

Neighbors of Belknap Lookout (NOBL)

2021 – 2024
Strategic Plan

Overview of process and purpose:

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Weaknesses

Opportunities

Threats

Mission, Vision, Values

Justice

Strategic Goal #1: Sharing Power

Champion: Ellie

Objective A: Restructure for power sharing

Objective B: Actually Share Power

Strategic Goal #2: Dismantling Racism

Champion: Robin and Sondra

Objective C: Addressing white supremacy

Objective D: Racial Equity Committee

Community

Strategic Goal #3: Build meaningful relationships between neighbors

Champion: Amy

Objective E: Host neighborhood events

Objective F: Facilitating Formation of Individual Relationships

Strategic Goal #4: Beautification

Champion: Ellie

Objective G: Neighbor-led efforts to make Belknap more attractive

Quality of Life

Strategic Goal #5: Equitable Community Development

Champion: Kara

Objective H: Advocate for diverse housing options

Objective I: Increase home ownership options

Objective J: Increase access to amenities and services

Strategic Goal #6: Public Safety

Champion: Elianna

Objective K: Reduce crime and improve traffic safety

Strategic Goal #7: Engaging in areas that our neighbors care about/need

Champion: Robin

Objective L: Advocating for and addressing social/wellbeing needs

Objective M: Lifting up the voices of the traditionally silenced

Strategic Goal #8: Food Justice

Champion: Ayanfe

Objective N: Food Sovereignty

Objective O: Address food desert

Accountable:

Strategic Goal #9: To be fiscally responsible

Champion: Dan

Objective P: To be financially stable

Objective Q: Diversify funding streams

Strategic Goal #10: To be an attractive place to work or volunteer

Champion: Kara

Objective R: Value and compensate employees

Objective S: Value and recruit volunteers

Strategic Goal #11: To build trust through our actions

Champion: Elianna

Objective T: To become better known by our neighbors

Objective U: To be a good landlord

Overview of process and purpose:

Participants:

Board: Kara Harrison Gates, Ellie Walborn-Henry, Dan Miller, Robin Benton, Ayanfe Jamison, Loren Sturru.

Staff/Intern: Elianna Bootzin, Karolyn Grove.

Racial Equity Committee: Jan Koopman, Sondra Loucks Wilson.

Why:

Strategic planning is a management activity that is used to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, ensure that employees and other stakeholders are working toward common goals. It is a way to establish agreement around intended outcomes/results and assess and adjust the organization's direction in response to a changing environment. The strategic plan does not seek to describe the day to day operations, but instead sets goals that those operations should work towards

In essence strategic planning is a change plan. It is an opportunity to evaluate where we are, where we want to be, and make a plan to get there.

Strategic planning should be done every 4 years with annual updates and revisions to the plan. Additionally, strategic planning should be embedded into everyday operations and should guide decision making for the organization.

This year, in addition to the strategic plan we will be developing a policy for strategic plan expectations moving forward to ensure the momentum of the work that we do here on the plan.

Process:

Overall process folder:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/hsl3xnnpn8nf58i1/AACJQcnT8a11upu36qvMRfopa?dl=0>

General outline:

(Prewrite - Neighbor & Stakeholder Surveys, SWOT for board)

2 weekends, one each in Feb & Mar, 1-3:30 pm Sat & Sun, all include breaks

Day 1:

Introductions

Objective: Why are we strategic planning

Community Standards

Core Questions

Mission, vision, values, and mandates

Questions, follow up, overview of next session

Day 2:

Roll call, review of community standards

Assessing Strengths and Weaknesses Overview

Review received SWOT analysis results

Funding Analysis

Identifying Critical issues

Questions, follow up, overview of next session

Interlude: Missed Critical Issues, conducted as survey during board meeting

Day 3:

Roll call, review of community standards, overview of last planning session

Setting measurable goals and objectives

Questions, follow up, overview of next session

Day 4:

Roll call, review of community standards, overview SMART goals

Community discussion of each value's suggested goals from breakout sessions

Community discussion of strategies for agreed upon goals

Discussion of next steps/follow up needed/assignment of sub committees if needed

SWOT Analysis

SWOT ANALYSIS



Opportunities



Threats



Mission, Vision, Values

Mission

To empower residents of the Belknap neighborhood to identify their interests, support their own well-being, and to facilitate community health and prosperity.

Vision

A neighbor driven organization, committed to making a deep impact on the major institutions around us and collectively improving our built environment and our neighbors' quality of life.

Values

Justice: Living out our commitment to social and racial justice by sharing power with the people who live in our neighborhood and taking action to dismantle systemic racism.

Community: Building a sense of connectedness and facilitating meaningful relationships between neighbors.

Quality of Life: Increasing the community's mobility, accessibility and resilience, intentionally lifting up the voices of the traditionally-silenced on issues that affect our community, and advocating for the well-being of our neighbors.

Accountable: Being transparent as an organization and earning the trust of our neighbors through our actions.

Justice

Living out our commitment to social and racial justice by sharing power with the people who live in our neighborhood and taking action to dismantle systemic racism.

Strategic Goal #1: Sharing Power Champion: Ellie

By the next round of strategic planning in 2024, NOBL's activities will be determined by the neighborhood at large, including representation from the full range of demographic categories; neighbors will perceive us as transparent, accessible, welcoming and effective.

Objective A: Restructure for power sharing

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Training about sociocracy	80% of board trained.	August 2021
2. Test sociocracy	Review and use principles	October 2021
3. Define committee roles and expectations including compensation structure for neighbor participation.	Document created	October 2021
4. Create development scorecard (consider inclusion of racial impact study and small dollar investment options) and address development committee processes	Document created with statement on racial impact study	October 2021
5. Develop a neighbor demographic representation goal (factors could include race, gender, SES, student status, rent/own/unhoused, etc)	Document has been created.	November 2021
6. Develop new bylaws, policies and procedures rooted in sociocracy	Documents drafted Documents revised Documents submitted Documents adopted	August 2022 September 2022 October 2022 November 2022
7. Collect feedback on 4 during draft & adoption; establish baseline demographics of feedback	Feedback & annual meeting demographics collected	September, November 2022

Objective B: Actually Share Power

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Develop equitable policies to engage and vet prospective board and committee members	Materials are adopted by the board.	September 2021
2. Recruit board and committee membership that is representative of the demographics of our neighborhood	All demographic groups represented by 2024	Sep - Oct 2021 Sep - Oct 2022 Sep - Oct 2023 Sep - Oct 2024
3. Reduce board turnover	No more than 1 resignation per year	December 2022, 2023, 2024
4. Conduct engagement study / ask a representative sample of our neighbors on whether they perceive us as transparent, accessible, welcoming and effective.	Engagement study completed / Feedback demographics show increase in representation of the community living in the neighborhood.	December 2022, 2023, 2024 5% increased accuracy per year
5. Add compensation structure for low income event "volunteers"	Budget includes funds Policy in place, implement	January 2023 July 2023

Strategic Goal #2: Dismantling Racism

Champion: Robin and Sondra

By our next strategic planning process in 2024, we will have increased understanding of the disadvantages created by systemic racism, how to dismantle racism and a collection of partners with whom we can seek structural changes in our institutions. We will have removed systemic barriers from our own systems.

Objective C: Addressing white supremacy

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Hold Undoing Racism workshop	22 people will attend	April 2021
2. Track Human Rights Cities to test data dashboard and add action steps as appropriate	Report on funding status	June 2021
3. Create and implement inclusion filters	Filters are created and adopted	January 2023
4. Update HR policies to be equitable and de-center whiteness	Policies updated	July 2023

Objective D: Racial Equity Committee

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Increase participation in the Racial Equity Committee	3 leaders, 20 attendees 4 leaders, 25 attendees 5 leaders, 30 attendees 6 leaders, 35 attendees	December 2021 December 2022 December 2023 December 2024
2. Create an annual work plan for monthly local meeting	Plan is created yearly	December 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024
3. Establish partnerships in the monthly citywide networking meeting / with other key stakeholder organizations/groups	2 partnerships 4 partnerships 6 partnerships 8 partnerships	December 2021 December 2022 December 2023 December 2024
4. Discuss and advocate for change at institutions in 1 life area of the localized power analysis annually	2 policies suggested in 2022, 4 each year thereafter	December 31, 2022 December 31, 2023 December 31, 2024

Community

Building a sense of connectedness and facilitating meaningful relationships between neighbors.

Strategic Goal #3: Build meaningful relationships between neighbors

Champion: Amy

By our next strategic planning process in 2024, we will have hosted at least one new large event, collected 100 new contacts, and seen an increase in “belonging” for our neighborhood on the VoiceKent survey.

Objective E: Host neighborhood events

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Increase participation at National Night Out; collect new contacts	Establish baseline 10% increase 10% increase 10% increase	December 2021 December 2022 December 2023 December 2024
2. Establish an event planning committee	At least 3 members	November 2021
3. Report number of new contacts	Included in board report Goal: 100	December 2021 December 2022 December 2023 December 2024
4. Report VoiceKent belonging results and comparison	Included in board report Goal: Increase	December 2021 December 2022 December 2023 December 2024
5. Facilitate neighbor to neighbor events such as stuff swaps or block parties, collect new contacts	Event committee has participated in at least 1 neighbor led event yearly	2022
6. Host a carnival or yearly celebratory event, collect new contacts	Plan Event is hosted, process documented	December 2022 December 2023
7. Participate in neighborhood sports event such as a fun run fundraiser, collect new contacts	At least one event is held, process documented	December 2023 December 2024

Objective F: Facilitating Formation of Individual Relationships

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Facilitate neighborhood meet groups (knitting groups, Freely Available Zoom Space)	At least one event held per year	December 2021
2. Establish a positive presence on Next-Door	2 moderators recruited and trained by 2022, 4 by 2024	November 2022 November 2024
3. Create a neighbor to neighbor facebook group with Admins	Group is up and running with 4 admins	October 2023
4. Establish and distribute a neighborhood directory	Document is completed	December 2023
5. Biannual phone engagement (key announcements and/or wellness check)	Calls made by advocacy committee, concerns categorized for further use in next strategic plan	July, December 2024

Strategic Goal #4: Beautification

Champion: Ellie

By our next strategic planning process in 2024, neighbors will take ownership of regular beautification activities.

Objective G: Neighbor-led efforts to make Belknap more attractive

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Beautify alleys and advocate to the City for additional lighting to reduce crime	10 clean ups held	October 2021
2. Ensure neighbors are able to dispose of large trash items by hosting Dumpster day	Dumpster day event held	Annually
3. Establish a beautification committee	3 members	November 2022
4. Partner with Friends of Grand Rapids Parks/City Parks department/advocacy	Partnership defined	September 2023
5. Prevent graffiti by partnering to place new murals at hotspots.	Murals at SW corner of Highland Park, Clancy north of Creston Plaza	Summer 2024
6. Repeat 2021 home maintenance project	Houses assessed and contacted	Summer 2024
7. Assist with repairs/remaining in a home (home repair services) (education/help)	5 homeowners assisted	December 2024

Quality of Life

Increasing the community’s mobility, accessibility and resilience, intentionally lifting up the voices of the traditionally-silenced on issues that affect our community and advocating for the well-being of our neighbors.

Strategic Goal #5: Equitable Community Development Champion: Kara

By our next strategic planning process in 2024, we will have transparent, community-based land use decisions, active recruitment of homeownership options and amenities for all income levels, and an implementation plan in place at the City/DGRI for a better way down Belknap hill.

Objective H: Advocate for diverse housing options

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Participate in project evaluation for Planning Commission (etc) support according to current and then revised process annually	Attendance on meeting minutes	Now - Dec 2021 December 2022 December 2023 December 2024
2. Advocate for Master Plan / our area specific plan in the City’s Master Planning Process	30% present at Master Plan meetings	TBD - start late summer 2021
3. Learn about affordable housing options, network and advocate for same including tiny houses, solutions for the unhoused (FUSE, etc) incorporating (if not led by) the opinions of those impacted	1 speaker and 1 policy suggested annually	December 2022 December 2023 December 2024

Objective I: Increase home ownership options

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Community land trust	At least 1 property in Belknap is part of Dwelling Place’s CLT	Dec 2022

2. Partner with bank (LMCU?), housing nonprofits	Partnerships defined	June 2023
3. Advocate for tenant to ownership	Outreach materials to landlords	Dec 2023

Objective J: Increase access to amenities and services

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Track Parks' interest in water building as a community center	Annual inquiry and update in board packet	December 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024
2. Connecting residential and North Monroe business district (Belknap Hill)	30 neighbors participate in implementation of DGRI RFP's contract focus groups	Spring 2022
3. Advocate for snow removal and trash can maintenance during the City / Rapid budgeting process annually.	Call in / write in campaign issued, track numbers participated / response from Commissioners, changes implemented in budget.	Spring 2022, 2023, 2024
4. Network with business development groups (The Right Place, DGRI, GR Chamber, etc) to learn about business recruitment; explore partnership with Catherine's Health Center	Contacts made Document decision on whether/how to partner w/ CHC	December 2022
5. Recruit businesses such as daycare, pharmacy, general / grocery store, cafe, bank, and/or pediatric care to the Lafayette or Monroe North corridors.	Contacts made 1 business located	December 2023 June 2024
6. Start conversations with MobileGR, HPNA, etc about hike/bike trail along railroad	Initial meeting held	December 2024
7. Walk the neighborhood to check that all sidewalk corners have ramps	Report to MobileGR	December 2024

Strategic Goal #6: Public Safety

Champion: Elianna

By our next strategic planning process in 2024, we will have a reduced crime rate compared to 2019.

Objective K: Reduce crime and improve traffic and environmental safety

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Based on 3 year crime analysis, work with GRPD to create a public safety action plan annually	Plan created	May 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024
2. Conduct community education, including larceny prevention and the difference between fireworks and gunshots in 2021. Future topics may include lead pipes/lead paint and Coldbrook Creek	Education materials created and distributed, efficacy measured, and improvements logged.	May 2021, Dec 2022, 2023, 2024
3. Communication and fundraising for proposed traffic calming solutions on Fairview & Coit	Results received and shared.	October 2021
4. Launch Public Safety Committee; responsible for 2022 clean ups	3 members	November 2021
5. Develop a policy to assist neighbors who will conduct petitions for traffic calming study requests	Policy created and communicated to neighbors	December 2022

Strategic Goal #7: Engaging in areas that our neighbors care about/need

Champion: Robin

By our next strategic planning process in 2024, our neighborhood will have at least 3 public wifi access zones and use radically inclusive advocacy practices.

Objective L: Advocating for and addressing social/wellbeing needs

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Include community social-worker in ongoing budget	Budget, contract, revised processes	July 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024
2. Expand Internet access in the neighborhood	Explore partnership with existing Belknap Park wifi. Purchase 2 more units if needed	May 2021 Dec 2021

Objective M: Lifting up the voices of the traditionally silenced

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Establish advocacy groups/committees	3 group leaders recruited	November 2023
2. Tenant Advocacy (include renters rights materials, info about maintenance)	Outreach materials gathered and distributed (possibly through Grand Rapids Tenants Union)	December, 2024
3. Advocacy for the unhoused	Obtain and share opinions of local unhoused on options like the FUSE expansion etc (possibly through Homes for All)	December 2024
4. Issue advocacy - use feedback mechanism to share collective views on issues at gov't mtgs	Collection and dissemination of response to public policy proposals	December 2024

Strategic Goal #8: Food Justice

Champion: Ayanfe

By our next strategic planning process in 2024, neighbors will have more opportunities to and knowledge of how to garden as well as more access to fresh healthy foods.

Objective N: Food Sovereignty

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Build and home sphere gardens	2 sphere gardens built	August 2022
2. Curate content on new website on how to garden	Page populated	April 2022
3. Launch Food Justice Committee	At least 3 members	Nov 2023
4. Participate in exploration of and business planning for food oriented enterprises considered	Deliberations and conclusions documented	December 2024

Objective O: Address food desert

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Explore and help implement healthy food retail (Fresh Market?) through NEWC Healthy Eating	Meetings held, implementation planned	December 2021
2. Add web content on produce donation, cottage food law	Website updated	Summer 2022
3. New intern partnerships pursued include GVSU Public Health	Application acquired	November 2023
4. Partner with Equitable Community Development Committee to recruit grocery store	Contacts made Discussion/recruitment continued	Dec 2023 Dec 2024

Accountable:

Being transparent as an organization and earning the trust of our neighbors through our actions.

Strategic Goal #9: To be fiscally responsible

Champion: Dan

By our next strategic planning process in 2024, we understand our finances, fully support our programs at an appropriate level, and establish a capital reserve for long term maintenance.

Objective P: To be financially stable

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Review financials quarterly with the board	Review is completed	Quarterly 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024
2. Create program evaluation and evaluate programs on an annual basis	Document created and filled out annually	December 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024
3. Use evaluation to create annual budget	Proposed budget reflects evaluation results	January 15: 2022, 2023, 2024
4. Conduct an external financial review annually (peer rev 2022).	Review is completed	April 2022, 2023, 2024
5. Invest long term Linear Park \$	Account opened & money invested	May 2022
6. Qualify for Section 8	Applied	Dec 2022
7. Achieve 5% financial growth annually.	% of growth on year end financials	January 2023, 2024

Objective Q: Diversify funding streams

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Create Template Fundraising Plan, customize annually, including private foundation funding, small neighbor fundraising events, basic solicitations, event sponsorship levels & outreach materials. Targets based on budgeted amount needed based on program evaluation.	Plan created	January 2022, 2023, 2024
2. Explore funding opportunities at neighborhood events (breakaway music festival).	Conversations held and conclusions documented	April 2022
3. Identify project and apply for the neighborhood match fund.	Project identified, application submitted	June 2022, 2023, 2024
4. Explore and prepare to launch potential enterprise(s) that fulfill(s) our mission such as an internet cafe, coffee shop, bookstore, microbusiness incubator, urban agriculture or pop up market/cafe.	Decision made on pursuit, business plan in place if positive	December 2024

Strategic Goal #10: To be an attractive place to work or volunteer

Champion: Kara

By our next strategic planning process in 2024, we will compensate our employees appropriately, and provide easily accessible volunteer opportunities with improved retention.

Objective R: Value and compensate employees

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
5. Ensure that workload is realistic by assessing project time needs against the strategic plan.	Plan/timeline established for when/who to work on projects in conjunction with Annual Plan	January 2022, 2023, 2024
6. Establish employee evaluation structure that reflects racial justice and organizational mission/vision/values	Evaluation structure established; include "do you have what you need to do your job?"	January 2023
7. Establish fair compensation scale	Policies established (1) and put into action (2)	April 2023 July 2023
8. Ensure recruitment and retention reflect racial justice best practices including standard interview, restarting recruitment if pool doesn't meet target.	Document created with references. Candidate pool reflects demographic targets.	July 2023
9. Outsource payroll administration	Firm hired	July 2023
10. Replace and maintain hardware, technical support	Annual employee satisfaction surveys reflect employees have equipment needed to do their jobs	September 2023

Objective S: Value and recruit volunteers

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Hire community engagement staff (with volunteer management role)	Job posted and filled	July 2023
2. Update/upgrade constituent management relationship (CRM) software	Software updated	September 2023
3. Provide clear volunteer opportunities for neighbors.	Volunteer needs established, structure created for sharing opportunities (website, flyers), distribute	September 2023
4. Establish baseline volunteer metrics (# events per volunteer), compare year over year results	Report created	December 2023, 2024
5. Apply to host more kinds of interns	3 applications submitted	December 2023
6. Recruit volunteers from a variety of sources	3 major organizations contacted per year	December 2023, 2024

Strategic Goal #11: To build trust through our actions

Champion: Elianna

By our next strategic planning process in 2024, we will increase our communication list and engagement (open rate etc) by 30%.

Objective T: To become better known by our neighbors

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Develop template annual marketing/communication plan, customized annually.	Document created	May 2021
2. Redesign website for ease of use, accessibility and equity.	New website launched	December 2021
3. Customize and execute Communications Plan annually (add baseline metrics first time, add comparisons thereafter)	Document customized Annual report on implementation	January/December 2022, 2023, 2024
4. In-person recruitment and canvassing with branded clothing and/or signage	26 blocks canvassed	December 2023
5. Host booths at neighborhood events	4 events visited	December 2023

Objective U: To be a good landlord

By our next strategic planning process in 2024, we will have completed remaining work on the building (roof, insulation).

Activities	Measurables	Timeline (begin/end dates, deadline)
1. Review options for property management.	Quotes collected, discussion held (minutes)	December 2021
2. Create time and budget plan for major improvements.	Plan created.	January 2022
3. Document tenant processes, including tenant rights info to be provided upon moving in.	Informational material created, distributed to tenants	June 2022
4. Establish a yearly schedule for maintenance tasks	Schedule established	December 2022
5. Set aside \$1,000 annually for long term maintenance needs (invest)	Funds invested	2023, 2024+