

# Deer Park Initiative

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# Basic Assumption:

- The neighborhood we grew up in is in us. It played a part in making us who we are. Family, school, religious institution, and neighborhood wove themselves together in our experience. We observed the everyday life of the neighborhood, the give and take of neighbors, the lifestyles of other families, the care of property, the aspirations of our friends, and we concluded what might be possible for us given that we come from such a neighborhood.
- Therefore, we focus our efforts on the health and vitality of neighborhoods, attempting to do so as holistically as possible.

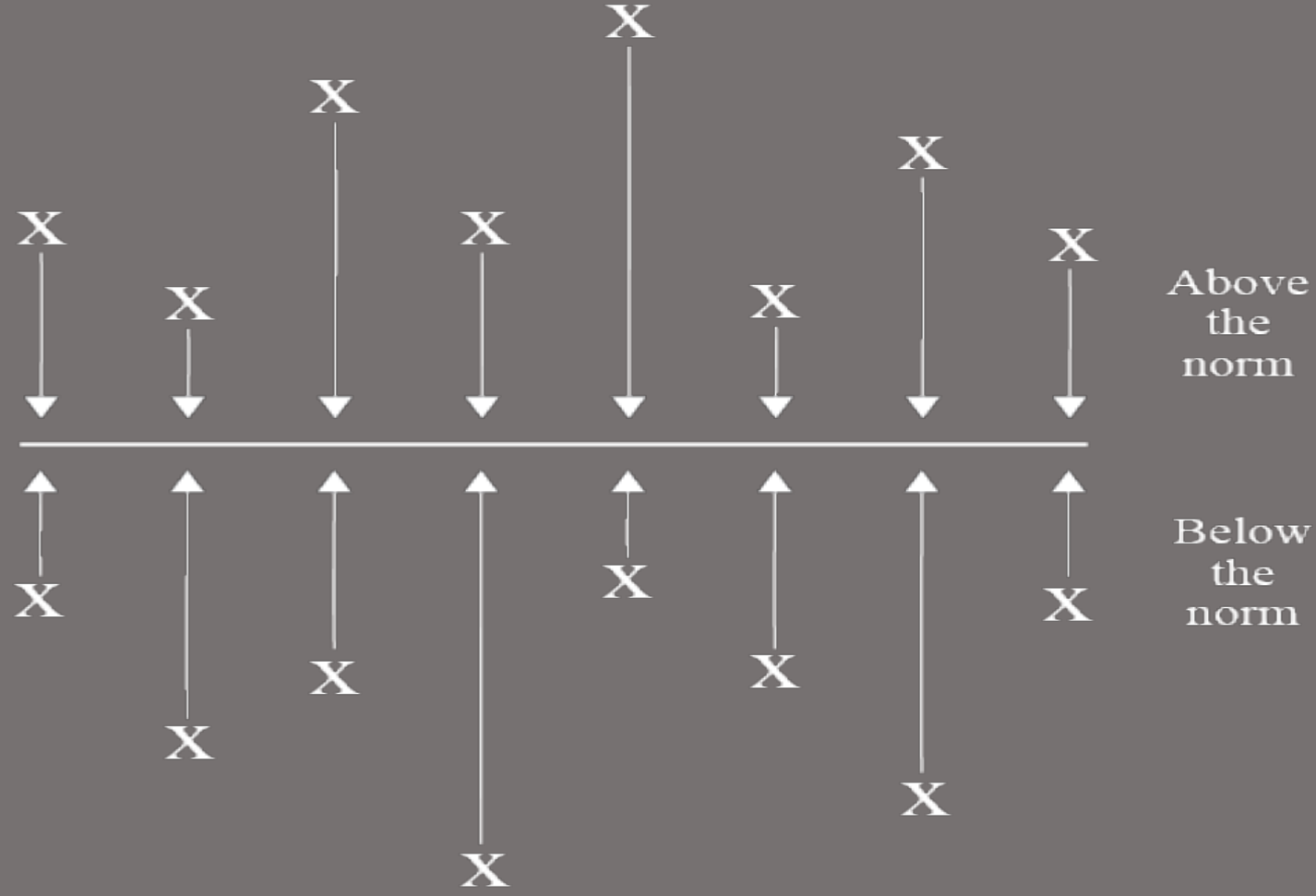
# A Neighborhood Standard

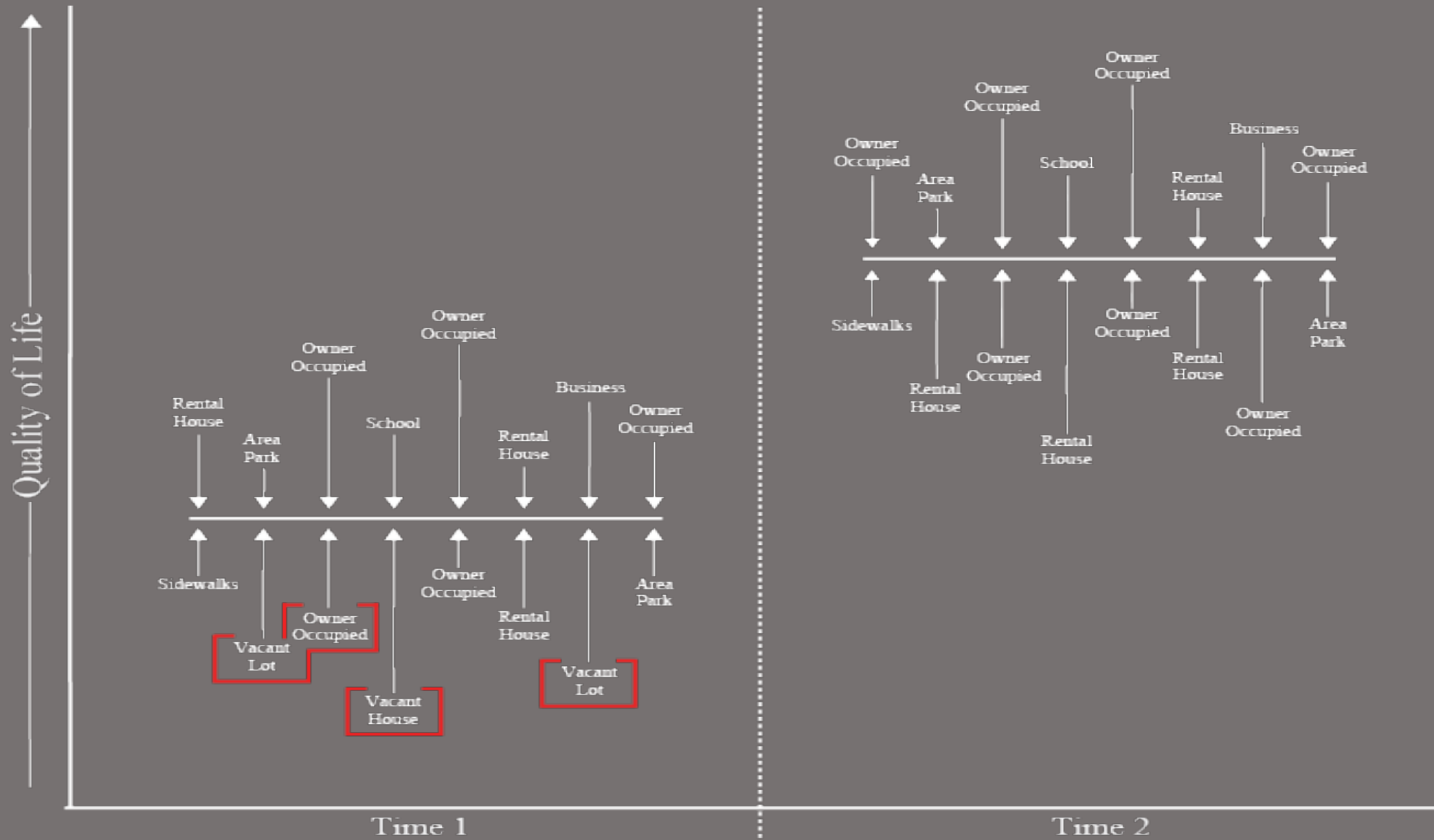
- Every community, organization, and neighborhood has a certain cultural “center of gravity” (a standard or norm) around which activity occurs.
- “This cultural center of gravity acts like a magnet . . . If you are below the average level, it tends to pull you up. If you try to go above it, it tends to pull you down. The cultural center of gravity . . . (pulls) you up to the average expectable level of conduct and consciousness. Beyond that, you are on your own . . . “

--Ken Wilber

A Brief History of Everything

—Responsibility / Collaboration / Innovation—→





# Deer Park Collaborating Partners

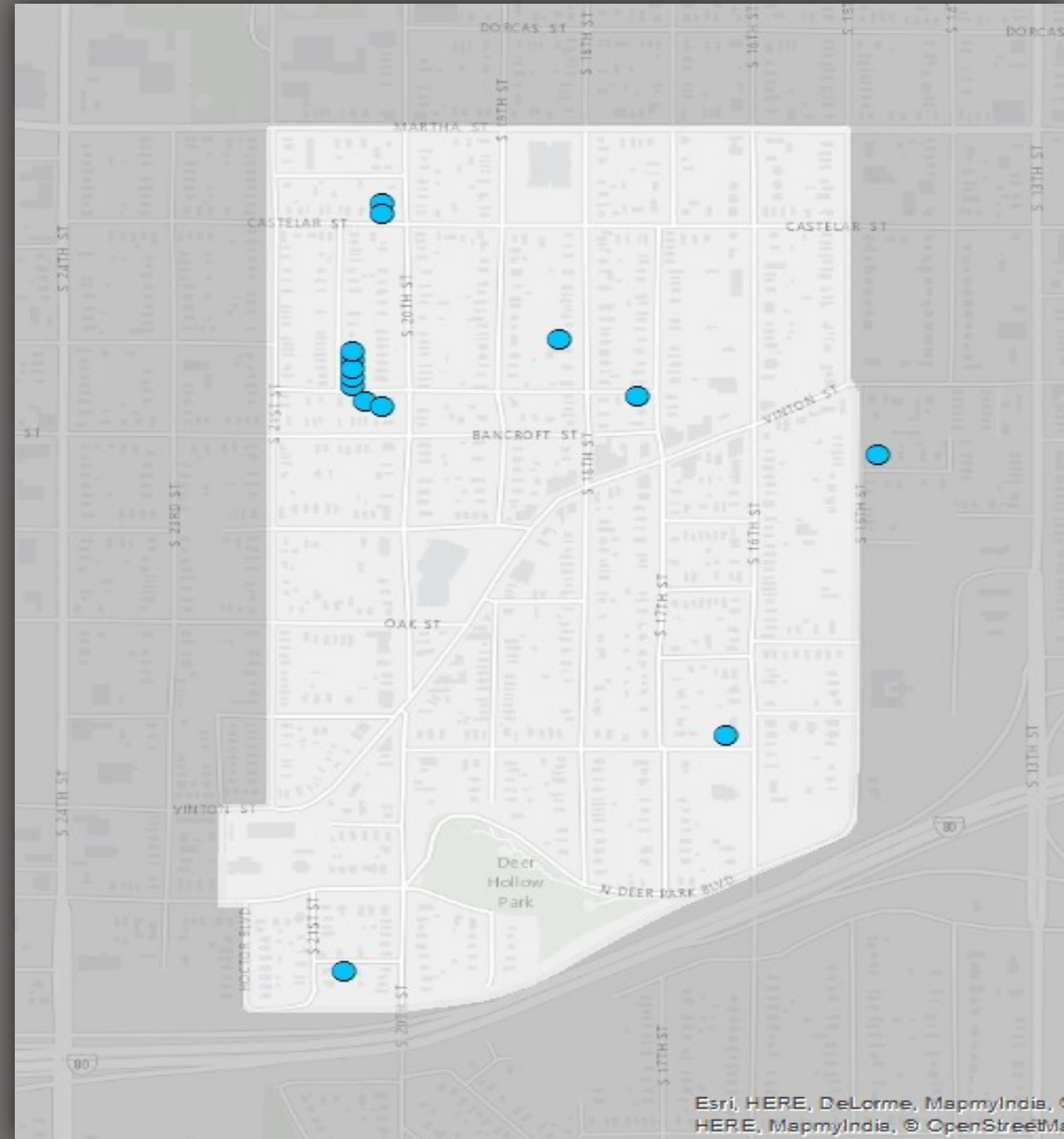
(16 Prospect Village partners are participating in the Deer Park Initiative)

City of Omaha Planning Department  
Deer Park Neighborhood Association  
One World Health Center  
Family Housing Advisory Services  
Restoration Exchange Omaha  
Omaha Healthy Kids Alliance  
Habitat for Humanity  
Rebuilding Together  
Visiting Nurses  
Boys Town (South Omaha Office)  
Keep Omaha Beautiful  
UNMC College of Public Health  
Omaha Fire Department  
Nebraskans for Solar  
The Sherwood Foundation

Nebraska Family Collaborative  
Completely Kids  
Immigration: Justice for our Neighbors  
ONE Omaha  
Metro Community College  
Douglas County Health Department  
Catholic Charities Micro Enterprise  
SONA – South O Neighborhood Association  
Omaha Public Works  
Mayor's administration  
Omaha by Design  
MLCDC  
Omaha Police Department  
Omaha Parks Department  
Castelar Elementary School

# Demolitions

- 14 Demolitions of unfit/unsafe structures

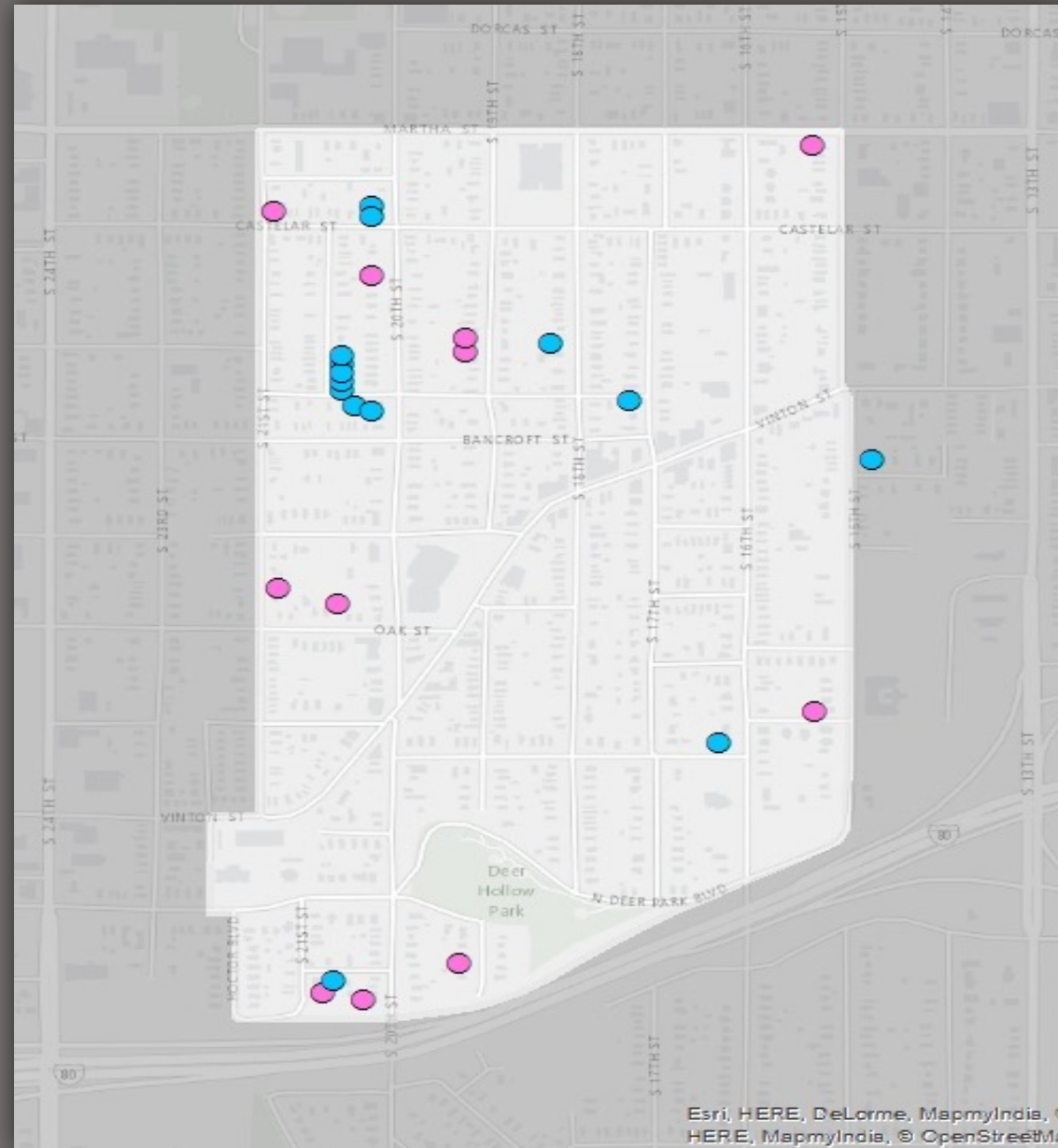


● Demolitions

# Lead Hazard Program

- 11 homes had lead hazards remediated
- Exterior and interior paint stabilization, window and door replacement, soil remediation, porch floor replacement, wood basement stairs replaced
- Child under 7 in home (or visits regularly); at or below 80% of AMI

- Demolitions
- Lead Hazard

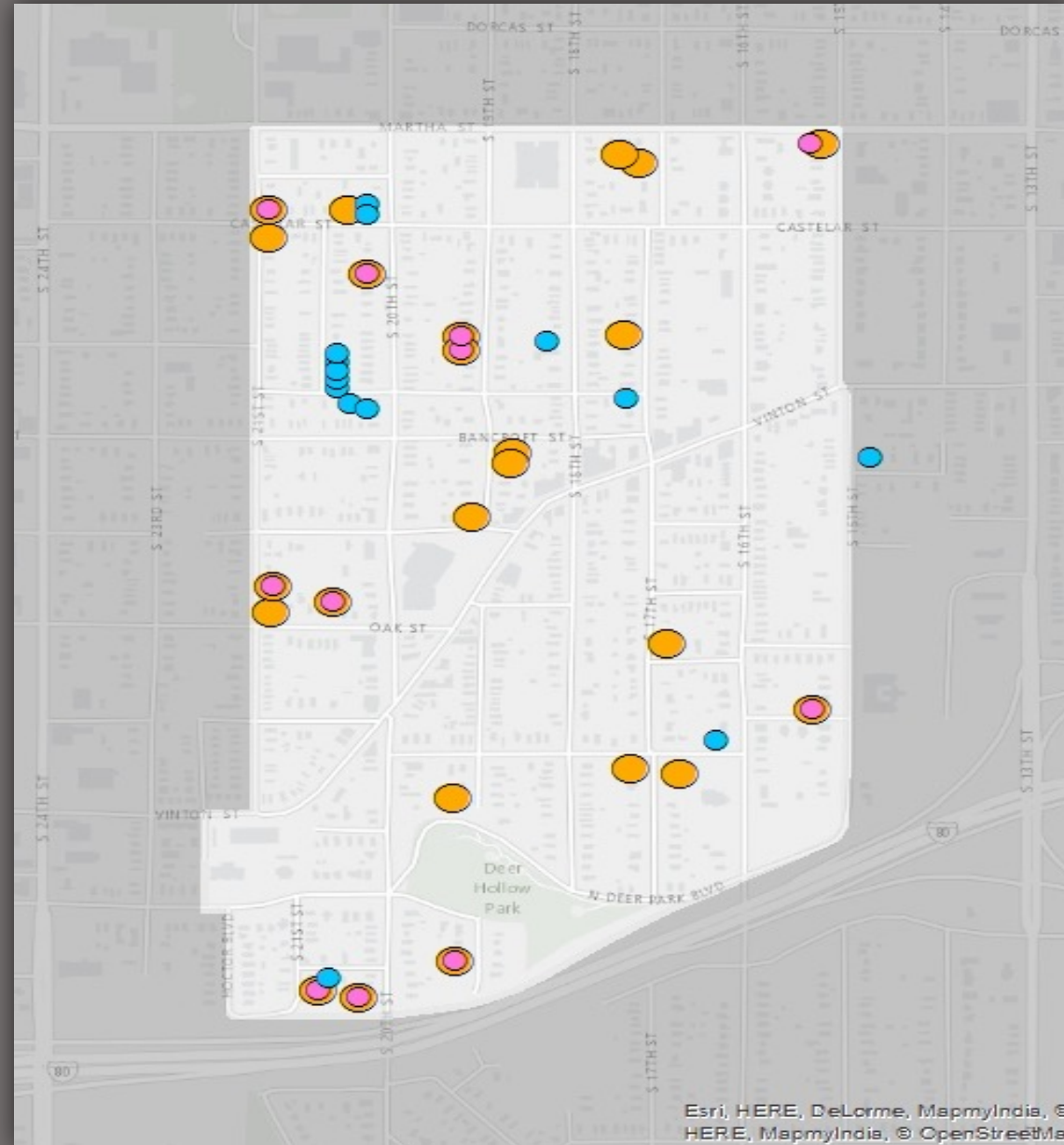




# Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation

- 28 Owner-occupied homes currently being repaired, rehabilitated, or reconstructed.
- Lead-based paint hazards, structural items, safety and health related items
- Client eligibility: homeowner, taxes & insurance current, 80% MFI

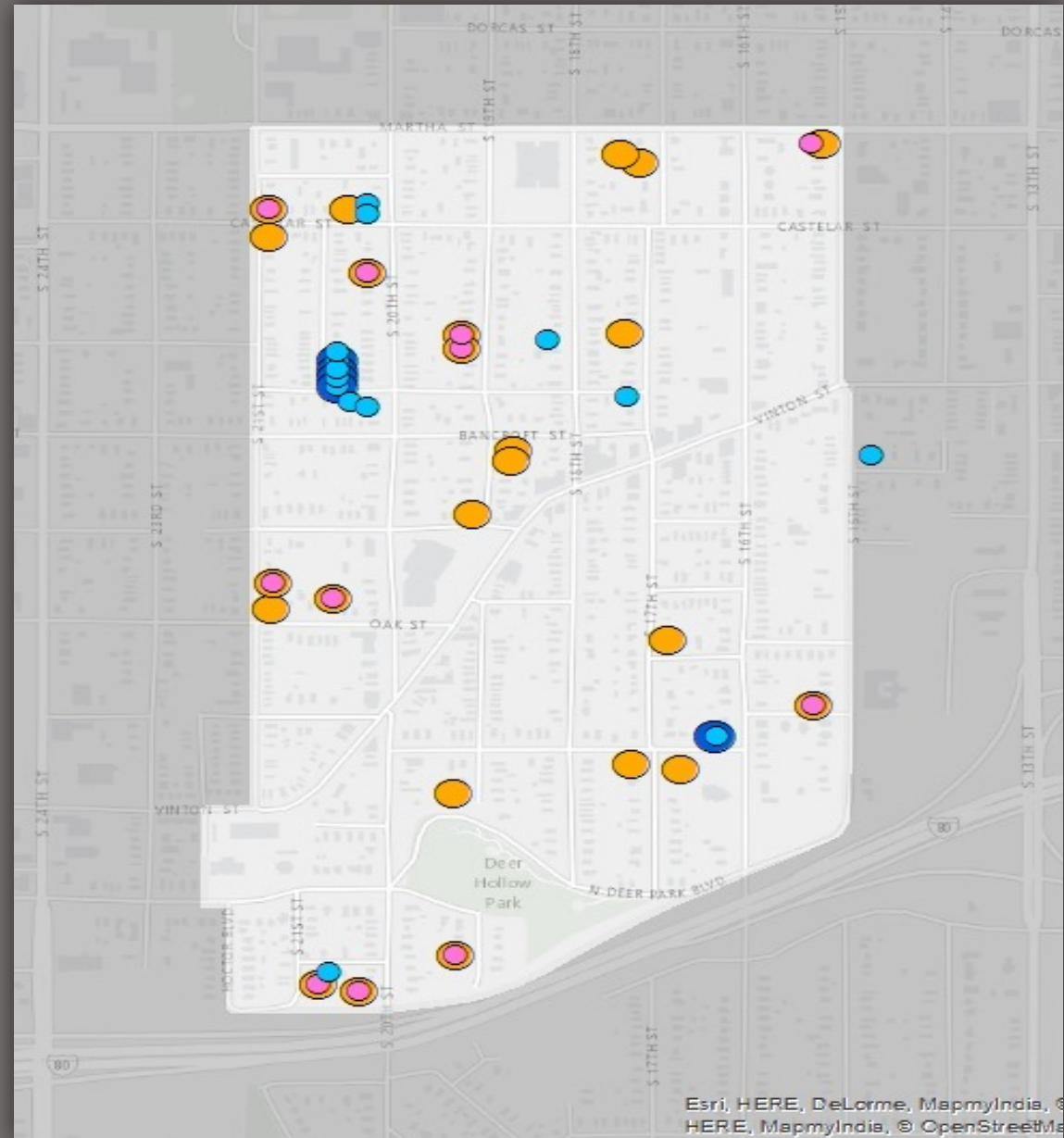
- Demolitions
- Lead Hazard
- Owner Occupied Rehab



# Property Acquisition

- 4 lots purchased and conveyed to Habitat for new housing construction; a 5<sup>th</sup> lot is in the planning phase
- Locating owners, assembling buildable sites, untangling and negotiating legal issues

- Demolitions
- Lead Hazard
- Owner Occupied Rehab
- Acquired Property



# Public Art

Omaha by Design facilitated the acquisition and placement of public art sculptures along Vinton Street to help further define Vinton Street as an arts corridor.



# Commercial Corridor

The Sherwood Foundation has provided \$100,000 for the purpose of providing matching grants to small businesses and property owners along Vinton Street.



# Grant Recipient

Applicant: Oracle Art

Location: 1808 Vinton St

Grant Amount: \$1,500

Proposed Upgrades: Signage,  
Remodeling, Technology



# Grant Recipient

Applicant: Gallery 72

Location: 1806 Vinton St

Grant Amount: \$2,943.53

Proposed Upgrades: Exterior sign lighting, Security cameras, Glass repair, Gallery displays



# Grant Recipient

Applicant: Vinton Hall

Location: 1724 Vinton St

Grant Amount: \$10,000

Proposed Upgrades: Roof repairs,  
Interior repairs, Security system,  
Advertising



# Grant Recipient

Applicant: Alona Club

Location: 1523 Vinton St

Grant Amount: \$2,253

Proposed Upgrades: Sidewalk repair; foundation painted





# Grant Recipient

Applicant: Paisano's Meat Market

Location: 1715 Vinton St

Grant Amount: \$10,000

Proposed Upgrades: Walk-in  
Cooler & Freezer



# Grant Recipient

Applicant: Historic Stable Building

Location: 1809 Vinton St

Grant Amount: \$3,584.16

Proposed Upgrades: Façade, New door, Sidewalk repair



# Grant Recipient

Applicant: Crystal Lady Antiques

Location: 1817 Vinton St

Grant Amount: \$2,344.79

Proposed Upgrades: Façade improvements, Sidewalk repairs, Security monitors



# Grant Recipient

Applicant: Modest Bride

Location: 1911 Vinton St

Grant Amount: \$10,000

Proposed Upgrades: Windows,  
Interior remodel, Security system



# Grant Recipient

Applicant: International Bakery

Location: 1932 Vinton St

Grant Amount: \$10,000

Proposed Upgrades: Awning  
equipment & Baking equipment



## Additional accomplishments:

- Quality of Life survey (results by English-speaking/Spanish-speaking; owner/renter; and overall);
- In-depth neighborhood history completed by Restoration Exchange Omaha (Larry Jacobson);
- Metro Express provided (and will provide again) its facility for DOGIS, ACELA, and Lead Registry training;
- Keep Omaha Beautiful organized a cleanup campaign of sidewalks and streets;
- Boys Town's Common Sense Parenting program served 32 families in Deer Park, reaching 132 children.
- Castelar Elementary conducted "neighborhood visioning" project with fifth graders
- Rebuilding Together currently conducting "Rebuilding Day" (20 volunteers) at specific locations within Deer Park – painting, rehabbing, restoring, clean up...
- The Deer Park Neighborhood Association markets/continues to market housing repair and other programs

## Anticipated accomplishments:

- Rebuilding Together with funding to do 17 roofs (in larger Deer Park neighborhood)
- 5 Habitat houses; 5 additional owner-occupied rehabs; 20 Healthy Home/Energy Conservation projects possible; Handyman and Emergency projects possible; Rental Rehab projects possible (Extensive marketing on city and Rebuilding Together programs in recent weeks/months)
- A few more Sherwood Matching Grant recipients along Vinton Street
- ????

## Brief History:

- Property is purchased by owners who see potential
- The Planning Department, at the request of the neighborhood, conducts a study and creates the Vinton Street NCE: a Neighborhood Conservation & Enhancement District for the Vinton Street Area (to help preserve and protect the History Vinton Street business district and surrounding neighborhood through zoning regulations)
- Councilman Gernandt requests that the City come south (to Deer Park) with its developing holistic neighborhood revitalization initiative
- The Deer Park Neighborhood Association in collaboration with the Planning Department determines the boundaries of the focus area
- Planning Department staff secure (and allocate) grant funding for property acquisition, demolition, housing rehabilitation, etc. (approximately \$1.8 million)
- Sixteen organizations that were a part of the Prospect Village Initiative join the City for the Deer Park Initiative (and other organizations join them) turning what resources they can to the focus area

Each step making possible subsequent steps that weren't imagined initially

The City of Omaha along with funding from and HUD provided funding for streetlights along Vinton Street to further define the street as an arts corridor, inviting of night time events.

The following three slides are artist renderings of Vinton Street with streetlights added.

Streetlights were added in 2018.









This is work I oversaw while directing the Housing and Community Development Division of the City of Omaha Planning Department. Timeframe: 2016 - 2018

Thanks to Lisa Smith, Omaha City Planning Department, for assistance in the development of this PowerPoint presentation.

Appendix:

Forming a holistic revitalization collaborative

# Goal:

Build a collaborative consisting of area nonprofit and governmental organizations focused on the revitalization of a given neighborhood;

Build and maintain it in such a way that the collaborative (some part of it, at least) is willing to stay together and move—when the time comes—to another neighborhood.

# Initial Steps:

## 1) Identify the target neighborhood where

- at least one person living within the neighborhood and respected for their commitment to the neighborhood is willing to champion the work of the collaborative;
- where housing rehab activity is needed and where at least some organizations (churches, other nonprofits) are already doing work valued by the neighborhood;
- and, if possible, where a signature project is planned (perhaps underway) that will benefit the neighborhood and that, in turn, will be benefitted by the work of the collaborative.

## 2) Identify and invite all potential partner organizations to a meeting to discuss and share the following:

- The vision or goal, i.e., a holistic approach to neighborhood revitalization
- What the City intends to bring to the effort in the way of programs and resources (HUD and State funding for property acquisition, demolition, housing rehabilitation, etc.)
- What the City is willing to do to facilitate the formation of the collaborative, e.g., facilitate meetings, arrange presentations, ensure communication, etc.
- What is needed in order for the collaborative to evolve; what we can do to further the development of a collaborative where partner organizations increasingly feel a part of the collaborative and willing to focus resources on the target neighborhood



### 3) Monthly meetings in the neighborhood

-- The purpose of the meetings:

To build trust in the collaborative, itself, i.e., that it is real, that the City is committed to it, that meaningful differences are resulting from the effort;

To provide the opportunity for networking and problem-solving; to allow working relationships to develop on a first name basis;

To learn from one another about our respective programs (so that every program can serve as “outreach” for all other programs);

To make sure that all comments and ideas for improving the effectiveness of the collaborative are woven into future discussions so that participants witness their presence in the process, their input valued.

## 4) Guiding tenets in forming our Collaborative:

- Utilize group processes that ensure participation; processes that ensure that everyone at the table is invited to contribute/provide feedback/etc.;
- Remember that every step matters in your effort to ensure quality and in your effort to model and exhibit commitment. You are not working on the problem before you only, but on future, unforeseen problems, and your group's ability and willingness to address future problems is affected by its experience in dealing with current problems.
- Create "big pictures"/schematics/maps of the reality with which you are working so as to further a common view, a shared understanding, so each part can see that it fits into a meaningful whole.
- The goal (one of them) is to evolve a collaborative in such a way that all programs are strengthened by their affiliation with it. Thus, the importance of providing progress reports that include what every program has contributed, reports that can be shared with a program's board of directors and other key supporters.

As with any community development effort, success depends to a considerable extent on the following<sup>1</sup>:

- 1) The development of trust among participants
- 2) A shared vision/shared understanding
- 3) Committed/competent/reliable leadership
- 4) A shared language (so everyone in the room understands what's being said, so no one feels excluded from the conversation)

<sup>1</sup> Patty Carlson, Un of NE at Omaha