

# **Technical Memorandum # 3: Creating Living Wage Job Opportunities for Weinland Park Residents**

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## **I. Purpose of the Memorandum**

The objective of the research was to identify ways to increase employment opportunities for Weinland Park residents in conjunction with the development of plans for the physical revitalization of the neighborhood. The capacity of residents to more fully contribute to neighborhood revitalization as well as to more fully share in its benefits will depend in large part on their ability to obtain living wage jobs. As residents secure jobs and move from lower-paying to higher paying jobs, their ability to take advantage of home ownership opportunities, invest in housing improvements, and support the neighborhood's retail and service base, will be enhanced. Thus, a neighborhood employment strategy is an essential economic complement to physical revitalization strategies outlined elsewhere in the master plan.

This memorandum is intended to provide a framework for decision-making about workforce development initiatives for Weinland Park. It includes background information on employment needs and opportunities, and on the neighborhood's workforce development program and service needs, opportunities, and ongoing challenges. It concludes with a set of summary findings and preliminary strategy recommendations. The Working Committee is requested to consider the recommendations in light of the information provided, and establish priorities for moving forward. A set of questions to assist this process is provided at the end of this document. Based on the response of the Working Committee, the consultant will refine the recommendations and further develop plans for designing and implementing priority initiatives.

## **II. The Context: Weinland Park Employment Needs and Opportunities**

### **A. Employment Needs**

The Weinland Park workforce is characterized by high levels of unemployment and low wage employment. In 2000, Weinland Park had close to 4,900 residents, approximately 3,300 of which were of working age (18-64). Of the working age population, about 2,000 were in the labor force (either employed or actively looking for work). Approximately 1,700 of these were working and the 300 are unemployed. The unemployment rate was more than three times the MSA average. Among the 1,300 working age residents who were not in the labor force, an undetermined number were discouraged workers – individuals who want to work and are able to work but have given up looking. As a rough estimate, between 500 and 800 of these were discouraged

workers. In sum, approximately 800 to 1,100 residents were either unemployed or discouraged workers. Because the labor market of 2005 is weaker than five years ago, these numbers are likely to be higher.

In terms of income, half of all households live below the poverty line, and 70 percent earned less than \$25,000 in 1999. Among households with earnings, the average earnings were less than \$29,000 (a little more than half that for the MSA as a whole). This indicates that many if not most workers are earning less than a family-supporting wage. Data indicate that a relatively high proportion of working Weinland Park residents work in lower-wage service occupations.

## **B. Employment Opportunities**

While the challenges of employment for Weinland Park residents should not be minimized, the employment demand in the city and region indicates a range of opportunities for appropriately qualified individuals to find employment in low- and moderate-skill positions. Availability of jobs is not the issue. The Columbus MSA had about 880,000 jobs in 2003; Franklin County alone had 685,000 jobs. The Columbus economy has historically experienced relatively strong job growth and low unemployment, outperforming the state and national economies. The sections below summarize some of the most relevant employment opportunities for Weinland Park residents

### **The Neighborhood and Adjacent Areas**

The Ohio State University and Medical Center have over 18,000 employees, with most of these on OSU's main campus and at University Hospital, adjacent to Weinland Park.

OSU does significant annual hiring in a number of entry-level and lower-skill positions, most notably custodians, maintenance and repair technicians, food services, workers, and office and clerical associates. While administrative units throughout the university hire for these positions, the most concentrated hiring is in the Office of Student Affairs and the Department of Physical Facilities

University Hospital also hires workers annually in the above positions, as well as in a range of lower- and intermediate-skill nursing and allied health positions. Among these positions, the largest category is Patient Care Associates, which are roughly comparable to certified nursing assistants.

In addition to relatively high starting wages, (e.g., approximately \$9/hour for a custodian, \$10/hour for a maintenance and repair technician, \$10-26/hour for an office associate, OSU offers generous health care and educational benefits, and training for career advancement. For example, maintenance and repair technicians can enter apprenticeships for skilled trades such as plumbing, electrical, and HVAC.

There are other neighborhood employment opportunities in the retail, restaurant and entertainment, and lodging industries. These will expand with the completion of the South Campus Gateway, which could generate approximately 650 jobs, with 250 in retail, and 400 in restaurants and entertainment. Many of these positions will require low

to moderate skill levels and may be particularly well suited for young people in the 16-25 age range.

Riverside Hospital, approximately five miles from Weinland Park, has 6,500 employees, with similar opportunities as University Hospital.

## **Downtown**

Downtown Columbus, about two miles from Weinland Park, is easily and quickly accessible by public transportation along High Street. Downtown has a diverse employment base, including state and local government, corporate offices, insurance and finance, health care, hospitality, and retail. These employers offer a wide range of low- and moderate-skill employment opportunities in retail, service, and administrative support positions.

## **Other City and Region**

As in most regions, employment in the Columbus MSA has become increasingly dispersed. While there is no geographic breakdown of employment within the MSA available, it is evident that certain categories of jobs are found primarily outside the downtown area, and are not always easily accessible by public transportation. These include most manufacturing, distribution, and construction jobs, some of which are relatively well-paying and require only low to moderate skill levels. Only about 6% of Weinland Park workers are employed in manufacturing, much less than the 11% for MSA residents as a whole. At the same time, about the same proportion of Weinland Park residents are employed in construction and transportation/warehousing as other MSA workers, indicating that they are able to access a significant number of jobs in those industries.

# **III. Addressing Employment Challenges**

## ***A. Key Components of Workforce Development***

A number of elements must be in place for workers to succeed in employment. The following list summarizes the major components that comprise effective workforce development efforts. While each worker and jobseeker is unique, and may require a different mix of services, any successful effort must have all of these elements in place. While a neighborhood workforce development initiative cannot supply the resources and capacity to put all these elements into place, it can play a critical role and providing services appropriate at the neighborhood level and more effectively linking residents to citywide and regional programs and services.

- 1) Basic educational credentials
- 2) Job skills and work readiness
  - Develop work and career goals
  - Obtain occupational skill/credential
  - Learn workplace norms (promptness, dress, communication)

- Strengthen “life skills”
  - Identify job opportunities
  - Conduct job search
- 3) Child care services for working parents
  - 4) Transportation – to education and training programs, social services, child care, and work
  - 5) Job retention and career advancement support
  - 6) A support structure for achievement

## ***B. The Components of Workforce Development in Weinland Park: Needs, Resources, and Ongoing Challenges***

### **Basic Educational Credentials**

It is increasingly understood that the path to a living wage jobs begins with basic skills. The day when a worker could find a reasonably well-paying job without a high school education and basic literacy and numeracy, if not already history, soon will be. In fact, in many cases, well-paying jobs require not only a high school diploma, but a post-secondary credential as well

#### **Needs**

Weinland Park residents are heavily handicapped in this regard. Fully four in 10 adult residents (25 years of age or over) lack a high school diploma. This is almost triple the proportion of metro area residents overall. And fewer than one in five residents have an associates’ degree or better compared to about one in three among metro area residents generally.

In this light, it is imperative that support for adult residents who have not completed high school to obtain their GEDs (as well as efforts to encourage youth to stay in school and receive their high school diplomas, an issue that will be discussed in a later section) be significantly expanded.

#### **Resources**

There are a number of programs that already help residents obtain their GED or that could be more effectively utilized to accomplish this objective.

- ***Godman Guild*** operates an GED program, recently adding a third section to accommodate high demand. Godman Guild staff report that this program is filled to capacity and has a waiting list. The program currently has about 70 students.
- ***OSU Extension*** is collaborating with OSU’s Center for the Study and Teaching to provide literacy classes and individual tutoring.
- ***Columbus State Community College*** provides GED programs, and is able to offer them at satellite locations where appropriate space is available. Some additional funding for such programs is required. CSCC’s program involves aggressive student

counseling to increase completion rates. This includes frequent contact, problem solving and case management. CSCC also offers GED through its distance learning program.

- ***Columbus Public Schools Adult and Community Education*** offers a GED program at its North Education Center, with childcare provided for participants.
- ***Columbus Public Library Northside Branch***. The library has some publications and audio-visual materials to support literacy education, but has a very limited supply because of funding constraints. Other library branches offer literacy programs provided by the Columbus Literacy Council, but the Northside Branch does not have the space to offer such programs, and the Literacy Council is already stretched to capacity.

### **Ongoing Challenges**

- By all account there are not enough existing GED slots to meet demand. As noted, Godman Guild has a substantial waiting list for its program. In addition, it has only two teachers for its 70 students, and does not have the capacity to provide the intensive counseling and case management needed to help participants stay motivated and complete the program. Some prospective students test at very low grade levels and need intensive tutoring to remain in the program, which is not possible at existing staffing levels. As a result, the program completion rate is low, less than 15 percent in 2004.
- Evidence indicates that GED programs can be more successful for working-age adults if tied to job training and placement. Godman Guild would like to integrate employment objectives into its GED program, including developing a pathway into occupational training and providing work readiness and life skills training, but has been unable to do so because of resource constraints.
- Public funding for GED programs is limited, so expanding access to GED will require a combination of increasing access to existing GED resources and tapping additional sources of philanthropic and corporate funding. In this regard, the GED and related of capacities of CSCC need to be more fully utilized for Weinland Park residents.
- While there is not enough capacity to meet current demand, there are still many residents who need a GED but are not enrolled or planning to do so. Residents who don't understand or are too discouraged to seek their GED need to be engaged, educated about the educational credentials required in today's workplace, assisted in developing educational and career objectives, and supported in taking the steps necessary to achieve those objectives.
- Additional classroom space in the community would enable educational providers such as CSCC and the Literacy Council to offer additional neighborhood-based educational programs.

### **Job Skills and Work Readiness**

While basic skills are a pre-requisite for a living wage job, they are insufficient. To find and keep a good job, individuals must have an occupational skill, the ability to

function effectively in the workplace, and the ability to manage work and other life responsibilities.

## **Needs**

Weinland Park residents face a range of issues that render them unprepared or unqualified for living wage jobs.

***Limited occupational skills and work experience.*** Many Weinland Park residents lack occupational skill credentials or basic computer skills required for many jobs. Others lack stable work histories, including individuals relying on public assistance. About 14% of Weinland Park households rely wholly or partly on public assistance compared to less than 3% in the Columbus MSA as a whole. Lacking work experience, many of these individuals don't have the skills to function effectively in the workplace, including communications, teamwork, problem resolution, appropriate dress, and timeliness. Some employers, such as University Hospital, will not generally hire applicants without stable work histories.

***Limited knowledge of the job market.*** Another barrier for some residents is limited knowledge of career options, and lack of skills required to conduct a job search. Many residents do not understand their options for entry-level employment, what career paths exist, and what types of employment are well matched with their interests and skills. Sometimes their expectations for entry-level employment are unrealistic in light of their limited skills and work experience. They may also lack knowledge on how to identify job openings, prepare resumes submit job applications, and conduct job interviews. With many employers now taking job applications solely over the internet, many Weinland Park job seekers lack access to a computer or are not comfortable using this technology.

***Limited life management skills.*** Entering the work world adds to the demands and stresses already experienced by Weinland Park workers and families. Working full-time requires balancing work, personal, and family life. Working parents need to find appropriate childcare. Transportation can be an issue, and families need to live on a limited budget. Many Weinland Park residents struggle with these issues.

***Low self-confidence.*** A less tangible but not unimportant barrier is psychological. Without work histories or with unsuccessful work experiences, many residents lack confidence in their employability, some jobseekers lack the motivation to aggressively enter the job market. Some also justifiably fear hiring discrimination.

***Special barriers.*** Some individuals face special barriers that make it difficult or impossible to qualify for certain jobs. These include substance abuse histories (Godman Guild reports that at least half of the individuals applying for its job readiness training have a substance abuse problem), criminal records, and mental and physical health problems. A new state law, for example, prohibits employees with criminal histories from working in health care occupations involving direct patient care. At University Hospital, a felony conviction and even some misdemeanor convictions disqualify individuals from working in any hospital position. A positive drug test also results in disqualification. Another issue for these individuals is the need for special support

services, such as re-entry programs, substance abuse treatment, and mental health services, in addition to the standard job skills and work readiness training.

## Resources

### Computer Literacy

- **Godman Guild** has a computer learning center offering both individual access and computer classes. The OSU Extension provides volunteer teachers, tutors, and technical support.
- **Columbus State Community College** offers free computer training courses on-line and at its computer lab.
- **Columbus Public Schools Adult and Community Education** recently received a community technology center grant for computer training at its North Education Center.

### Occupational Skills Training

The largest public sources of post-secondary certificate-level occupational skills training programs are Columbus State Community College and the Department of Adult and Community Education at the Columbus Public Schools. The programs at CSCC and those offered at Adult and Community Education's North Opportunity Center are reasonably accessible to Weinland Park residents. Non-profit organizations and private proprietary schools offer other programs.

- **Columbus State Community College** offers a wide range of occupational skills certificate programs, often with durations of one year or less. These include a pre-apprentice and construction trades program, and an auto service technician certification with credits toward an associates' degree program. It is introducing a number of new programs including information technology (A+, C+, and help desk), a manufacturing technology program, and a nurse aide training program conducted at a local nursing home. Programs are tuition-based but offer financial aid. CSCC also provides financial counseling, helps students develop a college plan, and provides career information, testing, and counseling. Students completing certificate programs can go on to complete associates' degree programs. CSCC also has an extensive distance learning program, mostly involving credit programs but also with some developmental education courses. It is considering ways to use its distance learning capacity to provide customized training for employers.
- **Adult and Community Education, Columbus Public Schools** offers a number of occupational certificate programs, notably in the health care field. Its most popular health care program is a one-year Licensed Practical Nursing program. Others include nursing assistant, dialysis technician, and medical coding. It also offers an evening automotive technology program, a construction trades program, HVAC training, and an office skills program.

## **Job Readiness Training and Job Search Assistance**

The primary job readiness training programs and job search assistance services that are easily accessible to Weinland Park residents include the following:

- **Godman Guild** operates the Job Success Program, a four-week job readiness program. It also operates the Opportunity Knocks program aimed at public assistance recipients approaching their time limit. The program works with clients to create a plan to address employment barriers and obtain job. This program is operated with five other agencies that are part of the Columbus Federation of Settlements. Godman Guild also has part-time job developer to support job placement and organizes job fairs.
- **Adult and Community Education, Columbus Public Schools** operates a six-month job readiness assistance program at the Franklin County Jobs and Family Services North Opportunities Center and the North Education Center. Participants are recruited through JFS and have to be receiving public assistance. The program includes job placement assistance.
- **Columbus State Community College** offers job counseling and job placement assistance for its students through a private employment agency. It also operates a satellite of the county's one-stop employment center.
- **The Columbus Public Library Northside Branch** provides a range of job search assistance. It helps customers find job postings on the internet and in the newspaper, helps with internet job applications, provides materials on resume writing and interviewing, and provides some basic computer training to help with resume writing. Librarians and library assistants provide one-on-one assistance by appointment on a time available basis.
- **Greater Columbus Employment Maintenance Organization** is operated by the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce and Jewish Family Services with a grant from the Columbus Compact Corporation, which manages the Empowerment Zone. The organization collaborates with all community-based organizations in the EZ, including Godman Guild. It provide preparatory training on resume writing, meeting with recruiters, and completing applications, sponsors job fairs, and educates employers about EZ tax breaks.
- **The JFS North Opportunity Center** is one of the county's one-stop employment centers. In addition to the job readiness program operated by the Columbus Department of Adult and Community Education, it provides job search resources and assistance.

## **Self Employment**

- **OSU Extension** provides small business assistance, including entrepreneurial training and small business incubator development assistance.
- **Columbus State Community College** operates U.S. Small Business Administration small business development centers in the Columbus area. CSCC also works cooperatively with the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce on minority

business development and entrepreneurship. It is also conducting a feasibility study in conjunction with the city and other partners for development of a mixed-use small business incubator in the Empowerment Zone.

### **Services to Populations with Special Barriers**

- **Godman Guild** has a chemical dependency/mental health case manager who conducts barrier assessments, counseling and referrals for Job Success and GED students.
- **Alkebulon**, a nonprofit organization located in the neighborhood provides re-entry services for ex-offenders. Services include mentoring, violence prevention training, entrepreneurship training, limited job placement, and childcare. .
- **Columbus State Community College** provides counseling and referral services for students with substance abuse, mental health, and other social service needs.
- **North Opportunity Center** offers services to clients with mental health and substance abuse problems through a JFS contractor.

### **Life Skills Training**

- **OSU Extension** gives a class on life skills, including money management. It also works with the Financial Services Urban Coalition, a coalition of bankers that encourages people to open checking accounts, and partnered with a credit union to expand its services into the community.
- **Godman Guild** integrates life skills training into its job readiness programs.

### **Ongoing Challenges**

- Federal WIA funding, an important source of occupational training for public and nonprofit organizations, is very limited.
- Some job readiness programs, including Godman Guild's Opportunity Knocks and Adult and Community Education's program at the North Opportunity Center, are limited to individuals receiving public assistance.
- Job readiness programs have difficulty placing graduates in jobs because of weak relationships with employers. Most programs lack job development staff that develop relationships with employers, learn their employment requirements, make appropriate referrals, and maintain contacts to identify and resolve problems with recent placements. Godman Guild, for example, has only a part-time job developer, which it would like to expand to a full-time position. It also reports that it needs a full-time job placement staffer to work with clients on job searches.
- Job readiness programs typically provide only limited or no occupational skills training, resulting in placements in low-paying jobs. While this is sometimes necessary and even appropriate in the short-term, participants are rarely linked to post-placement training to support career advancement.
- Job search assistance resources are inadequate. For example, the Northside Branch library, because of limited space and staffing, cannot significantly increase its current inventory of 15 computers (it plans to add three more), or dedicate any specifically

for job search activities. It reports long waits to use the computers for job searches and job applications during certain times of the day. It also cannot hold job search classes or computer training classes, as some other library branches do, despite high levels of demand.

- CSCC reports that it could offer some programs in the neighborhood through distance or on-site classes if there was appropriate classroom space available.
- There is a need for additional career exploration resources and vocational assessment services.
- Program capacity for ex-offenders and substance abusers is widely considered inadequate to meet demand. Godman Guild reports that there is a long waiting list for substance abuse program, and Alkebulon reports that, with its limited resources, it does not even conduct formal outreach efforts.
- North Opportunity Center and the county's one-stop system in general, have historically suffered from poor management and are not well regarded by clients and service providers alike. The management of the system has recently undergone reorganization, which may lead to service improvements. However, current plans involve consolidating one-stop services into one center south of downtown, which will be much less convenient for Weinland Park residents than the North Opportunity Center, which is located on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Grant Avenue.

## Childcare

### Needs

The availability of convenient, high quality, affordable childcare is critical for working parents. Parents have a range of child care needs. There are different needs for children at different age levels. Some parents need care at non-standard hours to match their work shifts. Others need specialized care for children with disabilities or special needs. And parents need back-up arrangements for sick children or when arranged childcare falls through.

### Resources

- **Godman Guild** hosts a full-day Head Start program, running from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- **OSU College of Human Ecology's Department of Human Development and Family Studies** plans to open a Child Development Center adjacent to the new Weinland Park Elementary School, which will considerably increase the childcare availability. The center will serve 88 children, including 64 pre-schoolers, and 24 infants and toddlers. It is scheduled to open late next year. According to the director of the center, it hopes to recruit many of its students from Weinland Park.
- **Summit Avenue United Church** is considering opening its childcare center to Weinland Park residents.
- **Informal networks** also exist among neighborhood residents for short-term and emergency childcare.

## Ongoing Challenges

Even with existing and planned resources, the availability of convenient, high-quality, and affordable childcare is likely to remain inadequate,

- In addition to the general shortage of childcare slots, specialized services including sick childcare, early and late shift care, and care for special needs children with chronic illnesses or physical/mental disabilities are in very short supply.
- Parents among the “working poor” who do not qualify for childcare subsidies have considerable difficulty paying childcare expenses. While state childcare vouchers subsidies are available to some low-income parents, their availability has declined and eligibility standards have become more restrictive.
- There is also a need for more after school programs for elementary school children.

## Transportation

### Needs

Residents who find jobs in or adjacent to Weinland Park or in downtown Columbus can rely on the regional public transit system. However, for those with jobs on the outskirts of the city or beyond, public transit is not always convenient, fast, or reliable. In addition, for parents who have to drop their children at childcare facilities that are beyond walking distance, using public transit may not be practical.

Automobile ownership in Weinland Park is low. Forty percent of Weinland Park households do not have an automobile available. This compares to fewer than 10% of MSA households. And even Weinland Park households that own an automobile may not have sufficient income to maintain them properly.

### Resources

- *COTA* has an extensive route system. It provides frequent and rapid access to downtown from Weinland Park. Getting to most other job sites can take much longer and require at least one transfer.
- *COTA*'s pilot Urban Express van service to work sites has been somewhat successful, but is very small scale and has other limitations. It requires a minimum of five workers per employer, does not operate on weekends, and is often behind schedule. *COTA* cannot expand this program until it is able to raise a local match for federal funding.

## Ongoing Challenges

Efforts to improve *COTA* services to workers traveling to outlying areas are likely to prove costly and time-consuming, and may not be a productive focus for neighborhood efforts. Another approach would be to assist residents who need automobiles for their jobs to obtain reliable vehicles at reasonable cost.

## Job Retention and Career Advancement

### Needs

Obtaining a job is only a first step toward long-term career success. New employees, especially those with limited work experience, need support to overcome problems in the workplace and elsewhere in their lives that may jeopardize their employment. Moreover, many entry-level workers lose their jobs for a variety of reasons and have to re-enter the job market. Finally, entry-level workers are more likely to advance in their careers if they develop and pursue a long-term career plan involving additional education and training. Given the limited skills and work experience of many Weinland Park residents, even those who obtain jobs are likely to require help in setting a career path and progressing toward living wage employment.

### Resources

- *Godman Guild* monitors job retention and provides informal retention support to its job readiness program graduates.
- *Columbus State Community College* works with students to develop career plans involving progressively higher levels of training and credentialing and, to some degree, seeks to structure its programs to support career pathways (e.g., in the nursing field).

### Ongoing Challenges

- Godman Guild reports that it has limited staff capacity to follow up with clients once they graduate from the Job Success program. It would like to increase this capacity significantly but has been unable to obtain the necessary funding.
- Education and workforce development professionals agree that job retention and career advancement resources are a weak point in the region's workforce development system. Government programs generally provide little funding for such activities beyond short-term retention.
- Expanding these services will be important in assisting entry-level workers to advance into living wage jobs and long-term careers.

## Support Structures

### Needs

Beyond specific services, individuals struggling to complete their education, find a job, or deal with life challenges that threaten to derail their efforts, need personal advice and problem solving support. This could be in the form of professional support from a case manager or informal support from a friend, colleague, or a volunteer from a church or service organization.

## Resources

- **Godman Guild**, through its membership in the Workforce Alliance, has access to the Alliance’s new shared-management database, which enhances its ability to connect clients with needed resources.
- **Columbus Urban Experience**, a faith-based initiative led by Robert Caldwell, is in the process of training and placing volunteer mentors to support Godman Guild clients who have recently been placed in a job. It is also working with area churches to “adopt” neighborhood families.

## Ongoing Challenges

- Case managers of some city or county programs serving neighborhood residents lack the time, resources, temperament, or incentives to provide effective support.
- Individuals who are clients of a number of employment and social service programs often have multiple case managers for themselves and family members, increasing their confusion about how to receive assistance and making case managers less accountable.
- The lack of “civic infrastructure” in the community increases social isolation.
- Communication and coordination among service providers in serving common clients still needs to be strengthened.
- More mentors and peer support networks are needed.

## Career Preparation and Support for Youth

### Needs

Too many Weinland Park teens are dropping out of high school. While the reasons are many and complex, the fact remains that without a high school diploma and a post-secondary credential, the odds of today’s high school student obtaining a well-paying job are minimal. Parents and educators recognize that unless there is for more support for success in school beginning in the early grades, many of the neighborhood’s young people will face dead end futures.

### Resources

In addition to school-based programs, there are a number of community-based resources that are available or could be provided to neighborhood youth.

- **Godman Guild** operates teen programs with a work readiness/summer internship component.
- **Directions for Youth and Families**, which provides a range of services for at-risk youth throughout Central Ohio, operates the **Short Stop Teen Center** in Weinland Park. The center primarily serves middle school children with a range of innovative programs. These include creative enterprises that design, produce and market products such as t-shirts, tiles and greeting cards, performing arts programs (including dance, music, and theater), and CD production. These programs are designed to build

self-esteem, discipline, and academic, creative, business, communication, and leadership skills. The Center also recently started a tutoring program focusing on math, reading, and writing. It is offered three times a week after school. Center staffers report that they could increase participation in their programs if they had an additional van to transport participants.

- ***OSU Extension*** plans to provide literacy classes and tutoring for neighborhood youth during summer 2005. One activity will be the development of a community newspaper.
- ***OSU Service Learning Initiative*** offers volunteer opportunities for student tutors and mentors.
- ***University Hospital*** sponsors a math and science club once a month after school at OSU College of African-American Studies Community Extension Center not far from Weinland Park.
- ***Columbus State Community College*** has Kids in College summer camp that focuses on career exploration in science and technology fields. CSCC also operates a range of career exploration, remedial education, and early college programs with the Columbus Public Schools.

### **Ongoing Challenges**

Many of these programs are highly regarded, but relatively small scale. While community-based career exploration, educational support, and skill building programs alone won't address the problems of school drop-out levels and destructive behaviors, these programs need to be expanded and more outreach undertaken to engage more neighborhood youth.

## **IV. Preliminary Recommendations**

### ***Implications of Findings***

- The most serious barrier to employment for Weinland Park residents is a lack of basic skills. The success of occupational training, job preparation and placement programs, and support services in helping residents obtain living wage jobs must rest on a foundation of basic educational attainment and credentialing. This means significantly increasing high school graduation and GED completion rates.
- A post-secondary occupational credential is increasingly required to obtain a living wage job. There is a wide range of occupational training programs available in Columbus from a variety of learning providers, including higher education institutions, nonprofit organizations, and private proprietary training schools. More can be done to link Weinland Park residents to occupational training programs, both pre- and post-employment.
- There are significant employment opportunities that are accessible to Weinland Park residents. More effective efforts must be developed to prepare residents for these jobs, link jobseekers with employers, and help them succeed in these jobs. There will

require more pre-employment job preparation, increased job development efforts, and more post-placement support.

- There are solid organizational and program assets within Weinland Park, but they are overstretched. These assets can be leveraged through stronger organizational collaboration, both internal to the neighborhood and through outreach to other service providers. If this proves insufficient to meet community needs, additional funding may be needed to expand the availability of critical workforce development and related services.
- There are already many points of collaboration between the community and OSU. A more organized and comprehensive initiative to identify additional forms of collaboration can prove mutually beneficial to both parties.
- Residents need stronger support structures – both formal and informal – to help them succeed in achieving their educational and work objectives. This includes support with career planning, job search, and job retention as well as related family and personal issues such as managing household finances, parenting, addressing health issues, and dealing with life’s inevitable “breakdowns.” Increased support may come in the form of better access to information, stronger case management from service providers, and informal mentoring and peer support networks.
- Finally, there is no single, well-established forum where community stakeholders can work collaboratively to address workforce development issues. Stronger engagement of community leadership and institutions will help to gauge needs, identify new community capacities and resources, and improve the neighborhood’s competitive position for public and philanthropic funding.

## ***Potential Initiatives***

### **Establish a Weinland Park Employment Collaborative**

The community, in partnership with the city, should establish a Weinland Park Employment Collaborative. The Collaborative would be an umbrella organization with the mission of raising the levels of education, employment, and incomes in Weinland Park, improving the availability and quality of workforce development services to Weinland Park residents, addressing program gaps, and leveraging public and philanthropic resources. It would provide a forum for the development of a comprehensive, strategic approach to addressing the community’s workforce development needs.

Membership in the Collaborative would include community-based and faith-based organizations providing workforce development services, as well as local business, civic and political leaders, major institutions, and representatives of key public agencies. It could also include experts in the field of workforce development. The Collaborative would have a number of objectives:

- Make education and employment a highly visible community-wide priority;

- Create an image of Weinland Park as a “learning community” dedicated to economic advancement;
- Counter the sense of hopelessness that prevents many residents from pursuing educational and career goals.
- Work to expand workforce development services and job access to a scale commensurate with need;
- Support and enhance the work of existing workforce development service providers;
- Raise awareness of existing neighborhood and city workforce development resources among Weinland Park residents;
- Support greater integration and coordination of services among Weinland Park organizations and with other local organizations.
- Further engage existing community institutions and develop community leadership around education and workforce development;
- Monitor the appropriateness and effectiveness of existing programs;
- Develop strategies to address identified resource gaps;
- Reduce fragmentation and improve program coordination;
- Establish a united front in communicating neighborhood concerns and advocating for additional resources;
- Ensure greater continuity of services.

The Collaborative would provide a forum for the community to establish goals, take initiative, and monitor progress around education and employment issues. It would empower the community to take greater control and ownership over its economic future. While the Collaborative would not compete with or supplant existing service providers, it could supplement and leverage their resources by taking on coordination of functions, providing shared services, developing pilot programs, etc.

Initial priorities of the Collaborative could include a campaign to promote education and skill building focusing on high school graduation and GED attainment. This could include efforts to increase GED slots and enrollments, the development of a wider range of GED options, some tied more closely to job preparation and placement, and the development of mentoring and peer support networks to support program completion.

### **Develop a Career Literacy Initiative**

The Collaborative could include on its agenda the development of a career literacy initiative designed to inform residents of the dynamics of the Columbus regional economy and the implications for employment opportunities and skill requirements. Residents would be educated about the types of jobs that are available, both entry-level and higher-skill, what wages they pay, and what educational levels are required to obtain well-paying jobs in various industries. This could involve the development of an

engaging PowerPoint for presentation at community meetings or a booklet/resource guide for distribution through community- and faith-based organizations.

### **Increase GED Completions Rates**

The Collaborative could undertake a campaign to increase GED completion rates through a number of related initiatives:

- To raise awareness of the need for GED completion through The Career Literacy Initiative described above;
- An effort by service providers to increase the availability of GED programs, with more convenient sites and hours;
- To make stronger linkages between GED and occupational training leading to a well-paying job;
- To develop a corps of volunteer tutors to help GED candidates.

### **Establish a Formal University-Neighborhood Partnership.**

OSU is already working with the neighborhood on a number of activities related to workforce development, as describe above. These efforts could be strengthened by creating a more formal partnership to plan, facilitate and coordinate a range of joint activities. Such activities could include:

- Expanding job preparation and placement for entry-level positions on the OSU campus and University Hospital. These efforts could particularly focus on low-and moderate skill custodial, maintenance/repair, food services, clerical, and nursing and allied health positions. These efforts could involve developing customized pre-employment training, job search assistance, and post-employment support. This effort could also prepare jobseekers for other state government jobs within the same civil service job classifications and jobs at other health care and food services employers
- Making greater use of student and faculty volunteers for tutoring, mentoring, job coaching, and other voluntary activities.
- Providing more educational support and career exploration opportunities for Weinland Park Youth.
- Expanding the activities of the OSU Extension in such areas as entrepreneurship training, life skills activities, youth enrichment, computer training, etc.
- Using academic expertise to design new program models, provide technical assistance, and evaluate program outcomes.

### **Provide Additional Community Space for Employment-related Activities**

As part of the physical revitalization programming under consideration for the Weinland Park plan, the 3M site is being considered for mixed-use activities, including

community space. This space could potentially be used for a number of employment-related activities.

- Classroom space for additional GED or occupational training, either on-site or through distance learning technology. The space could be made available to Godman Guild, Columbus State Community College, Columbus Adult and Community Education, or other educational providers.
- Incubator/shared space and equipment for micro-entrepreneurs. This could be combined with entrepreneurial training programs. CSCC, which is planning to develop an incubator in the Empowerment Zone, which encompasses Weinland Park, could be approached about using this space.
- Expanded child care and after school care.
- Temporary satellite space for the Northside Branch library until its new building is completed. This could be dedicated to activities such as literacy education, job search, and computer training.

### **Provide Employment and Entrepreneurial Opportunities Tied to Physical Revitalization Activities.**

The significant residential and commercial redevelopment proposed for Weinland Park could create employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for neighborhood residents. Programs should be developed to train and prepare residents for these opportunities. Such programs could include:

- Pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship training in the building trades.
- Commitments by property developers to meet neighborhood training and hiring criteria.
- Entrepreneurial training for building sub-contractors and home improvement businesses. This might particularly appeal to ex-offenders with trade skills who have limited employment options.

### **Improve Access to Jobs in Outlying Areas**

The focus of employment efforts should primarily be on accessible jobs in and adjacent to the neighborhood and in the downtown area. However, certain jobs, particularly manufacturing and distribution, are generally beyond these areas. The Employment Collaborative could work with COTA to promote van services, ride sharing or other services that would result in greater access to jobs.

Another approach would be to replicate a number of programs that solicit tax-deductible car donations, then repair the cars, provide them at cost to public assistance recipients and other low-income individuals, and sometimes provide training in maintenance and basic repair. Such a program might also be combined with and automotive training internship or even an automotive certificate programs such as that offered by CSCC.

## **Build Community Support Structures**

Efforts to involve volunteers from within and outside the community in supporting residents in their education and employment efforts should be expanded. Such efforts could include

- Establish a volunteer recruitment campaign through the Employment Collaborative.
- Expand mentoring programs such as the one developed by Columbus Urban Experience. Mentoring recruitment could target the faith-based community, OSU staff volunteers from similar backgrounds and experience as Weinland Park residents, and Weinland Park residents themselves.
- Develop informal peer support networks for GED program participants, jobseekers, and entry-level employees.
- Build on informal resource networks. Neighborhood residents already are involved in some degree in helping one another with such issues as finding emergency childcare. Ways should be found to encourage and expand these networks, perhaps by providing resource information that can be shared, and enhancing communication tools.

## **Develop Education and Career Development Support Efforts Targeted to Youth**

More needs to be done to encourage young people to stay in school and to develop the skills, behaviors, and attitudes that will help them establish successful careers. While much is being done within the Columbus Public Schools, additional community-based efforts should supplement these school-based efforts.

### **Educational Retention**

Young people need more community support to stay in school through efforts such as mentoring, tutoring, and enjoyable out-of-school educational activities. Some of these efforts could include:

- Establishment of a “Grandmother’s Brigade,” as discussed at the community charrette in February. Many of the older women in the community play the roles of de facto community leaders and are highly respected. Many have informally assumed mentoring roles for young people as they seek to keep youth out of trouble and on the right track. These individuals could be supported in their role through training and information that will help them direct youth into productive learning activities. This effort could potentially be supported by the federal Senior Corps, which, through a local partner, could provide volunteer stipends.
- Youth mentoring and tutoring by college students. OSU already provides tutors and mentors through the Service Learning Initiative, Project Community, and other programs. These activities could be expanded in Weinland Park through the University-Neighborhood Partnership. Over the longer run, a more ambitious effort using the nationally-renowned Breakthrough Collaborative model could be considered.
- Homework Help Center. The Northside Branch library could establish a homework help center if a satellite facility can be established in the 3M site or another location.

Some of the other branch libraries have set up programs, using staff and volunteers, during after school hours. The Northside Branch does not currently have sufficient space.

- College promotion and incentives. OSU and other schools could promote interest in completing high school and attending college through such activities as college weekends or camps, which give young people and opportunity to sample the college experience, and a small number of merit scholarships for neighborhood youth who excel in academics and community service.
- Support for parental involvement. This could include coaching for parents on supporting their children's education and keeping them in school. It could also include joint learning activities by parents and children that help parents create a learning environment within the home. This might include a "Technology Goes Home" program model that involves parents and children learning to use computers together, and receiving a free computer to take home at the end of the program.

### **Career Exploration**

Young people are more likely to stay engaged in education if they develop career interests. Initiatives to support career exploration should be taken at the community level to support in-school activities. These might include:

- Career camps organized by OSU, University Hospital, and CSCC. These could follow the model of the M.D. Camp organized by OSU College of Medicine. This is a day camp for high school students who want to become doctors, with medical students as their supervisors/mentors. Activities include a range of classes and labs that help the students identify their particular strengths and interests.
- Access to the resources of the OSU Career Center.
- Apprenticeship and work experience programs involving placements with local employers.
- Expansion of entrepreneurship experiences such as those provided by the Short-Stop Center.

### **Entry-level Work Opportunities**

Older youth, even those remaining in school, can benefit from entry-level part-time jobs that provide income and work experience. Targeted job readiness and placement programs could be developed for youth in the 16-to-25 age group. One particularly promising opportunity that is now under consideration by Godman Guild is a customer service training program in partnership with CSCC and Campus Partners that seeks to place young Weinland Park residents in jobs in the new South Campus Gateway and other neighborhood retail and entertainment employers. Such efforts should involve training and certification using National Retail Federation customer service standards to provide graduates with a widely recognized credential in the retail field.

## **V. Questions for the Working Committee**

The following questions may help to guide the discussion about establishing priorities for a Weinland Park workforce development strategy.

- 1) Which recommendations address the neighborhood's most pressing needs?
- 2) Which recommendations are likely to have the greatest neighborhood support?
- 3) Which recommendations are likely to attract organizational commitment and resources from key stakeholders and participants?
- 4) Which recommendations are likely to be implemented quickly? Which will take the longest to implement?
- 5) Which recommendations are most complementary to other elements of the proposed neighborhood plan (as it now stands)?