



# COPLEY ROAD BETTER BLOCK

## AFTER-ACTION REPORT



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The Copley Road Better Block was generously supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

# INTRODUCTION

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The Copley Road Better Block was my third Better Block project in the Akron area, but also one of the most rewarding. Being able to connect with a local community that has experienced disenfranchisement, disinvestment, and violence, while still maintaining hope and positivity about what their neighborhood could be was inspiring.



*From left to right: Block Captains EJ Brinson, David Nelson*

Throughout the Better Block project, the residents repeatedly showed their passion, creativity, and openness to new ideas to transform their built environment. But most of all, they showed their pride in their neighborhood. The community members were all extremely proud of their history, their local businesses, and what their neighbors have accomplished. I am thankful to have had the opportunity to work, brainstorm, reimagine and build with such an inspiring community, and I cannot wait to see the changes that come to Copley Road.

*-Colin Amos  
Better Block  
Project Manager*

# BLOCK CAPTAIN: EVIS “EJ” BRINSON

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## **How It Started**

One could suggest that the inspiration to reimagine Copley Road started when Judge James R. Williams took office for the municipal court. Others may suggest it began when Barbara Sykes became the first African-American councilwoman, or when Pastor Jeffrey Dennis, Pastor Kenneth Paramore, and other concerned pastors formed Unity Partnership to challenge Star Bank, FirstMerit, and other banking institutions to work toward economic equality for minorities. Regardless of the origin that initiated the necessary change for a community overlooked time and time again, it was definitely sparked by the eco-system established by every leader before E.J. and Alisha Brinson, Eufancia Lash, Scott Fubler, Dr. Cryshanna Jackson-Leftwich, Damion Strickland, Henry Johnson Jr., Stacie (John) Carter, Sean Taylor, Ceyanna Dent, and Donovan Rodgers. Each one grew up on the Westside of Akron and are privileged to carry out the initiative for their community.

## **What Does This Mean For Copley Road**

The best representation of meaning and impact for the community is illustrated in the video produced by Jonathan Carter and viewable here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEYmAOV3rIQ&app=desktop>. This video provides a snippet to the possibilities that can result through intentional, collaborative efforts to help redefine and increase meaningful opportunities for this district. These collaborative contributions are a blueprint for future successes that could result in economic equality, development, and programming to ensure that those that live in the community evolve with the development of the neighborhood.

## **The Impact It Had**

The SCTTC team was able to leverage collaborative efforts with the Pro-Football Hall of Fame, The Governor’s Office, The Love Akron Network, Veterans, and more for the

community. The most significant influence resulted from local government (Mayor Horrigan, Marco Sommerville, James Hardy, Executive Ilene Shapiro, Jason Dodson, Congresswoman Marcia Fudge, Dr. Joan Williams, Councilman David Hamilton, Councilman Jeff Fusco, State Representative Emilia Sykes, Senator Vernon Sykes) who ensured the success of the initiative for the community. Mayor Daniel Horrigan and the police department’s willingness to experiment with a police storefront was one of the most impactful aspects for the event.

## **What the Experience Meant to SCTTC**

West Akron is and will always be home for many of the Summit County Think Tank Coalition members. For us to experience the moment of momentum for our community was humbling and a privilege. Being able to kick off the event on February 1 (to honor past and present local leaders) and to commence the event on Memorial weekend (to honor those who fought for our country) meant a great deal to us. We are honored and grateful to have had the opportunity to partner with the Knight Foundation (Kyle Kutuchief and Bronlynn Thurman), the Better Block team, Progressive Alliance CDC, nonprofits, vendors, musicians, and residents to reimagine West Akron together.

## **Summit County Think Tank Coalition Leadership Team**

E.J. Brinson  
Alisha Dennis-Brinson  
John Carter  
Dr. Cryshanna Jackson-Leftwich  
Phillip Hann  
Eufancia Lash  
Henry Johnson Jr.  
Scott Fubler  
Damion Strickland  
Donald Porter

Sincerely,  
Evis “EJ” Brinson

# BLOCK CAPTAIN: REV. DAVID NELSON

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## **How It Started**

When I first heard of the concept of Better Block, I was excited about the impact it would have to the community along Copley Road. This project emerged with a conversation between Kyle Kutuchief, Bronlynn Thurman, Evis Brinson, and myself about Copley Road and how both of our organizations (Progressive Alliance CDC & Summit County Think Tank) could impact the area. After much conversation, we were introduced to the Better Block organization, which came with their team (Jason, Krista, and Colin) to visually walk the Copley Road corridor. Thereafter, Evis Brinson and myself decided to become Co-Captains for the Better Block project for Copley Road to reimagine the space between Hawkins and Nome.

## **What Does This Mean For Copley Road**

We believe our neighborhood stands at a crossroads. With the disinvestment in the area, and many business closing, and relocating, we knew Copley Road needed a more positive and enriching identity and hope for the area. We believe the revitalization of our business district can turn things around, make life better for current residents, bring visitors to the neighborhood, and attract young families, entrepreneurs, and business owners. Our focus was the business district between South Hawkins Avenue and Nome Avenue which brought people together to reshape the area by showing improvement to the area. People attended this event from all over Summit County, and we witnessed the community meeting neighbors and coming together in great and diverse ways.

## **The Impact It Had**

The event was filled with incredible musical artist, vendors, community organizations, and pop-up police station. In addition, Under Armor & the Football Hall of Fame co-sponsored along with others the flag football event which brought youths together to play flag football. Some of the vacant storefronts came alive along with the

market space of vendors, and the reimaged parking along Copley Road. This event captured the best of what Copley can be when the community comes together while highlighting the gifts, talents, and business ideas of those within the community. We are grateful for the many volunteers, and team leads who volunteered their time and effort to help Copley Road Better Block make the impact it did for our community.

## **What the Experience Meant to SCTTC**

For us this experience was a tremendous honor and incredible moment for the West Akron community. PACDC would like to thank everyone who made this Better Block as success for our community. With the help of the residents of West Akron, fantastic sponsors such as Knight Foundation, Better Block, and City of Akron, and my other co-captain Evis Brinson, along with those who assisted and volunteered we were empowered to transcend the community over two days and infuse an attractive energy to the community which we hope and plan to continue in the area. Many are asking what's next? We are excited about showing them!

## **Progressive Alliance Community Development Executive Team**

David Nelson  
LaTonya Lewis  
Iriel Hopkins  
Emmett Lee  
Samuel DeShazor  
Martin Belsky  
Marquita Mitchell  
Kelvin Berry

Sincerely,  
Rev. David M. Nelson



**BACKGROUND**

# Beginning a Better Block



## Background of Copley Road



*Copley Road in preparation of Better Block*

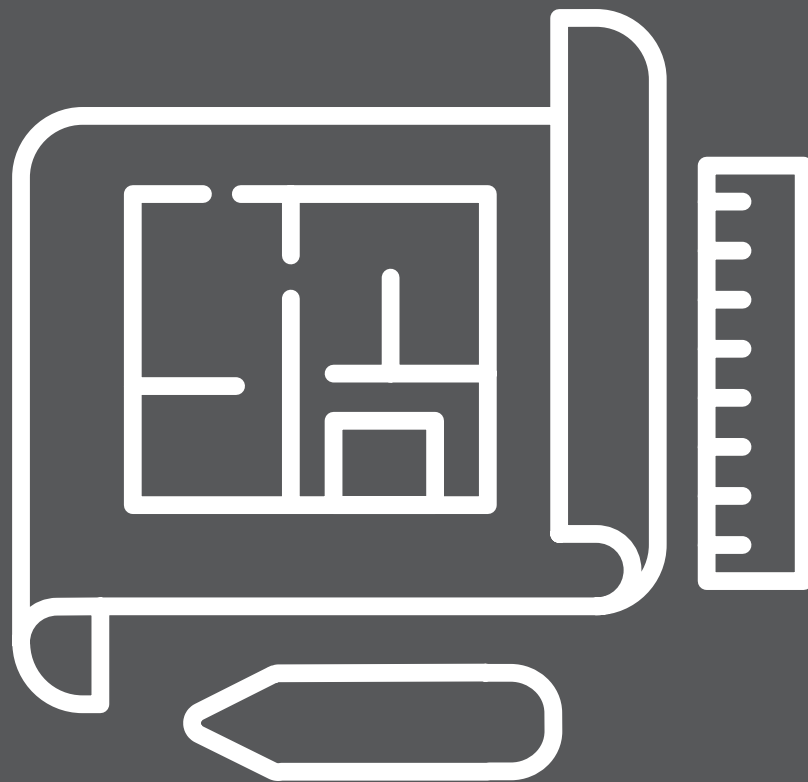
The Copley Road area of Akron, historically known as Maple Valley, is a predominantly African-American neighborhood located west of the city center. Copley Road is a major thoroughfare through the neighborhood, with commercial spaces lining the street with single family homes one block away. Over the years, Copley Road has seen disinvestment and decay leading to crime and the degradation of the public space.

The Better Block project along Copley Road chose to focus on the block and a half of Copley Road between Hawkins Avenue and Nome Avenue. This area was chosen due to the continuous building frontage and the density of local businesses. The proximity to open spaces that could be activated and to Kerr Park also provided opportunities for improvement. The site consists of a three-lane road, one

eastbound, one westbound, and a turn lane with approximately five-foot bike lanes on each side. There is an angled parking lot in front of the local businesses that can provide parking for around 15 cars. The businesses along the block consist of hair and nail salons, a lottery and convenience store, an incoming arcade and video game lounge, and Hanini's Subs, a beloved sub shop. All of these businesses, while supported by the local community, cater to customers who come and go in their cars quickly and do not spend any time in the area.

On the south side of Copley Road, the buildings are much less dense, with large empty parking lots and stand-alone businesses, including a tax associate, United Black Firefighters of Akron, and a church.





# THE PROJECT

# THE PARTNERS

The Copley Road Better Block was led by a dedicated local team who made it all possible.

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## EJ Brinson



EJ Brinson is a 1996 graduate of Firestone High School in Akron, Ohio, studied Business Administration at the University of Akron. First responsibilities to his family, wife Alisha, and his children Tymerin, Elisha, Nehemiah, and Desteny. He started his professional career at Cingular Wireless where he rose through the ranks to manage corporate accounts. At 23, he became an entrepreneur and began to develop property in Akron, Ohio. Shortly after, he was hired to be the ED for P.R.A.C., Inc. He has served(s) on the Akron Urban League committee, SCPC 2010, First Tee of Greater Akron, Executive Ilene Shapiro DIA Committee, ASCR Committee, SCTTC, Building for Tomorrow, and is a board member with the International Soapbox Derby.

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## Rev. David Nelson



Reverend David M. Nelson is a native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He relocated to the Akron area, and has been active in the Akron community for over 10 years. Reverend Nelson is a graduate of St. Joseph's University (B.S), Lincoln University (M.Ed) & Ashland Theological Seminary (M.Div) respectively. Currently, he is a doctoral student at United Theological Seminary focusing on Transformational Leadership. He is currently, the Founding & Executive Director of Progressive Alliance Community Development Corporation. He has received numerous community proclamations, and awards from the State of Ohio, Summit County, and City of Akron. He addition, he has been honored as a keynote speaker, and workshop facilitator for several community organizations.

Reverend Nelson also serves as Senior Pastor of New Hope Baptist located in Akron, Ohio. He is active in the community, through the Akron Urban League, NAACP, and Habitat for Humanity. He is a member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated.

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## LaTonya L. Lewis



LaTonya L. Lewis is the Program Director, Newborn Screen Counselor, and Outreach Educator for the Region VI Sickle Cell Program at Akron Children's Hospital. She is a graduate of the University of Akron and sits on many community boards, including The Office of Minority Health Advisory Committee, The African American Male Wellness Walk Initiative, Let's Move Summit County, and she is a Board Member of First Glance. Inc., just to name a few. She was a former board member of CASA/GAL and the Akron Summit Community Action Agency, Inc. Latonya is a member of The Diversity on Board Program and is Vice President of Class 2, a project out of Leadership Akron. She proudly serves at her church as President of the Health Ministry, Choir, and Praise Team at The United Baptist Church in Akron, Ohio.

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## Eufrancia Lash



Eufancia Lash is a lifelong Akron resident of Akron, Ohio. He is a product of the Akron Public School system and is a graduate of Central-Hower High School. He received his Bachelors of Arts degree from the University of Akron in Business and Organizational Communications with a concentration in Public Relations.

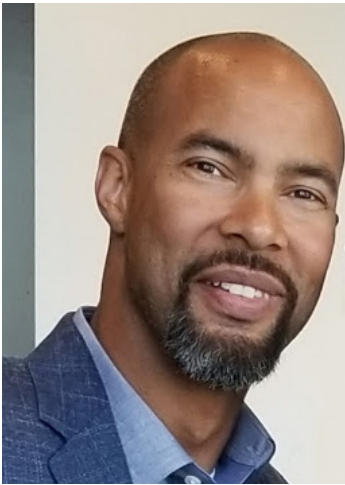
His professional background includes assignments with Ford Motor Company, The American Road (Ford Subsidiary), Alliance Inspection Management in Long Beach, CA, and now proudly works as the Director of Supportive Services with Alpha Phi Alpha Homes, Inc. He also continues to do consulting work through his consulting company The Akropolis Group.

Lash is the married father of four children. He is very involved in the community and serves to make it a better place through the work within his career field, memberships and affiliations. He proudly serves as a Commissioner on the Akron Civil Rights Commission, Citizens Monitoring Committee, member of Prince Hall Phoenix Lodge #112, 100 Black Men of Greater Akron, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and the Summit County Think Tank Coalition. He also serves as the Minister of Music for the New Hope Baptist Church in Akron, Ohio.

He is a true eclectic and enjoys music of all kind from various genres. His interests are vast and vary, but include leadership development, politics, learning, photography and travel to name a few.

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## Scott C. Fubler



Scott C. Fubler is an Akron native devoted to being an upstanding husband, father, and son. He is a graduate of Buchtel High School, class of '93, and recipient of the Buchtel "Manhood" award. He served 6 years in the Army National Guard forces. After his service to our country, he held a management position as a licensed optician. While the opportunity was very respectable, Scott couldn't deny that fact that he desired something a little more physical. This led him to AT&T where he has been a dedicated technician for 19 years now.

He spends his free time enjoying the great outdoors, managing rental properties, serving on the Audio/Sound ministry at his church, and helping out with the Summit County Think Tank Coalition (SCTTC). Scott is a loyal and loving husband of 8 years to his wife Whendi Fubler, with two children Noah (14) and Jourdan (4) and one on the way. He loves the Lord, his family and his community.

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## Dr. Cryshanna A. Jackson Leftwich



Dr. Cryshanna A. Jackson Leftwich is an Associate Professor in the Department of Politics and International Relations at Youngstown State University where she also serves as the Urban Internship Coordinator and the Director of Women and Gender Studies. Her research interests focus on public policies pertaining to social equity, civil rights, and gender equality.

Dr. Jackson Leftwich has published several articles in the Journal of Public Management & Social Policy and has also been invited to publish chapters in several books. Along with her research interests she has worked on the evaluation of a number of federally funded grants. She is also very active with the YWCA of Mahoning Valley where she serves as First-Vice Chair of the Board of Directors, Chair of the Young Women with Bright Futures, and is a member of the executive committee, and serves on the Board of the Summit County Think Tank Coalition.

Dr. Jackson Leftwich has been awarded numerous honors and distinctions during her tenure at Youngstown State University including, Distinguished Professor of Service, Distinguished Professor of Teaching, Diva of Distinction for Educational Leadership, YWCA Board Member of the Year Award, Greater Akron Regional Chamber, 30 for the Future Award Recipient, 2011 Athena Award Nominee, and Educator of the Year.

She received her Bachelor of Science from Miami University in Health and Sport Studies, her Master of Science degree from West Virginia University in Sport Management and her PhD from the University of Akron in Public Affairs and Urban Studies. Dr. Jackson resides in Akron, OH and is an active member of Mt. Calvary Baptist Church. She is married to Michael T. Leftwich, JD and they have one son, Clayton M. Leftwich.

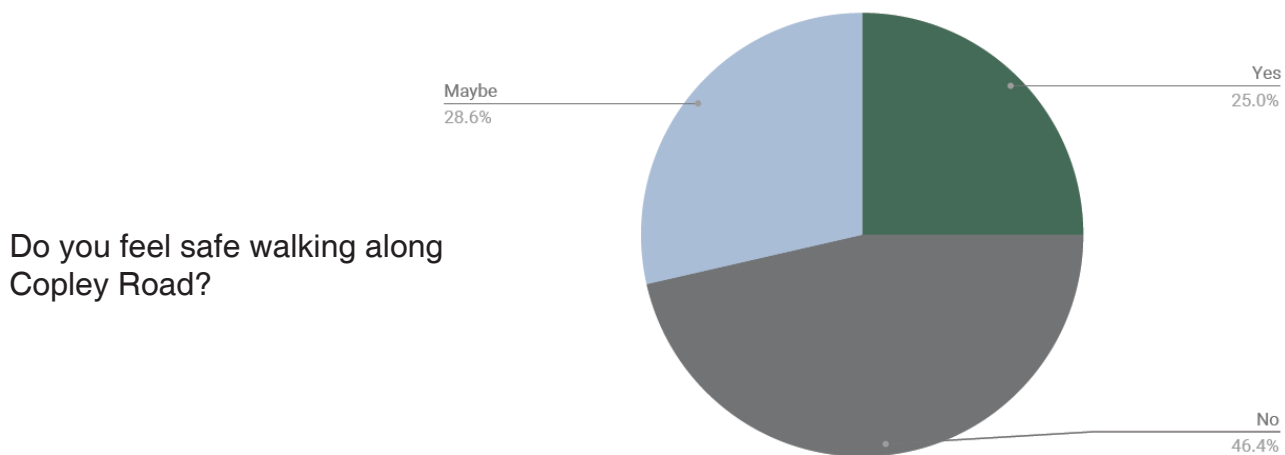
# THE SURVEYS

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## The Surveys

As in every Better Block, the process started with community surveying and conversations to identify the neighborhood's issues, potential solutions, and the vision that residents have for the area.

As seen in the surveys, the biggest concerns for the Copley Road neighborhood were safety and aesthetics. They also asked for destination businesses that encourage people to stay in the area, such as sit-down restaurants specifically with a health food orientation, coffeeshops, bookstores, youth centers, and art galleries.



What public amenities are most needed along Copley Road?

- Lighting (25 responses)
- Landscaping: planters, trees, gardens (21 responses)
- Kid's play area and community spaces (20 responses)
- Seating: benches, cafe sets (13 responses)
- Bus stops (6 responses)
- Artwork and color (4 responses)
- Parking (4 responses)

If you could change one thing about Copley Road, what would it be?

- Aesthetics (18 responses)
- Safety (13 responses)
- Street design and parking (10 responses)
- Become more community built (4 responses)
- Parking (4 responses)

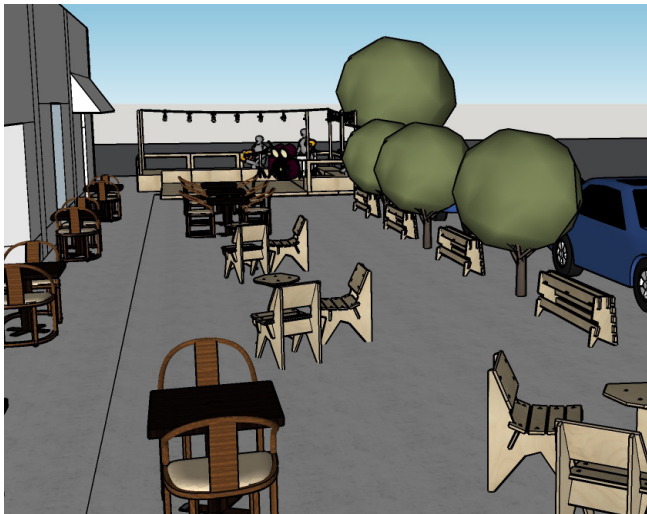
# THE DESIGN

Based on the survey results, we created a list of interventions that could be installed on Copley Road to address some of the issues that residents identified.

## Public Infrastructure

### *Seating*

One of the biggest needs on Copley Road is activated public spaces. We decided to create a cafe seating environment in front of the businesses in the parking lot to give people a place to congregate. We cut out our Wikiblock cafe sets and our newly designed tables and chairs. We also created parklets that could double as performance spaces and seating. The seating elements in the reclaimed parking spaces invited people to sit and spend time with their neighbors.



### *Parking*

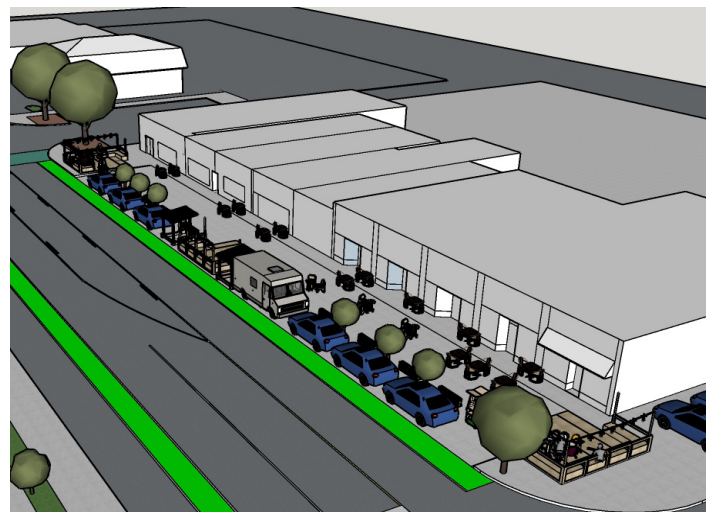
To ease concerns about the loss of parking and to increase safety for pedestrians, we installed parallel parking along the street. This provided parking for the businesses while also providing an added barrier for pedestrians from moving cars on the street. We also brought out rubber curb cuts to make more parking accessible on the side of the building.

### *Market Space*

We also turned a gravel lot across the street into a market space to showcase local vendors and businesses. To create a contiguous building frontage, we created a facade to span the gap between the two buildings and act as a gateway to the market. We brought out local vendors and business owners, constructed long tables, and hung string lights to create a comfortable environment.

### *Pedestrian Flow*

To connect this space with the performance spaces across the street, we created a temporary midblock crosswalk across Copley Road. We also partnered with Spin to host an electric scooter demonstration and pose e-scooters as a potential mode of alternative transportation to the residents of the neighborhood. As of now Spin is in talks with the City of Akron and exploring a potential expansion into the city.



Crosswalks, Planters, Bike Lanes



# MICROGRANTS

## Improving Local Businesses

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*Project Manager Colin Amos installing a new sign for a local business*

According to the surveys, aesthetics of the area was a major concern of the community. As part of a longer-term solution to improving the aesthetics of Copley Road, we created a microgrant program for local businesses. Generously supported by Pastor Petar Nedov and the Knight Foundation, the microgrants gave \$8,000 to local business to do façade improvements.

A committee of local stakeholders vetted the applications, and chose the following winners: Greedy Ghost, Cosmetique West Beauty Salon, Chapel of Grace Christian Center, Copley Road Wings, A Journey Into Better Health, Showtime Beauty Bar, Gino's Pizza, Westside Neighborhood Development Corporation, and the United Black Firefighters of Akron.

Each business will receive a grant for improvements to the exterior of their businesses, ranging from paint for the buildings to updated

signage and removing graffiti.

A large portion of the funding for the microgrants was donated by Pastor Petar Nenadov. “We hope the microgrants will enable existing businesses and new entrepreneurs to invest in their ideas for the good of the community,” he says.

In our projects around the country, we've seen the power and inspiration that comes from a community uniting, dreaming together, and focusing their efforts on one concentrated block. That block becomes a showcase of ideas that can be tested for a short period of time. Those ideas, along with an organized community, can then become a roadmap for long-term implementation. We are excited to showcase the amazing neighbors, businesses, and partners on Copley Road who have been working diligently to make this demonstration a success.



Creating Spaces For Performances



# THE FABRICATION

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## Wikiblock

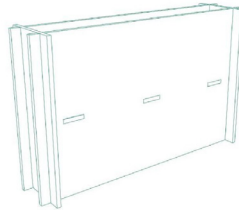
Wikiblock is an open-source toolkit of designs for benches, chairs, planters, stages, bus stops, beer garden fences, and kiosks that can be downloaded for free and taken to a makerspace where a CNC router (a computer-aided machine) can cut them out of a sheet of plywood. Most products can then be assembled without glue or nails, and used instantly to make a block better.

For the Copley Road Better Block, we cut:

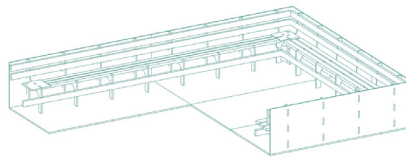
6 Cafe Sets



8 Koda Planters



3 Performance Pods



8 Dining Tables



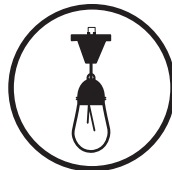
# THE BUILD AND WORKSHOPS



## Build Metrics



12 gallons of paint



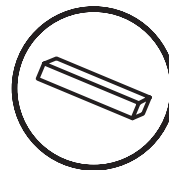
300 ft of string light



52 Volunteers



60 Sheets of plywood



200 1X2s

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## Volunteer Schedule

<b>May 22, 2019</b>	9:00-5:00	Wikiblock build (14)
<b>May 23, 2019</b>	9:00-11:00	Wikiblock build (1)
	11:00-1:00	Bike lanes, painting, string lights (4) Wikiblock build (1)
	3:00-5:00	Wikiblock build (3) Bike lanes, painting, string lights (5)
<b>May 24, 2019</b>	11:00-1:00	Bike lanes, painting, string lights (1) Event Set up (2)
	1:00- 3:00	Event set up (5)
	6:00-10:00	Data collection and surveys (5) Site Maintenance (2) Clean up (2)
<b>May 25, 2019</b>	11:00- 3:00	Data collection and surveys (6)
	3:00- 5:00	Date collection and surveys (1) Site Maintenance (2)
<b>September 2, 2017</b>	11:30-5:30	Beer garden operation
	12:00-2:30	Information Table
	1:00-3:00	Feedback and data collection
	2:30-5:00	Information Table
	3:00-5:00	Feedback and data collection
	5:00-8:00	Tear down and cleanup

# Creating Bike Lanes

s Hawkins





# THE BETTER BLOCK

# PROGRAMMING SCHEDULE

Throughout the Better Block, there were different elements of programming to highlight local arts and businesses. The schedule consisted of music demonstrations and workshops, and performances by local artists, building on Copley Road's identity as a music and arts centric district.

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## Friday, May 24, 6-10 P.M.

### Live Performances

*6 p.m. – 7 p.m. Theron Brown*

*7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. Umojah Nation*

*DJ Mo Bounce*

### Food Vendors

*Breakfast Box Pop-Up*

*San Tri Party Planning and Treats*

*Penguin Ice Cream*

*Funky Trucketeria*

*Twist of Leona*

### Neighborhood Retail

*Bright Star Books*

*Blame Taya*

*Body Boutique*

*I Appear Cosmetics*

*Touch by Sekoya Massage Therapy*

*Maple Valley Cleaners*

*Paparazzi*

*Symple Treasures*

### Community Connections

*Better Streets*

*United Way*

*Department of Veterans*

*Maple Valley Library*

## Saturday, May 25, 11 A.M.-4:30 P.M.

### Live Performances

*2:30 p.m. – 4:30 Hub's Groove*

*Drummer/Spoken Word- Jerry Williams & DJ Mo Bounce*

### Food Vendors

*Breakfast Box Pop-Up*

*San Tri Party Planning and Treats*

*Penguin Ice Cream*

*Funky Trucketeria*

*Twist of Leona*

### Neighborhood Retail

*Bright Star Books*

*Blame Taya*

*Body Boutique*

*I Appear Cosmetics*

*Touch by Sekoya Massage Therapy*

*Maple Valley Cleaners*

*Paparazzi*

*Symple Treasures*

### Community Connections

*11:00 a.m.- 1 p.m. Congresswoman Fudge*

*11:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. Voter Registration*

*11:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. Judge Stormer*

*11:00 a.m.- 1:30 p.m. Job Family Services*

*Emmanuel Schools*

*United Way*

*Department of Veterans*

*Maple Valley Library*



COPLEY ROAD

# BETTER BLOCK

MAY 24TH. 6PM-10PM

MAY 25TH. 11AM - 4:30PM

JOIN US AS WE REIMAGINE A PORTION OF COPELY ROAD & HIGHLIGHT THE GREAT FOOD, MUSIC, AND ENTREPRENEURS IN THE AREA.

## FEATURING

### FOOD VENDORS

BREAKFAST BOX POP UP  
BEACH COMBER TRUCK  
SANTRI PARTY PLANNING & TREATS  
HIBACHI EXPRESS FOOD TRUCK  
MELVIN ELLIS  
PENGUIN ICE CREAM  
TWIST OF LEONA  
FUNKY TRUCKETERIA

### COMMUNITY/RETAIL VENDORS

AKRON SCORE  
BRIGHT STAR BOOKS  
BLUE STEAL BOXING ACADEMY  
BLAME TAYA  
BODY BOUTIQUE  
I APPEAR COSMETICS  
IN JOY  
JUDGE STORMERS PROBATE COURT  
TOUCH BY SEKOYA MASSAGE THERAPY  
POLICE SUBSTATION  
PAPARAZZI  
MAPLE VALLEY CLEANERS

## PERFORMANCES BY

FRIDAY: THERON (6P-7P), UMOJAH NATION (7:30P-9:30P), & DJ MO BOUNCE  
SATURDAY: HUB'S GROOVE (2:30P-4:30P), DRUMMER/SPOKEN WORD - JERRY WILLIAMS & DJ MO BOUNCE



Live Performance by Local Artist Shamara Costa



## The Event



### *Event Overview*

The Copley Road Better Block event was incredibly successful in bringing the community out to enjoy the space. Many long-time residents expressed their excitement about seeing their neighborhood active again.

One resident said, “I haven’t walked or sat down on Copley Road since I was a kid. That’s what it used to be, and we are trying to bring it back.” Hundreds of community members came to listen to local musicians, such as Hubb’s Groove, Umojah Nation, Shamara Costa, and Theron Brown, play in a flag football game with local Akron Police officers and fire fighters, and eat and shop at local vendors.

Many businesses expressed their desire to make some of the changes permanent and kept some of the Wikiblock furniture created. Hanini’s Subs kept one of the parklets in front of their space to provide café seating for their customers, and the United Black Firefighters of Akron took the other parklets to be used in their space.

The rest of the furniture will be continuously reused by the Progressive Alliance CDC and Summit County Think Tank Coalition in future events on Copley Road.

The interventions were successful in reclaiming space for people and providing a safe place for residents of West Akron to come together.



Performance Pods

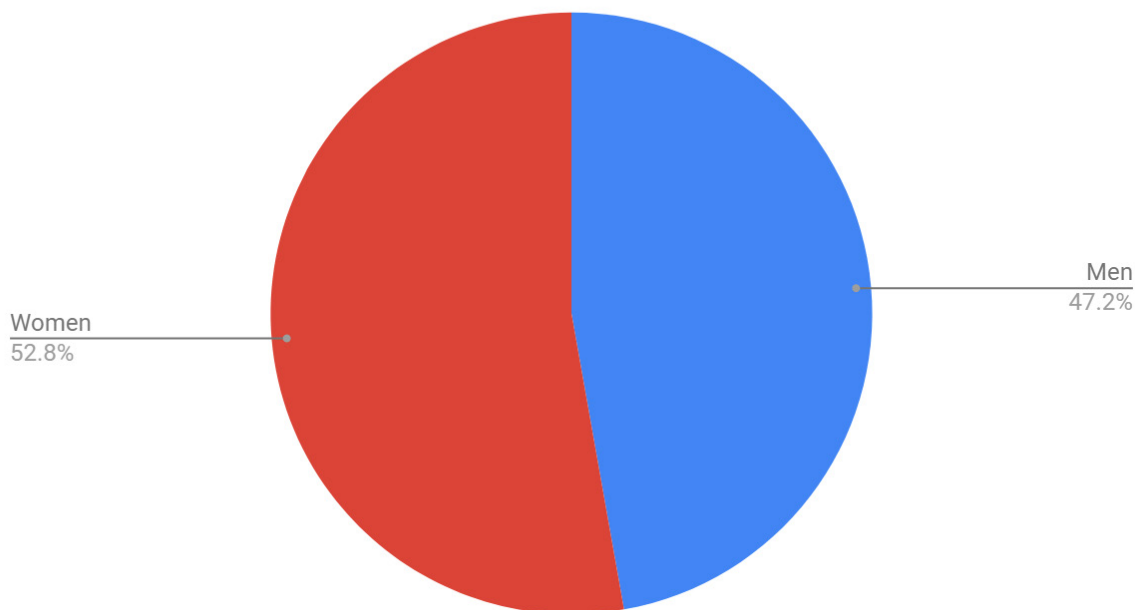


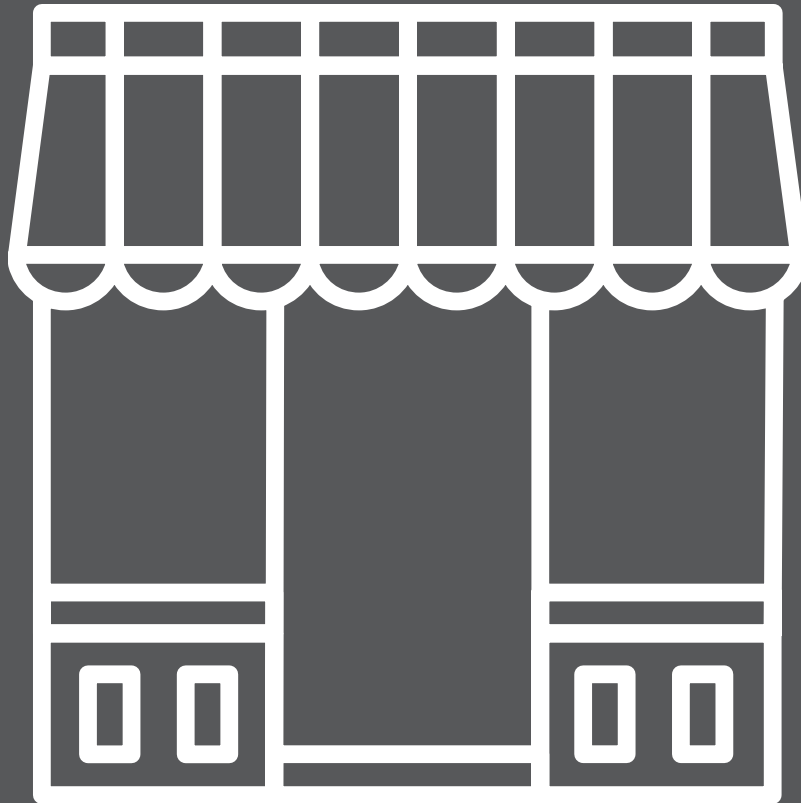
## Demographic Trend

According to our demographic counts, women outnumbered men on the site consistently throughout the whole weekend, a strong statistic showing the perception of safety of a space.



Gender Demographic Ratio on Copley Road





**PROGRESS + STEPS**

# STEPS FOR THE FUTURE

The Copley Road Better Block provided the foundation for change in the Copley Road neighborhood. The Better Block did not fix the neighborhood, but rather identified what steps need to be taken to make improvements to the community.

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## **Design for People**

Copley Road needs public spaces for people to come together. This can be accomplished through the installation of cafe seating, parklets, and pocket parks. Places that are designed for the convenience of cars are not conducive to vibrant public life. Parking in the Copley Road area should be rethought as district parking behind the buildings and on streets, and parking lots should be redesigned and reused as gathering spaces for people.

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## **Think Small**

Throughout the Copley Road Better Block planning process, we heard many concerns about not building enough, or extending the project further down Copley Road. But through all of Better Block's work, we have found that focusing on small spaces leads to the largest impacts. It is much easier to do many small things well than one big thing. Host small, regular events like having a band perform for a few hours outside of a restaurant and installing cafe seating, hosting a neighborhood bike ride or 5K race, having a potluck dinner in one of the empty public spaces. These pop-up events and installations do not have to be elaborate or involve a huge amount of people but they will still have a huge, lasting impact in bringing the neighborhood together.

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## **Make Events Community-Centric**

Trust your neighbors to make decisions and plan parts of future projects. The Copley Road neighborhood has the capacity and the skills to make significant improvements themselves. This was proven even during the Better Block event when two neighbors stopped by to help a local business owner put up a new sign. Do not be afraid to lean on the community for volunteer time or donations or borrowing of necessary materials. Events hosted by the community for the community will lead to the biggest impact. Hosting volunteer days to clean up parks or streets, renovate local businesses or beautify the area will bring the community together to work toward a common goal while also making physical improvements to the area.

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## **Trust the Community**

Continue to make spaces that people love and accept in the area, despite fears of vandalism or theft. Continue to push boundaries.

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## Experiment

Not everything will work, but give it a try. If you invest a bit of time and resources testing something out, people will let you know if it's working or not. If it's not, adjust and try again. Don't be afraid to put an idea out there.

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## Recognize Significance

The Copley Road neighborhood has an incredible foundation on which to work. There are existing bike and pedestrian infrastructure to build around and provide alternative methods of transportation to the community. There are multiple engaged, neighborhood groups actively working to try and improve the neighborhood. And there are many elected officials who are focused and committed on improving West Akron. There is a lot of momentum, focus and attention coming out of this Better Block project on Copley Road. Continuing the work that was started and continuing to fight for the betterment of the Copley Road neighborhood is more important now than ever.

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## Brand and Market the Neighborhood

As part of the project we worked with White Paper Ink, a marketing firm, to help with branding of the neighborhood. While not all of the created resources may be used, it is important for the neighborhood to create some sort of identity to market itself. This should take form through a specific color scheme, logo, taglines and other branding material.





# MEDIA COVERAGE

 Akron Leader Publications

## Akron Ohio News - Copley Road Better Block showcases improvements

Shown above, from left, during the opening ceremony for the Copley Road Better Block event May 24 is Akron City Councilwoman Linda ...



**City of Akron, Ohio** @AkronOhioMayor · May 24

Mayor Horrihan helped kick off **Copley Road Better Block** this evening!

Be sure to check it out tonight or tomorrow to enjoy some good food, incredible music, and fun for the whole family!



copleyrbetterblock and 2 others

7 20

 Akron Beacon Journal

## Copley Road Better Block asks: What could Akrons Maple Valley become?

Copley Road Better Block opened Friday and runs through Saturday afternoon in the Maple Valley business district in West Akron. It's the latest ...



**Emilia Sykes** @EmiliaSykesOH · May 24

Come on down to the **Better Block Copley Road**. You can't miss us! #HD34 #BirthplaceofChampions



1 7 58

 News 5 Cleveland

## Better Block projects aims to spruce up Copley Road

AKRON, Ohio — Jackie Easley has owned Cosmetique West Beauty Salon on Copley Road for two decades and loves her Akron ...

Feb 1, 2019



 Akron Leader Publications

## Akron Ohio News - Better Block coming to Copley Road

WEST AKRON — For several years, the Better Block Foundation has taken a "build it and ... The Copley Road Better Block had its kickoff Feb.

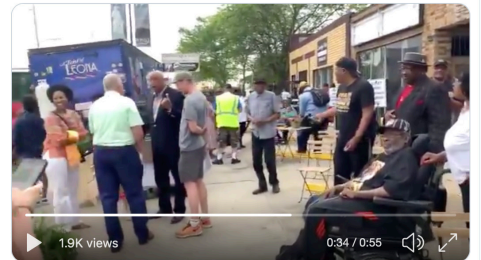
Feb 7, 2019




**Kyle Kutuchief** @KyleKutuchief · May 24

This is usually just another parking lot. Tonight there is live jazz, cafe seating and community building at the **Copley Road Better Block**. Come join us on the West Side of #Akron. #whynotAkron

cc: @TheBetterBlock @AkronOhioMayor @SummitExecutive @SummitThinkTank #knightcities



3 17 62

 Akron Beacon Journal

## Copley Road business area to get two-day image update

AKRON — The Copley Better Block program runs 6 to 10 p.m. Friday and 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday. The two-day reimagining of the Maple ...

May 23, 2019



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Music at Copley Road Better Block



# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

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**KNIGHT  
FOUNDATION**

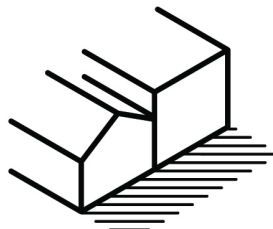
*County of Summit - The High Point of Ohio*



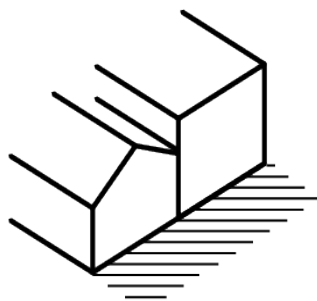
**DANIEL HORRIGAN, MAYOR**



**Progressive  
Alliance CDC**



**BETTER BLOCK**



**BETTER BLOCK**