

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The NorthStar Community Development Corporation (CDC) in Detroit, MI requested technical assistance from Urban Planning Partnerships at Michigan State University. Our Urban Planning practicum group researched and analyzed a neighborhood within Harmony Village in northern Detroit. This extensive research will be of assistance to NorthStar in implementing a redevelopment project in this neighborhood. Research included, researching the history of the Harmony Village neighborhood, conducting a windshield survey of housing and commercial structure conditions within the study area, creating an economic profile of the neighborhood and producing graphical comparisons between Harmony Village and the City of Detroit, creating an inventory of existing resources, producing maps for zoning designations within the study area, and a GIS database of structural conditions within the neighborhood. We produced this final technical document which offers recommendations.

Our Methodology consists of analyzing primary and secondary data. The primary data includes an initial S.W.O.T. Analysis, Interviews with NorthStar staff and school children in the neighborhood, and a windshield survey of the housing and commercial conditions in our study area.

Through our historical research, we found that Harmony Village was originally annexed, subdivided, and development began in the 1920s. By 1940, the Harmony Village neighborhood was fully developed. Until 1960, Harmony Village was a mostly Caucasian, working class neighborhood. During the 1960s the John C. Lodge freeway was built right through the center of the Harmony Village neighborhood. Also during the 1960s, the census tract in which our study area is in went from having a population of over 99% Caucasian in 1960, to 83% African American by 1970. During the 1970s, government projects including an open-air market, and housing revitalization efforts were attempted to address economic problems and an aging and deteriorating housing stock. Population in Harmony Village also drastically declined from 1970 to 2000. The study area is now 52% vacant as a result of this decline. The City of Detroit's population declined by about one third during from 1970 to 2000,

with Harmony Village declining by more than half its total population.

The median household income in Harmony Village is \$17,256. The median home value is \$24,775. Total household expenditures are \$14,611. The average household in Harmony Village spends more for food service than any other retail expenditure. Transportation is the second highest retail expenditure. Together, food and transportation constitute 64% of the average household's total retail expenditures. Crime is much higher on average in Harmony Village than Wayne County and the national average. Murder and rape are over 5 times more frequent in Harmony Village than in the nation.

In the second week of January 2001, our group conducted a S.W.O.T. analysis. From our initial observations we made judgments for the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats for the study area. Strengths include: Proximity to Clinton Elementary School, proximity to the Lodge Freeway, and numerous faith-based institutions within the study area. Weaknesses include: No recreation/green space, poor physical conditions of structures, trash problems, and little police presence. Opportunities include: Much vacant land, low property values, and numerous City-owned properties. Threats include: Perception of high crime in the area, continued traffic problems, low property values, and compatibility problems between commercial & residential uses.

Also on the second week of January 2001, we conducted a windshield survey using criteria set by NorthStar in a previous assessment conducted in 2000. Using the primary data we gathered from this survey, along with secondary data including base maps and an address database from the City of Detroit, we were able to build a GIS database of housing and commercial conditions in the study area. Each of the nearly 900 lots were given a rating of good, fair, poor, demolish, or vacant: For the residential portion of the study area, we found that 52% of the residential lots are vacant. Thirteen percent of these lots contain a home that is in good condition, 17% in fair condition, 16% in poor condition, and 2% need to be demolished. For the commercial portion of the study area 50% of the lots are vacant, 14% have structures that are in good condition, 29% are in fair condition, 3% are in poor condition, and 4% need to be demolished.

In late March 2001, a Fifth grade class at DeWitte Clinton Elementary School was interviewed. They commented about not having enough recreation space in the neighborhood and also needing more police protection to enforce traffic laws and reduce the amount of drug dealers and users, as well as, the homeless on the streets.

From the data we analyzed, it is the recommendation of our group to the NorthStar CDC, that in order for redevelopment in this study area to succeed, there must be more police presence and citizen involvement in neighborhood watch programs. There is also a need for more recreation and green space, further demolition of abandoned structures, and a diversification of the surrounding shopping areas. Other recommendations include: improvements to infrastructure (sidewalks and streets), address trash and graffiti issues, improved animal control services, establishment of a corridor business association, commercial facade improvements, diversification of the residential housing mix, and more community involvement.

Our group ran into some limitations in doing the research for this report. We could not find very much information on the history of the Harmony Village neighborhood and there were several errors in the data given to us by the City of Detroit. There was also a serious deficiency of available technology to produce maps within the Urban and Regional Planning Department at Michigan State University.