Milo-Grogan Neighborhood Development:
An Analysis of History, Tools, and Conditions Towards Neighborhood Prosperity

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ABSTRACT

The Milo-Grogan neighborhood near Downtown Columbus, Ohio, released a neighborhood plan in 2007 to review, recommend, and develop the area. Milo-Grogan is a distressed district, yet it is urban and nearly centrally located—sandwiched between The Ohio State University, the Linden Neighborhood, the Ohio State Fairgrounds, Fort Hayes Metropolitan Education Center, and the industry districts that serve the nearby Columbus Metropolitan Airport. The objective of the plan is to revitalize the area to become a productive, well functioning neighborhood in various facets: urban design, land use, transportation, community facilities, housing, and economic development. Traditionally, plans of this sort are reviewed, updated, and re-released after five years. This plan, on the other hand, focuses on a ten-year-out format.

Presently, there is no new edition of the Milo-Grogan Neighborhood Plan, and many of its recommendations remain untouched. My goal is not to analyze this plan and its progress, but to consider how other factors must function to make the objectives of the plan a reality. Thus, considering the various matrices that help us understand what has created this environment and how this environment can evolve is necessary. By analyzing these constructs, the Milo-Grogan neighborhood can be better understood, and perhaps the recommendations of the plan may be realized.
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Location of Milo-Grogan

Figure 1 The Milo-Grogan neighborhood in respect to other nearby landmarks, resources, and districts. Milo-Grogan is fixated slightly northeast of downtown Columbus, Ohio.
Figure 2 This is an enlarged image of Milo-Grogan. The neighborhood is bound on all four sides by railways, and bisected by Interstate-71. Note: A small network of streets in the upper left portion, south of 11th Avenue, is also included in Milo-Grogan
Purpose of Thesis

This thesis serves to analyze the development efforts of the Milo-Grogan neighborhood of Columbus, Ohio via three major components and methods:

Firstly, I aim to identify the historical factors and conditions that have led to the current state of conditions in the Milo-Grogan neighborhood. Secondly, the goal is to identify progress, current benchmarks, and future benchmarks of the 2007 Milo-Grogan Neighborhood Plan through a series of interviews with the Associate Director of Development of the City of Columbus, Kevin Wheeler. In order to combine and synthesize these two components, I must investigate the conditions of urban reality through the collection of information. Thus, I formulated questions from my views of proper urban development—guided by my study of The Death and Life of Great American Cities by Jane Jacobs, which are attached at the end of this document. These questions guided my interview with Goldean Gibbs, a Milo-Grogan community member, about what community members have seen and experienced, what they would like to see, and their perceptions of the conditions and realities of Milo-Grogan. In addition, other information has been collected to reinforce the other factors in the development of Milo-Grogan.

This thesis aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Milo-Grogan, its current development efforts and conditions, and to determine what direction Milo-Grogan must take. This neighborhood is in a strategic location in Columbus, as such; compressing information on Milo-Grogan's history, plans, and its perception of place
shall give us all—from citizens to developers to policy makers—a clearer and greater picture of the condition of Milo-Grogan.

**My Background**

I am a Senior at Indiana University—Bloomington completing my Bachelors of Science in Public Management with a Minor in Geography. Since early in my studies, I have been fascinated with the process of urban development and planning, most specifically in the urban regeneration and redevelopment paradigms. Aside from a selection of relevant courses in both my Major and Minor that have tailor-made my degree, I have studied the field on my own. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*¹ by Jane Jacobs has made the most immediate impact on me in my endeavors in this research. As such, I will employ some of her concepts that have made an impression on me in the analysis of this neighborhood.

¹ *The Death and Life of American Cities* is a highly influential novel on urban planning, written in 1961, that was critical of modernist policies on urban planning. Jacobs contested that these policies were destroying the function and properties of inner-city neighborhoods that are fundamental for the greater structure of a city, a metropolitan area, and the traditional workings of neighborhood functionality.
History of Milo Grogan

In the 1870s, the railroad network from Columbus’ Union Station began to stretch towards the northeast. Eventually, these Pennsylvania Railroad tracks formed a square—from this, various industries began to emerge in the area to take advantage of the railroad infrastructure. This enclosed area became a sort of perceived industrial cluster—although industries were only beginning to utilize the area, it was a master plan of sorts for an industrial community (Dunham 41).

The Milo-Grogan neighborhood emerged within these bounds initially as two small communities, Milo and Grogan. Milo got its name from Milo P. Streets, a neighborhood brickyard owner, and Grogan got its name from Joseph P. Grogan, a local shopkeeper and Post Office administrator who ran his business on the now-main thoroughfare Cleveland Avenue (Milo-Grogan Neighborhood Plan 4). For much of the villages’ early years, the area was rather isolated from the City of Columbus—they weren’t part of the city’s infrastructure and utilities, and the railroads formed a vernacular boundary that divided “within Milo-Grogan” from the City of Columbus. Responsively, these two enclosed villages unofficially consolidated as population began to swell with a predominantly Irish population (a traditionally manufacturing-centric ethnic community), in response to the burgeoning industries emerging in and around the heavily utilized railroad district. The two communities also gained strength and unification, although unincorporated, because of their commercial progress along Cleveland Avenue.
The Milo-Grogan community desperately needed improvements: the archaic and dilapidated neighborhood needed paved streets and other infrastructural improvements to improve quality-of-life and to match the modernity of Columbus—goals achievable only through annexation with the City of Columbus. Milo-Grogan had plentiful taxable assets for the City of Columbus, but their new school (since removed from the school district) was a $30,000 debt the city did not want to absorb (Dunham 46). However, the turning point for the annexation of Milo-Grogan was Mayor Dewitt Badger’s concept of a “Greater Columbus”, which argued that the idea of annexation, growth, and prosperity would lead to making Columbus a nation-leading metropolis. Badger saw Milo-Grogan as a neighborhood that would bolster the industrial sector for Columbus, grow the city in terms of population and tax-base, and increase the link between the Pennsylvania Railroad and Columbus (Dunham 47). Eventually, the two villages would annex into the City of Columbus on October 16th, 1908 (Milo-Grogan Neighborhood Plan 5).

This propagation of Milo-Grogan and its annexation was driven almost completely by their industrial presence and economic performance abilities. In Milo-Grogan’s infancy, industrial firms started populating the western railroad boundary just outside of the district. Two smaller firms proved the versatility and utility of the area as an industrial cluster, namely: Kilbourne, a hand truck manufacturer that generated nearly $1 million in annual sales, and Berry Brothers Bolt Company, which remained in the area until 1997 (Dunham 42). The success of this still-small
corridor began to attract larger firms, which would later develop into the industrial magnates that tethered the community to the economic structure of the region\textsuperscript{2}.

Later, Joseph Andrews Jeffrey bought out the Lechner Mining Machine Company, which produced the patented “chain-driven, air-powered machine that would cut coal from an underground seam”, and moved the company headquarters to the proven industrial cluster just outside Milo-Grogan (Dunham 42). The introduction of this firm paved the way for large firms to target Milo-Grogan as an area prime for industrial development and utilization.

Jeffrey’s continued growth exacerbated this point. Jeffrey purchased the Ohio Malleable Iron Company in 1904 in order to have cheaper access to the production of iron casting, the British Diamond Coal Cutter Corporation in 1926, which paid dividends for Jeffrey during World War II, and Galion Iron Works, which produced road rollers and graders to sell to local and state governments (Dunham 45). Although Jeffrey and its holdings with outside of Milo-Grogan jurisdiction, their influence on Milo-Grogan as an industrial engine was clear: other firms followed suit and established themselves within Milo-Grogan. Additionally, the firm assisted its employees in purchasing homes in the area, and remained a part of the lives of its employees far into the 20\textsuperscript{th} century\textsuperscript{3}, solidifying the point that the industrial firms were there for the people of the neighborhood of Milo-Grogan—that working in the

\textsuperscript{2} It is important to note that Columbus as a whole was never predominately an industrial city like the many cities in Ohio; however, Milo-Grogan was one of a few areas in Columbus that adopted a industrial-community format to accommodate for the lack of industrial culture in the region. Milo-Grogan residents’ livelihoods were all tethered to the performance of the industrial sector in one-way or another.

\textsuperscript{3} The Great Depression led to the demise of this program (Dunham 44).
industrial areas and living in Milo-Grogan were mutually exclusive. The initial establishment of Jeffrey was the turning point towards the annexation and perceived importance of Milo-Grogan as an industrial community and powerhouse.

Soon, many industrial firms established themselves outside the western annexation border, providing jobs for the residents within the area (Dunham 51). It was around the time of the annexation that industries appeared in Milo-Grogan, including the aforementioned Ohio Malleable Iron Company and Kinnear Doors—the inventors of slatted steel and aluminum doors that could be raised upwards and rolled up, as opposed to the traditional swinging doors that take up room.

Large industrial firms eventually paid Milo-Grogan attention because of the performance of these small firms’ success in the area. One large empty parcel, south of 5th Avenue and west of Cleveland Avenue (within the western boundary of Milo-
Grogan), developed into a massive industrial park⁴. Columbus Die, Tool, and Machine Company moved to the southern portion of this parcel in 1914 and built a larger facility than previously at another location. The Timken Roller Bearing Company filled the remaining space and constructed a 148,000 square foot facility (Dunham 53). The massive company, a branch of the Timken Corporation in Canton, Ohio, was attracted to the railroad network and the motivated population of Milo-Grogan. These large industries would come to dominate the industrial climate for decades to come, as they employed thousands and eventually benefitted from World War II contracts.

The presence of industry in Milo-Grogan not only attracted householders and increased the householders’ wealth and capital, but increased small business activity in the area. A business strip between 1st and 5th Avenues on Cleveland Avenue (the boundary between the industrial areas and residential areas) emerged after the annexation (Dunham 56). For neighborhood service purposes, another commercial district emerged on St. Clair Avenue on the east side of Milo Grogan (Dunham 57).

⁴ This parcel would later become known as the Timken Site.
The industrial, residential, and commercial factors held steady after the Great Depression, however; the period after the World War II industrial boom led to the first significant factor that led to the downturn of Milo-Grogan: white flight. Veteran’s benefits, namely the GI Bill, provided many of the existing residents of Milo-Grogan the opportunity to move into new homes in the newly established suburbs. These relocated individuals often purchased automobiles to commute to their jobs in Milo-Grogan. The newfound vacancy in Milo-Grogan drove home prices down, and the low-income urban-penetrating minority populations (namely African-Americans) were able to afford housing. This caused a massive downshift in the average wealth of homeowners in the area.

Since the white population that fled tended to keep their jobs in the area, the lack of employment for the new residents meant “community income and spending power had to decline” (Dunham 64). This phenomenon contributed to the underutilization, and later, the escape of most commercial institutions in the area that once served the previous generation of the neighborhood. Today, the area lacks...
many of the services these lost institutions served, including but not limited to: private practice health care, supermarkets, pharmacies, skilled trades, specialty stores, and traditional restaurants.

Another contribution to the demise of the commercial sector, as well as the escape of homeowners, tenants, and the large industrial firms (which will be discussed later), was the introduction of Interstate-71 in 1961-62 (Dunham 64). The interstate thereby split the neighborhood in two halves, simultaneously severing neighborhood thoroughfares with the massive freeway sound barriers. From this, much of the neighborhood connectivity was lost: residents could no longer walk down the streets that were once connected, automobile traffic was funneled to a couple streets to traverse the freeway’s path, and the sense of a neighborhood and a sense of place were thereby changed forever. No longer was Milo-Grogan one neighborhood, instead; Milo-Grogan now appears as four compartments divided to the east and west by I-71, and to the north and south by 5th Avenue (which has become a major boundary due to its overutilization, due to most other east-west streets being severed).

Furthermore, the construction of I-71, through the eminent domain by the Federal Government, destroyed over 400 homes, and led to the loss of over 1,400 people—over a quarter of Milo-Grogan’s population—over the 1950’s and 1960’s alone (Dunham 66). As a result, the commercial sector fell apart. Cleveland Avenue, the prominent shopping and commercial avenue of years past, is directly adjacent to the interstate. The loss of homes, population, and the stress of the interstate
contributed to a forty-five percent storefront business loss on this avenue alone (Dunham 67). Later, this void in commercial activity was replaced by automobile-centric, and often corporate, establishments on 5th Avenue—which remain today. The collapse of commercial activity and decline of population led to a new phenomenon in Milo-Grogan—vacancy quickly became part of the neighborhood, and stayed.

Additionally, the social and economic conditions began to crumble. By 1973, female householders increased, high school incompletion rates increased, unemployment began to exceed citywide rates, mean incomes fell to half of the city wide mean income rate, twenty-five percent of families were below the federal poverty line, crime was twenty percent that of the city rate, and students were significantly behind in school compared to other Columbus students (Dunham 68-70). These factors contributed to a still-lingering competitive disadvantage for Milo-Grogan. The closing of the only public school in Milo-Grogan in 1977, Milo Elementary School, marked the end of the shift in the socio-economic climate (Dunham 71).

Ultimately, many of the industrial firms began to fold or move out of Milo-Grogan. Their prosperity was not directly tied to the health of Milo-Grogan as a community, because the businesses served regional, state, national, and international markets. Post-World War II marked a time where industries became

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5 This is the major example of the decline of commerce and housing infrastructure, however; there are other areas in Milo-Grogan, notably the St. Clair Avenue business cluster, which experienced similar problems reciprocally.
less important. Goods began to be made overseas and overseas-markets challenged the United States’ industrial sector. The once-competitive railway-transport system that was such an attraction for businesses in Milo-Grogan gave way to freeway transport, which was more available and cost efficient on the outskirts of the metropolitan area. An excerpt from Tom Dunham’s *Columbus’ Industrial Communities: Olentangy, Milo-Grogan, Steelton* concisely identifies the exit of some of the major firms (Dunham 71):

*Kilbourne and Jacobs, which had been located just to the south of Jeffrey, had disappeared as an entity when Jeffrey purchased it in the early 1950s, thereby folding with Jeffrey. While Jeffrey was declining, the Columbus Die, Tool, and Machine Company, located along Cleveland Avenue, south of Timken, ceased operations in 1966. To the north of Fifth Avenue, the Ohio Malleable Iron Company that had been purchased by Jeffrey in 1902, but retained its identity, was purchased by the Dayton Malleable Iron Company in 1980. The Columbus plant was then closed, eliminating about 540 jobs. Kinnear Doors, which like Ohio Malleable, was one of Milo-Grogan’s original factories at the community’s annexation, was purchased in 1972 by Harsco Corporation, and in 1990 Harsco sold the door company to Wayne Dalton. Dalton moved production out of Columbus to more modern facilities, thereby removing about 175 jobs from Columbus. The Columbus Die and Tool Company, which had operated on Fifth Avenue across from Timken, closed in 1982. Columbus Coated Fabrics, a century old in 2000, survived one more year. In the mid-1950s, the company had been purring along with a workforce over 1100; then it began a slow descent and at closing employed about 450.*
Perhaps the greatest void in the industrial sector, and of the greater neighborhood of Milo-Grogan, was the exit of the Timken Roller Bearing Company (Dunham 72):

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the future for Timken Roller Bearing Company in Milo-Grogan would appear to have been secure, for in the early 1970s, Timken invested about $7.5 million for the improvement of its Columbus facilities. Ironically, shortly after this investment, Timken’s business began to decline, as American automobile companies were losing market share to foreign competitors, and by 1981 Timken’s Columbus employment had fallen to about 1,850. (Recall that in the 1950s, Timken employed over 4,000.) From declining sales in the 1970s and 1980s, Timken never recovered. In December 1986, the company announced that over the next three years 450 production workers would be phased out, as Timken planned for the closing of the 1920 plant that had manufactured millions of vehicle ball bearings. After the factory closed in 1989, it sat empty until September 1996 when it was razed. Timken, however, still operated the 1942 railroad bearing plant at the Cleveland Avenue site. Producing about fifty percent of the world’s railroad bearings, the plant in 1996 employed about 300 workers, and survived until 2001 when the company permanently closed it, eliminating then about 200 jobs. Timken followed to demolish this plant, leaving, leaving its Cleveland and Fifth location completely vacant.

Although a handful of successful light-industrial and industrially related firms still do exist in Milo-Grogan, the exit of these significant heavy-industrial firms signified the shift of Milo-Grogan from a industrial community—comprised of once two separate villages—to an urban neighborhood with many of the problems of urban neighborhoods after World War II and white flight. Herein lies the issue: Milo-Grogan did not transition into a diverse and functional urban community. What must be done to evolve Milo-Grogan will have to consider this lost time and lack of
cognizant adaptation. From here we will explore the tools available to modernize Milo-Grogan and give it a competitive edge.

Figure 7 The Timken Site today, the Southeast corner of 5th Avenue and Cleveland Avenue
The Milo-Grogan Neighborhood Plan

Columbus City Council adopted the Milo-Grogan Neighborhood Plan on April 9th, 2007, facilitated by the City of Columbus Planning Division in the Department of Development and other stakeholders. The plan was initiated in response to the glaring need for economic development and revitalization in the centrally and strategically located Milo-Grogan neighborhood. The Milo-Grogan Neighborhood Plan serves six purposes:

- Revitalize Milo-Grogan by assisting current and future residents and other interests to create a diverse, mixed-income neighborhood of residential, commercial, industrial, and other appropriate land uses.
- Serve as an official, publicly adopted guide for public and private investment in the neighborhood over the next ten years.
- Demonstrate to sources of potential funding for community development and other needs that an exhaustive community-based planning process has been completed, that a wide array of options have been fully discussed, and that a high level of consensus has been achieved in major policy areas.
- Provide realistic and fiscally responsible direction for future change in the Milo-Grogan community.
- Identify opportunity sites for development and redevelopment that represent the best opportunities for positively impacting the future of Milo-Grogan.
- Further the pursuit of job creation, increase of property values, and elevate the quality of life for the residents of Milo-Grogan.

Figure 8 Source: Milo-Grogan Neighborhood Plan, 2007

Within, the plan outlines improvement goals and future benchmarks for six facets of development: urban design, land use, transportation, community facilities, housing, and economic development. Overall, the plan establishes the visions and the goals for the urban environment of the future, but is reliant on private investment to drive the recommendations of the plan. Traditionally, plans of this sort will re-adjust every five or ten years—monitoring change and facilitating for future change. Therefore, it is important to track the progress of Milo-Grogan under
the guise of their neighborhood plan. I ask: where has this plan taken Milo-Grogan in the last five years? In order to find these answers and to determine if any benchmarks have been met, I interviewed Kevin Wheeler, the Assistant Administrator for the City of Columbus Planning Division. We explored each section of the plan, and concluded that most of the recommendations of the plan have not been implemented. I will touch on the glaring points within the plan, their progress or lack thereof, and conclude6.

Firstly, public facilities stand out as a major concern to the residents of Milo-Grogan, and to this date, much has changed. The Milo-Grogan Recreation Center was shut down by the City of Columbus because it was underutilized and difficult to fund. There was a movement by the residents to bring back the center, and now the city is beginning to renovate and expand the center. The introduction of a new park, called New Beginnings Park, fulfilled one of the recommendations of the plan—besides the park at the Recreation Center; this is the only one in the neighborhood. Pressure is mounting on the City of Columbus to continue to place parks of varying types in the area, but there has been no movement so far.

Concerns with the public school conditions in Milo-Grogan continue to stress the neighborhood. Since Milo-Grogan is split down the middle by I-71, pupils West of I-71 go to Whetstone (far north from Milo-Grogan), and pupils East of I-71 go to Linden-McKinley (far north of Milo-Grogan). Milo-Grogan still does not have a fire

6 Please reference Appendix A for further information.
station in its bounds, and remains split by two separate police precincts that are not located in the area. An increase in population, development activity, community interest, or tax base will likely influence these social changes.

The first major goal for the burgeoning development of Milo-Grogan is to install gateways or signs notifying people of their arrival to Milo-Grogan. Conceptually, gateways or signage are intended to give neighborhoods like Milo-Grogan a sense of place to residents and non-residents alike, which is beneficial for the cohesiveness and identity for the neighborhood. Wrought iron gateways over streets or signs welcoming people to a neighborhood are common around Columbus, and even more common in neighborhoods in and surrounding the downtown area. Furthermore, with the 2012 Columbus Bicentennial celebration, the City of Columbus envisioned the installation of these types of landmarks would be important to celebrate the history and existence of all historic neighborhoods. Alas, this recommendation remains unaddressed.

In another way to approach identity preservation, the plan outlines the need to rehabilitate the landmarks that represent the community. The historic Railway and Light office remains in place, untouched. The City of Columbus at one point has encouraged assistance from the Historical Preservation Office to place the former
Milo-Grogan Elementary School and the Railway Power and Light office in the Register of Historic Places, but this has not been done. Thus, Milo-Grogan is neglected as a neighborhood of historical importance and the symbols of the neighborhood of the past have been ignored.

Strong neighborhoods must be able to attract people into the neighborhood, and this begins with aesthetically pleasing and functional street design. Many of the road corridors in Milo-Grogan require repair or construction, there is a need for better reutilization of pedestrian use, and roads and sidewalks must be designed properly to enhance neighborhood community and character. These important recommendations have also gone untouched. Some movement and interest needs to occur to seek Capital Improvement Funds and Urban Infrastructure Recovery funds from Columbus to improve the streetscape of Milo-Grogan.

Aesthetics, public safety, and real estate market concerns continue to mount within Milo-Grogan, and this can easily be linked to the boundaries in the neighborhood—defined exclusively by the railroad right-of-ways and their edges. The people of Milo-Grogan live among these boundaries, which are “dead spaces” without development. Furthermore, rail traffic is virtually nonexistent, so the preservation of these massive right-of-ways are an eyesore, a grey-space, and a deterrent for the real estate market. Presently, there aren’t any initiatives to acquire railroad or railroad right-of-way property. Additionally, these properties are zoned Manufacturing, so firms would have to submit a variance to change this—an

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7 These goals should be achieved via the introduction street trees, furniture, and other Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) principles.
unattractive venture in an already struggling real estate market. Luckily, the property adjacent to the railroad on Camden Avenue is owned by CRA-Co investments, but the development does appear to be a private affair. From aerials, we can see that there is some moving of dirt, but upon investigation, Wheeler and I could not determine the future use.

Within, the residential zones follow a consistent and appealing grid system, which is in line with TND principles—ripe for future development, although investment is not occurring presently. The plan’s section on residential design refers to the overall goal of having new construction, but the disinterest in imitating or forcing a false sense of broad new development. Primarily, the residential design guidelines aim to guide new construction to resemble the historical existing character of the homes in the area. These are required guidelines for future development, although; nothing seems to have been built since the plan’s implementation. Luckily, this is a sound policy that aligns with the TND principles the City of Columbus is trying to institute in Milo-Grogan—a policy that will remain in place for the future.
Concerning the TND principles the City of Columbus is demanding for future new development, the City of Columbus has extended their Urban Commercial Overlay (UCO) to encompass the commercialized strip along 5th avenue and on Cleveland Avenue along the historic commercial and industrial district. The UCO is a tool that attracts traditional development and encourages commercial development in areas that seek growth. “The provisions of the UCO are intended to encourage pedestrian-oriented development featuring retail display windows, reduced building setbacks, rear parking lots, and other pedestrian-oriented site design elements” (City of Columbus, Ohio Legislation Text). Since the UCO was implemented in Milo-Grogan, the city is unaware of any new development, period, under this guideline.

Wheeler has also indicated that new development would come on a lot-by-lot

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8 This lack of new development in Milo-Grogan is a persistent issue we will explore further.
basis, but there hasn’t been any significant movement in the housing development side. The last to build in the area is Habitat for Humanity, but they have since moved on to build in other neighborhoods. This is troublesome, because without the non-profit interest in development, there is no noteworthy interest, since private investment is discouraged by the current market conditions in Milo-Grogan.

Commercial development, arguably the most important consideration, also lacks significant presence in the area. There is nowhere in Milo-Grogan where one can live and walk to shop for daily goods or services. There are fast food establishments, gas stations that sell things, and other stores, but there aren’t any convenience or service-based businesses that provide for the day-to-day needs of Milo-Grogan residents. The City of Columbus is very interested in proposals, but they haven’t received any of note. Milo-Grogan is troubled with the lack of opportunities to acquire daily goods where they reside—an amenity often necessary for residential retention.

According to Kevin Wheeler, “the goal with Milo is to see some form of sustainable retail emerging at the community level”. The city has to be realistic about what kinds of businesses would be attracted to the area, which means they can’t demand a specific type of proposal and reject those that don’t meet hyper-specific criteria. Any development and investment is welcomed for consideration due to the need for stimulus and investment in Milo-Grogan. Once the floodgates open when the market improves, the City of Columbus must act upon the private

\footnote{A later section, \textit{The Columbus Land Bank Program}, will address this concern further.}
sector’s interest in proposal for all the other opportunity sites\textsuperscript{10}, unless investment in Milo-Grogan swells and has come to a level that the City of Columbus can afford to be particular.

With interest in the development of these types of uses and other related uses tied to economic development principles, the plan focuses on investment in specifically identified opportunity sites. The South side of 11\textsuperscript{th} Avenue (adjacent to the fairgrounds), the Timken Site (West of Cleveland Avenue and South of 5\textsuperscript{th} Avenue, the East side of Cleveland Avenue across from Timken (the historical commercial district that today maintains only a few businesses), the North side of 5\textsuperscript{th} Avenue, and the North side of Camden (the railway right-of-way currently under construction) have been identified as the best places to influence economic development. Unfortunately, the lack of market is holding back development in these areas. There is capacity for new development, however; it is difficult to attract and is challenging to coerce a firm to address a neighborhood they don’t already have any stake in. Thus again, the City of Columbus is forced to wait for an active proposal. At this point, attracting development and investment relies on the availability of incentives, the City of Columbus’ collaboration or partnership with the private sector to seek funding of various sorts to aid a redevelopment project, and/or the collaboration with related non-profit organizations (who aren’t very active in the community). At this point, it is not so much an issue of “focus areas” as it is attracting general development and investment interest.

\textsuperscript{10} Areas considered a priority by the community and judged to be ripe for redevelopment by staff (Milo-Grogan Neighborhood Plan 33)
As addressed before, funding and market forces cramp the ability for firms to develop in Milo-Grogan—financing, environmental remediation, and permits are among the many expenses private entities must incur in this district. Wheeler identified potential incentives for developers to apply for:
Evidently, there are resources available to assist investment in the many facets that deter investment in Milo-Grogan. Perhaps these incentives aren’t enough to overcome the strain for sustainable financing in the area, or; there is simply no interest. Worse even, the City of Columbus may not be pushing these incentives enough and are not portraying the Milo-Grogan area as a place to invest. The City of

Clean Ohio Fund: Up to $3 million in State of Ohio grant funding, per site, may be made available for site acquisition, clean up, infrastructure, or engineering costs.

Business Loans:

**Business Development Loan Fund** – Loan of up to $200,000 for acquisition of machinery and equipment or real estate

**Working Capital Loan Fund** – Loan of up to $100,000 per year for five years to be used for operating costs

**NCR* Investment Fund** – Loan of up to $200,000 for fixed asset financing within the NCR Districts

**NCR Commercial Investment Fund** – Loan of up to $25,000 for exterior renovation of real property within the NCR Districts

**NCR Façade Renovation Fund** – 0% interest loan of up to $7,500 for exterior renovation of real property within the NCR Districts.

**Green Switch Loan Fund** – Loan of up to $200,000 for gap financing of energy efficient construction/renovation projects. Loan funds can also be used for the purchase and installation of energy efficient equipment.

*Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization

**Figure 12 Source: Columbus Department of Economic Development**
Columbus must be very considerate towards different proposals that drive pedestrian and transportation patterns, while also relying on market forces.

At this point, we can concur that the issue lay mainly with attracting that first developer, who must invest a significant amount into Milo-Grogan as to effect the economic development of the neighborhood in a significant way. Once this is achieved, as Wheeler indicates, development in the area will experience a domino effect from investment. This suggests that once there is a significant investment and development project, investment will increase in Milo-Grogan and the area will begin to see development unfold11.

A burgeoning project on the 31-acre Timken Site stands out as potentially the first project that may occur. Timken, the largest opportunity site in Milo-Grogan, “may become primarily light industrial and office/warehouse along with some retail projects or get developed with a heavier emphasis on retail” (Ball), while the Milo-Grogan Neighborhood Plan suggests mixed-uses as a solution for the lack of many commercial and residential options in the area (Milo-Grogan Neighborhood Plan 35-6).

According to Wheeler, the Timken site needs to be designed, after significant remediation, to maintain proper street frontage, mix of uses, and an appropriate set 11 Spill-over development in Milo-Grogan faces another misfortune: neighborhood fragmentation. Since the freeway divides the neighborhood, many development efforts may not carry over from one segment to another. Thus, it is important to maintain stability in the housing market of Milo-Grogan—the strongest glue in economic development. The market must improve, and continue to hold its own. The Columbus Land Bank Program would be an effective tool to solve many of the housing market problems.
of circumstances given the economic and urban environment. These are requirements under the UCO placed on the site.

Redevelopment Concept B

1. Redevelop the Timken site for a combination of the following uses: commercial/retail, office/warehouse flex space, multifamily residential and green space.
2. Commercial uses include a two-story “big box” retailer (200,000 sq ft) utilizing structured parking with retail uses on the ground floor.
3. Other smaller commercial uses would front Cleveland and Fifth Avenues.
4. Preserve all the existing residential areas east of Cleveland Avenue.
5. All development along Cleveland and Fifth Avenues should be consistent with UCO guidelines.

Figure 13 Example Redevelopment Concept, from the Milo-Grogan Neighborhood Plan

This site—purchased by successful remediation developer Wagenbrenner Development Inc. in March 2009, has secured a $3 million grant from the Clean Ohio Fund to conduct environmental remediation on the site. They have had success with the redevelopment of the adjacent Weinland Park neighborhood, so there is faith that the site will develop in a sustainable fashion and that they will be able to attract development. Perhaps this site will be the domino that falls, but remediation and development has yet to begin.

Wheeler and I continued to speak about what lacks in this community.
Obviously, there is significant need for these recommendations to come to fruition. Understandably, the market does have to improve for this to occur. Our discussion turned in a different direction when we agreed that there needs to be a local voice in the community—a person, organization, or movement that can drive change and speak up for Milo-Grogan. Wheeler pointed out that traditionally in Columbus, churches drive a lot of social and civic development, community involvement, and thus, change. They have a lot of interest.

Luckily for Milo-Grogan, there are many churches in the area that can contribute a great amount of social capital towards the cause. We also noted the varying community services organizations, such as the Boy’s and Girls Club, the Faith Mission Shelter, the Martin Janis Senior Center, Youthbuild Columbus Community School\textsuperscript{12}, and the Gertrude Tyree Learning Center\textsuperscript{13}. Although the real estate and investment markets are struggling, I find that the City of Columbus must pay more attention to the area in order to push these recommendations—all of which would be very beneficial towards the increase in quality of life and opportunity in Milo-Grogan. Further, the above organizations have a capacity to find or develop neighborhood leadership—a neighborhood voice will aid in attracting investment and attention to Milo-Grogan. With these two forces—the City of Columbus and the interest in organizations—these recommendations may become a reality.

\textsuperscript{12} Charter School for the young adult/dropout population
\textsuperscript{13} An early childhood Head Start program
Another available tool for neighborhood redevelopment is the Columbus Land Bank Program. Formed in 1994 under the Land Reutilization Program (ORC 5722), the program seizes vacant, abandoned, and underutilized properties for resale to homeowners, non-profit developers, or for-profit developers. This process aims to revitalize neighborhoods for future development, and alleviate neighborhoods of the strain of vacant homes and properties.

Assets are obtained either through donation from a property owner, through purchase by the city of Columbus, environmental foreclosure, or most commonly, through the process of tax foreclosure. Tax foreclosure occurs when three factors are met over the course of a few years: the taxes owed on a property become delinquent, the property is vacant, and it has not been maintained. The property is then seized and goes to the Sheriff’s sale—the property’s minimum bid becomes the value of the property’s delinquent taxes. If the minimum bid for the property is not matched, the property will return to the city as an asset of the Land Redevelopment Division, and managed by their Land Bank Program. This process of seizure, Sheriff’s sale, and Land Bank acquisition usually takes one to two years per property.

Once in the hands of the land bank, the goal is to return the property to a condition appropriate for resale. This usually requires razing any existing structure,

14 These are often of the most distressed properties in the city.
and sometimes requires environmental remediation. After this gradual process is complete, the Land Redevelopment Office will list the property online for sale.

Unfortunately, sale of these properties is a challenge in two circumstances:

Firstly, assume a non-profit organization or private developer is capable of financing and acquiring the property, able to renovate or develop the property, list it for sale, and expect to turn a profit (or in the case of a non-profit, meet their maximum financing goal) on the property after these incurred expenses. Is there a market for these renovated or rebuilt homes in areas that are low income, with homes in poor conditions, and at an infrastructural disadvantage due to their low tax base and lack of attention from City Hall? Furthermore, a renovated or newly developed property, because of these reasons, will often amount to be worth in $50,000-$70,000 range. Will the costs to make this project happen be worth it? Often times, this is the case.

Secondly, why would a bank be interested in financing a home that takes a considerable amount of effort in underwriting and credit and collateral risk? If a bank is not willing to fund a relatively expensive residential development project for little return, how can the neighborhood expect to have their properties redeveloped by private forces and improve?

Due to these looming problems, a neighborhood must institute a Community Development Corporation, or CDC, to purchase these lots and redevelop them. These non-profit organizations represent the interests of a neighborhood and its
development. CDC’s are more willing to spend on the retrofitting and legal regulation costs that will lead to the successful sale of the property—which is often a significant burden and a discouraging factor for many private developers. Often funded through grants and local monies, CDC’s can replace the role of a developer, as there is less of a financial burden on individuals to proceed with redevelopment efforts. One of the major funding options for CDC’s is Mayor Coleman’s Home Again Program, formed in 2006. The program set aside “$25 million to acquire, rehab and tear down vacant and abandoned houses in Columbus neighborhoods” (Coleman).

Another method of funding is provided through the Federal government. One technique, gap financing, provides the CDC with the difference of the money it takes to construct and how much it will sell for.

Moreover, a CDC is often more willing to invest in redeveloping multiple properties at once. The suggestion that it is very difficult to try to sell one redeveloped parcel in an environment that does not reflect that progress is correct. Instead, it is wise to generate multiple properties in general vicinity (however, not in the form of a cataclysmic neighborhood development overhaul) so that future gradual growth, change, and redevelopment are encouraged.

Redevelopment success in the Franklinton and Children’s Hospital areas owe much to their local CDC’s, which have acquired numerous properties through the Land Bank. These examples of gradual success suggest that other neighborhoods in the Greater Columbus area could benefit from a strong CDC.

Current development in Milo-Grogan owes much to Habitat For Humanity, a
non-profit organization that has capitalized off of land bank properties. Their operations in Milo-Grogan ceased five or six years ago, so that they could focus on other areas in the city. With their withdrawal, there has been no definitive non-profit organization that can drive development in Milo-Grogan. Essentially, new development has ceased. Furthermore, Milo-Grogan does not have a strong CDC. There is evidence that there is one, but it is not functioning at the level of these other CDC's. A strong CDC would be beneficial in the area, as the City of Columbus owns a few vacant lots and a couple of structures. It is in the best interest of Milo-Grogan to organize a strong CDC with individuals within and from outside of the community. There are properties available to develop, there is a need, and perhaps if there was a CDC that could deliver results, more results would follow. CDC's rely on neighborhood commitment and an intimate relationship with the residents of the respective neighborhood. Milo-Grogan has the tools in place to improve its sense of place and community, however; the community must initiate this resource and come together to drive change.
Perception of Milo-Grogan from Resident’s Perspective, a Conclusion to the Study on Milo-Grogan

I had the privilege to interview Goldean Gibbs, a resident of Milo-Grogan. Ms. Gibbs moved to Milo-Grogan when she was two years old. She grew up there, attended Milo Elementary, and eventually went to college after her high school graduation. She married and moved away, until then her father died and her mother became ill. She made her return to Milo-Grogan approximately fifteen years ago to live with her mother and care for her.

Ms. Gibbs’ circumstances are unique and served beneficial to this study—she lived in the area when the industrial sector was strong, witnessed the introduction of I-71, and left the area before the socio-economics of Milo-Grogan slid further in the wrong direction. She later returned to a jostled community with a changed face, with a lessened industrial presence and lessened opportunity overall. The questions I asked her revealed much about her community. Upon finishing our interviews, she reached conclusions about Milo-Grogan she had not considered previously. With an open mind, she approached difficult conclusions that brought a sense of hope and resolution to the problems Milo-Grogan faces—revealing a way for other community members to view Milo-Grogan and approach their mounting issues.

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15 See Appendix B for the annotated questions and answers of the interviews with Goldean Gibbs.
Ms. Gibbs is a proud member of Triedstone Baptist Church, on the southeast side of Milo-Grogan. For her, the church is the cultural and community institution that gives her a reason to remain in the neighborhood. Moreover, she is a proud resident of the Milo-Grogan neighborhood. In our interviews, it became evident early on that she was not dissatisfied with Milo-Grogan from her own experience with her environment. She has a career, she is college educated, and she is the member of a tight-knit church community. Ms. Gibbs identified herself as a neighbor in the community, but consistently viewed the community from her nostalgic lens: Milo-Grogan raised her as a child during the period the neighborhood was more intact—there were more businesses, the community wasn’t split in half by I-71, and the Milo Elementary School was in operation.

I challenged Ms. Gibbs to consider what it is now—to remove herself from her identification with Milo-Grogan as a child of the sidewalk and of the street, while still considering what was once the lifestyle and neighborhood structure of years past. Eventually, we broke through. Certainly, we identified and agreed on the recommendations of the plan and on what the plan suggested Milo-Grogan lacks—that part is established, understood, and recognized. However, through the way our conversation unfolded and by posing emotionally and thoughtfully challenging questions, we revealed something significant about people in general in Milo-Grogan—many people innocently neglect to critically analyze their built environment. It is with critical analysis that

Would you say that if people that lived there to be part of the community and say “I’m in it for the long haul”, would people stay and would things improve? I don’t know if there’s enough [investment or civic interest] being poured into the community that would create a change.
neighborhood figures and leaders are able to investigate issues in their communities, and seek the tools available for improvement (i.e., The Milo Grogan Neighborhood Plan), incite collective neighborhood interest, and demand change and progress with a new, progressive identity.

This exercise does not aim to dispel the good will of many community members. In fact, it revolves around a central perspective: a community will approach success and change if the community members recognize that they, as community members, are the pivotal players—so long as they submit their interest and effort toward a greater goal.

Evidently, change must start with the community—but to force a community to do anything is not only challenging, but also unrealistic and callous. A patriarchal voice is not the role of governments, developers, or even community organizers. We recognize the tools for change are there, but community effort and critical analysis from residents—those who live within this environment—will pave the best avenue towards future, perpetual change.

The main question lies in how the community can capitalize off of their community members to engrain a central voice and collective movement to drive this change. We can agree that this is necessary—it is the most organic and accessible solution to many problems, particularly those that can be driven by activism, social order, and an earnest yearning for change. Ms. Gibbs concluded that “[Milo-Grogan] is a community that at one point was a thriving community, was active, more residents were in the community, but that has fallen away. People are
moving out of the community because there isn't anything in the community to keep
them there”. The social tools available to assist in reversing this phenomenon lack:
there are little pieces of social infrastructure that involve residents in the
community, but there is no blanket-effect—the different organizations have the
propensity to effect different people and groups of people in different ways, but they
do not provide the community with overarching support and a voice.

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Robert J. Sampson, Henry Ford II Professor of Social Sciences at Harvard
University, recently published an important book on urban policy called Great
American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect. His overall view that
the poor and those of poorer neighborhoods have a propensity for altruism that can
drive community change is a concept that holds great meaning and relevance for
Milo-Grogan. Further, he touches on the challenges community institutions (namely,
churches) face in trying to drive neighborhood change and activism.

In an interview with Richard Florida, an urban studies theorist and the
Senior Editor at The Atlantic, Sampson reveals that the efforts one organization
alone will struggle to gain “enhanced collective efficacy, collective civic engagement,
and cohesion among community leaders” (Sampson, The Atlantic). What is
challenging for many communities is that they rely staunchly on one type of
organization—this often occurs in areas that rely heavily on a church or a non-profit
alone. He argues that there needs to be an infrastructure of voluntary organizations
and non-profit organizations to reach community goals. Sampson concludes, “Communities with a diversity and density of many types of organizations seem to do better, creating collective spillover or ‘knock on’ effects” (Sampson, The Atlantic).

The Milo-Grogan Neighborhood Plan outlines significant goals that will aim to improve the Milo-Grogan neighborhood in many ways; however, there has been very little movement in the implementation of these goals. The City of Columbus is lacking in their commitment to the improvement of Milo-Grogan, but at the same time, there is very little voice and demand from the community members for these recommendations to come to fruition. Nothing will happen until community leaders or organizations push for change.

In order to realize the recommendations of the plan, the various organizations of Milo-Grogan need to form a network and a framework to raise community awareness of the plan, pull together shared resources to improve community services and morale, and generate a collective voice. Ideally, this would result in heightened interest from non-profit organizations, and eventually, the City of Columbus. This unique neighborhood of unique circumstances has the propensity to accomplish goals they may not even recognize from the surface, yet through the commitment and the critical analysis of the residents, the Milo-Grogan

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16 For example, the United Way has become increasingly more involved in the Weinland Park neighborhood, which has experienced heightened neighborhood involvement and structure, and has recently undergone various neighborhood improvements.
Neighborhood Plan will become relevant and an evolution will occur for Milo-Grogan.
Appendix A.

Annotated Interview Questions for Kevin Wheeler, Associate Director for the Planning Division of the City of Columbus, Ohio

Do Milo-Grogan residents and planners value sidewalk width more or street width more? Sidewalk condition and connectivity tends to be a greater concern.

What is the view of more open spaces? There is a desire to see more open space in the plan, and there has been a park introduced.

How would you characterize Milo-Grogan, since it’s sectioned off? Milo is a collection of pockets of neighborhoods and commercial and industrial districts. It was once one large neighborhood, but the busyness of 5th Avenue and the boundary that I-71 forms has created this division.

What are the challenges Milo-Grogan faces? The desire to attract investment and development of all types.

What are Milo-Grogan’s greatest strengths? Location in the city, and its transportation connectivity to the rest of the region. It is very well situated.

Does Milo-Grogan have any high density living or public housing? There is public housing north east of St. Clair Avenue in the Northeast corner of Milo-Grogan. It’s not as high density as one would think with public housing, but it’s present. They are apartments, actively used, well designed and maintained. There aren’t dead zones in the development.

Has Milo-Grogan reciprocated from other development projects in the surrounding areas? There is no direct impact other than the demonstration of the fact that similar investment and development can occur in similar neighborhoods. If the Weinland Park development (a district of similar circumstances) is very successful and can transform its neighborhood, there will likely be a spillover effect on Milo-Grogan. Also, new proposals on the Jeffrey site, just southwest of Milo-Grogan, for development may also spillover into Milo-Grogan. Planning anticipates these two development efforts to directly impact demand for investment in Milo-Grogan.

Why did Weinland get attention for investment when Milo did not? Because of the location of Weinland Park. It’s adjacent to Ohio State University and there’s a school, which makes Weinland a laboratory of learning. It’s also closer to all these other gentrified neighborhoods, the United Way is involved, and just a bunch of interest.

Are there plans on densifying Milo-Grogan? There is no deliberate plan, but densification may result from future development—the city would be most interested in seeing higher density in the commercial corridors, but it needs to be done in the right way. Density needs to be sensitive to the patterns that surround.
**Is Milo-Grogan a gray belt?** There is a fair amount of business activity in Milo-Grogan, so it isn’t exactly stagnant. But of course, more investment is always welcome. In fact, there’s a surprising amount of industrial activity in the northwest corner, but are more often smaller firms and light industrial.

**Can you give an example of where policy challenges development in Milo-Grogan?** Most of Cleveland avenue on the east side is zoned C-4, which is a commercial district that does not allow residential on the first floor, instead, only the 2nd and subsequent floors. If someone wanted to build a taller, high-density apartment or condominium building, they would have to seek a variance for rezoning.

**Any plans to manage the barriers caused by the sound barriers and the train tracks?** No.

**What major players are involved in Milo-Grogan?** The Area Commission, Boys and Girls Club, and there are some entities that are easily lost track of. Not very accessible.
Appendix B.

Annotated Interview with Goldean Gibbs, resident of Milo-Grogan, Columbus, Ohio.

*Questions influenced by The Death and Life of Great American Cities by Jane Jacobs*

How would you gauge sidewalk safety? Is there a process of monitorization from neighbors, shopkeepers, et cetera? Is the sidewalk a place to play and live or a place to loathe? Currently, they are fairly safe to play in the back streets, but there aren’t any street figures that are relied upon to monitor the street activity. This did exist in the past. Sidewalks on busier streets are used to go to the shop or go to work, but it isn’t typical, or very safe, for children to play on these sidewalks or to build neighbor relationships.

*What role do sidewalks play in commerce?* The sidewalks don’t play a role in commerce. They could, but at this point they do not. The opportunity was greater in the past.

*Is there sidewalk trust? Does the community engage on the sidewalk, build relationships, and general acquaintanceships?* There isn’t. There used to be in the past, but the neighborhood lacks this connection.

*Is Milo-Grogan a community or just a place in the city?* It’s definitely a community.

*Do the physical boundaries that fragment Milo Grogan affect neighborhood connectivity?* Most of the coming together happens within the residential quadrants, but there is minimal neighbor connection throughout the Milo-Grogan area.

*Does Milo-Grogan foster interaction in public spaces, stores, and coincidental situations?* The attempt is always to foster this concept, but there aren’t a lot of businesses that can provide this that are left in the area.

*What kind of public spaces do people interact?* The Rec Center (Milo-Grogan Recreation Center), the Milo-Grogan Boys and Girls club, and a cleaners.

*Does Milo-Grogan have a public character that neighbors know can trust?* Not anymore. Perhaps at a smaller level in the Boys and Girls club, but from a general neighborhood perception, this individual would not cross their minds as a public character.

*Is there any street gang activity and where does it occur?* I’m sure that there is some in the area, but I haven’t really seen it. If I were to guess, it would be near the Rec Center just because of the age group that participates in the Rec Center.
Do you feel residents would value sidewalk-width more, or street-width? Sidewalk width, because of the fact that it is more neighborhood-centric. There is a desire to have this neighborhood focus, and this focus definitely needs improvement.

Is there a need for more open space? No, there is enough as it is... if anything, Milo-Grogan should be getting denser.

Has there been any community garden development? No.

Are parks under represented in Milo-Grogan? Not as much now as New Beginnings Park has been introduced.

Despite the physical divisions in Milo-Grogan, is there any connectivity? It’s a neighborhood that’s connected and easily navigated.

Do the sound barriers of the freeway put a damper on what could be? No, because they have been there so long that it’s a condition of the neighborhood that people are used to. But certainly, they have changed what was once a good thing.

Is Milo a district, a neighborhood, a designation by the city of Columbus, a combination, or what? It’s a designation, and it’s a neighborhood. This designation by the city includes multiple nodal neighborhoods in the greater neighborhood of Milo-Grogan.

Is there a local monument or landmark? The Boy’s and Girl’s Club.

What about Milo Art’s (the former elementary school)? For me, it’s kind of depressing because I went to elementary school there and I don’t foresee the utilization of the building. Nothing is really happening there. It has been used then not been used and it seems to be in purgatory.

With this site, is it an eyesore? It is an eyesore. If it’s just there and it doesn’t seem to be able to serve a purpose in the future, it could become a detriment to the community as a vacant, open space.

Is there a local movement or task force, where people are coming together to want to maintain the neighborhood or improve it? Not that I’m aware of.

Do you believe Milo-Grogan belongs to the city as a whole? Yes, because it’s a community area and its not just there for the residents of the area. It’s available to anyone that wants to use it.

What factors do you believe would argue against that? That it is a community and that it may appear, act, or function too inclusively.

Do you believe there’s a network of “street neighborhoods”? I personally believe there is such thing in other neighborhoods, but not in Milo-Grogan. These streets don’t carry their own identity. Milo-Grogan character is a character of the neighborhood, not the streets.
Do you believe that there is connectivity between these streets that form the neighborhood? Absolutely.

What are the factors that create this “neighborhood”? It’s a little different now, there’s not as much connectivity; factors such as the Boy’s club aren’t as cohesive as a neighborhood tool.

Are these streets a productive space? Not now.

There are two types of neighborhoods: those where the residents remain (I’m in it for the long haul) and those where people live because they can afford it, and when they move up, they move out and leave this void and the area remains stagnant. Is this something occurring in Milo-Grogan? That is accurate, that people have moved out, and because of that there’s not a lot of productivity or things happening. One of the most productive things for me in the area is the Church (Triedstone Baptist Church), and the Church has maintained being a community figure. They’ve done a lot of things in the community just to enhance the community, not necessarily pull people back into the community to stay, but to at least be involved.

Does the church give a reason for people to stay? Personally, I think so, but it depends on what you’re looking for. This particular church realizes that there has to be more things offered for people to stay. More than just a religious aspect, there’s the community center that offers some activities, but it is in some competition with the Boy’s and Girl’s Club and the Rec Center.

Would you say that if people that lived there to be part of the community and say “I’m in it for the long haul”, would people stay and would things improve? I don’t know if there’s enough [investment or civic interest] being poured into the community that would create a change.

How do you think Milo-Grogan performed as a neighborhood once the freeway was introduced? It stopped much of the performance because it cut the neighborhood in half. There was a time one could walk across town to amenities, but now you have to walk around, which has halted some productivity. Before, it was more of a community. Children were able to go together to the Boy’s and Girl’s Club, and go to the elementary school. Today, this is not the case.

What do you believe are the biggest challenges Milo-Grogan faces? People are leaving the neighborhood, and those that are staying stay because it’s a cost factor, but they are not vested in it, so they aren’t apt to seek change in the neighborhood as a whole. They just live there, but they don’t tend to act to belong to the community.
What do you believe are the biggest strengths to Milo-Grogan? Its history, what it used to be and those that are still there that believe in it want to see it go back to. The people that are still working in the particular businesses that are still in the community are vested because they are in the community and want to see what it used to be.

Do you believe Milo-Grogan is too fragmented to operate as a district? It would take a lot to become a district at this point, because its disconnected and disjointed, the residents aren’t vested in it, and there isn’t a strong enough business presence. People will move if they get a better income. People move out because there aren’t a lot of things available to them to help them. Besides the convenience store and the gas station, there isn’t a business presence available to provide the services to retain a neighborhood feeling, and thus, the district suffers.

Is Milo-Grogan, as a group of people and a collective identity, large enough and strong enough to fight city hall? Not now, there just aren’t people who are vested in it and willing to take that on. However, there was a recent movement by the community to bring back the closed Rec Center, and with some protesting and going to City Hall, and they got it back open. It appears they are now renovating it as well.

Does Milo-Grogan have a social structure? Not anymore. The Church and the Boy’s and Girl’s Club would be the best example of this, but it’s not a community wide thing.

Is commerce inconvenient to residents? Shopping, groceries, school supply shopping doesn’t exist in the area, which is why the Church has taken on some of this responsibility, such as a back-to-school drive and a food pantry and a clothes pantry. They help to provide these things because there’s no real place to buy these.

When the community is lacking these things, is there another organization that tends to cover the bases? Historically, the Church has tried to fill the gap, but they can’t do it all. The Church is pretty connected to Milo-Grogan—it is and has the capacity to be effective community-wide.

Would you say that people travel to work in Milo-Grogan that don’t live there? Very few, most of the people that work in milo live in milo. They mostly drive to work.

When, if at all, is Milo alive and buzzing with day-to-day street interaction? Maybe 3-6, coming from work, but it isn’t alive like other communities.

Are there portions of Milo-Grogan that are alive throughout the day with activity? No.

Do you believe that Milo-Grogan has any attractions to those outside the neighborhood? No.
Has Milo-Grogan reciprocated from any surrounding development in other areas? No. Most of the buildings in Milo-Grogan are old, there is very very little new development aside from the Habitat for Humanity homes.

Are there any new ones being phased in? Since Habitat stopped building, no.

Had Milo been blacklisted by Mortgage lenders? I don’t know for sure, but it sure seemed so.

What would you say are Milo’s assets? The Boy’s club, the church, that’s about it.

Me: I would argue street structure, location in the city, and proximity to surrounding services.

Goldean: I would agree with that as well.

Do you know if there are any plans or perceptions on densifying the area? Not that I’m aware of.

Do properties tend to be funded through credit, government grants and assistance, or “underworld” money? Mostly personal money and credit, but rent may be more apt to be funded through underworld money.

Do you see a lot of real estate transactions occurring or mostly rental? Most of the people in my area are owning or trying to own. The real estate market isn’t really that consistent or strong, though.

Are absentee landlords prevalent? Actually, this is occurring next door to me and has been for some time. These vacant homes aren’t always boarded. The one next to me, there wasn’t any illegal activity occurring as far as I know (breaking and entering, transients, etc.).

*From what I gathered from her: We can assume that there are absentee landlords, probably more prevalent than some other areas in the city, and these absentee landlords don’t always board their homes and don’t always monitor their properties. Generally, there’s a 50/50 chance there is illicit or transient activity in these properties.

Have there been any demolitions recently (related to the Columbus Land Bank Program)? No.

What would you say, currently, would be the greatest eroding factor in Milo-Grogan—if at all? Probably the vacant housing and lots, lack of commercial activity, absentee landlords, the eyesore that comes with this, and the further spiral of dilapidation as a result.

What kind of impact does a vacant home leave on your community? It’s just an eyesore.
Is it an emotional thing, too? If you have community pride, it's emotional to see the community is going down. This can be a great blow to the motivation of some people in the area—this air of “giving up” or losing interest. Unfortunately, very few people have this pride.

What is the MAJOR driver of population out of Milo-Grogan? There is no growth in the community, there aren’t businesses that you can readily get to, and there is just a lack of activity in the city.

How would you summarize your views on Milo-Grogan after this conversation? “It’s a community that at one point was a thriving community, was active, more residents were in the community, but that has fallen away. People are moving out of the community because there isn’t anything in the community to keep them there.”

Bibliography


