SPRING GROVE VILLAGE: COMPLETE STREETS

Spring Grove Village
Rebecca Rauf
Juliana Zanotto

Project Goals

Spring Grove Village is a small neighborhood located off Interstate 75 and Mitchell Avenue. It is made up of predominantly industrial and residential uses with a few fast food restaurants, car dealerships, and other businesses. While Spring Grove Village residents are proud of their neighborhood and are actively working to improve it, there are still several things that could be highly beneficial. Implementation of Complete Street ideals would create better connectivity while specifically focusing on internal movement and cohesion. Pedestrian movement is incredibly important to this neighborhood. Many residents from Spring Grove Village as well as nearby communities walk to the Kroger, to nearby parks, or simply for exercise. In addition, a large public housing development is located right outside the neighborhood’s boundary on Este Avenue.

Implementing Complete Street ideals has several meanings. The concept overall has a number of goals. For example, encouraging other forms of transportation than vehicular is preferable, easing traffic congestion, working toward better air quality, or improving safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers (National Coalition of Complete Streets, 2005-2009). Other Complete Street principles complete a network of roadways,
combine social, economic, and environmental practices together, design streets to fit into the surrounding context, promote health and comfort, and add landscaping elements to create a better overall appeal. Spring Grove Village would greatly benefit from these practices.

The main focus for this project is to improve movement throughout the community. The focus is not only on vehicular movement but on pedestrian and bicycle as well. Other forms of transit, such as buses, also play an important role. Designing Complete Streets contributes economically to Spring Grove Village. With the creation of an efficient public transportation system residents will not only be able to move about the neighborhood better, but they will enjoy spending time walking or biking around. This system will provide accessibility into Spring Grove Village as well as within it.

In terms of neighborhood redevelopment, the implementation Complete Streets will encourage growth and make the area easier to maneuver around. Better accessibility will bring drivers into the developments from Interstate 75 and from the busy roads that cross through the neighborhood. Adding more trees and landscaping as well as natural buffers for pedestrians will improve Spring Grove Village’s environment. Aesthetic improvements will create a nicer view for residents and encouraging other forms of transportation other than vehicular will provide better air quality.

A final goal for this project addresses the social aspect. When roadways are enhanced and new elements added residents will find it far more appealing to use these amenities. Much of the older generation in the neighborhood enjoys walking around, regardless if it is for physical activity or simply to enjoy their home. By following Complete Street methods these residents will feel comfortable and most of all safe. In
addition, by not simply driving to a destination, residents will have more interaction with one another.

**Project Description**

I am focusing on five main strategies for my project: bus stops, neighborhood gateways, pedestrian walkability, bicycle lanes, and intersection redesign. All five parts coincide with Complete Street principles of improving safety, encouraging alternative forms of transportation, increasing walkability, or reducing congestion.

Figure 1. Bus Stop on Spring Grove Avenue (Photo taken by Rebecca Rauf)

The bus stops in Spring Grove Village are definitely lacking in quality. Along the main streets of Winton Road, Spring Grove Avenue, and Mitchell Avenue, only two stops have any form of shelter. Some of the remaining bus stops have benches and trashcans while other only have the metro sign on a metal pole. Needless to say, because Spring Grove Village is centrally located within Cincinnati, it has several main routes that transfer a great deal of people. Providing better bus stop will not only promote metro use but it will also give users a safer and more comfortable experience, especially when the weather is less likable. I designed three main bus stop types. The two busiest bus stops in the neighborhood are located along Spring Grove Avenue by the cemetery and in front of the Kroger on Kenard Avenue. While both stops have existing structures; they are in need of improvement. Spring Grove Avenue’s stop is next to construction along the road but is not being renovated. I propose to replace
both stops with newer, fully-covered glass and metal structures with benches on the inside for residents to use while they are waiting. This first style of bus stop includes small trees and landscaping to both make it more attractive and catch storm water runoff.

The second proposed style is designed specifically for Winton Road. Due to the fact that the Spring Grove Cemetery abuts its entire west side there is not enough space to build completely covered structures. Instead a bus stop with very short sides and a roof that overhangs farther will protect transit riders from bad weather conditions as well as let oncoming drivers be aware that there are people there. A small platform is also within the design so they do not have to wait for the bus while standing on the dirt.

The third stop is less detailed. This style entails a bench or two with some landscaping. Many of the stops along Este Avenue and parts of Mitchell Avenue just have the metro sign and are not necessarily busy enough to have fully enclosed construction. The benches and trees will provide basic amenities for people waiting for their ride. Implementation of new bus stops will help vehicular drivers to be more aware of the stops and where pedestrians may be waiting. They will also enhance Spring Grove Village’s busiest streets and promote pedestrian safety.
Another Complete Street strategy is gateways. While gateways seem to deal more with people entering the neighborhood, they also help those drivers realize what area they are in and welcome them. While Spring Grove Village has been actively working on constructing new signs and already has a few, there are still several places that would benefit from receiving them such as southbound Spring Grove Avenue from St. Bernard, westbound Clifton Avenue from Clifton Heights, westbound Mitchell Avenue from Vine Street, and eastbound Winton Road from College Hill. Two more gateways are proposed in addition to boundary gateways. When driving into the neighborhood from Interstate 75 or Spring Grove Avenue the first thing a driver sees is the elevated and very rusty railroad bridges that go across the roadways. The City of Fairfield, Ohio, found a way to remove this type of eyesore without painting the bridge by generating a sign that goes in front of the bridge and covers it from view (City of Fairfield, Ohio, 2010). While they use the sign as a ‘thank you for visiting,’ Spring Grove Village would have welcome signs into the neighborhood. While the railroad bridges remain untouched the unsightly view of rust and metal is removed.
Pedestrian improvements are incredibly important to Complete Street ideals. Like many other smaller sized neighborhoods, Spring Grove Village has many residents that are familiar with one another and walk around the area. Because of this expanding the sidewalk network of the entire neighborhood is very important. In addition to the bridge underpasses needing to be updated, many of the sidewalks are in need of repaving and in some places widening. The neighborhood has realized this predicament and already began updating Spring Grove Avenue’s sidewalks and adding a new median. Connectivity of the sidewalk network also means finding a way for pedestrians to safely cross busy streets and not increase vehicle congestion at the same time. Brick crosswalks at main intersections or bus stops would inevitably help slow traffic, increase awareness of pedestrian movement, and give a new style to Spring Grove Village roads.

One of the main Complete Street principles is promoting all types of transportation. The previous parts of my proposal discuss metro bus use, pedestrian walkability, and increased safety for both pedestrians and drivers. Bicycling is yet another form of transportation that is not only good for the environment but also cheaper and a great form of exercise. According to code a road must be at least forty-four feet wide, at the very least, to incorporate a biking only lane (Chicago Land Bicycle Federation, 2002). Initially I wanted to add a bicycle lane to Este Avenue but the roadway is not wide enough to have one. The next best option is for a shared bicycle and vehicle lane like Clifton Avenue by the University of Cincinnati has. The road would have specific markings to tell drivers that bicyclists can also use the roadway. This same
idea would be implemented along Spring Grove Avenue but with addition room because the roadway is far larger than Este Avenue’s. These bicycle lanes would be incorporated into the proposed Revive I-75 trail that will run alongside the Mill Creek (City of Cincinnati, 2009). By encouraging residents to change their habits the bicycle lanes promote different forms of transportation that would ease congestion along Spring Grove Village’s main thoroughfares.

Lastly, Spring Grove Village residents are disgruntled at the amount of traffic that passes through their neighborhoods. Large speed bumps have been added to several streets in an effort to slow down traffic and discourage it from taking those routes. In order to reroute vehicles to Jessica’s proposal for Vandalia Avenue, several intersections will need to be changed. Derby Avenue currently has a right hand turn lane that allows drivers to quickly turn onto Winton Road. By removing this option drivers would be encouraged to take Vandalia Avenue. The shift in traffic to Vandalia Avenue would also mean changing the intersection where it intersects Winton Road. The bus side on the opposite side of the street by the cemetery would need a crosswalk for pedestrian safety and a new turn lane would also be needed depending on the amount of future traffic. Joseph’s proposal for a Kenard Avenue extension across Mitchell Avenue would require creating a new turn lane from Spring Grove Avenue to Kenard Avenue for estimated future traffic patterns. Depending on how extreme traffic estimates would be for his proposed Transit-
Oriented Development, a traffic light would also be a possibility to ensure safety for pedestrians, drivers, and bicyclists.

Overall, these five proposals work with Complete Street elements to increase connectivity in Spring Grove Village. While there are a number of other things that involve Complete Streets that could also benefit the community, the previously stated five provide a good start. Spring Grove Village has the potential to overcome the barriers and boundaries that the industrial part of the neighborhood has dealt with for years.

Rationale

The existing sidewalk network in Spring Grove Village is lacking connectivity. There are many sidewalks that are in good condition but there are more than are not; many of them are not up to code in width while others stop before the road does. By creating a more connected network pedestrians will be able to safely walk around. The implementation of Complete Street ideals will also greatly benefit residents. Because many of them walk for exercise as well as to go to Kroger or a bus stop, adding alternative forms of transportation will make the roads more user friendly. Gary Robbins, a stakeholder in the community that has lived there for many years, expressed great concern about the current bus stops in the neighborhood and how they were not benefitting anyone because of their lack of design and practicality. Adding structures, lighting, and benches would help bus users be more comfortable during cold weather and be safer as well.
Mr. Robbins also felt that gateways would have a benefit for the area as a whole. When a person is driving into Spring Grove Village they are unaware of what neighborhood they are in. By adding welcome or thank you signs that problem will be solved. Implementing a large sign in front of the railroad bridges will also make the area more visually appealing. Overall, I think that by changing the streets in Spring Grove Village, it will help put the community and neighborhood “on the map.” It will also be safer for pedestrians to walk along the road and increase connectivity between the residential areas and the Kroger (or proposed TOD).

Urban Design Associates Revive I-75 plan will affect Spring Grove Village. The interchange from Interstate 75 will be more compressed and free up more space by the Mill Creek. Their plan has a bicycle trail along the creek within the neighborhood and surroundings ones. This trail would definitely help tie different communities together and bring people down to Joseph’s proposed Transit-Oriented Development or UDA’s proposal. Revive I-75’s plan would also bring more people into the area from their proposed development; therefore continuing to stimulate the local economy and bring in new businesses and retail. Spring Grove Village will definitely benefit from the proposal.

In addition, Cincinnati’s light rail and streetcar proposals, if implemented, would affect the neighborhood. Because a Transit-Oriented Development is one of Spring Grove Village’s proposals along with implementation of Complete Streets elements, many transportation options will open up for the neighborhood and the community. Both city proposals could be beneficial. Another group in the Niehoff Studio is analyzing Vandalia Avenue and its connection to the much of the west side of Cincinnati. Jessica’s
section of our proposal discusses how that connection could be continued through Spring Grove Village and create a better route for drivers to take that would not disrupt homeowners. Overall, Spring Grove Village is looking toward a bright future that will benefit the community, nearby neighborhoods, and the City of Cincinnati.

**Implementation/Funding Strategies**

Implementing Complete Street ideals are far less expensive than one would think. In fact, many small changes can slow traffic flow, encourage pedestrians, and help a neighborhood without spending too much. For example, changing signal time for pedestrians to use a crosswalk does not cost anything but can drastically encourage more walkers and safer practices. On a project by project basis a great deal of the money spent to enhance a street can be seen as more of an investment in the roadway as well as saving money in the long run (National Complete Streets Coalition, 2005-2009).

While there are ways to improve street design without spending a great deal of money, there are many more possibilities when funding is available. The Complete Streets movement is now spreading across the United States and many cities and states are implementing plans. Federal Highway funding is available through several programs: the Surface Transportation Program (STP), Transportation Enhancements (TE), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ), and Safe Routes to School (SRTS) (National Complete Streets Coalition, 2005-2009). On a smaller level funding is also available through some state and metropolitan planning organizations that have programs specifically dedicated for certain transportation design purposes.

While not all states are as far along as Colorado or Oregon, many states are at the beginning stages of implementing Complete Street principles. As of right now the state
of Ohio does not yet have any policies in place, but with the proven success many cities and states are now having after constructing Complete Streets, Ohio’s time will soon come. By amending policies to include specific language to encourage certain design principles many states are now focusing on funding and implementing these new ideals. For example, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Wisconsin have rewritten some of their state laws to include new primary policies to do just this (National Complete Streets Coalition, 2005-2009). In addition, over fifty jurisdictions as of the spring of 2008 have adopted some form of complete streets policy into their legislation (Laplante & McCann, 2008).

Departments of Transportation are also greatly involved. While most state laws only cover projects initiated by the state’s DOT, there are some that go into closer contexts and reach to specific roadways. The National Coalition for Complete Streets suggests encouraging better networked streets by establishing incentives for local policy adoption, having Complete Street requirements in city and state plans, adding new policies to the DOT’s, and committing to work together with other local and statewide entities (National Complete Streets Coalition, 2005-2009). There are a number of funding opportunities that Spring Grove Village could use at the state and federal level to fund the previously mentioned projects. With the economy being the way it is now, designs that will save money in the future are highly favored as well as “getting the bang for your buck.”

**Precedent Study**

The City of Boulder, Colorado, is known for their great success in implementing Complete Street principles to create efficient, utilized roadways. As I have previously
stated in my Complete Streets report earlier this quarter, Boulder created the Multimodal Corridor Project that identified ten existing multimodal corridors (City of Boulder, 2006). Boulder later prioritized which streets needed attention the most and worked to renovate and revitalize those areas. Four main improvement types were focused upon: roadways, pedestrian right-of-ways, bicycling, and transit (City of Boulder, 2006). Like Spring Grove Village, Boulder saw the potential of their neighborhoods and worked to create a more connected transportation network that would benefit all user types. The plan would connect missing sidewalk sections and enhance crossings at many busy intersections that needed additional safety for pedestrians.

This network of seven bus routes provided an alternative to driving for residents to move across their city and reach their destinations. The seven routes, referred to as HOP, SKIP, JUMP, BOUND, DASH, STAMPEDE, and BOLT, would at the very least receive upgrades to their existing transit stops with new signs and pavement platforms (City of Boulder, 2006). Busier transit stops would be given more amenities like shelters, benches, and trash receptacles. To increase operational efficiency of the CTN improvements such as bus bypass lanes and bus signals prioritization would be implemented. While Spring Grove Village is far smaller than Boulder, it still has plenty of foot, bicycle, and bus traffic to implement a smaller scale CTN.

The City of Boulder has become nationally known for their success in implementing Complete Street principles. Like Spring Grove Village, the city recognized its potential and worked toward better design and multi-modal transportation options for its residents that benefitted Boulder economically, socially, and environmentally.
Bibliography


