



Youngstown Safe Routes to Parks Action Plan

**Youngstown Neighborhood
Development Corporation**

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Youngstown, Ohio

Contents

Content Outline for Safe Routes to Parks Action Plans

Introduction	2
What is Safe Routes to Parks?.....	2
Project Goal.....	3
Engage: Who is Involved	5
Assess: The State of Park Access in our Community	9
Plan: Improving Safe Routes to Parks	15
Implement: Creating Safe Routes to Parks	18
Sustain: Keeping the Work Going	20



Introduction

What is Safe Routes to Parks?

Cities across the country are improving safe and secure access to parks using a framework called *Safe Routes to Parks* to overcome challenges that make it hard for people to enjoy the physical, social, and mental health benefits of parks. This is an effort to ensure that people can walk, bike, or roll to a park or green space in a way that is appealing and safe from traffic and personal danger.

People without cars, who rely on walking, bicycling, and public transportation to get around; kids, who are not old enough to drive themselves to parks; and seniors, who may prefer not to drive are of particular importance. Additionally, in some communities, walking or bicycling to a park is unsafe or uncomfortable because of the lack of sidewalks, crosswalks, and speed humps to support walking, bicycling, and rolling and a presence of violence and crime, which means that people then do not or limit their visits to parks. In particular, low-income communities and communities of color that have experienced historic disinvestment and marginalization, which manifests in continued inequities like higher rates of weight-related chronic disease. In an effort to promote equitable access to parks, *Safe Routes to Parks* efforts focus resources on populations and neighborhoods that need it the most.

About the Program

Goals and purpose

From a competitive pool of nationwide applicants, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership has selected Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC) to join **Safe Routes to Parks Activating Communities**, a technical assistance program focused on improving safe and equitable local park access.

With funding from The JPB Foundation, Safe Routes to Parks Activating Communities supports collaboration among local partners to ensure that children and adults can easily and safely walk, bike, or roll to local parks and green spaces. As part of the program, the south side of Youngstown, Ohio is among ten diverse communities across the country that has received training and coaching from the Safe Routes to School National Partnership to develop an action plan for improving active travel to local parks and green spaces and implement early actions from the plan.

For more information, visit:
saferoutespartnership.org

This work is made possible by the Safe Routes to Parks Activating Communities program at the Safe Routes to School National Partnership, through funding from The JPB Foundation.

The goal of *Safe Routes to Parks* is to increase park usage and improve health for people of all ages, races, abilities, and income levels. However, more funding and partners are needed to expand and sustain *Safe Routes to Parks* efforts and make additional infrastructure changes that support walking and bicycling.

Project Goal

Our goal is to improve health outcomes among Youngstown's residents, particularly its youth, by improving access, safety and amenities at city parks and along primary walking paths to the parks.

About This Action Plan and How It Was Developed

This Safe Routes to Parks Action Plan is intended to guide Youngstown in creating and enhancing safe and equitable access to parks and open spaces that addresses local needs. The Action Plan was developed based on data conversations with key stakeholders, including community residents. Recommendations in the Action Plan are based upon the components needed to ensure that efforts are continued, integrated into agency functions, and are positively affecting the community. YNDC supported the development of this Action Plan for Youngstown through work with community members and other key stakeholders. The most successful *Safe Routes to Parks* initiatives incorporate the Safe Routes to Parks Action Framework: engagement, assessment, planning, implementation, and sustainability.

The Action Plan begins with the Engage section, which includes a description of who is involved in the primary coalition and the community engagement process. The Assess section outlines current conditions related to park access in the community, including existing policies, plans, programs, infrastructure, and identified assets and challenges. The Plan section outlines community identified *Safe*

Routes to Parks priorities and solutions, program operations for advancing the work, and a summary of action steps. The Implement section of the action plan includes a description of early improvement action(s) and high-priority, feasible action steps and outlines how to move the work forward. The Sustain section discusses how to keep this work moving forward following the Safe Routes to Parks Activating Communities program.

The *Safe Routes to Parks Plan* focuses on the six City of Youngstown parks that host a youth summer day camp. These parks have high numbers of youth who walk to and from the park, both during the summer and after school in the afternoons. As such, these are the highest priority for cultivating safe walking environments. Through data analysis of crime, vacant property, and pedestrian-involved crashes, as well as walk audits around each park, Homestead and Glenwood Parks were identified as the highest priorities among the six parks. Homestead Park is located in a neighborhood with high crime rates and a significant number of blighted structures and unmaintained vacant lots and sidewalks. Glenwood Park is located along a busy three-lane road with no marked or signalized crossing at the park and a significant number of pedestrian- and bicycle-involved crashes have occurred in close proximity to the park. Upon successful implementation of *Safe Routes to Parks* recommendations for these parks, it is recommended that walking routes to all parks in Youngstown should be analyzed and a plan developed to address identified issues.

Engage: Who is Involved

Lead Organization, Primary Coalition, Member Roles, and Community Engagement



Ribbon cutting at the Homestead Park splash pad, brought about through the collaboration of multiple partners

The Engagement stage of the Safe Routes to Parks Action Framework entails partnering with community organizations and community residents during all stages of the process. This section of the action plan includes a description of who is involved in the primary coalition and the community engagement process.

Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC) serves as the lead agency for the Youngstown Safe Routes to Parks project. YNDC is a citywide, multifaceted 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization launched to catalyze strategic investment in neighborhoods throughout the City of Youngstown following the completion of the Youngstown 2010 planning process, which included the goal of transforming Youngstown into a smaller, greener, and more vibrant city. The mission of the organization is to improve the quality of life in Youngstown by building and encouraging neighborhoods of choice for all. YNDC aims to accomplish this mission through a dual approach that includes strategic investments to rebuild market confidence in neighborhoods with strong assets, and broader partnership-based strategies to strengthen the community development capacity of Youngstown, and citywide infrastructure supporting neighborhood revitalization. Current programs include housing rehabilitation, neighborhood stabilization, neighborhood planning, park improvements, nutrition incentives, Safe Routes to School, and tree planting.

A broad network of stakeholders is involved in improving the City of Youngstown's parks. These include the City of Youngstown, YNDC, community residents, neighborhood youth, local foundations, and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership. The goal of this collaboration is to ensure the parks are adequately maintained with updated facilities and amenities, as well as to improve the primary walking routes to and around the parks.

The City of Youngstown is responsible for maintenance of park facilities and grounds. YNDC serves as the lead agency, convening partners and raising funds for park improvement projects. Neighborhood residents provide stewardship over parks in their communities by applying for funding through local foundations, such as the Raymond John Wean Foundation, for park improvements. Residents, as well as youth in the neighborhood and park users, provide input on safety concerns and desired improvements. Local Foundations, such as the Community Foundation of the Mahoning Valley and the Youngstown Foundation, provide financial support for park improvements.

Representatives from each stakeholder group participated in walk audits and site visits of the parks covered in this plan—Glenwood, Homestead, Mahoning Valley Sanitary District (MVSD), Crandall, John White, and Lynn. Walk audit participants included youth in two summer camp programs, the City of Youngstown Parks Director, YNDC staff, block watch leaders, and representatives from local foundations and other non-profit organizations. In addition, a staff member from the Safe Routes to School National Partnership provided a walk audit training for participants, as well as recommendations to include in this plan.

In order to learn resident priorities for park safety and improvement, YNDC staff conducted 85 door to door surveys with residents living around the parks. In addition, YNDC staff surveyed more than 150 students at Wilson and Taft Elementary schools to get their input on park improvements, proposed activities, and safety concerns.

The following table lists partners involved in the Safe Routes to Parks planning process and potential future project partners.

Partnering Organizations:

Neighborhood Associations
<p>7th Ward Citizens Coalition: represents, advocates for, and builds the capacity of residents and neighborhood groups in the 7th Ward of Youngstown, where both Homestead and Lynn Park are located</p>
<p>Gibson Heights Block Watch: represents Homestead Park and the surrounding neighborhood; members watch over the park, advocate for park improvements, participate in safety trainings, and provide input on new amenities</p>
<p>Brownlee Woods Neighborhood Association: represents Lynn Park and the surrounding neighborhood; members watch over the park, advocate for park improvements, raise funds for new amenities, and collaborate with City Parks Department and YNDC to manage park improvement projects</p>

ICU Block Watch: represents the Cottage Grove Neighborhood, which lacks park access but has a high concentration of youth; members coordinate youth activities, including summer camps, the Southside Summer Experience, and annual events, such as the neighborhood harvest and Easter egg hunt; members and youth in the summer camp participated in a walk audit of Homestead Park and provided input on improvements to the park itself

Crandall Park South Neighborhood Association: represents Crandall Park and the neighborhood directly south of the park; members watch over the park, advocate and raise funds for park improvements, create and maintain greenspaces near the park, and hold events at the park for youth, including a fall hay ride

Fosterville Block Watch: represents the neighborhood east of Glenwood Park; members participated in the walk audit of Glenwood Park and the surrounding streets and have created greenspaces near the park on vacant lots

Idora Neighborhood Association: represents Glenwood Park and the neighborhood west of the park; members raised funds for and assisted with the construction of the park

Taft Promise Neighborhood: a collaboration of more than 40 organizations to improve the health, education, economy, infrastructure, housing, and safety of the neighborhood surrounding Taft Elementary School, located just south of Homestead Park; members participated in the walk audit of the park and advocate for continued park improvements and the local Safe Routes to School project

Northeast Homeowners: represents residents on the east side of Youngstown, where John White Park is located; members advocate for park improvements, as well as create and maintain greenspaces in the surrounding neighborhoods

Local Foundations

Youngstown Foundation: provides funding for park improvements through its Hine Memorial Fund, which specifically assists with projects to increase universal accessibility for individuals with disabilities; has provided funding for splash pads at Homestead and John White Parks, accessible walkways and paths at Lynn and Jackson Parks, and an ADA-accessible restroom at Homestead Park

Raymond John Wean Foundation: provides funding to grassroots community groups for neighborhood improvements projects through its Neighborhood SUCCESS grant program; groups have received funding for improvements at multiple parks, including Crandall, Lynn, and Glenwood Parks

Community Foundation of the Mahoning Valley: provides funding to organizations working to improve public health through policy, systems, and environmental change; has provided funding

<p>for improvements to park safety, accessibility, and amenities at Homestead, Glenwood, Crandall, and John White Parks; foundation staff participated in a walk audit of Glenwood Park</p>
<p>City of Youngstown</p>
<p>City Council: drafts and passes legislation related to city park policies and funding; provides discretionary funding for park improvements</p> <p>Department of Parks and Recreation: provides maintenance of park properties, hosts a free, annual summer camp for neighborhood youth, and manages park improvement projects</p> <p>Youngstown Police Department: partnered with YNDC and the ICU block watch to host the Southside Summer Experience events to provide activities for youth who lack access to parks and to promote positive interactions between YPD officers and neighborhood youth</p>
<p>Park Users</p>
<p>Community residents: provided input on desired park improvements and feedback on improvements completed to date through door-to-door surveys</p> <p>Camp counselors: assisted in completing walk audits at Homestead Park and in obtaining input from park users</p> <p>Neighborhood youth: participated in walk audits and provided input on overall park safety and desired amenities</p> <p>Taft and Wilson Elementary School students: participated in Walk to School events, pedestrian and bicycle safety training, and provided input on overall park safety and desired amenities through classroom discussions and interactive surveys</p>
<p>National Experts</p>
<p>Safe Routes to School National Partnership: provided funding and resources to complete the Safe Routes to Parks plan, conducted a site visit to Youngstown to provide a project overview to partners and to lead walk audits, and provided technical assistance on early action projects, the Safe Routes to Parks plan, fundraising for improvements, and continued project sustainability</p>
<p>Lead Agency</p>
<p>Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation: received funding to complete the Safe Routes to Parks plan, led the planning process and early action projects, continues to raise funding for future park improvements and advocates for increased safety, maintenance, and additional park amenities, and assists in the coordination of the Southside Summer Experience pop-up playgrounds in neighborhoods that lack park access</p>

Assess: The State of Park Access in our Community

Existing Conditions, Challenges, and Relevant Data



Neighborhood youth, ICU Block Watch members, and YNDC team members conducting a walk audit for Homestead Park and the surrounding area

The assess section of this plan summarizes relevant existing policies, plans, and programs, documents infrastructure conditions, identifies assets and challenges, and provides data and statistics on collisions, crime, and housing vacancy.

Currently no policies exist related to safe access and walking routes to the parks in Youngstown. However, multiple existing policies, plans, and programs exist that are relevant to *Safe Routes to Parks*. These are identified below:

- **Safe Routes to School:** The City of Youngstown has a Safe Routes to School program, with an Ohio Department of Transportation-approved School Travel Plan (STP). The STP was created in 2015 to identify barriers to safe walking to elementary school and proposes solutions to these issues.
- **Summer Day Camp:** The City of Youngstown Parks Department provides a summer day camp program each year at six parks. The camp is fully staffed and provides free breakfast and lunch, arts and crafts, sports, and field trips.
- **Youngstown 2010 Plan:** The city's comprehensive plan identifies neighborhood parks as providing substantial benefit to the community through enhanced quality of life. The plan calls for the creation and maintenance of high quality city parks.

Park Access across Youngstown

Southside Summer Experience Pop-up Playgrounds

The center of the south side of Youngstown—namely parts of the Newport and Cottage Grove neighborhoods—lack access to a nearby park or playground. Youth must walk a half an hour to get to either Glenwood or Homestead Parks. These neighborhoods also have the highest concentration of youth in the City of Youngstown.

The lack of park access and activities for youth was a consistent theme heard by neighborhood canvassers throughout the US Department of Justice *Community Based Crime Reduction* (CBCR) planning process. While the construction of a new park was not determined to be feasible in the short-term, given limited resources, the CBCR project implementation has included a series of weekly “pop-up” playgrounds throughout the summer in the Cottage Grove neighborhood. These events, called the *Southside Summer Experience*, were held in conjunction with the Youngstown Police Department and the ICU Block Watch, providing free food, games, sports, arts and crafts, and other activities for neighborhood youth. Events were held on vacant lots, which were cleaned up in advance of each event.

- **InvestHealth Park Improvement Plan:** With funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, this plan was completed in 2017 and identifies improvements needed at Glenwood, Homestead, Crandall, and John White Parks, four of the most utilized parks in the city.
- **Mahoning County Community Health Improvement Plan:** Completed in 2014, this plan calls for increased utilization of Youngstown’s parks and playgrounds as a way to improve overall health outcomes.
- **Active Transportation for Ohio’s Strategic Highway Safety Plan:** This Ohio Department of Transportation plan calls for a reduction in the number of pedestrian fatalities and pedestrian injuries and an increase in the number of individuals who meet physical activity guidelines by improving the built environment so that it is easier and safer to participate in active transportation, as well as policy changes so that safe active transportation is supported and encouraged.

The six City of Youngstown park summer day camp locations—John White, Crandall, Lynn, Homestead, Glenwood, and Mahoning Valley Sanitary District (MVSD)—are assessed as part of this Safe Routes to Parks Plan. Because of the summer camps, these parks are heavily used and many youth walk to the parks from the surrounding neighborhoods. Of the six parks, two were identified as priorities—Homestead and Glenwood—due to higher rates of pedestrian and bicycle-involved crashes, proximity to a higher number of vacant properties, and high rates of crime in the neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the parks.

In the assessment stage, walk audits of the six parks in this plan were conducted by project stakeholders. Participants identify problem areas on the route to the park, around the perimeter of the

park, as well as within the park. Solutions to these problems are identified in order to increase the safety of park users while walking to and from the park. As more residents feel safe along primary walking routes to the park, the park will benefit from more activity and more natural surveillance.

In-depth walk audits were conducted at Glenwood Park and Homestead Park using the Safe Routes to Parks Walk Audit tool. The results of those walk audits are discussed below. Each walk audit consisted of seven assessment areas: sidewalks; street crossings and intersections; driver behavior; safety; comfort; park appearance; and park features.

The appendix contains detailed maps of sidewalk and crossing conditions at each park, as well as the proximity of vacant properties and reported crimes.

Glenwood Park

The majority of walk audit participants found the **sidewalks** leading to Glenwood Park to be in very poor condition, due to tripping hazards, lack of barriers between street and sidewalk, the close proximity to traffic, narrowness of sidewalks, numerous curb cuts where cars enter and exit businesses, and obstructions, such as poles and poorly-located signs. Participants also rated **street crossings and intersections** very poor, due to the *No Crossing* signs in all directions at the intersection of Glenwood Ave. and Canfield Rd., poorly marked or missing crosswalks, lack of curb ramps, non-functioning pedestrian-activated crossing signals, lack of pedestrian signage, street width, and the accumulation of gravel at crossing locations. Participants rated **driver behavior** as fair, due to some speeding, driver distractions, and failure to yield to pedestrians. Participants rated **overall safety** as fair due to limited street lighting and high traffic on Glenwood Ave. Participants rated **overall comfort** as fair due to the presence of blighted properties nearby. Participants rated **park appearance** as excellent with the exception of excessive litter, walkways that need to be cleaned, and blighted buildings adjacent to the park. Participants rated



The walk audit of Glenwood Park revealed conflicting pedestrian signage, unsafe pedestrian crossings, and faded crosswalks.

park features as excellent, with the exception of the lack of a water fountain and lack of signage with park information.

Overall, Glenwood Park has an adequate sidewalk network, both along Glenwood Ave. and the intersecting side streets. However, the crossings along Glenwood Ave. are hostile to pedestrians and walking to the park, particularly from the east side of Glenwood Ave., is very dangerous. Pedestrian crossing is forbidden in any direction at the intersection of Canfield Rd. and partially forbidden at W. Indianola Ave. Crosswalks closer to the park are marked with signage but the crosswalk markings have faded away. There is a fear that the mid-block crossings on Glenwood Ave. across three lanes of heavy traffic would give youth and other pedestrians a false sense of security, as drivers are not accustomed to yielding to pedestrians in this area.

Glenwood Park had more pedestrian and bicycle-related crashes within a quarter mile of the park than any other park in this plan from 2015-2017. The Police Department reported more traffic violations near Glenwood Park than any other park. It also had one of the highest crime rates in the surrounding quarter mile radius compared to the other parks and one of the most significant crime hotspots in the area—the Ohio Gas Mart—is just one block away from the park. Glenwood Park is well-lit at night, but could benefit from additional lighting of the basketball court and Glenwood Ave. itself.



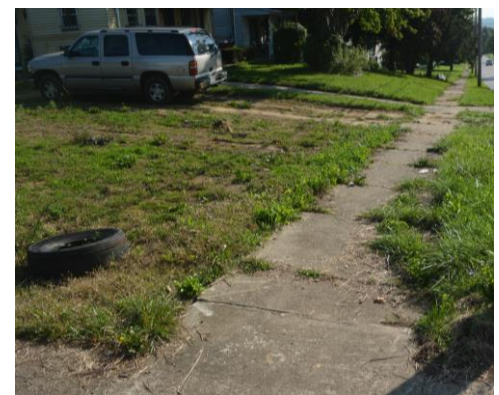
The walk audit of Glenwood Park also revealed sidewalks covered in gravel, broken, and uplifted sidewalk squares.

Homestead Park

The majority of walk audit participants found the **sidewalks** leading to Homestead Park to be in fair condition, with issues noted being the lack of sidewalks on the south side of E. Dewey Ave., the lack of curb ramps at the intersection at Homestead St., and sidewalk squares in disrepair on the west side of Homestead St. Participants also rated the **street crossings and intersections** as fair, with issues noted being the need for paving of the parking lot entrance and the lack of marked crosswalks at E. Dewey Ave. and Homestead St. Participants rated **driver behavior** as fair due to speeding of cars on E. Dewey Ave. Participants rated **overall safety** as fair due to the lack of visible law enforcement presence. Participants rated **overall comfort** as fair due to the presence of vacant lots and blighted structures near the park. Participants rated **park appearance** as fair due to vandalism of park equipment and deferred maintenance of park facilities. Participants rated **park features** as fair as there is no convenient access point from the street to the park, no signs showing information about the park, and lack of bicycle parking.

Overall, Homestead Park has an adequate sidewalk network connecting it to the surrounding neighborhood. Notable exceptions include the lack of a sidewalk on the south side of E. Dewey Ave. and the poorly marked, non ADA-accessible intersection at Homestead St. and E. Dewey Ave. A significant concern around Homestead Park is the high amount of overgrown vegetation on sidewalks leading to the park. Tall grass and overgrown vegetation blocks the sidewalks in a number of areas, particularly along E. Dewey Ave. A number of vacant structures also exist along E. Dewey Ave. and surrounding streets, which pose a hazard to children walking to and from the park.

Homestead Park has a high rate of crime within a quarter mile of the park, as well as a high number of vacant and abandoned structures. Residents and park users have repeatedly expressed concern over safety issues at the park, particularly stemming from large congregations of youth. Reports of fighting at the park are common. The former tennis courts are also a concern as individuals drive through the grass and park on the old courts, often engaging in anti-social or illegal activities at night.



The walk audit of Homestead Park revealed broken sidewalks, overgrown vegetation and the lack of marked crossings and curb ramps at intersections around the park.

John White, Crandall, MVSD, and Lynn Parks

Abbreviated walk audits were conducted at the four remaining parks with summer day camps. The audits revealed issues at each park, though the team agreed none were as critical as the issues around Glenwood and Homestead Parks. Each of the four remaining parks lacked clear wayfinding signage and some lacked signs to even let visitors know the name of the park. John White Park has three barriers along Kimmel St.—a guard rail, a chain link fence, and a split rail fence—the latter two of which are in extreme disrepair. The gravel parking area on Kimmel St. is also in poor condition. Crandall Park does not have a sidewalk along Redondo Rd. near the brick shelterhouse; however, a sidewalk does exist on the south side of Redondo Rd. The entrance to MVSD Playground is often covered in mud as a result of runoff after rain events. Each of the four parks had less crime and fewer pedestrian or bicycle-involved crashes than Glenwood or Homestead Parks.

Plan: Improving Safe Routes to Parks

Priorities, Solutions, and Action Steps

The Planning stage of the Safe Routes to Parks Action Framework is the opportunity to develop priority areas, set goals and specific actions, identify policy improvements, and integrate into agency and jurisdiction plans and policies. This section of the action plan describes community-identified Safe Routes to Parks priorities and solutions, program operations for advancing the work, and a summary of action steps.

Glenwood Park

The primary accessibility issue at Glenwood Park is the current state of crossings and intersections along Glenwood Ave. Given the high number of youth who use the park and the high volume of traffic on Glenwood Ave., addressing these issues is a high priority. In the short term, relatively simple solutions include restriping all crosswalks and installing additional signage, such as speed limit signs, playground signs, and pedestrian crossing signs. Existing pedestrian crossing signals should all be made fully functional and inspected regularly to ensure they continue to function. These actions would be undertaken by the City of Youngstown.

Longer term solutions include significant redesign, realignment, and reconstruction of intersections on Glenwood Ave., as well as the installation of a signal at the intersection of Sherwood Ave. at the park itself. Pedestrians are currently prohibited from crossing in any direction at the intersection of Glenwood Ave. and Canfield Rd. The intersection is designed to move cars through quickly. The opening of a gas station at the corner, with three separate curb cuts, has added to the danger for pedestrians at this intersection. In order to alleviate traffic concerns and prioritize pedestrian access, the intersection needs to be redesigned and reconstructed to accommodate all users. Improved signalization at this intersection would likely accommodate pedestrian access without causing increased automobile congestion. The intersection of Glenwood Ave. and W. Indianola Ave. does have marked crosswalks and pedestrian signals; however, pedestrian crossing of Glenwood Ave. on the south side of the intersection is prohibited due to the misalignment of W. Indianola Ave. In conjunction with the redesign and reconstruction of the intersection at Canfield Rd., the intersection at W. Indianola Ave. could be redesigned and realigned to provide full pedestrian access and improved traffic circulation. The intersection of Glenwood Ave. and Parkview Ave. is signalized, but a traffic study should be conducted to determine if this signal is warranted. Removal of this signal could improve traffic flow at the intersection at W. Indianola Ave. and Glenwood Ave. Finally, a pedestrian-activated signal, such as a pedestrian hybrid beacon, or HAWK, could be added to the intersection of Sherwood Ave. and Glenwood Ave. This traffic control device is used to stop road traffic and allow pedestrians to cross safely. These action steps would be undertaken by the City of Youngstown, with assistance from Eastgate Regional Council of Governments and the Ohio Department of Transportation.



A pedestrian hybrid beacon, or HAWK, could be added to the intersection of Sherwood Ave. and Glenwood Ave. to increase the safety of youth walking to Glenwood Park

Homestead Park

One of the primary accessibility issues at Homestead Park is the intersection at E. Dewey Ave. and Homestead Park. The intersection is not signalized and only traffic on Homestead St. must stop. The lack of stop sign on E. Dewey Ave. encourages drivers to speed past the park, particularly given that this intersection is on a hill. A four-way stop should be installed at this intersection to prevent speeding around the park. In addition, the intersection is not ADA-compliant. Curb ramps should be installed and crosswalks striped at this intersection. Finally, multiple sidewalk squares are in disrepair along primary walking routes and should be replaced. The City of Youngstown would undertake this action step.

A second accessibility and safety issue at Homestead Park is the overgrown vegetation along sidewalks on primary walking routes to the park, particularly on E. Dewey Ave. Community cleanups that involve neighborhood youth should be held to cut back vegetation and cut grass in order to make these routes more accessible. Cutting overgrown vegetation also improves sight lines, which adds to the safety of residents walking to the park. This is particularly important at Homestead Park where the surrounding neighborhood has a high crime rate. YNDC, with support from neighborhood residents and community groups, will take the lead on this action step.

Due to the high crime rate around the park, lighting the perimeter of Homestead Park is also a priority. Some LED lighting has been recently installed on the stone shelter house and near the intersection of E. Dewey Ave. and Homestead St., but additional lighting would improve safety and around the park. The driveway entrance to Homestead Park is in very poor condition and should be paved to improve accessibility. These action steps would be taken jointly by YNDC and the City of Youngstown Parks Department, with funding from the Community Foundation of the Mahoning Valley.

John White, Crandall, MVSD and Lynn Parks

The two redundant fences at John White Park—the chain link and split rail—should be removed by the City of Youngstown Parks Department. A welcome sign should be installed, as one does not currently exist. Additionally, a wayfinding sign on McGuffey Rd. could be installed. The parking area along Kimmel St. also needs to be paved. YNDC would work with neighborhood groups to complete this action step, with funding assistance from the Community Foundation. MVSD Playground needs drainage work to prevent the entrance from flooding and the walkway being covered in mud. In the longer term, the fence around the playground should be replaced. The City of Youngstown Parks Department would take the lead on this action item.

Park Access across Youngstown

Park Needed in the Cottage Grove Neighborhood

As the neighborhood with the highest concentration of youth in the city of Youngstown and given the lack of park access, a new playground in the Cottage Grove Neighborhood—located between Market Street and South Avenue—is a high priority. Adjacent neighborhoods, also with high concentrations of youth but without access to parks, include Pleasant Grove and Newport.

A potential location for a new park is along Market Street, which has the benefit of significant amounts of traffic to provide “eyes on the park” but would also present a safety challenge to youth crossing the wide, 5-lane road. Another location could be the intersection of Erie Street and E. Judson Ave., where land is already owned by the City of Youngstown and Mahoning County Land Bank. A third location could be along Cottage Grove Avenue, near E. Florida Ave., where dozens of homes have been demolished. A separate option is to dramatically improve Sheridan Park, in the Newport neighborhood but within walking distance of Cottage Grove, but until the adjacent abandoned, deteriorating school is addressed, investment in this park is not recommended.

Implement: Creating Safe Routes to Parks

Early Improvement Action and High-Priority Action Steps



Sidewalks were installed around Taft Elementary School as part of the Safe Routes to School Program in 2017, connecting the school with sidewalks leading to nearby Homestead Park

The implement section details early improvement actions that can take place as this plan is being finalized and high-priority, feasible action steps.

Early improvement actions include walk audits completed with project partners and the Southside Summer Experience pop-up playgrounds held on vacant lots throughout the US Department of Justice *Community Based Crime Reduction* project target area.

Feasible, short-term action items include the installation of wayfinding signage and removal of redundant fences at John White Park, grass cutting and removal of overgrown vegetation blocking sidewalks at Homestead Park, installation of additional lighting at Homestead Park, and sidewalk repair around Homestead Park.

Signage at John White Park has been discussed at a meeting with the Northeast Homeowners, who expressed a desire for signs that match the color and look of an already existing *Welcome to the East Side* sign nearby on Oak St. The park has seen significant improvement over the past several years and new signage would help to celebrate the entrance to the park and designate the space as the community's park. Wayfinding signage along McGuffey Rd., which is a main corridor into the City of Youngstown, will increase the visibility and use of the park. The Parks Department will remove the dilapidated, redundant fences along Kimmel St. in order to improve the appearance of the park and better designate the entrance of the park.

YNDC will work with neighborhood residents and community members, and in particular youth who live nearby, to conduct a cleanup of overgrown vegetation along the sidewalks. Participants will pick up trash, cut grass, and limb up trees and bushes growing over sidewalks to improve safety and accessibility. YNDC will make contact with the Gibson Heights Second Church to form a partnership to repair the severely broken sidewalks on Homestead St. directly across from Homestead Park. YNDC will also work with the City of Youngstown Parks Department to install lighting around the perimeter of Homestead Park in order to improve safety.

In the longer term, YNDC will work with neighborhood groups to advocate for striping of crosswalks and improved signage around Glenwood Park and the high-priority, but higher-cost infrastructure improvements along Glenwood Ave. In addition, YNDC will work with local foundations to raise

Safe Routes to Schools and Parks

Safe Routes to School funding to also benefit youth walking to neighborhood parks

The City of Youngstown has received more than \$1,200,000 in support of its Safe Routes to School program from the Ohio Department of Transportation and Eastgate Regional Council of Governments through its Transportation Alternatives Program. The first infrastructure project was focused on Taft Elementary school, which had the highest percentage of students walking to school in the district. Improvements included the construction of a sidewalk along Homestead Street where one previously did not exist. Though just a few blocks long, this sidewalk segment was important, as it completed the sidewalk network connecting Taft Elementary, Wilson Elementary, and Homestead Park, all located within a ten-minute walk.

Future projects that are already planned and funded will improve sidewalk conditions and crossings around three of the parks covered in this plan—Homestead, Crandall, and Lynn—which are each within walking distance of elementary schools that are part of the Safe Routes to School project. These projects are set to be completed by 2021.

funds for more significant improvements, including the paving of parking area on Kimmel St. at John White Park, the paving of the driveway entrance to Homestead Park on E. Dewey Ave., the installation of additional lighting at all parks, and the long-term maintenance of abandoned properties along the primary walking routes to Homestead Park.

Sustain: Keeping the Work Going

Sustainability Recommendations

The sustain section details how Safe Routes to Parks work will be sustained past the execution of the early implementation projects.

The following items are recommended as implementation activities for the Safe Routes to Parks Plan:

- Incorporate Safe Routes to Parks action items into the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT)-approved Safe Routes to School travel plan, where action items are within the walking radius of elementary schools included in the plan. This will enable the City of Youngstown to apply for funding through ODOT to make infrastructure improvements outlined in this plan.
- Work with Eastgate Regional Council of Governments to incorporate Safe Routes to Parks action items into its long range transportation plans and seek funding for implementation.
- Present the Safe Routes to Parks plan to Youngstown City Council and the Healthy Community Partnership to raise awareness for the need to improve conditions along the primary walking routes to parks.
- Reconvene the Citywide Action Team, comprised of engaged neighborhood leaders across the city of Youngstown, particularly members who have expressed interest in making park improvements a priority, in order to advocate for Safe Routes to Parks plan improvements. Work with the Citywide Action Team to create a petition to be signed by residents and other stakeholders to advocate to Safe Routes to Parks plan improvements.
- Identify Safe Routes to Parks-related improvements needed around additional parks once issues are addressed around the parks identified in this plan.
- Seek additional funding sources for Safe Routes to Parks improvements.
- Incorporate Safe Routes to Parks recommendations into a City of Youngstown Parks Master Plan if one is created.
- Incorporate relevant Safe Routes to Parks recommendations in neighborhood plans and other planning documents as they are created.

Appendix

Relevant Data and Maps of Existing Conditions and Improvements Needed

Reported Crimes* within 0.25 Mile of Parks (2015-2017)						
	Homestead	Glenwood	John White	Crandall	Lynn Park	MVSD
Number of Crimes	873	992	199	791	120	692

*crimes included in the analysis are aggravated assault, forcible rape, murder, robbery, arson, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, disorderly conduct, driving under the influence, drug violations, liquor law violations, robberies, simple assaults, traffic violations, vandalism, weapons offenses, and miscellaneous other reported crimes

Reported Crashes* within 0.25 Mile of Parks (2014-2016)						
	Homestead	Glenwood	John White	Crandall	Lynn Park	MVSD
Number of Crashes	1 (resulted in pedestrian fatality)	2 (resulted in pedestrian injury)	0	1 (resulted in pedestrian injury)	1 (resulted in pedestrian injury)	1 (resulted in pedestrian injury)

*crashes are limited to pedestrian-involved and bicycle-involved

Vacant Properties within 0.5 Mile of Parks (2018)						
	Homestead	Glenwood	John White	Crandall	Lynn Park	MVSD
Number of Vacant Properties	200	216	76	234	35	51

Homestead Park



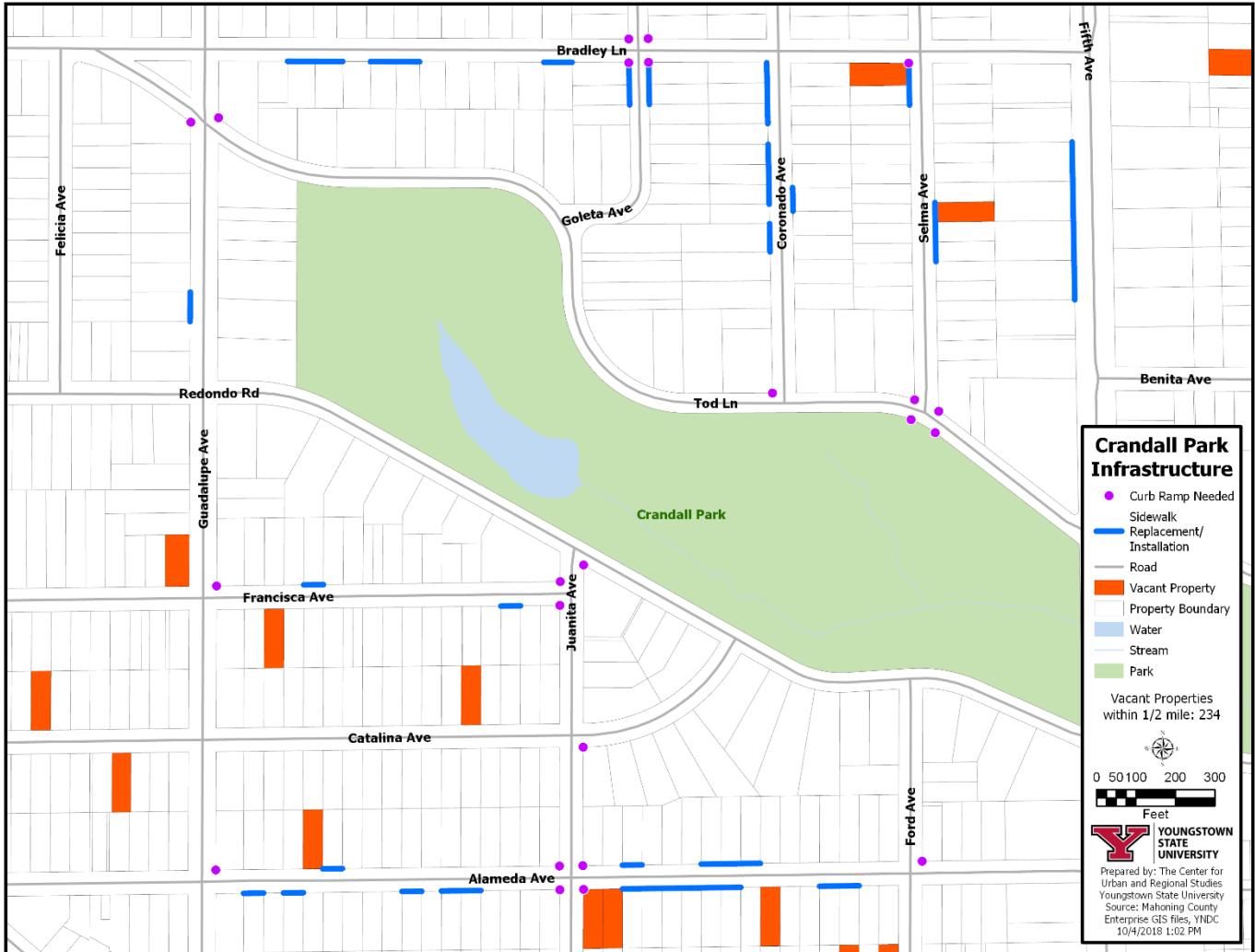
Glenwood Park



John White Park



Crandall Park



Lynn Park



MVSD Playground

