About Louisville

Louisville is situated along the border between Kentucky and Indiana, the Ohio River, in north-central Kentucky at the Falls of the Ohio. As of 2010, the Louisville metropolitan area had a population of 1,307,647 ranking 42nd nationally. It was an important internal shipping port in the 19th century.

Louisville today is best known as the location of the Kentucky Derby, the first of three annual thoroughbred horse races making up the Triple Crown. Louisville serves as a critical air freight hub and the headquarters for several Fortune 500 companies and is the home of the University of Louisville.

As of 2005-2007 the racial and ethnic composition of the Louisville metropolitan area was 74.8% White (71.7% non-Hispanic White alone), 22.2% Black or African American, 0.6% American Indian and Alaska Native, and 2.0% Asian. 2.9% of the total population was Hispanic or Latino (of any race.)

About the SoBro Neighborhood

The SoBro neighborhood received its sobriquet because it lies just south of Broadway, traditionally the southern boundary of downtown Louisville. After the Civil War, SoBro was intensively developed with a mixture of housing, commercial, manufacturing, and warehouse uses. During the latter part of the 20th Century, a freeway was built through part of the area, many residents and employers left for the suburbs, and many of the buildings were demolished to make way for the surface parking that now occupies 60% of the neighborhood’s land area. What has remained are residents who care about their neighborhood, a regular grid of streets and sidewalks and some important institutions and buildings like Spalding University, Presentation Academy, Lampton Baptist Church, and the mid-century landmark The 800 Apartments Building, once Kentucky’s tallest building.

The neighborhood also retains an interesting mix of land uses and is a strategic location between downtown, Old Louisville, the University of Louisville, the airport and UPS facility, and Churchill Downs. These advantages make SoBro a logical location for redevelopment to create a distinctive new district adjoining downtown.
Project Scope

The project has as its central focus the revitalization of the SoBro neighborhood through implementation of several elements of the neighborhood plan including enhancing active transportation choices and the integration of this effort with programs underway to install green stormwater infrastructure and increase the urban tree canopy. Important partners in this effort will be Spalding University and the Jefferson Community and Technical College, which have, or will have, campuses in SoBro.

Challenges to Overcome

• Lack of neighborhood identity, self-promotion of the neighborhood, green space, and retail shopping
• Transportation obstacles such as one way streets, excessive surface parking, and expressway intrusion
• Vacant land, abandoned properties, and perceived lack of public safety

Project Goals

• Develop and implement a strategy to communicate the distinct identity of the project area as Louisville’s first green district
• Promote environmentally-friendly commercial, residential, and public development
• Incorporate and revitalize the historic character of the neighborhood
• Implement strategies of green development to showcase how they can be used city-wide
• Bring people into the neighborhood and capitalize on people who want to move back to the city
• Develop a multi-use corridor (Library Lane) as a spine for the area
• Use public transit improvement as leverage for private investment
• Improve the tree canopy with strategic plantings to create amenities
Redevelopment

New commercial, residential, institutional, and industrial development in SoBro would build on the existing wide mixture of these uses, to create an interesting and lively district and an alternative to low-density outward sprawl in the region. This project will consider public investments in green infrastructure and transportation choices and how these might be combined with investments by Spalding University and Jefferson Community and Technical College to catalyze a next stage of private investments in housing and commerce.

Green Design & Infrastructure

The SoBro plan notes that the “greening” of SoBro “should be done in such a way that it can accommodate the needs of SoBro’s educational institutions while at the same time contributing to the public and resident’s needs and the vitalization of street life and neighborhood vitality.” SoBro will provide an opportunity to put some of these ideas into the context of an effort of neighborhood revitalization and the creation of a green theme to the infrastructure in that district. These investments, in the form of rain gardens, can also help address the problem of combined sewer overflows. Landscape designs for the neighborhood that emphasize planting of trees will also help Louisville address an anticipated increase in the severity of the urban heat island effect. The SoBro plan notes that there “are possibilities for Green Development zones that could be educational and environmental for the community.” This project will encourage the exploration of joint investments in greening the neighborhood by the City, Spalding University and Jefferson County and Technical College and consider whether joint development might allow for special investments in energy and water conservation and waste reduction.

Transportation Choices

The 2007 SoBro Neighborhood Plan identified several actions to increase transportation choices that also enhance livability including: (1) improvements and extensions of the bicycle network; (2) restoring an attractive pedestrian environment next to the existing sidewalks; and (3) conversion of some of the one-way streets (high-speed and relatively low volume) into a network of two-way streets. The plan also described the deadening effect of the many acres of surface parking lots and called for organizing “Fourth Street institutions to investigate the feasibility of joint parking arrangements and facilities.” The commencement of the development of a new regional transportation plan provides the opportunity to consider changes to routes and levels of service in SoBro provided by the Transit Authority of River City.

Equity

Many of SoBro’s current residents are living in market-rate and low-cost housing. As part of its implementation work, Louisville can consider how to retain these housing choices in SoBro and consider other ways in which it could become a model of an economically and racially diverse neighborhood.
SoBro Neighborhood Team

Maria Koetter, Director of Sustainability, Louisville Metro Government
Contact: Maria.koetter@louisvilleky.gov
Maria is the Director of Sustainability for Louisville Metro and is responsible for city-wide strategic sustainability planning, policy development, and implementation of new programs and initiatives.

Patti Clare, Deputy Director of Transportation Planning, Louisville Metro Government
Contact: Patti.clare@louisvilleky.gov
Ms. Clare has over twenty-five years of experience in the planning field, with a concentration in downtown and economic development.

Tommy Clark, Urban Planner, Louisville Metro Government
Contact: Tommy.clark@louisvilleky.gov
Tommy Clark is an Urban Planner in the Louisville Metro Department of Growth and Innovation.

Wes Sydnor, Senior Planning Engineer, Louisville Metropolitan Sewer District
Contact: Wesley.sydnor@louisvillemsd.org
Mr. Sydnor is a Senior Planning Engineer with the Louisville Metropolitan Sewer District, working on Green programs and projects, Nine Minimum Controls (of Combined Sewer Overflows), Capacity Management Operations and Maintenance (CMOM) programs, and regulatory reporting.

Michelle King, Environmental Programs Supervisor, Louisville Metro Air Pollution Control District
Contact: Michelle.king@louisvilleky.gov
Michelle supervises the Louisville Metro Air Pollution Control District’s (APCD) Environmental Programs (EP) section.

Pamela Dumm, Manager of Business Operations, Jefferson Community and Technical College
Contact: Pamela.dumm@kctcs.edu
Pamela is active with the Partnership for a Green City and other area agencies. She serves on the Partnership’s steering committee, waste management committee, green buildings/green fleet committee, and purchasing directors committee.

Kevin Weber, Facilities Director, Spalding University
Contact: kweber@spalding.edu