the neighborhood that have been prioritized by the community.

The strategies in this chapter aim to strengthen the neighborhood in concert with the redevelopment of the Summit Lake Apartments by focusing on neighborhood appearance and beautification, investments in new and existing housing, and improving neighborhood streets and public space.

Improve neighborhood appearance and strengthen community stewardship

- Continue to support neighborhood clean-up efforts
- Explore the creation of a Block Captain program
- Manage vacant and nuisance properties
- Activate vacant lots with temporary uses

Ensure all residents have safe and healthy housing

- Support existing homeowners with making improvements to their homes
- Upgrade the rental housing stock
- Establish a task force focused on developing tools and policies that support residents to remain in Summit Lake
- Build new housing in the neighborhood

Make it easier and safer to reach neighborhood destinations

- Improve Lakeshore Boulevard to be the front door to the neighborhood
- Create gateways that connect the larger Summit Lake neighborhood
- Make streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists

Invest in parks and open spaces that meet the community needs

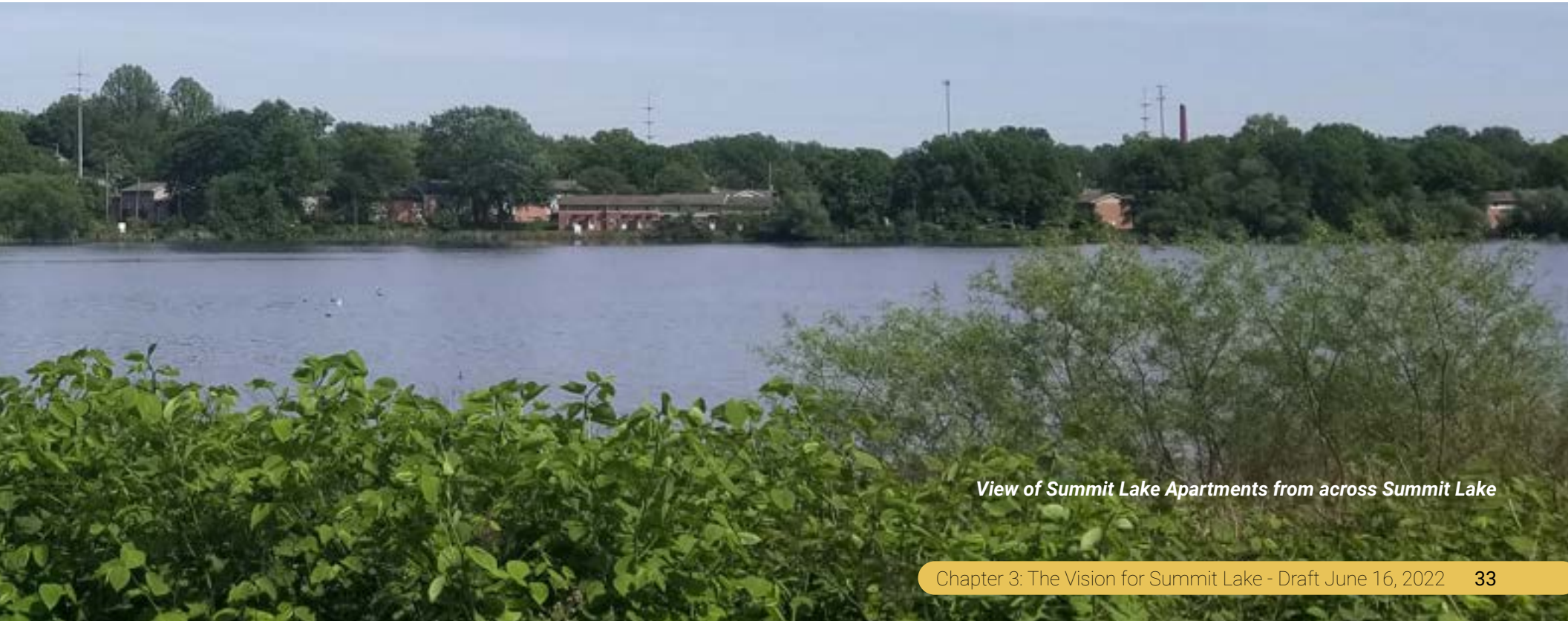
- Improve existing parks
- Develop new parks and open spaces

Summit Lake Apartments will be redeveloped as a mixed-income community that is integrated into the neighborhood.

This goal focuses on redesigning Summit Lake Apartments in a manner that meets the community goals with respect to integration with the rest of the neighborhood, inclusion of high quality amenities and open spaces, expansion of new quality affordable housing while preserving the ability of existing residents to remain in the community, and capitalizing on its adjacency to the lake itself.

The strategies for this goal are under development





View of Summit Lake Apartments from across Summit Lake

Resident survey event at Summit Lake Apartments



Resident survey event outside of the Reach Opportunity Center and Summit Lake Community Center

4

PEOPLE SPOTLIGHT

Residents are proud to live in Summit Lake with its strong sense of community and neighbors who look out for one another.

Long-time residents of Summit Lake recall when they used to know their neighbors and they would gather on a frequent basis to socialize or simply be available to help each other out when needed. The dramatic loss of population over the years coupled with resident accessibility to needed supports has disrupted social cohesion and sense of community for many residents. Today, newer residents find it harder to meet their neighbors and feel connected to each other.

This decline in “community” also has direct and indirect consequences for resident well-being and how comfortable they feel engaging with their neighbors or going around the neighborhood. Residents do not feel safe, do not let their children play outside, do not get very much physical activity, and are not involved with community organizations. This contributes to feelings of isolation and loneliness and negatively impacts mental health.

The COVID-19 pandemic further strained many households in the neighborhood and added urgency to the need to shore up community connections and build social resilience. Residents reported losing income, losing someone close to them, and feeling isolated and lonely due to the pandemic.

Whatever is happening at the neighborhood level is amplified among Summit Lake Apartments residents. Even though the Apartments have not experienced the same population loss as the broader neighborhood, the turnover rate is very high with 75% of families having lived at the site for 5 years or less. According to AMHA, this property is the least desirable of all their developments, and households would rather go to the bottom of the waiting list than move into the Apartments. The continual movement of families in and out of the site has disrupted the ability of Apartments residents to build a network of support. It has also impacted the willingness of new residents to make connections if they do not feel they will be at the Apartments for very long.

Aside from the disconnect residents feel in general, there are larger disconnects also happening in Summit Lake. The Apartments residents and neighborhood residents rarely interact with one another or venture into one another's spaces, and those who live on the "hill" do not mix with those in the "valley".

With the closure of all the neighborhood schools in the community due to the declining population, the neighborhood lost an anchor for bringing together families from across the area. Now, school-age children across the Summit Lake community (both at the Apartments and in the community) attend over 40 different schools across the City and County.

Furthermore, AMHA, through their Resident Services Department, has offered a robust menu of services for their residents for many years starting with the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program in 1993. Since then, programs AMHA has made available to its residents include the Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) Service Coordinator program, Parents as Teachers, and SPARK (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids) among many others. Most recently, AMHA was awarded a FY 2019 Jobs Plus grant in that officially launched at Summit Lake Apartments in early 2021.

In 2014, AMHA in partnership with the City and Akron Public Schools (APS), opened the Reach Opportunity Center (Reach) just north of the Apartments and adjacent to the City's Summit Lake Community Center. This facility, which houses two APS preschool classrooms and Head Start and an Early Head Start classrooms, also provides space for partner organizations to offer programs and services and meeting space for non-partner organizations.

Over the years, a number of programs have been offered at Reach in addition to the early childhood programming including computer classes by the Akron-Summit County Public Library, GED classes by Project Learn, afterschool program by the Boys and Girls Club of Northeast Ohio, and well-child visits by Akron Children's Hospital. Recurrent concerns voiced by service providers were the low level of participation in programs by Apartments residents, and if programs are well attended, they are attended by persons who reside elsewhere.

AMHA conducted a survey as a part of the Choice Neighborhoods planning process, in which residents demonstrated a high knowledge but low level use of available programs. The historical lack of participation of apartment residents counter the findings in the resident survey; residents still indicated a need for services provided at the Reach Opportunity Center.

Gathered from interviews and focused discussions with residents and service providers, the following barriers and challenges were cited for the disconnect and disengagement of residents with each other, with the broader community, and with the services available:

- lack of trust - residents do not feel comfortable sharing their information with someone they do not know, but they are also distrustful of institutions like APS, AMHA, and the healthcare system where there are both historical issues of mistreatment by the medical community and current mistrust when they feel their concerns are not heard by their doctors.
- revolving door of help - even when a resident does have someone they trust like a caseworker, many times that person can only help with a certain issue and if additional supports are needed, they have to work with someone else who they do not have the same relationship with. Similarly, recently, AxessPointe Community Health Centers closed the closest location to Summit Lake, causing their patients to scramble to find another doctor and resulting in the loss of relationships they had with the medical providers at that facility.

- issues with mental health are vastly underreported - already understated due to the stigma with having a mental health need, the impact of the pandemic and the associated isolation, personal loss, and financial instability experienced by many was only magnified in low-income communities. Minimal access to transportation, poor internet connectivity and few social outlets only contributed to the greater isolation of residents.
- need for services for the whole family particularly those with children - with no local schools, limited transportation, children of multiple ages, and concerns about safety, Apartments youth are not engaged in early learning or afterschool programs. Transportation is the biggest concern followed by programs of interest to youth, and then the availability of childcare programs that are less restrictive than Head Start/Early Head Start.



Key Data Points

Safety

- **Survey: many residents expressed concern about safety**
 - 53% of residents feel crime occurs “daily” or “frequently (1-2 times per week)” in the neighborhood
 - 49% have experienced gun shots in the neighborhood
 - 31% of residents will not allow their children to play outside

Community Cohesion

- **Survey: neighborhood residents exhibit a higher level of community engagement than Summit Lake Apartments residents**
 - 68% of neighborhood residents know their neighbors compared to 48% of Apartment residents
 - 66% of neighborhood residents are working to improve their neighborhood compared to 35% of Apartment residents
 - 48% of neighborhood residents do not participate in any community organizations compared to 77% of Apartments residents

Individual Well-Being

- **Survey: resident self-reported health and lifestyles point to a need for greater self-care**
 - mental health issues top health conditions among residents followed by issues exacerbated by poor diets - depression (36%), extreme stress/anxiety (35%), weight problem (27%), and high blood pressure (26%)

- 57% of adults and 37% of children are active for 30+ minutes only two or less times a week
- fewer than 10% of adults and 16% of children eat the recommended 5+ servings of fruits and vegetables a day

Economic Stability

- **Survey: residents face multiple barriers to employment or increasing their earning power**
 - 50% do not own a vehicle
 - 29% do not have reliable access to the internet
 - 30% do not use any banking services
 - financial issues top the list of immediate needs - budget/credit repair (18%), help with financial/legal issues (17%), help getting a loan for car/school/business (11%), emergency food assistance (10%)
 - 24% do not have a high school diploma/GED, 50% have a high school diploma/GED only

Youth

- **Survey: the youth are unengaged**
 - 23% of children 0-5 attend an early childhood learning program
 - 88% do not participate in afterschool programming
 - students from Summit Lake Apartments attend 29 different elementary, middle and high schools across the area including schools outside of Akron

Strategies:

The strategies in this chapter are broken into two areas - ones focused on the entire Summit Lake community that address strengthening the overall sense of community and connections between residents and ones specifically focused on the Apartments that reassesses the overall approach to supporting residents living at the site.

Community-focused strategies:

- Increase safety and perceptions of safety
- Create opportunities for residents to socialize and strengthen their community relationships

1. Increase safety and perceptions of safety

Support City strategy to reduce gun violence

“Firearms recovered have shot up. Everyone is carrying a firearm these days. We are trying to work through this.” - Akron Police Department

The frequency of gun shots was a major contributor to residents not feeling safe in the neighborhood. This was reinforced by the Akron Police Department which reported that firearm recovery has increased during the pandemic and is a focus of the City and Police Department. The City is developing a youth and community violence reduction program that can be deployed in neighborhoods such as Summit Lake. AMHA is also exploring grant opportunities to bring additional violence prevention and intervention programming to the Apartments.

Continue community policing efforts at Summit Lake Apartments

The Police Department and AMHA have enjoyed a long-term working relationship with off-duty police officers providing on-site security at AMHA’s developments in addition to those police officers on-duty. AMHA’s Resident Services Department shares each development’s calendar of events with the Police Department, and the assigned community policing officers to the area make it a point to attend these events. During the pandemic, the Police Department was understaffed which also impacted AMHA’s security coverage levels. Apartments residents were discouraged by the lack of response to reports of gunshots, drug dealing and domestic violence. Since then, staffing and coverage levels have returned to their expected levels. The security current team working at Summit Lake Apartments is more diverse, equitable and inclusive than ever before. Opportunities to build relationships between residents and the current security team should continue.

2. Create opportunities for residents to socialize and strengthen their community relationships

Hold more events for the community to come together

There is a strong desire among residents for more opportunities to socialize particularly as the community comes out of the COVID-19 pandemic. The July 4 fireworks over the lake that began during the pandemic was a huge hit, and residents would like to see that continue. Other activities of interest include movie nights, concerts, parades (there used to be drum corps parades), kids carnival, and other events that would attract an intergenerational audience.

Support grassroots opportunities for neighbors to meet

As the neighborhood is known for its “front porch” culture, a neighborhood-wide front porch socializing initiative is another good way to build neighborhood connections. This type of initiative could be coordinated by the Summit Lake CDC or through a Block Captain network and even expand to neighborhood block parties.



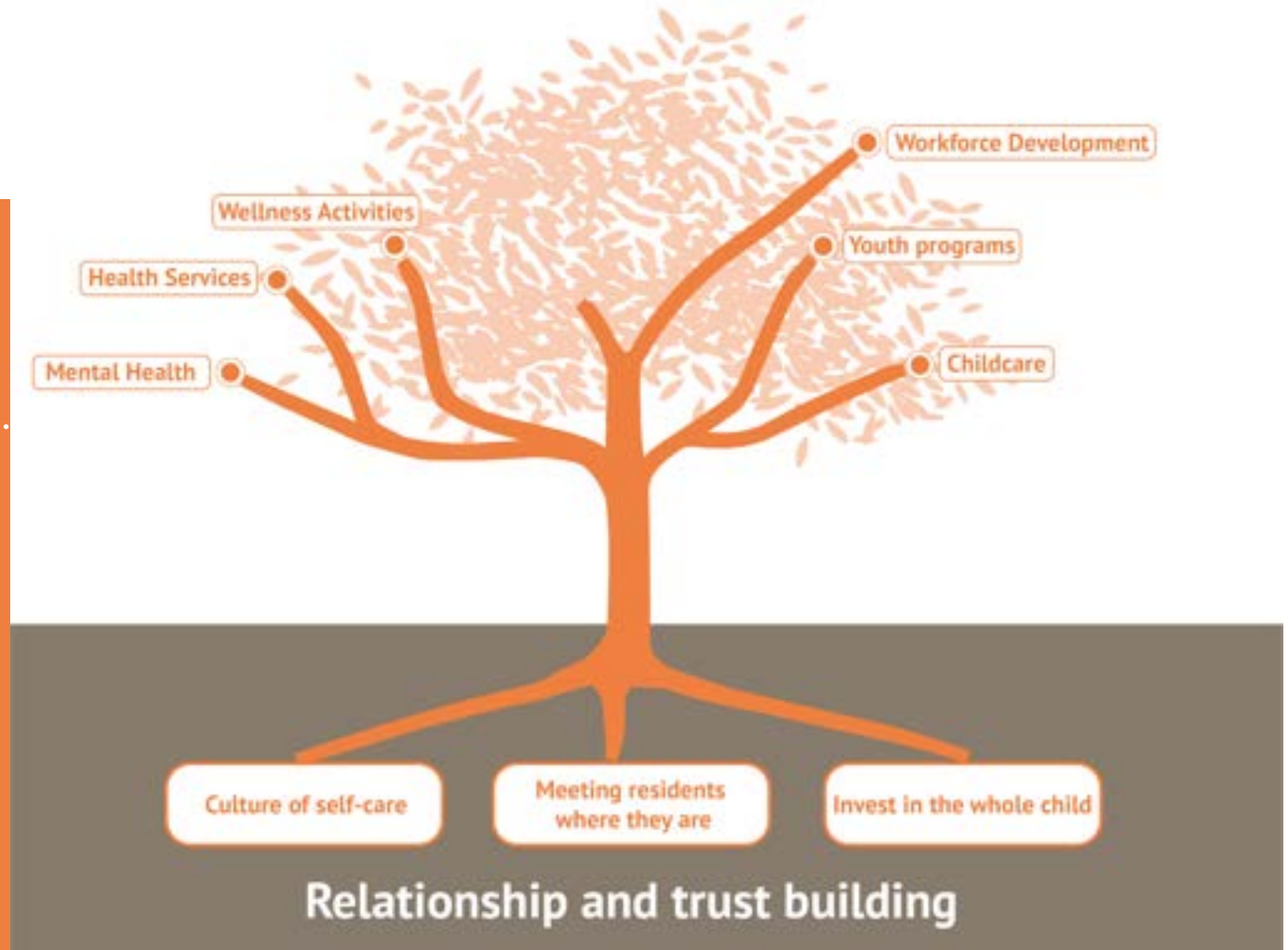


Nick Cave Event at Summit Lake Community Center
(Credit: Mark Arehart / WKSU)

Guiding Framework:

Prioritize relationship and trust building:

- *Support a culture of self-care*
- *Design services that meet residents where they are*
- *Commit to investing in the whole child*



Summit Lake Apartments-focused strategies:

This framework is grounded in the numerous conversations held with residents, on-the-ground staff, and partner organizations working in Akron or Summit Lake specifically, and reflects the themes mentioned again and again by different audiences in different venues. Residents do not trust or always feel respected by those whose mission is to help them, and providers are frustrated at the lack of participation and engagement by residents despite the offerings of services.

At the foundation of this is the need for intentional relationship and trust building. Like what was recognized by the Akron Civic Commons during their work in Summit Lake to transform the physical space - “the process moves at the speed of trust” - a similar adage could be made for the transformation of human space - “making oneself open to accepting help moves at the speed of trust”.

For this community, this means:

- making opportunities to connect without an agenda - too often, the only time providers interact with residents, it is to get or give “something” - whether gathering information, signing up for a program, handing out a food box, collecting rent, etc. Can space be made just to spend time getting to know the person in big and little ways?
- engaging and collaborating with trusted partners to bridge the trust divide - residents have come to mistrust large institutions for a reason, and helping to overcome these past transgressions requires a middle person that has the trust of both sides to bring them back together.

- deliver quality customer service and treat as we would want to be treated - unfortunately, lower-income residents and people of color are more likely to receive a lower standard of care or service. In the course of working with residents, those providing the service need to self-reflectively ask if what they are saying or how they are saying it would be acceptable to themselves.
- commit to consistency and sustainment of involvement - programs and services that are one-time engagements are wonderful but do little to build trust or a relationship with the participants. On the other hand, regular programming provides the opportunity for residents to gain familiarity with and eventually build a relationship with a provider. The provider, in this case, must be willing to commit for a sustained period of time and be okay with low engagement in the beginning versus expecting full participation on day one.

As AMHA seeks to uplift resident well-being and outcomes, the agency intends to seek anchor partners in the three key focus areas - personal well-being, economic stability, and youth - that are willing to authentically engage and work with AMHA to make this level of investment in the residents of Summit Lake. Partners and their programs will be assessed with this framework to see if they are aligned with AMHA's approach and share their vision.

3. Support a culture of self-care (personal well-being)

Address pandemic-caused isolation and trauma

The long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are unknown, but the need for mental health supports is at unprecedented levels. With low-income and minority communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, services to assist residents with processing the traumas experienced are very much needed.

Provide easy access to health services

The only clinic in Summit Lake is OPEN M which serves uninsured residents. Residents otherwise have to travel outside of the neighborhood for care, which can be difficult given the low rate of car ownership and the limited METRO bus service. Previously, Akron Children's was able to do well-child visits at Reach to support childhood vaccinations before the start of school. AMHA will work with local health partners to identify whether a similar program or one focused on well-visits for adults can be located at Reach on a regular basis. Additionally, given the high need for vision and dental care, AMHA will work with the health partners to explore if there are mobile vision and dental clinics that can be brought to the neighborhood on a quarterly basis.

Prioritize culturally competent care

Several residents spoke of poor experiences with persons in the medical field, particularly those who do not look like them. Given the historic mistrust, negative personal experiences, and skepticism of the COVID-19 vaccines, work to connect residents with doctors they can trust or hear health information from those that they respect.

Infuse health into activities residents want

Partner with residents to select activities they want to do and have them help organize those activities if they are interested. This could range from more traditional activities like a walking club, meditation circle or yoga, or less traditional ones like a garden club, learning how to can vegetables or cook meals using pantry items or what is in a donated food box, or hosting a vegetarian chili cook-off.

4. Design services that meet residents where they are (economic stability)

Establish a single point of contact trained to provide holistic support

Residents face multiple barriers to employment or accessing needed services and programs. However, because of the way agencies are funded or their focus area, they are unable to provide a comprehensive level of support and residents end

up being passed off to different providers to address different issues. This is frustrating to residents and to providers and frequently does not result in the desired outcome.

AMHA will explore with its partners what it would mean to modify the service delivery method to connect residents with their own personal navigator who can support them with all of their needs like a “one-stop shop” ranging from information and contacts/referrals, direct support with completing applications, making calls together to resolve an issue, or coaching the resident through a new process or activity that they are uncomfortable doing alone.

5. Commit to investing in the whole child (youth)

Involve youth in developing local programs

Frequently there is a disconnect between what youth want to do during their time away from school and what the adults want them to do. APS is engaging in facilitated conversations with families regarding afterschool programming. Given the dispersion of Apartments students, it would be beneficial to hold similar conversations in the Apartments with parents and the children to see what types of programming would be engaging and of interest that could be hosted in Summit Lake.

Create a youth navigator position to facilitate connection to appropriate programs

There are a number of different organizations that serve youth but not every program is appropriate for every youth. Given the diversity of programs available, having someone who is knowledgeable about and connected to a wide range of youth programs would expand the number of Summit Lake youth engaged in out-of-school time activities.

Expand the type and number of quality childcare slots close to the neighborhood

While there are early childcare slots available at Reach, residents do not always qualify to participate in those programs (Early Head Start and Head Start have employment requirements) or the program does not meet their needs (public preschool is only two hours long). Other childcare options are either far away, which is challenging if the parent does not own a vehicle, or the place of childcare does not serve all of the ages in the household needing care (several places do not serve infants and older children). As a result, only a small percentage of Apartments children 5 and under participate in an early childhood program.



Let's Grow Akron Community Farm

Summit Lake Neighborhood
Akron, Ohio



Green Onions \$1
Radish \$1

Beets #3
Carrots #3
Cucumber 2/41

Cut Flowers \$2

Fresh Herbs \$2
Italian Parsley

Rhubarb #3
Radishes #1

Green Beans #2



5

SUMMIT LAKE NEIGHBORHOOD SPOTLIGHT

Summit Lake is a connected community with quality housing, streets and public spaces that support active and healthy lifestyles as well as protect the natural environment.

Summit Lake has lost a significant amount of housing over the years as the population declined. Since 2000, 26% of the housing units have been demolished by the City because they were unsafe. Much of the housing that remains is old and in need of some level of repair. However, both home values and rents are low and have continued to decline over time, posing barriers to both homeowners and investors securing the resources needed to make improvements.

*“When I moved here, this was a neighborhood, streets were filled with homes, children, schools...”
-resident*



The City of Akron and its partners have undertaken a number of improvement projects in the neighborhood.

Completed:

- Pedestrian improvements at Lakeshore Boulevard and Long Street
- Speed tables on Miller Ave east and west of Victory Street
- Over 300 trees planted in the neighborhood and the creation of a 40'x120' urban forest on Vincent Street adjacent to Summit Lake
- Summit Lake street light survey and repair of non-working lights.

Underway and coming up:

- City gas line replacement work with new sidewalks
- North Shore Park design plan led by the Akron Civic Commons
- Home rehabilitation program
- Traffic studies for West South Street, Old Main Street, Ira Avenue, and Edison Avenue
- New community gathering space as a part of the Choice Neighborhoods planning work

The neighborhood is separated from the rest of the City by Summit Lake on the west, the highway to the north, and the rail to the south and east. Within the neighborhood, pedestrian conditions are poor. Residents identified speeding as a major concern and consistently pointed to Lakeshore Boulevard, Miller Avenue and Ira Avenue as the top streets where cars need to be slowed down. These streets are also the main connectors to neighborhood destinations. For example, Lakeshore Boulevard is the main entry point to the neighborhood and the front door to the open space and social service destinations like the Reach Opportunity Center and the Summit Lake Community Center. However, it currently acts as a barrier rather than a welcoming entrance.

“The neighborhood is quite enclosed. It does leave you feeling isolated.” -resident

“A lot of the community walks in the streets, the sidewalks are terrible.” -resident

Natural assets are an integral part of the community and make it unique, but parks and open spaces are concentrated around the lake with few access points from the neighborhood. The east side of the neighborhood lacks open space - residents east of Princeton Street are more than a 10-minute walk from the existing open spaces near the lakefront.

While Summit Lake is considered safer now by some long-term residents, outsiders as well as many current residents do not feel safe in the neighborhood. Unfortunately, this lack of safety translates into fewer active residents due to safety concerns. In addition to criminal activity, a major contributing factor to this feeling is the extraordinary amount of vacancy. Overgrown lots, unsealed buildings, dumping and trash are major quality of life issues.

Key Data Points

Vacancy and blight

- 46% (793) of all parcels are vacant which amounts to 89 acres of vacant property
- Over half of the vacant property is publicly owned by the City of Akron or the Summit County Land Bank
- Nuisance complaints are concentrated on vacant properties, particularly those that are privately-owned
- Vacancy and litter were the top quality of life issues residents wanted this plan to help solve
- 39% of neighborhood residents cited vacant/abandoned properties as one of the biggest problems with the neighborhood and 42.5% felt the City was doing a “poor” job of addressing unsafe, vacant homes in the neighborhood

Streets

- Safer streets was a top priority with Lakeshore Boulevard and Miller Avenue in the most need of traffic calming - crash and speeding data from the City confirm these streets as being to locations for accidents and unsafe driving
- Sidewalk conditions are poor, particularly the eastern part of the neighborhood, and there are few crosswalks

Housing

- 26% of Summit Lake housing units were demolished between 2000 and 2019
- 33% homeownership rate
- 49% of renters are housing cost-burdened
- The majority of the housing in Summit Lake was built prior to 1940
- 26% of all homes are in overall good condition, 57% need of minor repairs, 16% need of major repairs, 1% appear unsafe
- Housing affordability was cited by residents as one of the things they like most about the neighborhood
- Building new housing and rehabilitating existing housing is a top priority for residents

Open space

- Over half the neighborhood lives farther than a quarter mile or 5-minute walk, from a park entrance
- Neighborhood parks and recreational spaces were cited by residents as one of the things they like most about the neighborhood

Strategies:

The strategies in this chapter aim to uplift the neighborhood in concert with the redevelopment of the Summit Lake Apartments by prioritizing efforts that enhance the neighborhood's appearance and beautification, create new housing and upgrade existing housing, and improve neighborhood streets and public spaces.

2. Improve neighborhood appearance and strengthen community stewardship

Continue to support neighborhood clean-up efforts

During the community engagement process, residents identified cleaning up the neighborhood as their top activity that they wanted to see happen in the next year. With this clear resident-voiced priority, the Summit Lake Community Development Corporation (CDC) took the lead to initiate a resident-led clean-up program with on-going stewardship in the community. Through this promising program, residents submit an application identifying where in the neighborhood they want cleaned up and the Summit Lake CDC assists that resident with organizing other resident volunteers on a specific day to address litter, dumping in vacant lots, and overgrown areas. The program provides cleaning equipment and supplies, and coordinates with the City of Akron for dumpsters and trash removal on clean-up days. The first clean-up occurred in May 2022, and the Summit Lake CDC is working on identifying the second site for clean-up efforts.

Explore the creation of a Block Captain program

A block captain program can be a natural outgrowth of the clean-up campaign as it picks up steam. Residents who initiate or participate in the clean ups are already taking initiative to organize neighbors and identify areas of concern. A block captain network can build on this effort to encourage residents to call 311 and report nuisances, code violations, street light outages, and other neighborhood needs. This program can also be a communication platform to help get the word out for other neighborhood organizations and City programs.

Manage vacant and nuisance properties

Through the clean-up program, active residents and/or the Summit Lake CDC can help the City with identifying vacant and nuisance properties that have issues. Items to address may include noise complaints, unkempt yards, demolition of vacant and blighted houses, and mowing and maintenance of vacant lots. The City can also explore what adjustments may be needed to their code enforcement efforts to either prioritize responding or adopt a more proactive approach to code violations in Summit Lake.



Residents at the inaugural neighborhood clean up effort on May 7, 2022

Activate vacant lots with temporary uses

Residents would like to see some vacant lots activated with temporary uses to discourage dumping and provide space for use by residents while awaiting future development. Depending on the size, location and other characteristics of the vacant lots, a range of temporary uses have been proposed by the community, including:

- Pocket parks on visible corners where interventions can include beautification by installing low-height fencing, planters, benches, or welcome signs [see precedent photos from Detroit to the right]
- Mid-block greenways on City-owned vacant lots to shorten east-west blocks as identified in the City's Land Use and Open Space Plan completed in 2022

Additionally, City-owned vacant lots may be considered for low maintenance landscaping such as native wildflower, grasses and pollinators that can reduce the need for mowing, manage stormwater, and support pollinator populations.



Credit: Brilliant Detroit

Precedent: **Detroit Pocket Parks**

Brilliant Detroit uses resident-led processes to create pocket parks in underserved neighborhoods



Credit: Alexa Bush

Precedent: **Native Meadows**

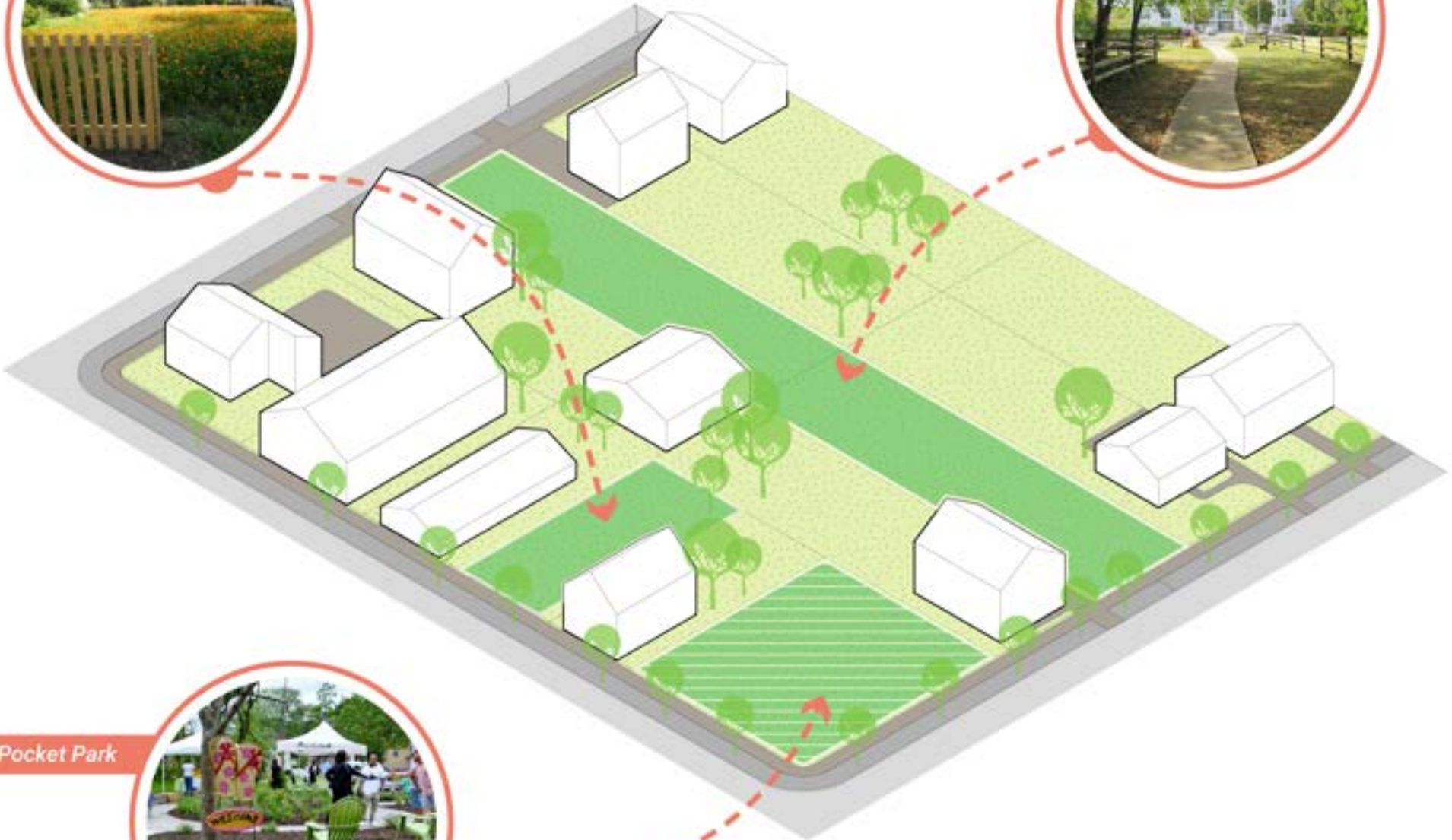
Detroit Civic Commons Fitzgerald neighborhood transformation of vacant lots to meadows. Also No Mow May initiatives to create better pollinator habitats.



Pollinator Plantings



Midblock Greenway



Pocket Park



7. Ensure all residents have safe and healthy housing

Support existing homeowners with making improvements to their homes

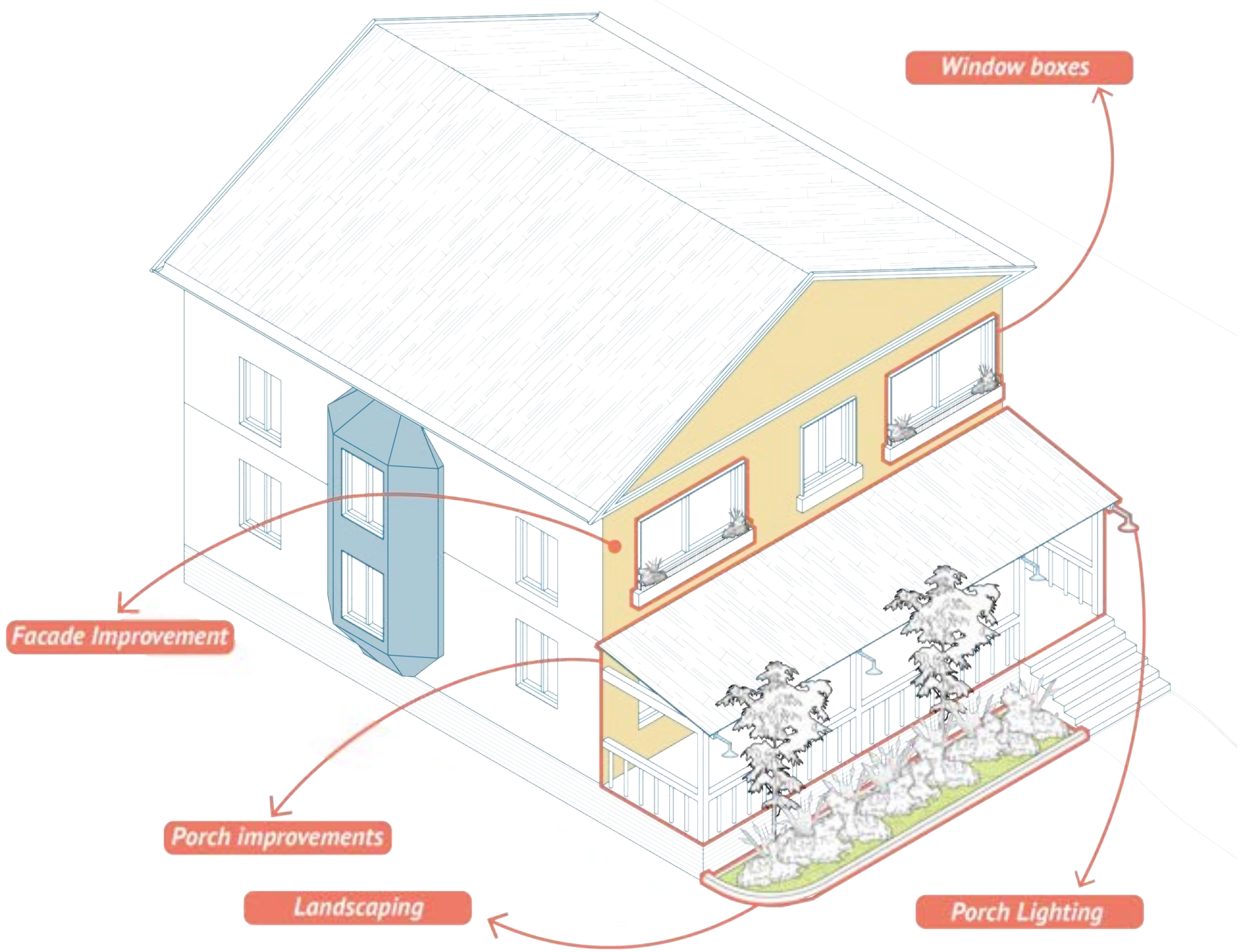
Current homeowners need support to maintain their homes, particularly given the age and size of most Summit Lake houses. Combined with low property values, homeowners have a difficult time accessing the needed financial resources to pay for the work needed. The City is in the process of developing a homeowner rehabilitation program which will assist homeowners. Beautification and safety enhancing upgrades, such as installing planters, window boxes, and porch lights can complement other exterior improvements and provide more lighting in the neighborhood. Habitat for Humanity could be a partner to help residents install solar lights.

Upgrade the rental housing stock

Large single family homes in Summit Lake that have been converted to one or more rental units face the same challenges as owner-occupied units in that these houses are also old and large, making them difficult and expensive to maintain. Unfortunately, some landlords have made minimal improvements to their properties - doing just enough to avoid prosecution - and these homes are a blighting influence on the neighborhood. Based on the recommendations of the City's Racial Equity and Social Justice Taskforce Housing Subcommittee, a landlord grant program to assist them with making improvements to their property could be piloted in Summit Lake.

Establish a task force focused on developing tools and policies that support residents to remain in Summit Lake

With millions of dollars of investments happening on the shores of Summit Lake and the City and AMHA planning to invest in new housing, existing residents are fearful that they will not be able to remain in the community. Homeowners are concerned that their property taxes and fees will increase significantly and they will not financially be able to remain in their home. Renters are concerned that landlords will increase rents higher than they can afford. The City has some existing tools at its disposal to help mitigate the concerns of homeowners, but there is a lack of knowledge of what they are and whether they will really address the challenges homeowners in Summit Lake face. For renters, the City could consider putting in place affordability terms for any rental property owners that take advantage of any City programs to upgrade their properties. A task force focused on the needs of Summit Lake residents can be an off-shoot of the Land Use work being done by the City.



Build new housing in the neighborhood

The overarching long-term shared goal of City and the Summit Lake residents is to re-densify the neighborhood and build new rental and homeownership housing on vacant lots. These new units would span the range of affordability and housing types.

The City's Land Use Plan identifies key locations for increased density and mixed use. Based on community and stakeholder input, several priority areas for housing development were identified. These selected areas are characterized by a high concentration of publicly-owned vacant land which would require

minimal assembly of private land or large single owner-owned lots such as the former Lincoln School site (owned by Alpha Phi Alpha Homes) or the St. Mary's Stadium site (owned by Akron Public School). Smaller infill development projects can be supported throughout the neighborhood by clarifying and streamlining the process for obtaining City and Summit County Land Bank-owned property now that the City's Land Use Plan is complete.



Duplex in Summit Lake built by the City of Akron using Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds. Building was purchased by AMHA and is used as scattered site public housing.

8. Make it easier and safer to reach neighborhood destinations

Improve Lakeshore Boulevard to be the front door to the neighborhood

Enhancing Lakeshore Boulevard would complement the redevelopment of Summit Lake Apartments and transform this street from a nondescript road, often times plagued by speeding cars, that currently serves as a barrier separating the rest of the Summit Lake neighborhood from the Apartments and the lake into an attractive connector spine.

The City is studying whether a road diet to reduce travel lanes from four to three with using the additional space for buffered bike lanes and/or sidewalks is feasible. Additional tree planting and a planted median that alternates with a middle left-turn lane can further transform Lakeshore Boulevard into a tree-lined, park-like boulevard that links the community on the east to the destinations along the lake.

In the short-term, all intersections from South Street to Ira Avenue should have painted crosswalks and signage to indicate pedestrian crossings. Additionally some key intersections should be considered for painted curb bumpouts using street paint in the approved colors and removable bollards or planters to reduce the crossing distance from 26 feet to 20 feet. Priority intersections include Crosier Street, Miller Avenue and Ira Avenue.

In the short- to medium-term, bus stops at destination points along Lakeshore Boulevard should be upgraded with elements like artistic benches, bus shelters, and lighting to call attention to the Summit Lake Community Center (at Crosier Street), Reach Opportunity Center (at Long Street), and the Summit Lake Nature Center (at Ira Street).



Example of painted bumpouts and removable bollards



Example of enhanced bus stop elements

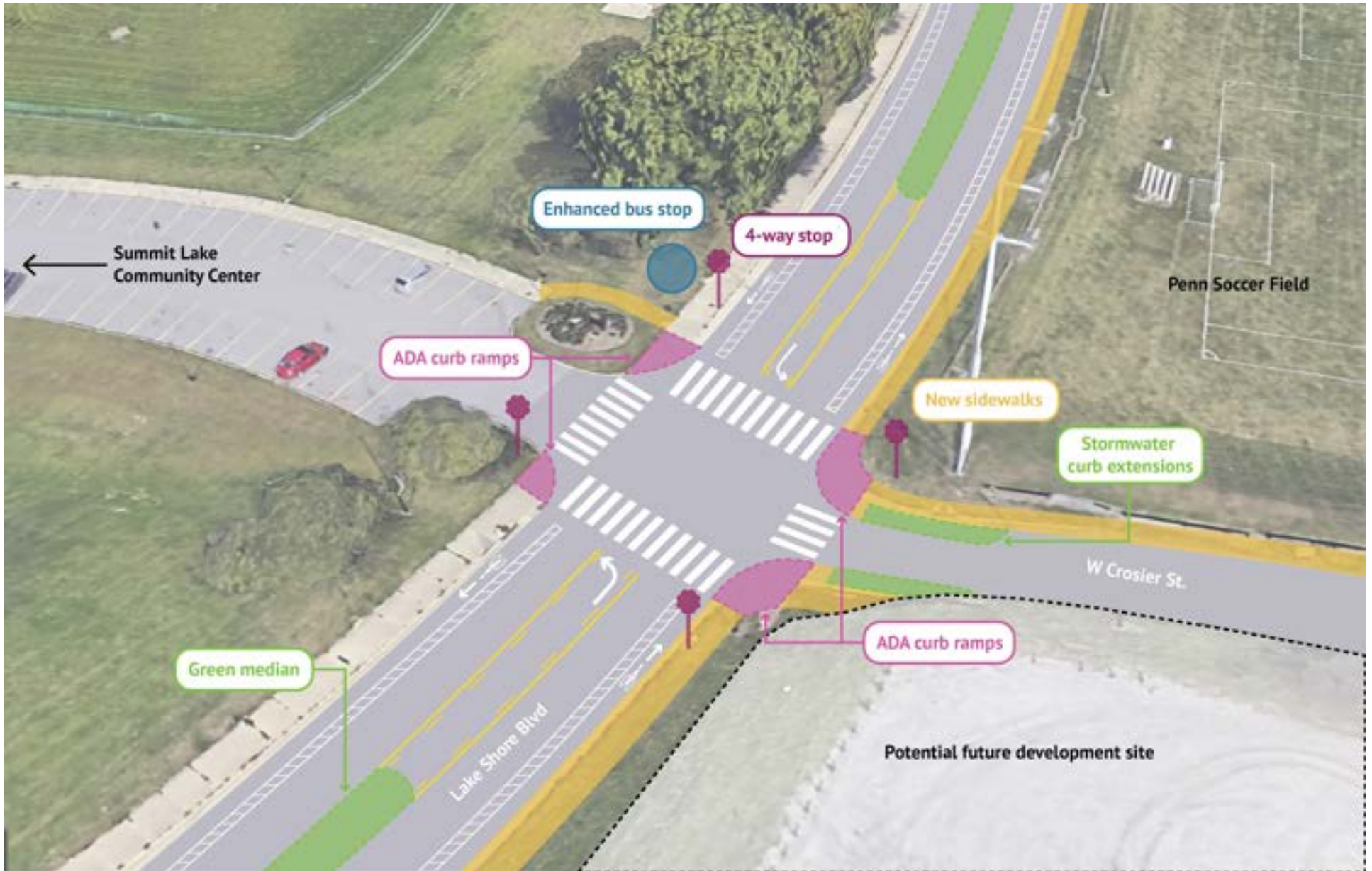


Figure 5: Diagram of street improvements at Lakeshore Boulevard & Crosier Avenue

Create gateways that connect the larger Summit Lake neighborhood

The I-76/I-77 highway separates the Summit Lake neighborhood from the community to the north, and key streets like Lakeshore Boulevard and Miller Avenue are unattractive and difficult to cross. The highway underpasses are in need of cleaning, lighting and repair. Due to highway construction, the Towpath Trail will be detoured from its current route underneath the highway and will pass under at Lakeshore Boulevard instead. As a part of the highway construction, the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition is considering incorporating artistic improvements to the underpass as a part of the highway construction. If this moves forward, it could help to kick start improvements to the Lakeshore Boulevard underpass and other highway underpasses and make them attractive northern gateways into Summit Lake.

Artistic treatments should also be considered for other gateway locations which would build community pride and beautify the neighborhood while calling positive attention to important locations. For example, residents could be involved in the design and execution of sidewalk painting projects. Sidewalk painting already exist at the intersections of Lakeshore Boulevard and Ira Avenue, and Long Street and Edison Avenue which could use refreshment with durable materials. These homegrown interventions help to define key neighborhood locations while beautifying the landscape, calming traffic, and making connections to community destinations.

Priority locations for sidewalk painting and/or murals include:

Highway underpasses at:

- Manchester Road
- Lakeshore Boulevard
- South Main Street

Bridges at:

- Princeton Street
- Kenmore Boulevard

Lakeshore Boulevard at intersections with:

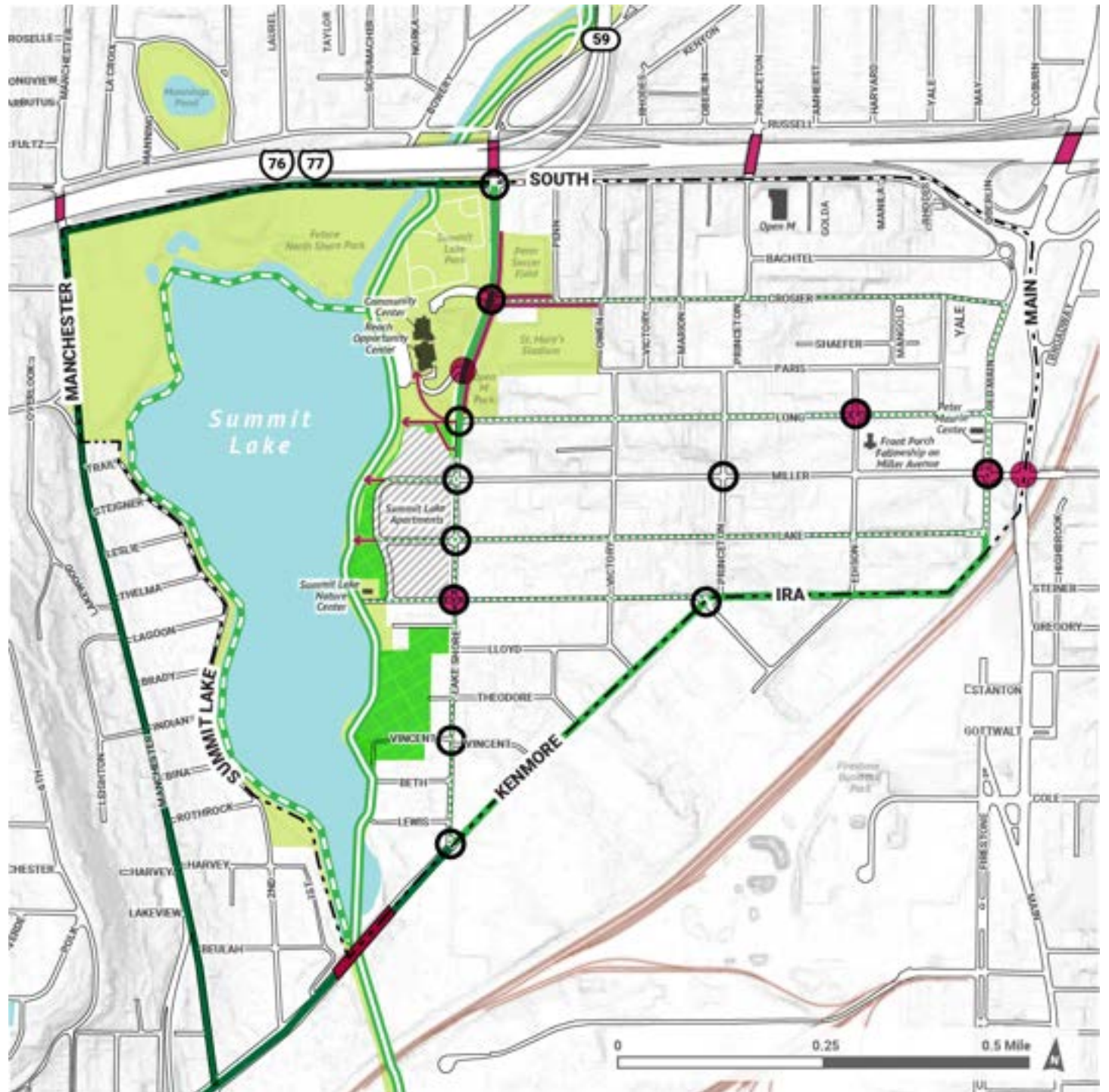
- Crosier Street (Summit Lake Community Center)
- Long Street (Reach Opportunity Center)
- Ira Avenue (Nature Center) - the existing sidewalk painting can be refreshed

Miller Avenue at intersections with:

- Main Street
- Old Main Street

Figure 6: Street improvements

- Choice Target Neighborhood
- Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trail
- Proposed Summit Lake Trail
- Proposed new open space
- Existing bike lanes
- Proposed bike lanes (Bike Plan)
- Proposed bike friendly routes
- New sidewalks, pedestrian paths
- Gateway improvements
- Intersection improvements





Example of painted sidewalk



Example of underpass treatment in Downtown Akron



Existing painted sidewalk on Ira Avenue and Lakeshore Boulevard

Make streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists

Most streets in Summit Lake have a standard roadway width of 26 feet and allow for permit parking on one side only. Most of the homes have off-street parking, which means there are few cars parked on the street. This results in wide open roadways that encourage speeding. To improve safety, key streets and intersections should be treated with both short-term and long-term traffic calming measures, including rebuilding intersections with ADA curb ramps.

- **Old Main Street and Miller Avenue:** This key intersection is identified in the City's Land Use Plan as a gateway into the neighborhood with potential as a new "town center". To make this intersection a more inviting entryway to Summit Lake, realignment of the streets combined with new signage or traffic signals should be evaluated in addition to beautification efforts.
- **Intersection improvements:** Painted crosswalks, 4-way stop signs and painted curb bumpouts and bollards should be considered for Miller Avenue/Princeton Street, Ira Avenue/Princeton Street/Kenmore Avenue, and Long Street/Edison Avenue.
- **Chicanes and stormwater curb extensions:** Traffic calming and green stormwater infrastructure opportunities exist on east/west streets, as water flowing down from the neighborhood affects the lake's water quality. Traffic calming chicanes can be tested with street paint and bollards similar to those described for intersection bumpouts. If successful, these can be built out as stormwater curb extensions to help manage stormwater and can also be an educational opportunity with signage about watershed management.

- **Bike routes:** Build out the bike network with bike lanes and/or signage per the City's bike plan. Focus on creating bike-friendly routes to neighborhood destinations on quieter streets and provide sufficient bike parking at these key locations.
- **Sidewalks:** Build new sidewalks as the neighborhood is developed to close gaps and identify programs to help property owners repair existing sidewalks.
- **Tree planting:** Wherever possible, the City should seek opportunities to increase tree cover on public property in accordance with the City's goal to protect the natural environment and enhance the pedestrian environment. Residents may also request street trees through 311, which the neighborhood organizations like the Summit Lake CDC can help share with the community.



Example of stormwater curb extension

9. Invest in parks and open spaces that meet the community needs

Improve existing parks

Residents appreciate the existing park facilities but noted that there is room for improvement. The playground outside the Summit Lake Community Center is in need of shade. The ball fields need better drainage and maintenance. Additionally, residents and stakeholders were interested in food options, such as a snack bar along the lake which would allow them to extend their stay.



Example of contemplative nature space and trail that is part of the Nature Sacred network that reconnects communities with nature.

Develop new parks and open spaces

New lakefront open space and walking trail

The City has acquired wetlands adjacent to the lake with the intention of creating a new natural open space and potential walking trail. Residents expressed interest in natural areas where they can learn about nature and observe wildlife. The City recently planted trees along Vincent Street at the south end of the proposed park to create an urban forest - a natural, contemplative space that also affords opportunities for future programming outside of the wetland park.

New park and open space east of Princeton Street

The City has identified new greenspace locations within its Land Use Plan on the eastern side of the neighborhood which is currently not as well served as the areas closer to the lake. During workshops, residents shared their preferences for features to be included in any new open space. These included active recreational spaces for kids, spaces that celebrate nature and/or provide opportunities for contemplation, and gathering spaces for quieter socializing.

“Summit Lake feels so far away. If you don’t live a block away it feels so far away.” -resident



Early Action Project: Lakefront Gathering Space

Residents want places to gather and widely approve of the improvements made by Akron Civic Commons along the northeast side of the lake. They expressed a desire for improvements along other sections of the lake, and this input led AMHA to select as its Early Action project the creation of a new gathering space on City-owned land between the Towpath Trail and Summit Lake Apartments just north of the Summit Lake Nature Center.

This public space is accessible to Summit Lake Apartments residents to use and enjoy and share with the rest of the community including Summit Lake Nature Center visitors and Towpath Trail users. The preliminary concept was shaped by resident input on how they would use the space. The concept will be tested during the summer and fall of 2022.

Summit Lake Apartments





6

SUMMIT LAKE APARTMENTS SPOTLIGHT

Summit Lake Apartments will be redeveloped as a mixed income community that is integrated into the neighborhood.

Note: The Housing Plan is still in development. The information contained in this chapter represents the concepts vetted with residents and stakeholders to date.

The current Summit Lake Apartments site is set apart from the rest of the neighborhood by the change in the street network as well as the buildings and their orientation the street. It functions as a separate and enclosed area that backs onto the Towpath Trail. The site's prominent location on the lake has the potential to serve as a major catalyst for uplifting the entire community - signaling that the time has come for Summit Lake to reclaim its stature as a vibrant, family-friendly community that welcomes new and old residents alike.

10. Preserve and expand affordable housing

Overall Housing Program

The overall housing program was designed to achieve several community goals as well as align with AMHA's organizational mission:

- preserve the same number of deeply affordable rental housing units as currently exists at Summit Lake Apartments;
- expand the number of other quality affordable rental housing units available to the community;
- incorporate as many unrestricted market-rate units as is feasible to support a true mixed-income community that has greater buying power to attract the type of amenities desired by residents;
- seek to develop new housing off-site to reactivate vacant lots and bring the energy of new development deeper into the neighborhood.

To understand the residential market potential of Summit Lake, AMHA and the City retained Zimmerman/Volk Associates (ZVA) to prepare a study. ZVA reported the following assessments and recommendations based upon their analysis of the community:

- on average, 1,765 households annually represent the market for new and existing housing, both rental and homeownership, in Summit Lake;
- 67% of the annual potential market would be moving to Summit Lake from other parts of the City;
- nearly half of the potential market is comprised of younger singles and childless couples (47%) followed by empty nesters and retirees (29%) and traditional and non-traditional households (24%);
- over the next five years, between 21 -26 new market rate rental units could be absorbed annually in Summit Lake; 1-2 new market rate for sale townhouses; and 3-5 new market rate for sale houses;
- recommends that initially new development should happen close to the lake to capitalize upon the investments being made there, and as the housing context improves, new construction can move away from the lake towards the central and eastern areas of the neighborhood.

A copy of ZVA's full market analysis can be found in Appendix B.

Based upon this information, the proposed overall housing program for Summit Lake Apartments is shown in the table below:

Type of units	# of units
Existing public housing units @ Summit Lake Apartments	239
Total proposed new housing units	479
Public housing units (one-for-one replacement)	239
Non-public housing units - other affordable units	144
Non-public housing units - market-rate (unrestricted) units	96

Homeownership units are not included in the housing program for Summit Lake Apartments. The City, now that the land use plan has been updated, is moving forward with a Request for Proposal process to solicit developers to build homeownership units on City-owned vacant lots in the community as described in Chapter 5.

Community Goals:

Based on community input, goals for the design of a reconfigured of Summit Lake Apartments site are to:

- *Better connect the site with the neighborhood*
- *Better connect the neighborhood to the lake and towpath trail*
- *Maximize views of the lake when possible*
- *Create public open spaces that connect to the lake and trail*
- *Provide a mix of housing options*



Site Design

Residents reviewing and providing input on two different roadway configurations during Workshop #3.



11. Integrate the Summit Lake Apartments site with the neighborhood

With the housing program in place, the next step was to establish the community goals for what a new Summit Lake Apartments site would look like. The preliminary site layouts were developed to respond to these goals.

As seen in Figure 7, residents and community stakeholders preferred a street network that extended the neighborhood grid through the site and a new loop road that connects from Miller Avenue to Ira Avenue along the Lake. Reconfiguring the street network in this manner also met several other urban design objectives:

- it creates a clear delineation between Summit Lake Apartments and the public open space;
- it creates new access points to the Towpath Trail for pedestrians at the north end of the site and for pedestrians and bicycles at Miller Avenue;
- it creates more efficient blocks for the development of new units and expands the open space adjoining the existing lakefront and Towpath Trail;
- it enables buildings to be oriented to the street to allow for “eyes on the street” rather than to parking lots as in the current site; and
- while this street network does decrease the amount of developable land at the site, this trade-off was agreeable to AMHA and the City if it created a more livable and sustainable development than what currently exists.

Figure 7: Conceptual site design for Summit Lake Apartments

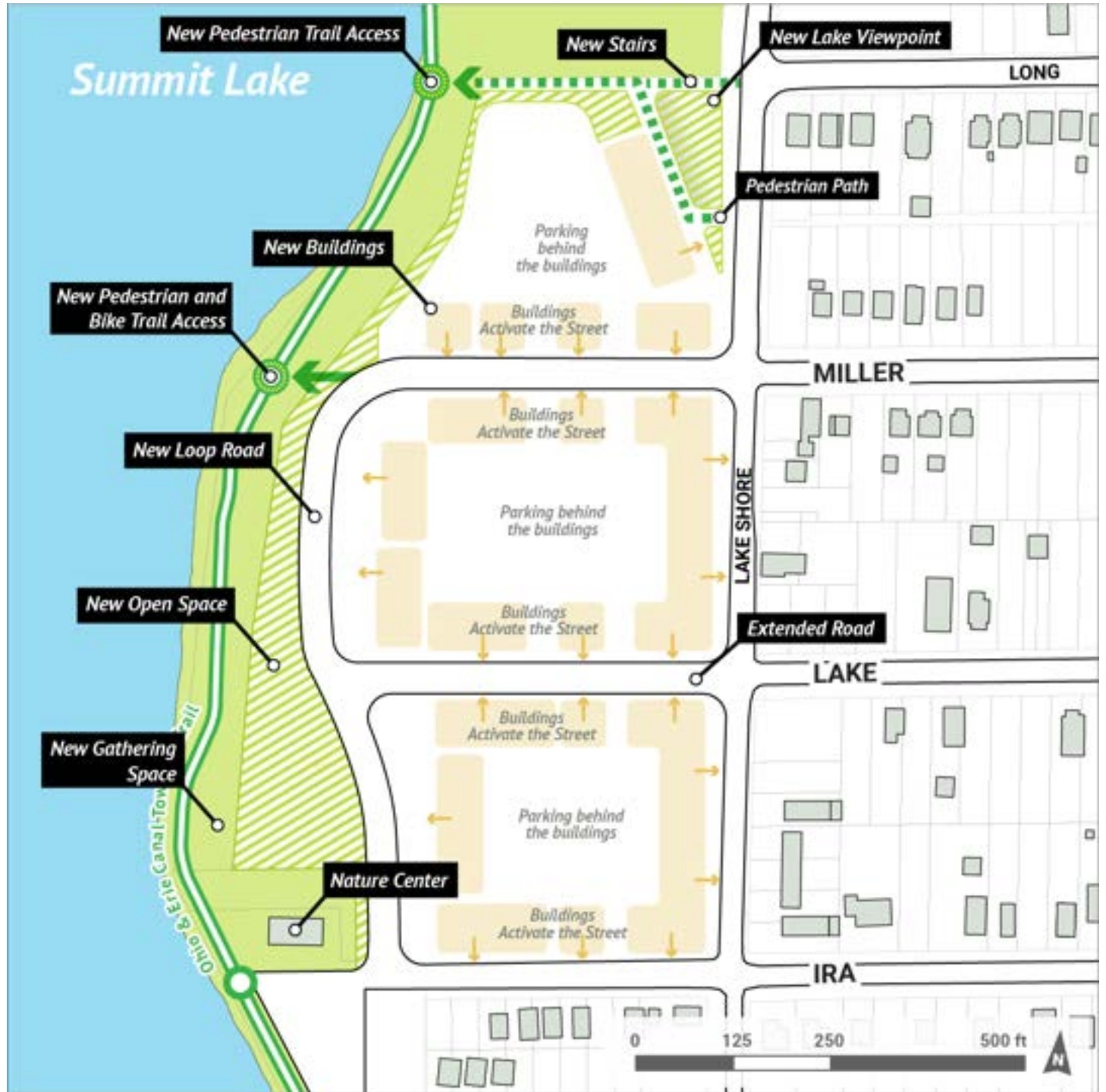
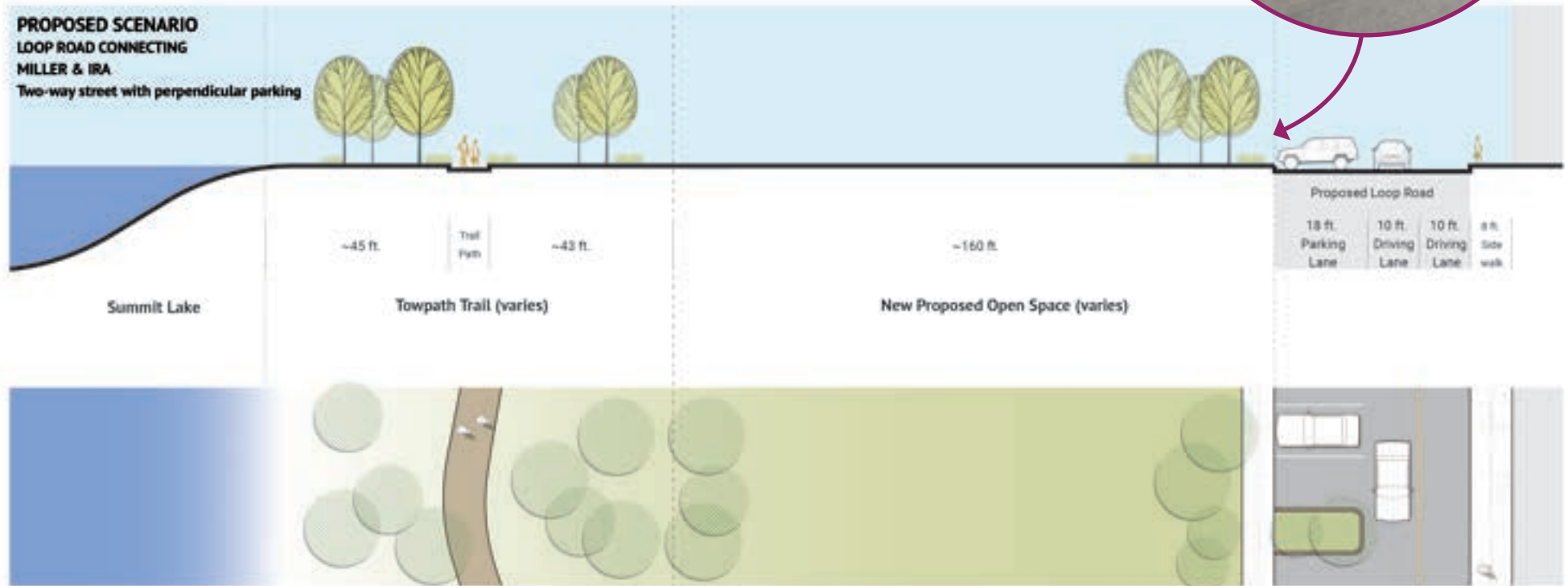


Figure 8: Proposed cross-section of new loop road

Landscaping and large stones will be used to delineate the parking from the park, and landscaped dividers will soften the impact of parking.



12. Create public open spaces that connect to the lake and trail

The reconfigured road network on the Summit Lake Apartments site creates several new open space opportunities for both local residents and visitors to the area. Along the lake, parking will be available to visitors of the new expanded open space and lake. As shown in Figure 8, perpendicular parking will allow access to cars traveling in either direction. To delineate the parking from the park, landscaping and barriers will be installed, such as the large stones that are already a fixture at other sites around the lake, including the Akron Civic Commons-improved space and the Summit Lake Nature Center.

New lake viewpoint and access at Lakeshore Boulevard and Long Street

The northeastern edge of the site has a steep hill that rises to a high point at Lakeshore Boulevard and Long Street. For this reason, the design does not extend Long Street through the site. However, the topography provides an excellent vantage point from which to enjoy views of the lake. The plan proposes a new viewpoint at this location by clearing away vegetation. A new staircase can connect Long Street to the Towpath Trail and the Reach Opportunity Center for pedestrians, while an ADA accessible path is provided mid-block at the bottom of the slope.

Top: Currently, it is difficult to tell where Summit Lake Apartments ends and where the public space associated with Towpath Trail begins.

Bottom: View from Lakeshore Boulevard and Long Street down to Summit Lake Apartments.



New open space

The proposed new site layout also creates a large new public open space on the west side of the new loop road next to the proposed gathering space. The new space will expand and complement the existing Towpath Trail and park. As the design progresses, this space will be integrated with the other spaces around the lake, like the new gathering space being piloted as an early action project.

New Towpath Trail access points

The redevelopment scheme creates two new access points to the Towpath Trail: one pedestrian connection at Long Street, and one bike and pedestrian connection at Miller Avenue. An access point is not being considered at Lake Street because of the proximity of the Ira Avenue and Miller Avenue access points.

Graphic: NEW OPEN SPACE - coming soon

Site capacity

Residents explored the different site capacity options for Summit Lake Apartments and the trade-offs of each during Workshop #4.



13. Diversify housing with a range of housing types and mix of incomes

Site Capacity

With a modified development footprint, the next step was to assess the capacity of the site and the number of new units that could be built. Key community goals that influenced the site's capacity included:

- providing a mix of housing types including townhouses, walk-up flats, a senior building, and one-story units that were accessible to residents with mobility challenges;
- providing enough parking so that residents did not have to park far away from their unit;
- maximizing views of the lake throughout the site.

Different versions of the site's capacity were explored ranging from maximizing the number of units on-site based on current zoning and parking requirements to maximizing the amount of parking above what was required by zoning. Based on community feedback, the preferred site capacity was one that offered a greater variety of housing types and with townhouses and stacked flats located on the east-west streets to continue the fabric of the neighborhood and provide more open views toward the lake. Each block has common open space and a community center with common amenities is sited on the loop road opposite the new lakefront open space.

While building heights and density are still under development, based on this preferred layout, the Summit Lake Apartments has the capacity to have 342 units, which is ~137 units short of the goal of 479 units.

Figure 9: Conceptual site plan for Summit Lake Apartments (option 1 - community preferred)

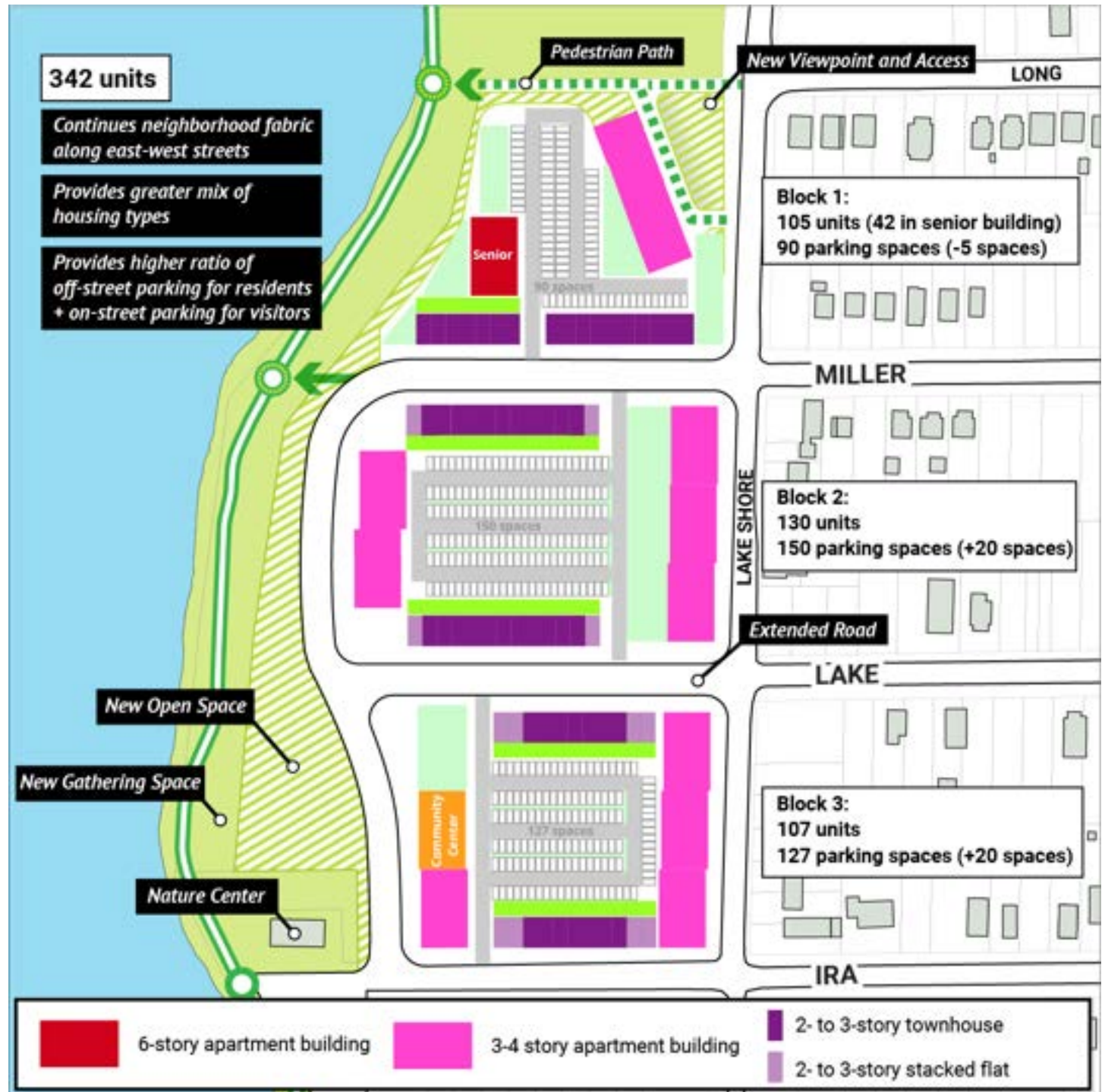
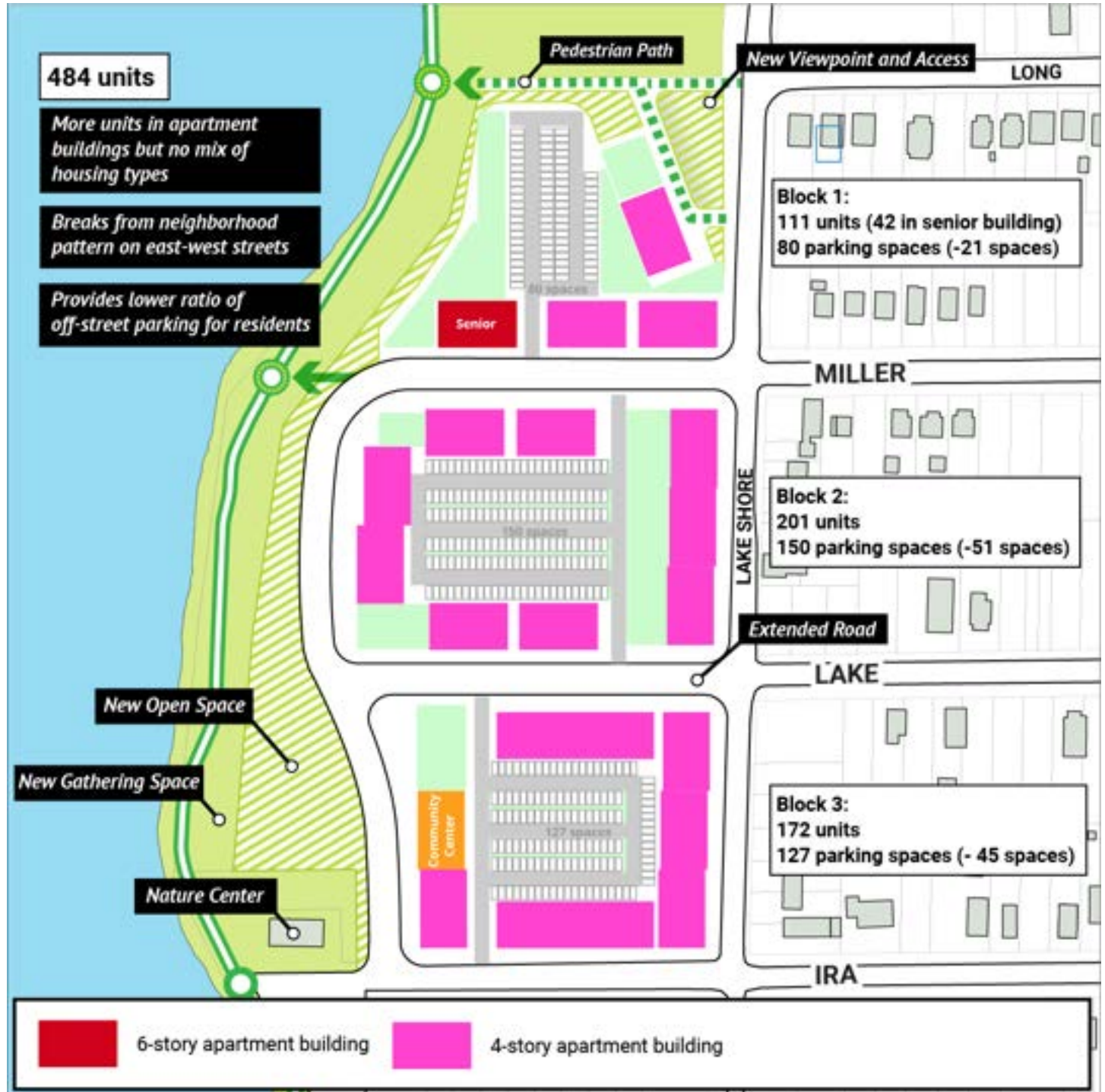


Figure 10: Conceptual site plan for Summit Lake Apartments (option 2)



Off-Site Development

[STILL IN DEVELOPMENT]

Graphic: OFF-SITE DEVELOPMENT SITE PLAN - coming soon

Housing Type, Unit Features and On-Site Amenities

During Workshops #3 and #4, residents were asked about different amenities and features they would like in the housing units common areas as well as their housing type preferences. This information will inform the housing design as it evolves.



A2

"Has nice porches in each unit"

"Lower to the ground, colorful, easy access"

"These fit in the neighborhood"



B6

"Porches"

"Fits with other homes"

"Different style"



C1

"Love the outdoor space"

"Outside balcony"

"More up to date"



C8

"I like the big windows"

"Porch on the lake front to see the lake"

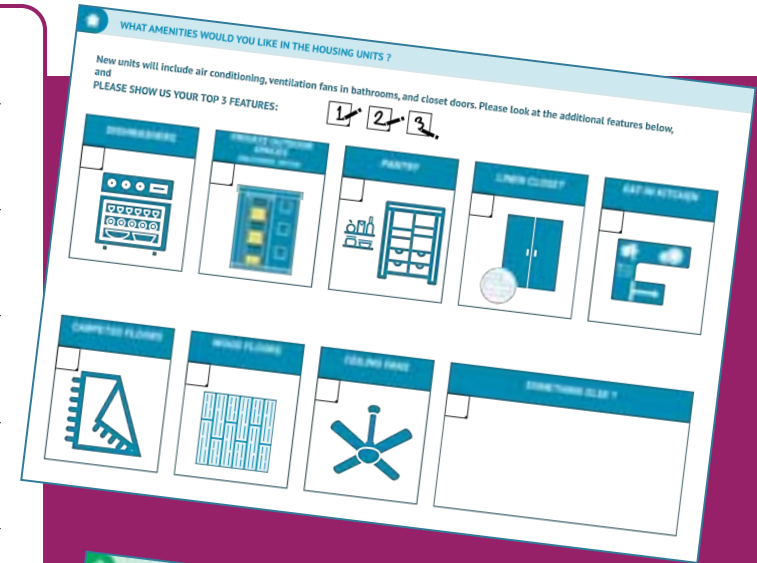
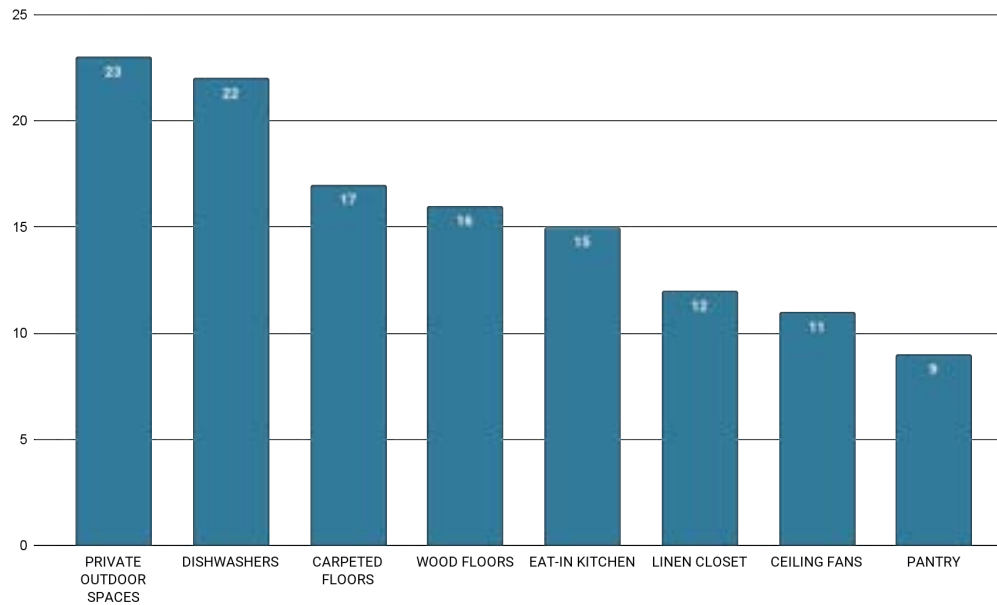
"Looks nice and safe"

Housing type and features

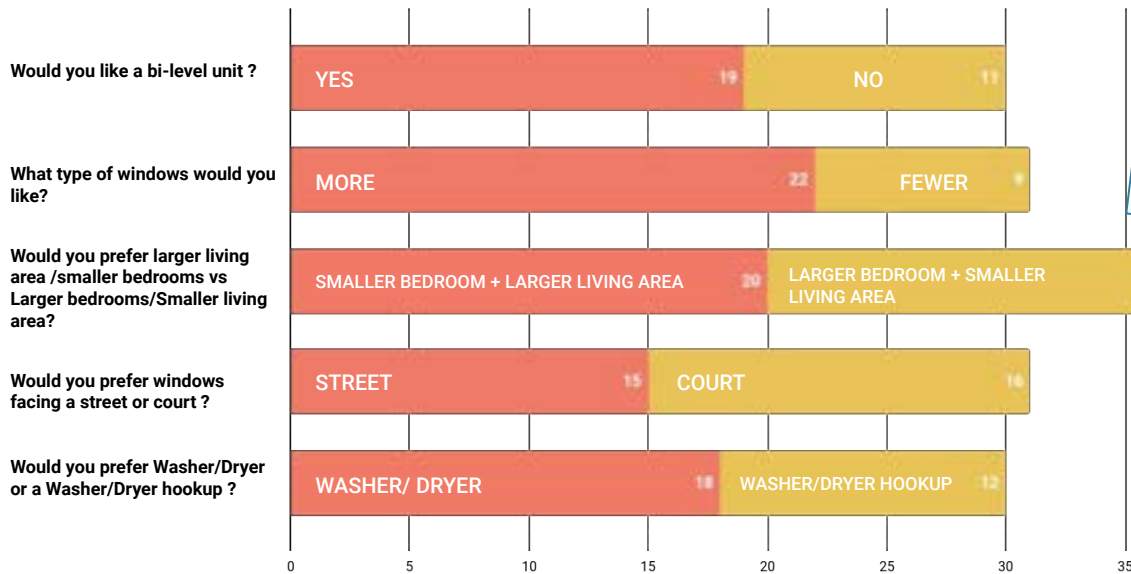
Residents reviewing various housing typologies and noting their preferences for different unit amenities and features in Workshop #3 and #4.



What amenities would you like in the housing units?



What features would you like to see more of or prefer in your ideal home?



On-Site and Off-Site Unit Mix

[STILL IN DEVELOPMENT]

Phasing

[STILL IN DEVELOPMENT]

Schematic Building Designs

[STILL IN DEVELOPMENT]

Relocation plan

[STILL IN DEVELOPMENT]

Sustainable features + LEED ND

[STILL IN DEVELOPMENT]

Graphic: SCHEMATIC BUILDING DESIGNS

Graphic: PHASING

*View of Summit Lake from
the Towpath Trail*





7

IMPLEMENTATION

coming soon