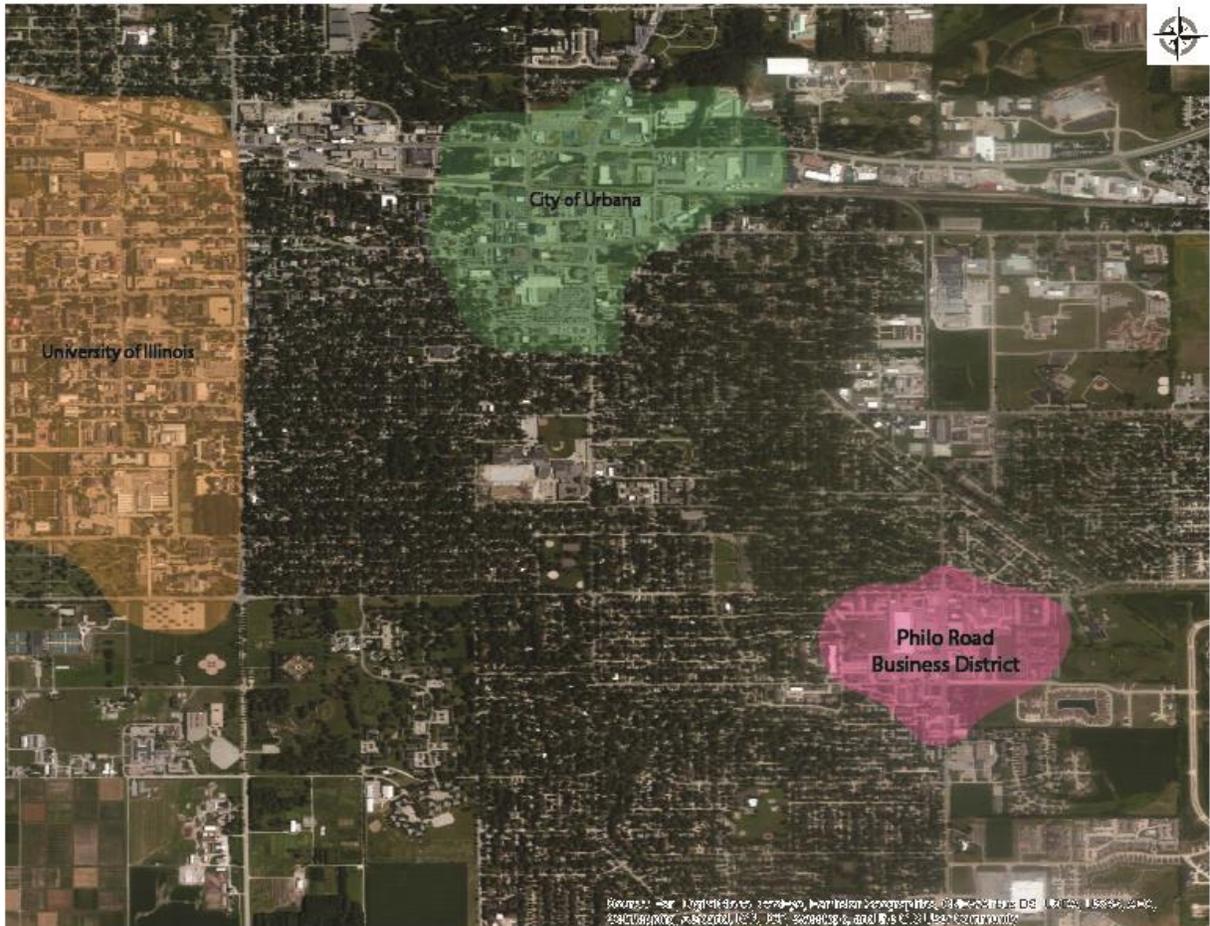


Evaluating Philo Road Business District Action Plan



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1. Background

On the 3rd of August 2004, staff of the City of Urbana presented a report on economic conditions in the Philo Road Business District to the City Council. The report was based on several studies conducted in previous years, including 2001 Neighborhood Workshop, 2002 Existing Condition Report, 2003 Neighborhood Open Houses and Focus Group, 2003 Urbana Business Survey, and 2004 Resident Survey. Based on these studies, Philo Road Business District Revitalization Action Plan was developed, and it was then presented to and approved by the City Council on February 7, 2005. The goals of the Action Plan include:

- Improve the image of the Philo Road Business District
 - Retain and enhance existing businesses
 - Improve development incentives
 - Plan and construct infrastructure improvements
 - Beautify the Business District through public and private efforts
 - Provide marketing assistance
 - Encourage creative building reuse
 - Promote development of outlots to promote denser/more vibrant area
 - Zoning and signage Improvements
- (Philo Road Business District Revitalization Action Plan, 2005, p20)

Based on these goals, the plan highlights specific projects and programs to be implemented, the tentative starting timeframe of those projects and programs, and a list of organizations that are responsible to carry out these projects and programs (see **Table 1** in Annexes & **Table 2** for the acronyms). Ten years on after the approval of the revitalization action plan, the City of Urbana would like to know the extent at which the plan has achieved its intended goals. This is an interest shared by the local and business community, and this sets the scope for the project to evaluate the action plan.

2. Objectives of the Project

The Community Development Division of the City of Urbana seeks to do an evaluation of the Philo Road Business District Revitalization Action Plan, and thus, the objectives of the project are to examine the implementation of the action plan and assess its effects of on the revitalization of the business district. As such, the evaluation will specifically look at the projects and programs that have been implemented and how they have contributed to the reinvigoration of the business district, and at the same time, it will touch on projects and programs that have not been implemented. In doing so, the evaluation will address conditions that enable and constraint the implementation of the action plan. The evaluation, then, will end with a list of recommendations for the city to consider as strategies for the future actions to help with the revitalization of the business district.

3. Introduction

Philo Road Business District is located in Southeast Urbana, which was once a thriving commercial area. A researched conducted in 2004¹ by the City of Urbana indicated that from 1960s to 1980s, retailers such as Kmart and Kroger were prominent in the area because Philo Road itself functioned as a major connection hub to Road 130, which acted as a main route for the transportation of goods and people to the area. However, in the 1990s, Road 130 was extended to connect with the Windsor Road, and at the same time I-74 was built, which created the link to the newly developed commercial areas in Prospect and Neil Streets. This development reduced the importance of Philo Road as a major arterial road that caused the retailers to move away from the business district, and this contributed to the initial decline of the Philo Road Business District.

The Philo Road Business District is situated within Florida Road on the north and Colorado Road in the south. It is a mix-use area where residential neighborhood, both multi-family apartments and single family houses, businesses and offices are clustered together. Based on the research in 2004, the most prominent use of the commercial area was grocers, convenient stores, gas stations, professional offices, and other small businesses. This is still the same use in the area where grocers like the County Market and Walgreen, and fast food restaurants like McDonalds and the Burger King still dominate the commercial district. In 2004, population within 5 miles of the business district was about 106,528 people with 42,900 total households (Action Plan, 2005²). It is also reported that area around the Philo Road has been among the one of the most fast growing neighborhoods in Urbana that contributes to additional housing development. Although housing development increases, the situation of the business district itself does not change much because businesses have not really grown. On the contrary, crimes such as shooting and loitering have been reported to commonly take place. Such crimes have been mentioned as one of the causes that deters the revival of the business district, and even though it is reported on the news and by the competent authority that crimes have dropped³ in the area, the perception about the area as unsafe still exists. This perception is believed to play a major role in preventing businesses and property owners to invest further, and discourage new businesses to move in.

The decline of the business district, contributed by a decreasing role of Philo Road as main artery road, development of Prospect Business Area, crimes, and many other factors, eventually encouraged the City of Urbana along with the business owners, land owners, and the community to initiate and create strategies to revitalize the business district. These strategies were compiled and created into a plan, which became the Philo Road Business District Action Plan.

4. Why Plan?

Lewis D. Hopkins says that plans are guidelines for future actions. As guidelines, plans are integral part of decision making process because they provide procedures that are necessary

1 A researched that was conducted by the Economic Development Division of the City of Urbana in 2004 regarding Philo Road Business District Revitalization.

2 Philo Road Business District Revitalization Action Plan (2005). Final Report. City of Urbana.

3 Wade, P. (2011). Crime Drops in August in Philo Road Area. News Gazette. Accessed from <http://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/2011-09-17/crime-drops-august-philo-road-area.html>

to guide decisions. And with the plans' capacity as guidelines, they enable decisions to be made in correspondence with actions that will give the most beneficial outcomes. Similarly, plans utilize holistic approach of decision making where all the stakeholders are involved and their ideas are incorporated. As such, plans provide opportunities and encourage all the relevant parties to take part in the process of planning and decision making so that their interest is represented. Moreover, plans provide a systematic decision making framework where actions are determined through rigorous discussions about most appropriate strategies and their consequences. More importantly, plans allow us to make adjustment in terms of improving our development decisions based on lessons learnt.

In the similar sense, the Philo Road Business District Action Plan should be looked at as guidelines for actions that can revitalize the business district. Hence, it will become the guidelines for the relevant stakeholders including the City of Urbana, business owners, property owners, and the community regarding the essential actions to improve the businesses in the area. As such, the action plan can help the stakeholders to work together, and determine what and how actions are most effectively carried out.

5. Category of the Action Plan

Based on the goals of the action plans and specific actions items attached to each goal, the action plan can be grouped into three broad development categories, namely physical, social, and economic aspects of development. Placing these goals into this broader group will be helpful for the process of evaluation and analysis of the action plan in a more systematic way.

5. a. Physical Development

Physical development is related to actions that aim to improve the physical conditions of the Philo Road Business District in order to increase the physical appearance the area. The following goals are identified to fall into this category.

- i. Improve the image of the Philo Road Business District
- ii. Plan and construct infrastructure improvements
- iii. Beautify the Philo Road Business District
- iv. Zoning and signage improvements

5. b. Social Development

Social aspect of development is associated with creating an environment where the area is safe, not only for businesses to operate, but also for the people to travel and engage in activities within the area. As such, it seeks to encourage relevant apparatus and people to be more proactive in their efforts to improve the conditions of the area by working together and involving in the neighborhood organizations. One goal is identified to promote social development, namely:

- i. Improve security and safety in the Area

5. c. Economic Development

Activities and programs that encourage investment in businesses and promote economic development in the area belong to this category. The followings goals fall into

this category because they seek to create conditions that can improve business activities in the area. The goals within this category are:

- i. Retain existing businesses
- ii. Enhance incentives
- iii. Provide marketing assistance
- iv. Investigate building reuse
- v. Investigate site redevelopment uses/outlot development opportunities

It is important to note that these three improvement aspects need to be developed in a mutually-enforcing manner since they all play an important role in addressing the revitalization issue in the Philo Road Business District. Therefore, these development categories are inextricably connected.

6. The Implemented Projects and Programs

Plans, as discussed, are guidelines for future actions, and as guidelines, plans may not be realized and implemented in accordance with the indicated timeframe due to various reasons. Hence, certain actions in the plan may not be carried out as expected. Similarly, such issue is expected with the Philo Road Business District Action Plan. Nonetheless, examining the projects and programs that have been implemented is essential to evaluate how far the action plan has come to achieve its objectives.

Since the approval of the action plan in 2005, substantial number of action items have been implemented. For the purpose of this analysis, each action items are discussed based on the development category in order to observe which aspect of development has made more progress.

6. a. Physical Development

Strategies for physical development aim to improve the image of the Philo Road Business District by maintaining and improving infrastructures, and undertaking activities to beautify the area. Such activities are expected to make the business district more physically appealing, and as such, it can attract more people to the area, and with the hope that it can increase business activities and elevate economic condition in the area as a whole. The implementation of the strategies for the physical development is exemplified via the following projects.

- i. Installation of welcome sign and improvement of directional sign.
- ii. The shared lane marking Philo Road in 2010
- iii. Studies of Philo Road/Florida Avenue Intersection improvements in 2011
- iv. Parking removal and new bike lanes on Philo Road in 2011
- v. Philo Road/Florida Avenue traffic signal improvement 2014
- vi. Dedication and installation of sculpture in 2010
- Vii. Landscaping

Installing welcome and business signage is important, not only to highlight the area and make the existing businesses more visible, but also to establish the identity of the neighborhood. The Southeast Urbana Neighborhood Association (SUNA) is working closely with Southeast Urbana Business Group to determine what kind of the identity the neighborhood is looking to create, that is to “*maintain safe attractive neighborhoods which provide a welcoming environment to all residents; support the renewal of the Philo Road business corridor; monitor and actively participate in the growth and development of southeast Urbana in a manner that is sensitive to natural areas and surrounding neighborhoods; and foster a spirit of community and cooperation among residents and businesses of southeast Urbana*” (SUNA⁴). Creating such identity is expected to contribute to the revitalization of the businesses in the area.

Image 1: Welcome sign



Image 2: Business signage



4 SUNA. Accessed from <http://www.sunaurbana.org/home>

Lane marking, adding bike lanes, improving traffic signals, and improving road intersections are part of the “*Plan and construct infrastructure improvement*” goal, where the priority is to improve the Philo Road, sidewalks, and extending bicycle trails. Road improvement is essential for a number of reasons. For instance, it is mentioned that lane marking is important because it can be used to:

- a) *Alert road users of the lateral location bicyclists are likely to occupy within the traveled way,*
- b) *Assist bicyclists with lateral positioning in a shared lane with onstreet parallel parking in order to reduce the chance of a bicyclist impacting the open door of a parked vehicle,*
- c) *Assist bicyclists with lateral positioning in lanes that are too narrow for a motor vehicle and a bicycle to travel side-by-side within the same travel lane,*
- d) *Encourage safe passing of bicyclists by motorists, and*
- e) *Reduce incidence of wrong-way bicycling including ensure road safety for bikers and pedestrians and encourage the community to bike and walk more, which is beneficial for health purposes. (Urbana Public Works Department, 2010⁵)*

Image 3: Bicycle trail



Similarly, study about improving Philo Road/ Florida Avenue intersection was conducted to evaluate the differences between roundabouts and current use of traffic signals. The aim of the study was to determine which alternative is better for the intersection. As such, several criteria were developed and used for the comparison analysis, namely:

- a) *Safety performance for all users.*
- b) *Operational performance for drivers.*
- c) *Estimated capital costs.*
- d) *Life cycle costs (including injury crash costs).*

⁵ Urbana Public Works Department (2010). City of Urbana to Stripe Shared Lane Markings on Philo Road. Accessed from <http://urbanaininois.us/sites/default/files/attachments/060310-sharrows.pdf>

e) *Crash-based cost-benefit analysis.* (Ourston Roundabout Engineering, 2011, p6⁶).

Table 3: Philo Road/Florida Av Intersection Improvement Result

Evaluation Criteria	Traffic Signals	Roundabout	Difference
Annual Injury Crashes	\$1,705,000	\$785,000	\$920,000 lower using a roundabout
Peak Hour Level of Service (LOS) by 2031 (AM/PM)	B / B Good/Good	A / B Excellent/Good	Roundabout improves efficiency
Capital Cost	\$240,000	\$790,000	\$550,000 in favor of a traffic signal
Capital plus Life Cycle Cost	\$1,945,000	\$1,575,000	\$370,000 in favor of a roundabout

Source: Technical Summary, 2011, p3⁷

Although the study indicated that the roundabout alternative was favored under three evaluation criteria, in 2014, traffic signal improvement project was implemented in the Philo Road/Florida Avenue intersection. The project was carried out because the traffic signals had reached its life service, and due to bike lanes installation, traffic signal heads had to be realigned with the travel lanes. This project consisted of the following elements:

- a) *New curb bump-outs to reduce pedestrian crossing times.*
- b) *Addition of left turn signals for Florida Avenue.*
- c) *New forward looking infrared video detection system for the traffic signals that will detect both automobiles and bicyclists.*
- d) *New audible countdown push button signals for pedestrians.*
- e) *Reconfiguration of vehicular lanes to align with the road diets and bike lanes implemented on Florida Avenue and Philo Road.*
- f) *Removal of existing traffic signal equipment. Existing traffic signal equipment will be utilized as temporary signals during the installation of the new traffic signals (City of Urbana, 2014⁸).*

6 Ourston Roundabout Engineering (2011). Philo Road / Florida Avenue. Accessed from <http://urbanaillinois.us/sites/default/files/attachments/urbana-philo-florida-ics-final-07-06-2011.pdf>

7 Technical Summary. Intersection Control Study. Accessed from <http://urbanaillinois.us/sites/default/files/attachments/executive-summary-philo-florida.pdf>

8 City of Urbana (2014). Florida Avenue and Philo Road Traffic Signals Improvement Project. Accessed from <http://urbanaillinois.us/projects/florida-avenue-and-philo-road-traffic-signals-improvements-project>

Image 4: Philo Road/Florida Av intersection improvement



For the purpose of beautifying the business district, evidence of landscaping is visible along the Philo Road as grasses, trees, and flowers are well-kept at the edge of the road. To ensure that grasses are well-maintained, the city has created height limit for the grasses along the area so that the grasses are mowed in a timely manner. Similarly, dedication and installation of sculpture as a part of the beautification project has been gradually implemented. It is mentioned that Urbana Sculpture Project was launched in 2009 and it attracted around 98 sculpture proposals, but following rigorous selection based on “artistic quality and ability to integrate and enhance each location”, four sculptures were selected (City of Urbana, 2010⁹). The selected sculptures were Prism Arc VI by Professor Carl Billingsley, Landing by Cecilia Lueza, Bench 9 by Barry Hehemann, and Fanfare by Shawn Morin (City of Urbana, 2010¹⁰). In the Philo Road Business District itself, Maelstrom II sculpture can be seen on the intersection of Philo Road and Florida Avenue.

Image 5: Landscaping along the Philo Road



9 City of Urbana (2010). Sculpture Dedication of "Landing" as part of the Philo Road Beautification Project. Accessed from <http://urbanaininois.us/posts/2010/05/sculpture-dedication-landing-part-philo-road-beautification-project>

10 City of Urbana (2010). Prism Arc VI Sculpture Dedication on Philo Road. Accessed from <http://urbanaininois.us/posts/2010/05/prism-arc-vi-sculpture-dedication-philo-road>

Image 6: Maelstrom II at Philo Road



6. b. Social Development

Under social development category, the effort is focused on improving security and safety in the area. In correspondence to this goal, a Neighborhood Safety Task Force was formed in 2006 with the aim to “*understand city-wide problems and the particular concerns of individual neighborhoods and then to develop a consensus on fair and workable solutions*” and focus on crime and safety issues by helping with drafting ordinance to establish rental registration and inspection program (SUNA¹¹). Similarly, A Neighborhood Watch Group was also formed, which is “*an association of neighbors who look out for each other’s families and property, learn how to make their homes more secure, and alert police to any suspicious activities or crime in progress*” (SUNA¹²) These neighborhood groups have regular meeting schedules and are working closely with the Urbana Police Department.

Similarly, frequency of police patrol has been increased, and nuisance ordinance has been put in place to improve the safety and security of the area. The nuisance ordinance has also contributed to the improvement of safety in the area because panhandling near the businesses and rental properties¹³ has been reduced. Furthermore, the City of Urbana has also developed a systematic inspection framework for residential buildings to address concerns about building codes and safety issues

11 SUNA. Neighborhood Safety Task Force. Accessed from <http://www.sunaurbana.org/public-safety/neighborhood-safety>

12 SUNA. Neighborhood Watch Group. Accessed from <http://www.sunaurbana.org/public-safety/neighborhood-watch-groups>

13 SUNA (2012). Annual Meeting Minutes. Accessed from <http://www.sunaurbana.org/suna-info/suna-meeting-minutes/2012-annual-meeting-minutes>

6. c. Economic Development

The focus for economic aspect of development revolves around business incentives, retaining existing businesses, conducting business survey, exploring business ideas, and meeting with the Southeast Urbana Neighborhood Business Group. One of the business surveys had been completed and become part of the action plan itself. Recently, Carle Clinic Inquiry was conducted and completed, where a list of business inventory around the Philo Road was produced. This inventory included many amenities and businesses around the Philo Road Business District area such as restaurants, churches, schools/daycares, and banks. Similarly, regular meetings are held with the business group. It is mentioned that quarterly or bi-annual meetings with the business owners and managers are coordinated in the area to “*share pertinent information, discuss relevant development and infrastructure, and promote discussion and networking among the business owners*” (SUNA¹⁴).

Discussion about the redevelopment and business incentives is highly valued as a positive step forward to revitalize businesses in the area. Based on the business survey, enhancing business incentives, especially expanding TIF into Philo Road Business District has been seen as a priority action. It is important to note that Philo Road Business District is not part of TIF¹⁵, but it is an area within the Enterprise Zone¹⁶. Enterprise Zone aims “*to encourage economic development and to increase employment opportunities for residents of the zone and the larger community*” (City of Urbana, Urbana Enterprise Zone¹⁷). In Urbana, the most common enterprise incentives are property tax abetments and sale tax exemption certificate. However, the enterprise zone incentives are not seen as lucrative and do not contribute to business growth in the area. As such, the discussion about business incentives focus on the potential to expand TIF to Philo Road because it is believed to be more effective to promote business growth. It is stated that “*Urbana’s TIF Incentive Programs encourage the redevelopment of vacant and underutilized buildings, catalyze capital investment in the City’s Tax Increment Financing districts, and foster a vibrant and creative business community in Downtown Urbana and along the Cunningham Avenue Corridor*” (City of Urbana, TIF Incentive Programs¹⁸). Since Philo Road area has plenty of vacant and underutilized buildings, TIF is believed to be able to contribute more to the business development in the area.

During the 2013 SUNA Annual Meeting, there was discussion about Legislative Bill that exempts Illinois hospitals from property taxes, which means that Carle Hospital is relieved from paying property tax. Urbana is mentioned to be most affected by this bill because “*the exemption will relieve Carle Hospital of \$6 million dollar on property*

14 SUNA. Philo Road Business Corridor. Accessed from <http://www.sunaurbana.org/projects/philo-road-business-corridor>

15 City of Urbana, <http://urbanaillinois.us/sites/default/files/attachments/january-2013-map-tif-and-ez-districts-36x48.pdf>

16 City of Urbana <http://urbanaillinois.us/sites/default/files/attachments/enterprise-zone-dec-2013.pdf>

17 City of Urbana. Urbana Enterprise Zone. Accessed from <http://urbanaillinois.us/businesses/incentives/EZ>

18 City of Urbana. Overview of TIF Incentive Programs. Accessed from <http://urbanaillinois.us/businesses/incentives/TIF>

taxes...with Urbana as the biggest loser for having 83% of Carle's property"¹⁹. This exemption resulted in about 11% tax increase in Urbana, which was about 25% higher than the tax in the City of Champaign. Since Carle has a property in South Urbana, the exemption affects Philo Road Business District as well because that means there is less money to be allocated for the development programs.

Many actions listed for economic development are long term oriented and resource intensives because it involves marketing assistance, exploring business alternatives, and investigating building reuse and site redevelopment. As such, it is an ongoing process that requires commitments from competent apparatus, and the City of Urbana is still looking for reinvestment on the Philo Road²⁰, and for that reason, the progress can be slow.

7. Evaluating the Impacts of the Action Plan

Implemented projects and programs discussed in each development category are geared towards revitalizing the business district where an increase in business activities become the fundamental outcome. To assess the extent of the impact of the action plan, a set of indicators are examined, which can help with the analysis of how the implemented projects and programs has met and achieved its intended objectives. Action plan, in simple terms, highlights the actions that are seen as necessary to address the challenges that the business district faces. The challenges indicated here revolve around the decline of the function of Philo Road as a business district, and as such, it seeks to overcome such challenge by attracting more businesses, improving safety and security, improving physical attractiveness, and creating policies and business incentives that can contribute to the business growth.

To measure the effects of the implemented strategies listed in the action plan, it is important to look at the change in indicators such as number of businesses, employment, crime statistics, and traffic collision history as part of the evaluation process. Such indicators will provide a valuable information on the performance of the action plan. These indicators will be accompanied with qualitative analysis to see how the impacts are experienced and perceived in the area.

7. a. Social Aspect of Development

Improving safety and security in the area has been seen as critical to create business-friendly environment. It is critical because crimes have been reported to take place regularly and it hurts the businesses. Therefore, reducing crimes in the area is an important objective of the action plan. Based on Spot Crime, 7860 crimes were reported to take place in the City of Champaign and Urbana in 2013²¹, and these reported crimes included assault, burglary, robbery, theft, vandalism, and the making of arrest. Within that year, in the business district area, between Florida Avenue and Colorado Avenue, 199 crimes were reported, and the crimes were mainly related to burglary, theft and

19 SUNA (2013). Annual Meeting Minutes. Accessed from <http://www.sunaurbana.org/suna-info/suna-meeting-minutes/2013-annual-meeting-minutes>

20 SUNA (2013). Annual Meeting Minutes. Accessed from <http://www.sunaurbana.org/suna-info/suna-meeting-minutes/2013-annual-meeting-minutes>

21 Spot Crime. Urbana, IL Daily Crime Report. Accessed from <http://spotcrime.com/il/urbana/daily/more>

assault. This was merely 3% of crimes reported in the City of Champaign and Urbana, which seems to be insignificant, but when the surrounding neighborhoods are included in the analysis, 20% of crimes reported in 2013 took place in the nearby area of the Philo Road Business District. During the 2013 SUNA Annual Meeting²², it was reported that in the past year the area had 60 fewer criminal reports, increase in call for services, and 20 percent decrease in crime. Similarly, based on visiting and walking around the Philo Road Business District during the day, it can be seen that the area appears to be safe.

Based on the conversation with the police officer and local community, decrease in crime statistic has been notable. However, this statistic is based on reported crimes whereas many crimes actually go unreported. For instance, recently, there has been numerous complaints about incidents regarding teenagers, 12 to 14 years of age, breaking into houses that create nuisance for the community. Similarly, even though crimes have gone down, the perception about crimes and the area as unsafe still exists, which hurts the image of the area.

7. b. Physical Aspect of Development

Besides improving the physical appearance of the business district, strategies to improve the roads are also related to reduce traffic accidents. Based on the collision history along the Philo Road and Florida Avenue, collision trend had been fluctuating from 2005 to 2010 (see Table** and Figure...bellow).

Table 4: Collision History at Philo Road Business District, 2005-2010

Year	Total Crashes
2005	3
2006	2
2007	3
2008	8
2009	3
2010	9
Total	28

Source: Ourston Roundabout Engineering, 2011, p7²³

22 SUNA (2013). Annual Meeting Minutes. Accessed from <http://www.sunaurbana.org/suna-info/suna-meeting-minutes/2013-annual-meeting-minutes>

23 Ourston Roundabout Engineering (2011). Philo Road/Florida Avenue. Accessed from <http://urbanaillinois.us/sites/default/files/attachments/urbana-philo-florida-ics-final-07-06-2011.pdf>

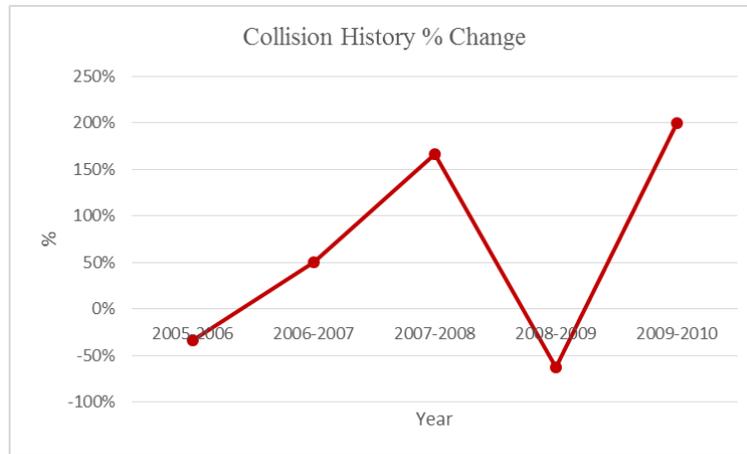


Figure 1: Collision history percent change

Based on the observation of the Philo Road Business District as well as conversation with the community member, the business district has looked much better with the landscaping, road improvement, and installation of sculpture along the Philo Road. As such, it is more attractive and appealing for people to drive in or walk. However, it is mentioned that such physical improvements have not really attracted businesses into the area. In fact, exterior of many commercial buildings in the area appear to be deteriorating.

7. c. Economic Aspect of Development

Since the action plan is intended to revitalize the business district, projects and programs that promote economic growth in the area are highly invaluable. Therefore, a number of indicators are examined to see the impacts of the implemented projects. First of all, based on data collected from Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) in terms of Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, the surrounding area²⁴ of Philo Road Business District experienced a dramatic increase in total number of jobs from 2005 to 2011²⁵, an increase of about 124%, which was a big change from the 27% decline in 2002 to 2005.

Table 5: % Change in Number of Jobs, 2002-2005, and 2005-2011

Year	S000	SA01	SA02	SA03	SE01	SE02	SE03	SI01	SI02	SI03
2002 to 2005	-26%	-36%	-13%	-50%	-45%	11%	-20%	200%	-50%	-26%
2005 to 2011	124%	100%	79%	550%	91%	60%	375%	67%	240%	100%

*Note: the explanation of the file structure for LODES can be found in attachment **Table 6**.

24 For the purpose of the analysis, the surrounding area is determined using census block boundary
 25 LEED Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES). Job to Job Flows. Illinois. Accessed from <http://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/#lodes>

Furthermore, according to census data²⁶, majority of the residents between 16 to 64 years of age (labor force) actually worked, 76% in 2000 and 80% in 2010. Interestingly, employed male declined by 10% from 2000 to 2010 whereas female gained 6% increase in employed labor force (**Table 7**). In terms of number of businesses, analysis is done via comparing the inventory list made in 2005 and data collected during Carly Clinic Inquiry for Southeast Urbana as well as field visit for confirmation (**Table 8: Business Inventory 2015**). The inventory shows that number of businesses have declined since 2005 although new businesses such as Design Decisions and Ominabarre²⁷ are moving into the area.

Observing the business district as well as gathering information from the community perspective, businesses appear to be slow in the area. As such, it is believed that more business incentives are required to boost business activities in the area. Additionally, the City of Urbana and business owners are believed not to do as much as they should to improve business activities in the area.

8. Has the Action Plan Achieved its Objectives?

Based on the assessment of the implemented projects and programs, it can be seen that progress has been made in the Philo Road Business District even though further actions are still needed to enhance that progress. Most notable progress has been related to the implementation of the actions that promote physical and social development of the Philo Road Business District. For instance, road improvement projects such as installing bike lanes and sidewalks, and beautification projects like landscaping and installing sculpture have contributed to the increasing physical attractiveness of the business district. As a result, the area has become more beautiful. Similarly, the formation of Neighborhood Safety Task Force, Neighborhood Watch Group, increase police patrol, and nuisance ordinance have reduced crime statistics and has made the area safer. As such, the action plan has been successful in improving the safety and security of the area. The challenge, on the other hand, still remains for the economic aspect of development because increase in business activities has been slow.

Despite the improvement in physical attractiveness and safety of the area, it is believed that more efforts are needed to expand such positive impacts into creating a vibrant business district. It is observed that even though the area is more attractive, its ability to attract people from afar remains problematic. Consistent with the opinion gathered during the business survey in 2005, people who shop in Philo Road Business District actually reside in the nearby area, and they are driven by a sense of loyalty and convenience. Similarly, observing vehicle trips along the business district indicates that cars rarely make a stop in the area. Correspondingly, although crimes have been reported to decline, it is believed that the perception about the place as unsafe still prominent, and this discourages people to visit the area. Additionally, many crimes actually go unreported and this may contest the notion of declining crimes statistics.

Moreover, improving physical appearance and safety of the area is designed to support one major goal of the action plan, which is not only to retain the existing businesses but also to

26 U.S Census Bureau. Work Status in the Past 12 Months. 2000 and 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

27 City of Urbana. New Business Openings and Expansions. Accessed from <http://urbanaininois.us/new-businesses>

attract more businesses. So far, the number of businesses have not increased as expected, and therefore, the challenge is to provide right conditions in order to encourage businesses to invest. Although the data indicates that employment and numbers of jobs increases in the area, it incorporates the thriving commercial area of south of Sunnycrest area, where Meijer is located, and thus, it skews the result of the analysis. In recent years, the area in the south of Philo Road has experienced business growth and housing development, and by the look of it, businesses are more likely to move to this area due to a favorable business environment. Consequently, more efforts are needed to attract businesses into the area although the action plan has contributed greatly to the improvement of its physical attractiveness and safety.

Business activities have been slow because, in pure terms, number of businesses have not grown although two new businesses moved in into the area in 2014. Such small businesses are not able to replace K-Mart and other retailers that used to provide larger number of jobs. In that sense, attracting new businesses have not been maximal even though physical and social aspects of development have been apparent. In order to improve business activities in the area, the Urbana Police Department has organized a regular meeting with the business owners, property owners, and the City of Urbana to explore ideas about improving the business district. The initial few meetings had been meet with enthusiasms, but it slowly waned down. This change was believed to be contributed by a number of reasons. Firstly, the crimes have declined so business owners are not as concerned as before. Secondly, property owners do not get involved as much because they still generate income from the lease of the property. And, finally most of the business owners run their own stores, and thus, they rarely have time to attend the meetings.

Furthermore, it is interesting to know that some community and business owners are not aware of the action plan. Similarly, some business owners have not really known about the business incentives and what it takes to access them. Such issues could be related to new business owners so have not heard about the plan, or lack of information due to unimplemented programs to attract businesses such as expanding TIF, or exploring business ideas for the area. Discussing about TIF with the staff from the City of Urbana, it seems to be challenging to expand the incentive to Philo Road. In fact, the city is trying to renew TIF 1 and 2, which will expire in 2016 and 2015 respectively. Therefore, more discussions are needed regarding the expansion of TIF into the Philo Road.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Philo Road Business District Action Plan is positive initiative and a sign of willingness to revitalize the business district. This is a good foundation to build upon in making the Philo Road becoming a vibrant business area. Projects and programs such as road and traffic signal improvements, bike lane, landscaping, sculpture installations, nuisance ordinance, and neighborhood organizations indicate that the many aspects of the action plan have been implemented. However, further improvement programs are needed to actually attract more businesses, and to ensure the main goal of the action plan, which is to revitalize the commercial area.

In a way, there seems to be a communication gap among various stakeholders about the action plan. Some business owners, for instance, are not aware of the action plan, and at the same

time, the community wants the City of Urbana and the business and property owners to do more. In a sense, the community wants to see more incentives and investment to revitalize the area, which actually exist, but the business people themselves have no knowledge of. This kind of gap needs to be addressed so that improvement projects and programs can be carried out more effectively. Furthermore, to ensure the success of revitalizing the business district, it is important to identify resources available in the area that can provide opportunities for further development. At the same time, there is the need to address the limiting factors so that they do not become constraints to the development efforts. Hence, a SWOT analysis is used for this purpose so that future actions are able to take advantage of the opportunities, and overcome the constraining factors in the area.

SWOT analysis for the Philo Road Business District

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Local owned business Local customers (loyalty) Existing business groups Community organizations Public transit</p>	<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Vacant building Empty parking spaces Crestview Park</p>
<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Dominated by fast food restaurants Renter-occupied housings</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Crimes (perceptions) Deteriorating buildings</p>

Knowing the limitation and opportunities enable the stakeholders to develop strategies that can maximize the strength and opportunity factors in the area while improving the sectors that can restraint development opportunities. This SWOT analysis is mostly derived from discussion with the stakeholders as well as from observation during the site visit. Therefore, the followings strategies are recommended to revitalize the business district, which is also the main goal of the action plan itself. Since the action plan aims to retain and attract new businesses in the area, these recommendations will start with strategies to address that topic.

9. a. Improve awareness about business incentives and resources

This will help the business owners to know and understand what kind of assistance they can get, where they can get it from, and how to get it. Similarly, it informs the community, especially those who want to start their own business, about the means of help they can get to set up a business. This can be done via business group meetings or meeting with the community organizations to discuss and explain about the available business incentives and resources.

9. b. Create a business focus development program

It appears that small businesses related to salon and fitness are doing well. Recently, a group of students from UIUC conducted a research on immigrant owned businesses along the Philo Road also indicated that local businesses that target local community have performed quite well. As such, it is important to create business development programs that respond to the needs of these small businesses to help them grow, and at the same time, provide opportunities to attract more businesses into the area.

9. c. Build on existing partnership

The Sunnycrest area has already had community organizations that work to improve the condition of the neighborhoods. Similarly, business group has been set up to discuss and share information about challenges and opportunities for businesses in the area. This can be taken advantaged of in building a better partnership where they can take more proactive role in organizing and leading activities to develop the area with the support from the city and other competent apparatus.

9. d. Organize events to promote the area

Perception of crime is mentioned to be a threat to the businesses in the area. Therefore, organizing events that promote the area is useful. The business district has beautiful Crestview Park behind the Sunnycrest Center, which can be used to organize events promote the area. This park can be used to organized cultural events, music events, and other outdoor activities that can expose the area to the public. These events not only enable people to see that the area is safe, but it becomes a destination for the people to travel to.

9. e. Create a communication channel among the stakeholders

Another challenge for the action plan, as observed, is lack of clear mechanism for the stakeholders to communicate with each other. Such communication exists before through business group meetings or community organization meetings. However, such meetings appear to be ineffective because there is no clear objectives, but simply to share information. Therefore, it is suggested that a proper mechanism for communication should be set up where the stakeholders come together to meet in a place and discuss issues based on the agenda. This will help the stakeholders to know the issues to be discussed and the outcomes to be expected, which increase the efficiency and productivity of the meetings.

9. f. Form a monitoring and follow-up task force

Finally, it is essential to form a monitoring and follow-up task force to assess the progress of the action plan. This task force should consist of representatives from each stakeholder, and they have a duty to ensure that individuals and organizations actually do the works they have been assigned to. (*See community vision in the Annex*).

In general, the implementation of plans are constrained by the availability of resources, specifically financial resources. Similarly, these recommendations will face financial constraint to carry out. For instance, organizing activities to promote the area or forming a monitoring task force will requires funding. Therefore, it is important that some sort of collaboration need to be built with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) because it has many student organizations that can organize such events. Such collaboration should also be extended to other organizations that focus on business revitalization.

Business district revitalization project is a long term project that requires commitment from all the stakeholders because it takes a long time to realize. It takes long time because such project is affected by situation in the neighboring areas as well as the situation of the city. It is extremely important that the local stakeholders are proactive in finding potential strategies to reinvigorate businesses in the area, but the strategies should not be limited to businesses only. Exploration of strategies need to think of ways that can reinvent the area by considering the local demographic, social, and economic characteristics. In the end, it is better to look at the Philo Road Business District Action Plan as a strategy to improve the area where the strategy needs to be adjusted with the change of local condition and characteristics. As such, the success is ever changing. In this case, improving physical characteristics and safety of the area has shown that the action plan has been successful to a certain degree in meeting its objectives, and this can become a starting point to put more efforts into helping businesses in the area to grow.

ANNEX

Table 1: Philo Road Action Plan Items

Action Element	Specific Action	TimeFrame/ Status	Responsibility
Improve the image of the Philo Road Business District	Establish an identity or common theme for the area in conjunction with the Southeast Urbana Business Group	2005-2006	ED/SEUBG/PW
	Place improved directional signs on Windsor and Philo	Complete	PW/ED
	Banner Program <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Install welcome banners• Design new logo and banners that help establish and promote neighborhood theme• Find sponsors with Southeast Urbana Business Group	Complete 2005	PW ED/SEUBG
			2005

Retain Existing Businesses	<p>Gather input for improvements for the Philo Road Business District</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention visits to businesses in Philo Road Business District • Meet with Southeast Urbana Neighborhood Business Group • Business Survey • Developers survey • Carle Clinic inquiry and follow up • Promote and advertise the Redevelopment incentive • Plan and assist with expansion/improvements 	<p>Complete</p> <p>Ongoing 2conducted and ongoing</p> <p>Complete Complete Complete 2005 Ongoing</p>	<p>ED/PW</p> <p>ED/PW</p> <p>Exec/ED/PW/Police</p> <p>ED Exec/ED Exec/ED Exec/ED</p> <p>Council/PW/Private</p>
Enhance Incentives	<p>Revise Redevelopment Incentive Program Guidelines and Market Program</p> <p>Inform developers of development agreement opportunities</p> <p>Investigate expansion of the Enterprise Zone into the District</p> <p>Evaluate TIF potential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with developers on sites and projects to determine feasibility • Calculate cash flow projections • Grant research 	<p>Complete</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>2005</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing ?</p>	<p>Council/Exec/ED</p> <p>Exec/CD</p> <p>Council/Exec/ED</p> <p>CD</p> <p>ED CD</p>

Plan and Construct Infrastructure Improvements	Complete Colorado to Stone Creek Boulevard	Underway	Private/PW
	Rebuild Philo to three lanes between Colorado and Mumford with signalized intersection at Colorado	2006	PW/State/CUUATS
	Improve pedestrian crossings as pedestrian traffic in the area has increased	Start 2005	PW
	Extend bicycle trails	In ICP/Greenways Plan	PW

<p>Beautify the Philo Road Business District</p>	<p>Conduct Beautification Study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study Philo Business District sites and landscape models from other communities <p>Streetscaping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape sidewalks and streets • Add landscaped median strips in the parking lots to break up to concrete vista • Provide landscape incentives on private properties • Investigate addition of a center median or enlarge parkways on Philo Road • Determine costs and budget <p>Improve building appearances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update business facades and signage • Offer loans from Redevelopment Incentive Program • Establish a system to return shopping carts • Enforce nuisance violations • Keep vacant buildings neat and clean-timely grass mowing, paint boarded-up – plywood windows and have abandoned cars towed • Work with SE Urbana Business Group to create a program to keep area clean 	<p>2005</p> <p>Start 2005 Start 2005</p> <p>Start 2005 2005</p> <p>2005</p> <p>Start 2005 Start 2005 2005 Ongoing Ongoing</p> <p>2005</p>	<p>CD/PW</p> <p>PW Private/PW</p> <p>PW/CD PW</p> <p>Exec/PW/CD</p> <p>Private/ED/PW Private/ED Private/ED/PW PW PW/Police</p> <p>ED/SEUBG</p>
<p>Provide marketing assistance</p>	<p>Promote building to target markets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with owners and real-estate agents to get detailed building and site information • Update the database of available building with detailed priority site information • Collaborate with owners and real estate agents to identify market targets • Develop marketing materials and direct market to targets and inquiries <p>Assist with marketing Philo Road Business District</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>2005</p>	<p>Private/ED</p> <p>Private/ED</p> <p>Private/ED</p> <p>ED/EDC</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise Materials Business District Directory and Visitor Guide Web page with city link Incentives information • Promotional event concepts and technical assistance <p>Technical marketing and public relations assistance for individual businesses</p>	<p>Complete 2005</p> <p>2005</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>ED IS ED ED/UBA</p> <p>ED/SBDC/UBA</p>
Investigate building reuse	<p>Interview building owners and developers regarding alternate uses</p> <p>Investigate neighborhood business venues</p> <p>Investigate employment-based uses</p> <p>Research models from other communities and draft</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Scenarios for the Philo Business District. See www.bigboxreuse.com; www.specialtyretail.net/issues/october01/bigbox.htm; www.vacantproperties.org; www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/lts/0201tb.pdf <p>Determine feasibility of concepts (and combining thereof)</p> <p>Determine applicability of incentive programs</p>	<p>Complete/Ongoing as needed</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>2005</p> <p>2005</p> <p>2005</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>Exec/ED</p> <p>ED</p> <p>ED/EDC</p> <p>ED</p> <p>CD/PW</p> <p>ED</p>

Investigate site redevelopment uses/outlot development opportunities	<p>Interview owners and developers regarding redevelopment uses</p> <p>Investigate development of outlots</p> <p>Examine other community models</p> <p>Determine market demand for models</p> <p>Determine applicability of incentive programs</p>	<p>Complete and ongoing as needed 2005</p> <p>2005</p> <p>2005</p> <p>2005</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>Exec/ED</p> <p>CD/PW</p> <p>ED</p> <p>ED/EDC</p> <p>Exec/ED</p>
Zoning and signage Improvements	<p>Study Zoning Restrictions to see if improvements or amendments need to be made to promote redevelopment</p> <p>Assess business signage needs along Philo Road and encourage businesses to improve visibility through sign construction with redevelopment assistance</p> <p>Enforce nuisance ordinance provision to remove trash, debris, and abandoned vehicles when they occur</p>	<p>2005</p> <p>Start in 2005</p> <p>2005</p>	<p>CD</p> <p>Private/CD/ED</p> <p>PW</p>
Improve Security and Safety in the Area	<p>Work with police and business owners to provide increased security for users of the area</p> <p>Increase police patrols of the area on an as needed basis</p> <p>Evaluate lighting, landscaping, and fencing needs with both aesthetic and crime prevention objectives in mind</p>	<p>2005</p> <p>2005</p> <p>2005</p>	<p>Urbana Police/Private</p> <p>Urbana police</p> <p>PW/Urbana Police/Private</p>

Source: Philo Road Business District Revitalization Action Plan, p.23-26

Table 2: Acronyms or Abbreviations

ED	Economic Development Division of the City of Urbana
SEUBG	Southeast Urbana Business Group
PW	Public Works Department of the City of Urbana
Exec	Executive Department of the City of Urbana
Police	Police Department of the City of Urbana
Council	City Council of the City of Urbana
Private	Private sector, including property owners, developers, business owners, etc.
CUUATS	Champaign-Urbana Urbanized Area Transportation Study
CD	Community Development Department of the City of Urbana
State	State of Illinois (Illinois Department of Transportation)
EDC	Economic Development Corporation
IS	Information Service Division of the City of Urbana
UBA	Urban Business Association
SBDC	Small Business Development Center

Source: Philo Road Action Plan, p.27

Table 6

Origin-Destination (OD) File Structure			
Pos	Variable	Type	Explanation
1	w_geocode	Char15	Workplace Census Block Code
2	h_geocode	Char15	Residence Census Block Code
3	S000	Num	Total number of jobs
4	SA01	Num	Number of jobs of workers age 29 or younger
5	SA02	Num	Number of jobs for workers age 30 to 54
6	SA03	Num	Number of jobs for workers age 55 or older
7	SE01	Num	Number of jobs with earnings \$1250/month or less
8	SE02	Num	Number of jobs with earnings \$1251/month to \$3333/month
9	SE03	Num	Number of jobs with earnings greater than \$3333/month
10	SI01	Num	Number of jobs in Goods Producing industry sectors
11	SI02	Num	Number of jobs in Trade, Transportation, and Utilities industry sectors
12	SI03	Num	Number of jobs in All Other Services industry sectors
13	createdate	Char	Date on which data was created, formatted as YYYYMMDD

Source: LEED Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES) Dataset Structure. Accessed from <http://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/lodes/LODES7/LODESTechDoc7.0.pdf>

Table 7: Employment

Year	Total	Male						Female					
		Total	Worked	35 hours or more per week	15 to 34 hours per week	1 to 14 hours per week	No work	Total	Female	35 hours or more per week	15 to 34 hours per week	1 to 14 hours per week	No work
2000	16,780	8,413	6,982	4,464	1,927	591	1,431	8,367	5,789	3,449	1,865	475	2,578
2010	15,460	7,618	6,274	4,160	1,373	741	1,344	7,842	6,130	3,252	1,793	1,085	1,712
% change	-7.9%	-9.4%	-10.1%	-6.8%	-28.7%	25.4%	-6.1%	-6.3%	5.9%	-5.7%	-3.9%	128.4%	-33.6%

Table 8: Business Inventory, 2015

Business inventory 2015			
Name of the business	Types	Name of the business	Types
Papa John	Piza	First Wok	Restaurant/Chinese
State Farm	Insurance	Check and Go	
Food Shop	Grocery	Charley Salon	Beauty/Salon
Sunnycrest Chinese Buffet	Restaurant/Chinese	Dry Cleaning	Service
McDonalds	Restaurant/Fast Food	Sister Sister's Hair Braiding	Beauty
Sprint	Mobile phone	Hot Spot	
Caring Hand	Animal hospital	Hot Slots	Automobiles
Burger Kings	Restaurant/Fast Food	Follmer Law Office	Legal
Verizon	Communication	Coldwel Banker Commercial	Finance
Labor Ready	Service	Design Decision	
Light House	Church	Heights Finance	Finance
Self Secure Storage	Service	Country	Insurance
Heartland Bank	Finance	La Fiesta	Vacant
CVS	Retail	Post Office	
Family Video	Video retail	Service Barber Shop	Beauty
Truly Fit	Fitness	Field Office	
I Dollar Tree	Retail	International Union Operating Engineers	
Polar Pop K	Grocery	Hairs by Larry	Beauty
Boost Mobile Virgin	Communication	Kobudokau	Martial Arts
County Market	Grocery	Pace Inc	
Walgreen	Retail	Learning Center	Educational

Community Vision for Philo Road (Sunnycrest)

1. Green space/Community Garden (teach kids to grow produce. Might make money by selling it)
2. Community Center with game room
3. Basketball court, tennis court (Maybe expand existing Crestview Park)
4. Resources (using empty Sunnycrest buildings?)with
 - a. Computer room
 - b. After school tutoring
 - c. Kitchen for cooking lessons
 - d. Art room (could have exhibits)
5. Social Service Center for adults
 - a. Meeting space
 - b. Parenting classes
 - c. Shopping/cooking tips
 - d. Job center
6. Outdoor entertainment area for music venues
7. Stage for plays
8. Coffee shop to hire youth and provide a place for adults and kids.
9. Alcohol free corner store
10. Prizes and awards and trips for kids doing good-from merchants other sources
11. Field trips
12. Regularly scheduled block parties
13. Regular (preferably minority) police presence so there is mutual respect. Foot patrols if possible.
14. Develop partnerships with
 - a. Family Resiliency Center at UIUC
 - b. Boys and Girls Club
 - c. UI Extension program
 - d. Urbana Park District
 - e. Urbana School District
 - f. Parkland College
 - g. YMCA
 - h. Urbana Library