



City residents work to take back neighborhoods

Sunday, February 10, 2008

Part Two of a four-part series — [Youngstown 2010: A plan confronts reality](#)

YOUNGSTOWN — The wooded roads that wind along Mill Creek Park on Youngstown's South Side were once home to some of the city's most prestigious families.

To some extent, they still are.

Many of the city's grandest mansions remain here, in much of their original glory, along the park's eastern border. Top attorneys, university professors and city leaders still inhabit this sliver of paradise, tucked behind a densely populated maze of blocks west of Glenwood Avenue.

"It's the best-kept secret since sliced bread," said Chuck Trnum, 62, a retired Army sergeant and longtime resident of Volney Road. "They used to describe it as the town that time forgot because the crime just passed us by."

But all is not well in paradise.

Just blocks away, Glenwood Avenue has come to be known as one of the meanest commercial corridors in the city. Its side streets encroach toward the park, speckled with dilapidated houses, picked over for scrap.

Concerns about crime resonate from every corner of this neighborhood — known to residents as Idora, for its proximity to the former amusement park by that name. Last fall, there was a murder and a shooting blocks from Trnum's home.

So tensions were running high when city planner Anthony Kobak arrived in Idora in September with plans to begin a micro-level revitalization. As many as 40 residents from the blocks between Canfield Road, Old Furnace, the park and Glenwood Avenue turned out to hear about the city's plans for their community.

Idora is one of 127 neighborhoods Kobak has identified across the city. Last year, he set out to develop an individual recovery plan in each one.

The neighborhood planning concept was an original aim of the Youngstown 2010 comprehensive plan.

Today however, that effort is just beginning.

In a 2004 study conducted by Youngstown State University, nearly 20 percent of Youngstown residents rated their neighborhood quality of life as "poor." About 50 percent of Youngstown residents said they felt unsafe in their neighborhoods at night. Almost 23 percent reported they had been a victim of, or witnessed, a crime in the year prior.

Deborah Mower moved to the city from Washington state last summer to teach at Youngstown State University. Mower said she was attracted to Idora for its proximity to the park. She wishes, however, her neighbors felt safe enough to get out and enjoy the setting.

"Everyone's worried about crime, that's the biggest issue," she said. "Even in the eight months I've been here, I've been seeing a lot of changes on the side streets."

Kobak and a team of volunteers arrived in Idora with suggestions such as establishing a historical district and developing design standards for Glenwood Avenue. Kobak hopes that formal historical recognition will boost property

values and that design standards will lead to a more uniform look for the neighborhood's signature thoroughfare.

In addition, Kobak hopes the neighborhood planning effort will lead to the formation of community groups. He is promising to deliver city services such as demolitions and additional police patrols in return.

Read the full story Monday in The Vindicator and on Vindy.com. Go to [Vindy.com now to read Part 1 and access online videos, interactive Youngstown maps and more.](#)