



Clarke Square Quality of Life Plan Update | Spring 2017*

Since the creation of the **Clarke Square** Quality of Life Plan, neighbors, stakeholders, and partners have worked together to create prosperity in and for Clarke Square, advanced the construction of facilities, and rehabbed homes. What follows are some of the recent highlights and achievements.

Housing

- Homeowners invested nearly \$340,000 in 30 home improvement projects through a home improvement matching grant program; an additional \$55,400 in grant dollars was invested in the projects.
- Clarke Square was selected for the Revitalize Milwaukee *Block Build MKE 2017*, a two-day event in May 2017 that brought together more than 500 volunteers to renovate and beautify 25 homes and vacant lots in Clarke Square.
- Partnered with Housing Resources, Inc. and ACTS Housing to prepare families for homeownership. In 2016, HRI and ACTS helped five families purchase homes, all formerly City tax foreclosures, in Clarke Square.
- Provided organizational support to Journey House and Cardinal Capital Management in their effort to seek approval and financing for the construction of 40 new units of housing adjacent to Clarke Square Park.

Economic Development

- Installed a six-foot bronze sculpture of Cesar Chavez on Cesar Chavez Drive, hosted the first annual *Cesar Chavez Day Celebration*, and launched the *Cesar Chavez Drive Artist in Residence* program.
- Worked with the Chavez Drive Business Improvement District and the Wisconsin Bike Federation to organize three *Ciclovía MKE* (open streets) events since 2015, drawing more than 1,000 people to the near south side. Two *Ciclovías* are planned for summer 2017.
- Journey House's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site prepared more than 600 tax returns in 2017, nearly doubling the 317 prepared the previous year. In 2016, Journey House's VITA tax preparation effort brought \$522,000 in federal refunds, \$151,500 in state refunds, and \$101,800 in Wisconsin homestead refunds back to neighbors.

Neighborhood Beautification

- Hundreds of volunteers participated in neighborhood cleanups and beautification opportunities such as Faith Builders' Serve Your City Day in August 2016.
- More than 40 fruit trees were planted throughout Clarke Square on Earth Day 2017 as part of the Victory Garden Initiative's *Fruity Nutty Five* contest.
- Worked with Journey House to install a community garden that serves as a popular family activity and gathering spot.

Social Connections

- Neighborhood Nights Out were a staple of social interaction and summer recreation on Wednesday evenings during June and July 2016.
- Safe & Sound and CSNI staff brought block-by-block organizing and *Pop-Up Block Parties* to the neighborhood. These events fostered connections and created opportunities for neighbors to share hopes, dreams, and concerns for Clarke Square.

Employment and Job Training

- Journey House Urban Careers Institute placed more than 150 individuals into jobs since 2016 and continues to serve as a comprehensive resource for the neighborhood by facilitating employment assistance, financial capacity building, and tax preparation.

Project 10/Health & Wellness

- Hired a part-time coordinator to engage neighbors in the areas of economic prosperity, physical health, emotional health and wellbeing, and spiritual wellness.
- Developed new partnerships with Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, the American Cancer Society, Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin, and the Sixteenth Street Community Health Center.
- Invested in the Christian Faith Fellowship Church East's *Forever Free* Alcohol, Drug, and Other Addictions (AODA) counseling program, enabling the creation of a computer lab to assist program participants in accessing basic necessities and securing employment.
- Conducted a small business competition in partnership with Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation that awarded a \$2,500 grand prize to a Clarke Square business.
- Participated in the City of Milwaukee's Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation's *Bloom & Groom* program which allowed residents to purchase flowers and plants at discounted prices.

Public Safety

- Developed partnerships with Milwaukee Police Department's District 2, local Aldermen, the City of Milwaukee's Department of Neighborhood Services, and Safe & Sound to foster neighbor engagement, build relationships, and nurture a safe and proactive neighborhood culture.
- Convened a multidisciplinary team made up of many partners to identify sustainable solutions for resident-identified public safety priorities.
- Showed a marked improvement in neighborhood collective efficacy (informal social control and social cohesion) as measured by Safe & Sound's organizational evaluation from October 2015 to October 2016.
- Partnered with the Zeidler Center for Public Discussion to engage neighbors and public safety officials in neighborhood safety listening circles which led to the creation of a local planning committee of neighbor facilitators to sustain the effort.

Community-School Partnership

- The 34,000 square foot, \$6 million Journey House Center for Family Learning and Youth Athletics, connected to Longfellow School, continues to be a vibrant space for learning, recreation, community events, and neighborhood meetings.
- Engaged with Longfellow School, Prince of Peace School, and Christ-St. Peter School to plan, implement, participate in, and help with neighborhood events.

Youth, Parks and Recreation

- Artists Working in Education, Epic Center Community Organization, Journey House, and other nonprofits provided young people with opportunities to explore their artistic and creative skills, and to develop their character and relationships.
- AWE worked with young neighbors to paint and install two public art projects in the neighborhood.
- Expanded the *Music In Mitchell Park* concert from a single event to a concert series held every Thursday night in August.
- Formed the *Friends of Clarke Square Park*, a group of neighbors and partners that regularly meet to advance stewardship, programming, and the physical environment of the park.
- Worked with partners to advance plans for renovating the Clarke Square Park Pavilion.

Lifelong Learning

- Journey House remains a learning hub for neighbors of all ages. Programs include adult English language courses, job readiness trainings for adults and youth, Youth Build, and GED tutoring.

**For more information or to get involved,
visit www.clarkesquare.org or call 414.647.0548 x 107**

* All data is for the time period January 2016 through May 2017.