PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS
Spring Grove Village
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Goals
The goals of this project are to improve pedestrian connections between identified pedestrian origins and destinations, honing in on pedestrian flow through the central industrial district; to provide the groundwork for a regional pedestrian and bicycle connection with the proposal to extend Vandalia Avenue; and to encourage pedestrian use within Spring Grove Village through beautification, placing lighting and pedestrian amenities, and improving the overall image of the pedestrian network.

Addressing the issue of pedestrian connectivity within Spring Grove Village can provide the impetus for reformed development within all districts of the community. Currently, the neighborhood is largely automobile oriented and accommodates pedestrians and transit as it is convenient. With a defined pedestrian network, the neighborhood can transform into a pedestrian and transit oriented community which accommodates the car only as much as necessary. In a sense, the community can become geared towards the residents rather than the through traffic. Therefore, this project will address both economic development and neighborhood redevelopment by addressing a keystone characteristic of a walkable community – a pedestrian network – which holds the possibility of transforming the built environment of the neighborhood from an automobile and through traffic oriented community to a pedestrian, transit, and resident oriented community.

The above outlined changes to the built environment of Spring Grove Village not only relate to the economic development and neighborhood redevelopment since the benefits can also overflow to become environmental improvements. Creating an inviting pedestrian network can provide an incentive for residents of the community to walk to neighborhood amenities instead of driving which would reduce emissions, even if only slightly. If the full potential impact of a strong pedestrian network is reached and the neighborhood begins to transform into a human scale, pedestrian and transit oriented community, the need for a vehicle would reduce further. Proposing pedestrian pathways and redeveloping land also present the opportunity to incorporate environmentally friendly elements such as small rainwater gardens, small retention ponds, and pervious pavement to offset the storm water run-off of the neighborhood. To further the environmental benefit of the network, pedestrian amenities could include recycling bins along pedestrian paths and roadways; and solar panel powered pedestrian lighting.
The pedestrian network would enhance and complete Spring Grove Village’s transportation network to offer safe and enjoyable accessibility to more users than the network does in its current state. All too often, transportation networks are thought of as consisting only of the roadway and the automobiles and transit which travel along it. This plan extends the network and challenges community members to think of the transportation network as extending beyond the roadways to incorporate the pedestrian flow on informal paths – pedestrian flow through lawns or unpaved right of way – and formal paths – sidewalks and dedicated pedestrian pathways.

In terms of sustainability, a project should analyze economic, environmental, and social impacts and benefits. As described above, the economic benefits of incorporating pedestrian paths can be small – connecting more consumers to local businesses – or quite large – reworking the built environment to be more conducive to pedestrians and transit. The extent of the impact depends on the general state of the economy, funding, and community support of the project potential. Similar to economic benefits, the environmental benefits of incorporating pedestrian paths can be small – encouraging a few more residents to walk to a destination rather than driving – or large – to incorporate solar lighting, pervious pavement, rainwater gardens, and retention ponds. However, the main focus of this project was on the social aspect of sustainability. There seemed to be a disconnect between the residents of Spring Grove Village and the amenities the neighborhood has to offer. The plan focuses on encouraging community residents to reap the full benefits of and to enjoy their neighborhood to the fullest.

**Project Description**

Through analyzing the current pedestrian flow on informal and formal pathways, the project will establish pedestrian pathways which complement the current pedestrian flow and create a formal network. To minimize the amount of land acquisition necessary, pathways should be located within the right of way, on public property, or in easements when possible. Four pedestrian and bicycle only paths are proposed, and are shown on the map below.

(Figure 2.1) The map (right) highlights the four locations of pedestrian and bicycle only paths which deviate from the street network in solid red lines. The eastern connection between West Mitchell and Este is highlighted at center with a plan view and at right with a path section.
In addition to pedestrian pathways, bicycle routes will be established within the community. This facet of the project ties in with another student proposal for “complete streets” within Spring Grove Village. Rebecca Rauf proposed to transform the street network of the community into a network which is accessible and safe for all users. One aspect of complete streets is the inclusion of bicycle routes and bicycle lanes. Bicycle lanes will also be included in some pedestrian connections projects to maximize accessibility of community bicyclists. This project is important because it could potentially tie into projects proposing bicycle and recreation trails along the Mill Creek, and provide a regional connection. One major connection is proposed: the reestablishment of Vandalia Avenue, which would convert a paved easement into a two-way road with sidewalks on each side, a bike lane, and a landscaping strip. The Avenue has the potential to connect to the proposed Vandalia Corridor which runs through Northside and South Cumminsville, as proposed by Chelsea Ruby.

(Figure 3.1) The proposed Vandalia Avenue is shown in red circles on the above map, along with a plan view (right) and a path section (bottom left).

The final aspect of this project focuses on encouraging pedestrian use through general beautification of paths and sidewalks. The incorporation of pedestrian amenities and good design can create the feeling of safety and also the sense of continuity of a specific pathway. This aspect is the simplest of the three proposals, but its implementation is critical to encourage pedestrian use and improve community image. This phase would focus on filling the gaps in the existing sidewalk network, improving the aesthetics of rail underpasses, and improving the conditions of sidewalks throughout the neighborhood to complete the pedestrian network.

**Rationale**

The industrial district located mainly along Spring Grove Avenue creates a barrier between the residential district in north Spring Grove Village and the Retail district in the southern end of Spring Grove Village. The existing retail development is largely auto-oriented, but features a large grocery store with a pharmacy, small restaurants, and small
retail. While another student is proposing a plan to increase the density of this development and change the format to a transit oriented development, the district would be a destination for neighborhood residents in its current or envisioned state. This proposal is needed to create a safe and efficient pedestrian network between origins – the residential neighborhood – and destinations – in general the retail district, but also including community parks.

(Figure 4.1) The above maps show the relationship between pedestrian origins – the residential district of Spring Grove Village and Winton Terrace – pedestrian destinations, and pedestrian barriers which include the industrial district, wide roadways, and railway underpasses.

The above maps show the existing pedestrian origins (left), existing pedestrian destinations (middle), and existing pedestrian barriers and flow in relation to origins and destinations (right). The pedestrian origins for the purpose of this study are identified as the residential core of the community which is mostly comprised of single family homes and also the public housing complex, Winton Terrace, which is not located within the neighborhood, but lies just to the northeast and generates a great volume of pedestrian traffic. The existing destinations as identified in the above map include the neighborhood business district, Hannaford Park – a small neighborhood park located within the residential district, Salway Park – a larger park south of Spring Grove Cemetary, and the commercial district in either its current automobile oriented state, or in its proposed Transit Oriented Development state (as proposed by Joseph Wagner). These existing conditions laid the ground work of identifying potential pedestrian pathways.

Various physical conditions of Spring Grove Village impacted the study at hand. A sidewalk inventory was conducted and found that while a major stretch of sidewalks along Spring Grove Avenue were under construction and will eventually be in excellent condition, many long stretches of sidewalks are disconnected or lay in disrepair. The below map (Figure 4.1) exhibits the general conditions of the sidewalks in Spring Grove Village.
The condition of railroad underpasses also poses a barrier to pedestrian connection. Although many improvements to rail underpasses would be greatly aesthetic, the improved image and addition of amenities will provide a sense of safety and continuity along the pedestrian routes affected. The two main railroad underpass focused on in this project are on West Mitchell Avenue (pictured above) and on Clifton Avenue just north of the Kennard Road intersection. While there is an underpass in need of improvements located along Spring Grove Avenue, west of the Mitchell Avenue intersection, the underpass is not as much of a barrier to pedestrian connectivity. This underpass could still undergo improvements as a gateway and community image project.

As mentioned in the above sections, a major physical condition which currently inhibits pedestrian connections is the automobile orientation of the built environment. By looking at the above map, it is obvious that the northern residential district exhibits a tighter street network which is more conducive to pedestrian movement than the southern portion of the neighborhood which features wide, linear roadways rather than a grid-pattern network. Image 4.2 shows Mitchell Avenue at a point which has six lanes.

The proposal has made an effort to involve community stakeholders from the research phases and continued the process through to the final presentation. Gary Robbins, Spring Grove Village resident, was the main stakeholder interviewed. Mr. Robbins reviewed the proposals and was very receptive towards the idea of pedestrian connections, not only for improved accessibility but also to encourage recreational use. Mr. Robbins encouraged the exploration of a denser development in the southern portion of the neighborhood which sparked Joseph Wagner’s interest in implementing a transit oriented development. Mr. Robbins also saw that the pedestrian connections would be a necessary improvement and complement to the existing street network regardless of whether or not the commercial development did eventually become more dense or not.

I-75 is a major highway of Cincinnati and also acts as the southern border of Spring Grove Village. The City of Cincinnati has worked with Urban Design Associates (UDA) to prepare a study which outlines visions for four communities located along I-75. This study, Revive 75, focuses on the Mitchell Avenue exit which is a major access route to Spring Grove Village. The study envisions four major improvements to the area:
interchange and streetscape improvements, to establish a buffer around the Mill Creek which will provide a transition between industrial and residential uses, restore the Mill Creek to a beautiful and productive waterway, and to celebrate the history of the Mill Creek corridor. While all four of these visions apply to the area, they do not apply to the residents. The Revive 75 plan offers many visions, but they often seem to be geared towards commuters and through traffic rather than the residents of the affected communities. Sure, the improvements could spark other redevelopment projects, but the proposals do not directly improve quality of life for residents. The vision most directly related to my proposal is the vision for a better transition between industrial and residential uses. While I was laying groundwork for my project, I did agree that there was the need for a transition between land uses within Spring Grove Village. However, I also saw the need for improved connectivity for the residents. UDA utilizes the term “buffer” which creates the mental image of another pedestrian barrier – whether it be a natural buffer of hills and native plants, or a built buffer of sculpted walls and art, it would force pedestrians to continue to depend on an automobile oriented street network. For pedestrian residents of the community, this would either be a neutral change or a regression, but definitely not an improvement in terms of connectivity.

The City of Cincinnati has also embarked on various plans to provide more forms of transit – the street car and light rail. My proposal to improve pedestrian connectivity and flow would only complement these plans since it would connect the residents who would be interested in using the transit to transit hubs, as well as providing inviting routes to those who do not currently use transit. Safe pedestrian routes provide encouragement to utilize existing and proposed public transit.

**Implementation/Funding Strategies**

In the current economic state of the country, there are many federal grants available to fund pedestrian and bicycle paths through communities. Funds provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act – the same stimulus funding many highway improvements – can also be awarded to establish and improve pedestrian and bicycle routes.

To help the project reach its fullest potential, I would suggest that a community organization dedicated to improving pedestrian and bicycle connectivity form from within Spring Grove Village to formulate a pedestrian network plan. The organization can form a partnership with the City of Cincinnati, much like the PATH Foundation has with the City of Atlanta (see Precedent Studies). The city could utilize the passion and community networking provided by the pedestrian connection organization and the organization can receive grant money from the city to implement and maintain pathways. With this partnership, Spring Grove Village could plan and implement a complete network of recreational and connected pedestrian and bicycle pathways, and the city would not have to be responsible for maintenance.
**Precedent Studies**

**PATH Foundation**  
Atlanta, Georgia

The PATH Foundation began to take root in 1991 in Atlanta, Georgia. After fifteen years of envisioning an extensive network of paths and trails in the Atlanta area, PATH has worked to establish more than 100 miles of trails. The foundation is a nationally recognized model for successful trail building and has established linear parks and recreational trails in all types of neighborhoods in Atlanta. PATH operates, builds trails, and maintains trails on donations and public funding.

In 1998 PATH established a partnership with the state of Georgia and several local entities to build a trail network connecting Atlanta to the Alabama state line. PATH acquired right of way from the Department of Transportation to build an extensive pathway on an abandoned rail line, the Seaboard Coastline. The relationship between PATH and the governments it has formed partnerships with is mutually beneficial. The governments utilize the knowledge and dedication of PATH staff to build and design trail projects. PATH works with the local governments to gain connections to federal, regional, and state funding opportunities.

**Bibliography**

http://www.pathfoundation.org

http://www.revivei-75cincinnati.com