

# **Maintaining High-quality Housing for a Predominantly Renter Community:**

A Housing and Community Engagement Plan  
for the Jefferson-Chalmers Neighborhood

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## Executive Summary

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### **Maintaining High-quality Housing for a Predominantly Renter Community: A Housing and Community Engagement Plan for the Jefferson-Chalmers Neighborhood**

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Many housing policies and programs are geared towards home ownership instead of rental housing, so neighborhoods with an aging rental housing stock have fewer resources for maintenance. Since over 50 percent of the households in the Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhood live in rental housing, many existing programs and policies do not apply to this community. To address these challenges, this plan aims to help Creekside Community Development Corporation, a non-profit organization that serves this neighborhood, learn more about the current renter and landlord populations and identify strategies for maintaining affordable rental housing.

Using secondary data sources, property condition surveys, and interviews, this plan identifies key housing and demographic characteristics that Creekside CDC's future housing strategies must consider. Most of the properties are owned by smaller landlords who own only one or two properties in the community and these landlords may not have the technical capacity or resources for maintenance. Many rental properties in this neighborhood are also owned by local owners and 26.1% of properties have a property owner who lives in the same zip code as the Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhood. The housing quality varies in different parts of this neighborhood so housing solutions should take this neighborhood variation into account. Based on apartment listings through the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) Housing Locator website, the median rental price for a three-bedroom house is \$725/month. This rental price is similar to the Detroit's median rental price of \$717/month but it may be challenging to maintain houses with the current rental income.

While this neighborhood faces challenges in maintaining affordable rental housing, few policies and programs at the city, state, or federal level support work with rental housing. The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) is the main program for creating rental housing but this program does not subsidize maintenance for existing private-market housing. The majority of the City of Detroit's Planning and Development repair grants are for owner-occupied housing, and Detroit's Neighborhood Stabilization Plan (NSP) funds for rental housing can only be used for rental housing in a targeted neighborhood which does not include the Jefferson-Chalmers community.

Despite limited policies, Creekside can use several strategies to build relationships with renters and landlords, increase local capacity, and improve the quality of life in the neighborhood. This plan presents six different strategies for working with rental housing. The strategies vary in the amount of staffing and financial resources needed for implementation, so this plan arranges the strategies into three different tiers: strategies integrated into existing programs, strategies that involve the creation of a new program, and strategies that require a long-term partnership with area community organizations.

This plan describes the following strategies:

### Tier One

- Community Organizing Programs for Renters
- Information and Access for Supportive Services

### Tier Two:

- Classes and Counseling for Renters and Landlords
- Landlord Assistance

### Tier Three:

- Code Enforcement
- Marketing Campaigns

Creekside will want to engage in additional conversations and assess organizational capacity and potential partners before choosing specific strategies, but this plan provides guiding principles that should inform any future housing strategy. Because Creekside is a membership-based organization, community organizing is part of Creekside's mission and critical for the success of any new strategy. Creekside may not always be able to address housing quality for rental housing, but can focus on aspects that address quality-of-life. Because Creekside has a small staff, Creekside will want to partner with other organizations for any of the initiatives. In addition, all housing strategies must be part of a larger community development plan.

## Acknowledgements

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## Chapter One: Introduction and Overview

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Creekside Community Development Corporation is a non-profit community development organization of neighborhood residents that serves the Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhood in Southeast Detroit, a neighborhood with over 50 percent of households living in rental housing. However, many housing policies treat homeownership as the cure for social ills and focus on homeownership, but ignore the role of the rental sector.<sup>1</sup> In addition, many rental housing policies focus more on new construction than on maintenance and many low-end rental properties are disappearing from the market<sup>2</sup>. Because of this, fewer policies and programs exist to support private market rental housing in these communities.

While most policies have not focused on rental housing, this is an opportune time to look at rental housing in the community. With the recent foreclosure crisis, cities and states are looking more closely at rental housing and including ways to improve rental housing in new programs such as the Neighborhood Stabilization Plan.<sup>3</sup> In addition, initiatives with rental housing can reach a population that is not being reached through owner-occupied housing. One-third of Americans rent their homes<sup>4</sup> and homeownership is too expensive for 80% of these current renters.<sup>5</sup> A high-quality rental housing stock can be an asset for communities, and if done right, rental housing can serve as an anchor to the community.<sup>6</sup>

Even with increased attention around rental housing, cities and community organizations still face many challenges with providing high-quality, affordable rental housing. The Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhood has a diverse housing stock and much of the rental housing is affordable, but maintenance is a concern for much of this housing stock. Because of this, Creekside needs to identify housing strategies that meet the needs of renters and address challenges with maintenance.

Creekside needs to look at several factors before creating a plan for rental housing. Creekside must first gain a better understanding of the current demographics of this neighborhood and the different types of rental housing in the community. The Jefferson-Chalmers community exists within the larger context of the city of Detroit and the Detroit area, including the neighborhood's competitive position within the city. In addition, Creekside must learn about the relevant city, state, and national housing policies, including how policies support or inhibit the maintenance of rental housing for low-income individuals. Using this information, Creekside can identify housing strategies that will work best with this neighborhood.

This housing strategy first provides an overview of neighborhood demographics, property ownership and conditions of rental housing properties and discusses how residents and landlords view the neighborhood rental housing stock. It then outlines six potential strategies that Creekside could use to work with renters and rental housing in the community. Through understanding the

neighborhood housing conditions and current policy context, the Creekside Housing Committee can work with neighborhood volunteers and community organizations to create strategies that help maintain high-quality housing and address the concerns of renters in this community.

## Creekside Organizational Profile

Creekside CDC is a membership-governed Michigan nonprofit corporation that serves the Jefferson-Chalmers community. Neighborhood boundaries include Jefferson Avenue to the north, the Detroit River to the south, Alter Rd. to the east and Clairpointe to the west.<sup>7</sup> Neighborhood residents founded Creekside CDC in 1993 to address loss of quality housing stock due to both neglect and demolition. Since then, Creekside has been involved with a variety of housing and community development initiatives in this neighborhood.

From 1993 – 2005, the organization was run entirely by volunteers. Creekside hired its first staff person in 2005 and its second staff person in 2007. Creekside currently has MSHDA and City of Detroit Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) status. Creekside currently has a 12-member board, all of whom are neighborhood residents. Creekside has two membership categories: full membership for neighborhood residents only and supporting members for all other members.

### **Creekside programs**

Creekside's work falls under the following goals:

- Building and preserving neighborhood housing
- Enhancing and expanding area greenways
- Preserving and upgrading our riverfront parks
- Protecting and improving our environment
- Planning neighborhood preservation and growth
- Growing an informed and active community.

Creekside has two committees that direct much of this work: the Housing Committee and the Community Building Committee. Goals of the Housing Committee include stabilization of existing stock, the development of single-family residential infill housing and higher density, multi-family residential development along the Jefferson frontage and along Dickerson Street. Community Building Committee goals include serving as stewards for neighborhood parks and other natural assets, hosting community building events and meetings, expanding Creekside's membership base, and working with community members to identify community concerns and solutions.

Creekside has been involved with developing a 45-unit affordable housing development, planting more than 600 trees throughout the neighborhood, planning multiple community meetings and events, and many other activities. Creekside has also been involved with several organizing



campaigns including preservation of the Maheras Gentry Park and a successful class action suit to clean up the canals in the neighborhood.

Creekside uses several different methods to share information with community residents. The main method is a quarterly Creekside newsletter that is mailed to all residents in the community. In addition, Creekside has an e-newsletter and blog for residents with internet access. Creekside staff and community volunteers have shared information through door-to-door organizing days. Residents can discuss concerns their concerns through Creekside community meetings and shape Creekside programs through participating in the Housing and Community Building committee.

Creekside has only two employees which will affect its ability to take on new programs. The median number of employees for Detroit CDCs surveyed through Community Legal Resources was three employees so many other CDCs in Detroit also have a small staff.<sup>8</sup> Although Creekside has a small staff, many community residents are active volunteers, so volunteer engagement will be critical for the success of any new housing strategy.

Some CDCs focus on programs for residents living in their housing developments, but Creekside serves all residents that live in the Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhood. Creekside does have 45 rental housing units in this neighborhood, but most of their programs are for all residents in the community. In addition to housing programs, Creekside's mission also addresses community building and greenspace concerns.

### Overview of Research Methods

To learn more about housing conditions, residents' concerns, and challenges in maintaining rental housing, I used information from existing data sources, resident surveys, property condition surveys, interviews of landlords and community development professionals, and internet research of current policies and other CDCs' programs.

#### **Secondary Data Sources**

US Census: For city-wide data, I used both the 2000 Census and 2005-7 American Communities Survey. Census-tract data was only available from the 2000 Census.

Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) Housing Locator: Because US Census rental housing data is over 9 years old, I used the MSHDA Housing Locator website to learn more about current rental prices. I searched for all apartments within the neighborhood boundaries that were listed on the Housing Locator website during a one-year time period from March 2008 – March 2009. Landlords can list their properties through a variety of ways, including Craig's List, Detroit and Grosse Pointe papers, MSHDA, or for-rent signs, so the MSHDA housing locator will not account for all available rental properties

Creekside 2004 investment properties and owner-occupied duplex dataset: Creekside had two datasets from a Wayne State University Urban Planning project:<sup>9</sup> a dataset of owner-occupied duplexes and an investment property dataset with properties where the owner has a different home address. This dataset include not only rental properties but also vacant and abandoned properties. Property owners included banks and government, but neither of these owners are likely to be renting their properties. While this dataset only includes properties with four or fewer units, this represents a large portion of properties in the community.

City of Detroit Assessor's Data: Through looking at 2008 Assessor data, I looked for changes in property ownership since the 2004 Investment Properties dataset.

### **Data from Field Surveys**

Property Conditions Survey (See Appendix Four): 120 properties were systematically randomly selected from the 2004 Investment Properties dataset and 2004 Owner Occupied Duplexes dataset for property condition surveys. On four different days in October and November 2008, Creekside staff and interns conducted drive-by surveys to assess vacancy and property conditions.

Creekside Housing Surveys (See Appendix Two): Surveys were distributed through the September community meeting and through four door-to-door organizing days on four different streets. Creekside Housing surveys were also hand-delivered to all houses that were selected for a property condition survey. I received 28 completed surveys from residents, including surveys from 10 renters and 18 homeowners.

### **Interviews and Site Visits**

While I was not able to host focus groups as part of this project, I interviewed four different landlords for this project. I contacted landlords through the Creekside newsletter that was mailed to all neighborhood residents, an advertisement in a Creekside e-newsletter, and an announcement at the September community meeting. All four interviewed landlords live on the same street as their rental properties. While this sample does not represent all property owners, it does describe a profile that fits many property owners. Three of the landlord interviewees have been involved with previous Creekside programs.

In addition, I interviewed three professionals who are involved in city-wide community development and housing organizations concerning the regional context for the Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhood and city-wide challenges for rental housing.

## Chapter Two: Analysis of Housing Conditions

Through secondary data sources, surveys, and interviews, I was able to learn about current conditions of rental housing in this neighborhood. This data can help Creekside CDC understand the current rental market, characteristics of property owners, property conditions of investment properties, and variations within this neighborhood. Using this information, Creekside can design programs that are tailored towards the housing characteristics of this neighborhood.

### Overview of the Jefferson-Chalmers Neighborhood

With a major street, a city border, and the Detroit River, this neighborhood has firm boundaries that separate it from other neighborhood. The Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhood is comprised of three different census tracts: Census tracts 5132, 5133, and 5134. All three census tracts are in the 48215 zip code. The different tracts and the 48215 zip code are shown on Figure One. The 2004 Draft City Master Plan identifies this neighborhood as part of the larger East Riverside area (see Figure Two on following page).

Figure One: Jefferson-Chalmers Neighborhood and Surrounding Communities

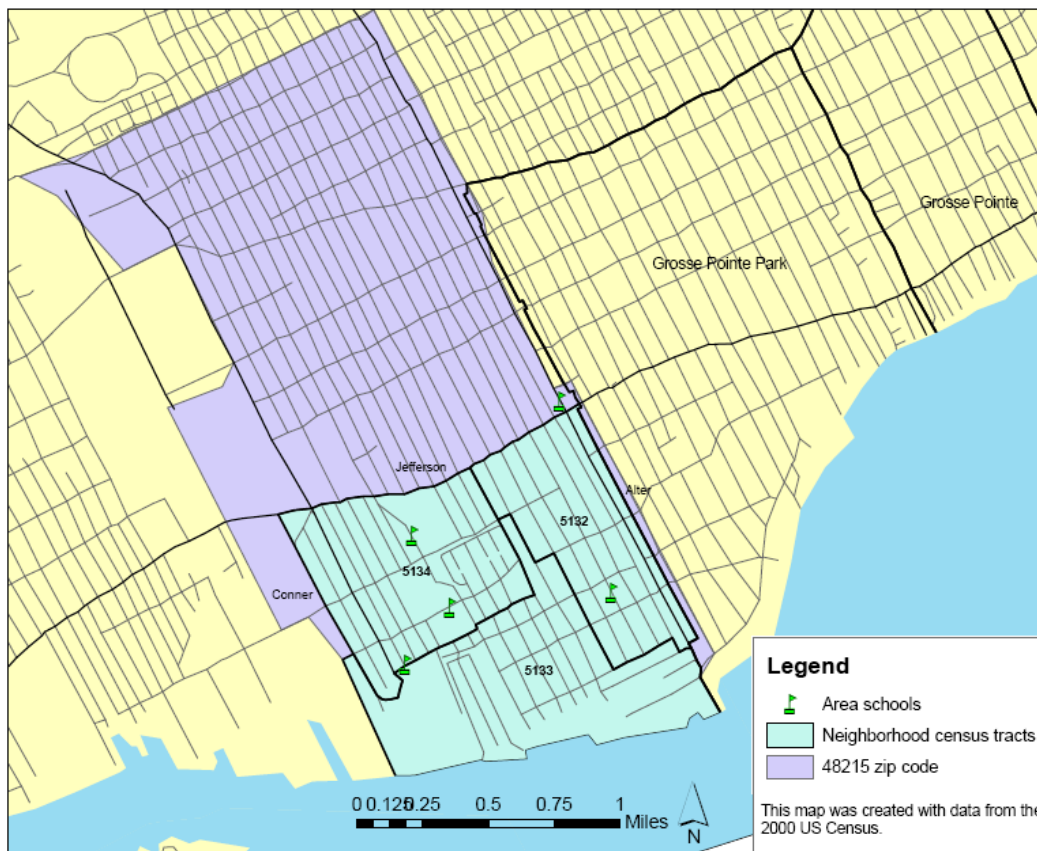


Figure Two: East Riverside Area from 2004 City Master Plan



[http://www.detroitmi.gov/Portals/0/images/planning/planning/MPlan/MPlan\\_2004/CRS3InviteMap.jpg](http://www.detroitmi.gov/Portals/0/images/planning/planning/MPlan/MPlan_2004/CRS3InviteMap.jpg)

### Housing and Demographic Characteristics

Table One shows the vacancy rate, homeownership rate, median income, and housing values in the different census tracts.

	Census tract 5132	Census tract 5133	Census tract 5134	Jefferson-Chalmers	Detroit
Number of Households	942	978	1124	3044	336,428
Vacancy (%)	21.11	9.53	12.67	14.54	10.3
Renter- Occupied (%)	49.15	42.02	60.68	51.12	45.1
Median Home Value for Owner Occupied Homes	\$57,000	\$81,500	\$87,000		\$63,600
Median Gross Rent	\$542	\$779	\$324		\$486
Median Income	\$32,816	\$36,469	\$22,727		\$29,526
Families living in poverty (%)	24	8.6	24.2		21.7
Individuals living in poverty (%)	28.4	16.4	27.6		26.1

SOURCE: 2000 US Census

Census Tract 5132, the easternmost tract in the neighborhood, has the highest vacancy rate of the three different tracts. The high vacancy rate may be related to age of the housing stock since this census tract has the oldest housing stock in the neighborhood. Only 0.7 percent of housing in this census tract was built between 1990 and 2000 compared to 14.5 percent of housing in census tract 5133 and 28.4 percent of housing in census tract 5134.<sup>10</sup> Census tract 5132 also has the lowest median home value for owner-occupied homes.

Census Tract 5133, the tract that borders the Detroit River, has both the highest income and smallest percentage of families living in poverty. Census Tract 5134 has the lowest median income, but this census tract also has a significantly higher population of individuals on social security than the other two tracts. In Census Tract 5134, 44.1 percent of households reported income from social security compared to 26.4 percent of households in tract 5132 and 23.5 percent of households in tract 5133. 60.5 percent of households in tract 5134 reported income from earnings compared to 81.5 percent of households in tract 5132 and 79.8 percent of households in tract 5133.<sup>11</sup>

Census tract 5134 has the highest percentage of renters, but this census tract contains the Jefferson Square Apartment Building, a building with over 180 rental units. Overall, the Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhood has over 51.1 percent rental housing. This is slightly higher than the city-wide percentage of 45.1 percent rental housing.

The City master plan describes the East Riverside area (which includes the Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhood) as having a higher vacancy rate and a lower rate of single-family homes than other sections of Detroit.<sup>12</sup> However, the East Riverside area includes neighborhoods north of Jefferson with demographic and housing conditions that differ from the Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhood. Census tract 5129, the tract just north of the Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhood has a lower median household income of \$16,500 and higher percentage of renter-occupied housing of 72 percent.<sup>13</sup> While this larger area may be perceived as one neighborhood, statistics may not accurately affect the Creekside area.

### **Rental Housing Prices**

According to the 2000 Census, 46 percent of all rental units in the Jefferson-Chalmers community were less than \$500/ month and 80 percent of all units were less than \$750/ month. While the U.S. Census does not have data on current rental prices, the MHSDA Housing locator has information on rental prices for recently listed properties.<sup>14</sup> Seventeen properties in this neighborhood were listed on this site from March 2008 to March 2009. Rents ranged from \$550 to \$1000 and the median rent was \$737/month. The median rent in Detroit is \$717/month so this price is fairly similar to the city-wide rental prices.<sup>15</sup> Of the properties listed through the Michigan Housing Locator, 12 out of 17 properties were three-bedroom apartment or houses. For the three-bedroom properties listed, the median rental price was \$750/ month.

## Analysis of Investment Properties in the Jefferson-Chalmers Neighborhood

The majority of rental housing is single-family homes and duplexes that are owned by private-market landlords. Many of these homes are owned by landlords who own only one or two properties in the community (see Table Two on page 9 for more information). In addition, there are a few larger apartment complexes and housing developments that account for 325 housing units. This amount of housing units is around 20 percent of the community's rental housing according to data from the 2000 US Census.<sup>16</sup>

### Major Rental Housing Developments (Contact List in Appendix Six)

Major rental housing developments include both affordable and market-rate housing. Many of these developments are concentrated in census tract 5134 in the western edge of the community. One development, Grayhaven Marina Village, is located on the waterfront.

#### Creekside Homes: Creekside Community

Development Corporation partnered with the NRP Rental Group in 2004 to develop 45 affordable single-family rental homes in the western part of this neighborhood as a low-income housing tax-credit project. Creekside homes will remain rental homes until 2019.



Rental housing with Creekside Homes  
[www.creeksidedetroit.org/pages/housing.html](http://www.creeksidedetroit.org/pages/housing.html)

Grayhaven Marina Village: This development contains 100 one and two-bedroom townhomes with riverfront access. This townhouse complex is run by Fourmidable Property Management and has 24-hour security and a gated entrance. One-bedroom apartments cost between \$795 – 895/month while two-bedroom apartments run between \$895-1100/month.<sup>17</sup>

Heritage Condos: Heritage Condos were built in 2007 so these condors are the newest of the apartment complexes. Many condos are owner-occupied condos, but the development also contains one and two-bedroom condos for rent. With rental prices for two-bedrooms at \$1150/ month, rent is higher for these condos than for other apartments in the community.

Jefferson Square: Jefferson Square apartments are located between Dickerson, Kitchener, Essex and Freud St. The apartment complex has 180 subsidized units, including one and two-bedroom apartments and two and three-bedroom townhomes.<sup>18</sup> The property is managed by Continental Management.

### Ownership of Investment Properties

Using a 2004 investment properties dataset,<sup>19</sup> I was able to analyze different types of property ownership. Because this list includes all properties where the owner lived at a different address, this list contains not only rental properties, but also houses that are currently vacant (see Research Methods Overview on page 6 for more information).

Table Two shows property ownership in the community. The majority of properties (65 percent of the investment properties in the 2004 dataset) are owned by landlords who only own one property in the community. Out of 504 property owners, only nine property owners owned five or more properties.

<b>Number of properties that each landlord owns in the Creekside area</b>	<b>Number of landlords that own this number of properties</b>	<b>Total properties in the Creekside community</b>
1	430	430
2	48	96
3	12	36
4	5	20
5	2	10
6	4	24
9	1	9
11	1	11
12	1	12
Unknown		14
<b>Total</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>662</b>

SOURCE: 2004 Creekside Investment Properties Dataset

I used a systematic random selection of every five properties in the Creekside Investment Property dataset for a more detailed analysis of property ownership in the community. This random selection included houses from 22 streets in the community. This selection included houses on all streets that contained at least three investment properties.

Table Three shows the ownership of randomly-selected properties. More than half of the properties were owned by individuals living in Detroit. Individuals that live within the 48215 zip code owned

24.8 percent of the properties while individuals that live in Detroit but outside the 48215 zip code owned 32.6 percent of properties.

**Table Three: Property Ownership in this Community**  
(based on a systematic random selection of 129 properties in Creekside’s investment property dataset)

Type of Property	Properties in Community	Percent of Properties (%)
Detroit resident (lives in Detroit but outside this neighborhood)	42	32.6
Neighborhood resident*	32	24.8
Metro Detroit resident (but lives outside Detroit city limits)	20	15.5
Company or non-profit	13	10.1
Individual living outside the Metro Detroit area	10	7.8
LLC (Limited Liability Corp.)	3	2.3
Government	3	2.3
Bank	3	2.3
Church	3	2.3

SOURCE: 2004 Creekside Investment Properties dataset

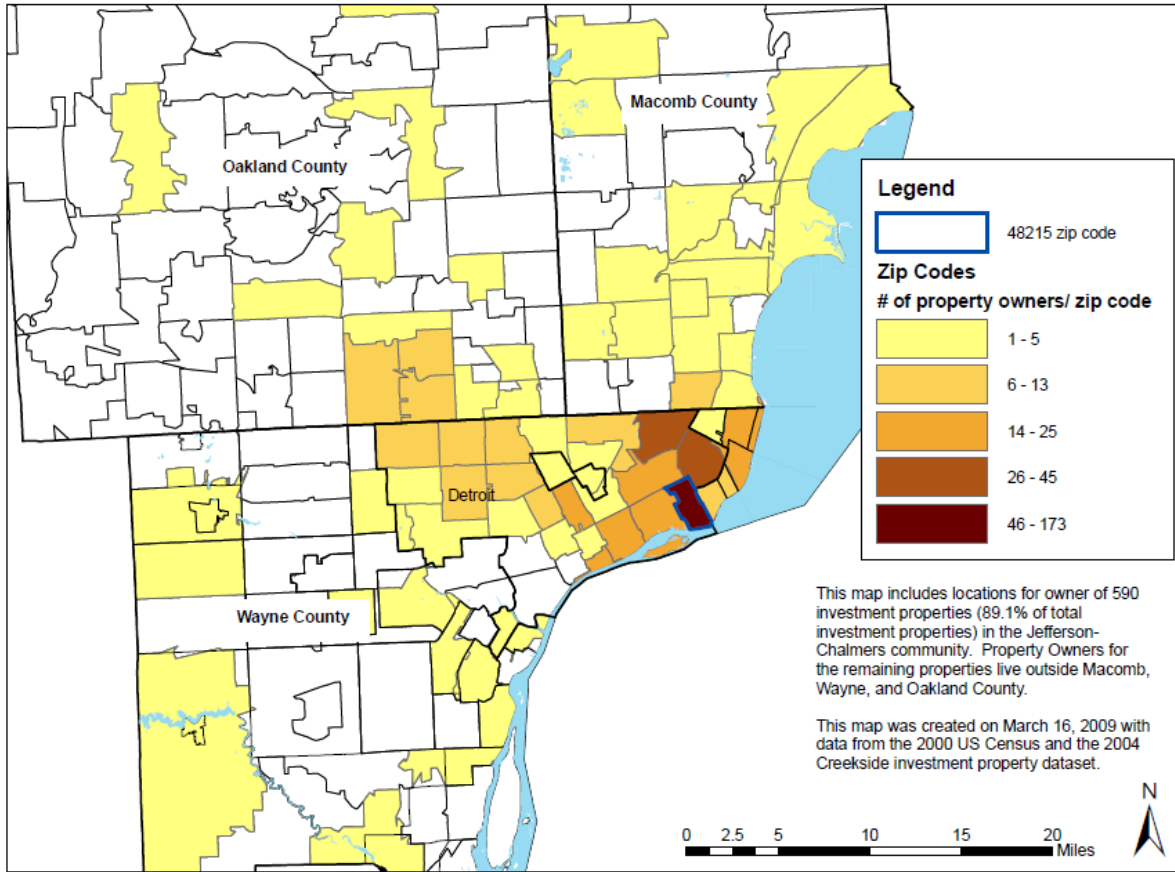
\*A neighborhood resident is defined as someone who lives within the 48215 zip code.

Figure Three shows the location of property owners of investment properties in the Jefferson-Chalmers community. This map only shows locations of property owners who live within Macomb, Wayne, and Oakland County, but this includes owners of 89.1 percent of the investment properties.

The 48215 zip code has the highest number of investment property owners. 173 properties have owners that live in this zip code. The 48224 zip code, a zip code on the East side of Detroit that contains the East English Village neighborhood, has the second highest ownership level with 45 different properties. All of the zip codes that contained owners for more than 15 properties were close to the 48215 zip code.



Figure Three: Owners of Investment Properties in the Jefferson-Chalmers Neighborhood by Zip Code (2004)



### Changes in Property ownership

After examining city assessor’s data for all surveyed houses, I found significant changes in property ownership since 2004. Of surveyed houses, over 35 percent properties have changed ownership between 2004 and 2008. For the majority of these transactions, another individual was the new property owner, rather than a bank or company. 48.8 percent of all transactions were between two individuals, so this may include transactions between family members. However, this is still a high number of transactions that could affect the stability of the neighborhood.

Table Four shows the new owners after housing transactions.

<b>Table Four: New Owners after Housing Transactions</b>		
<b>Type of ownership in 2008 (after housing transactions)</b>	<b>Number of properties</b>	<b>Percent of total ownership changes</b>
Individual	31	72.1%
Banks/ Companies	8	18.6%
Government	4	9.3%

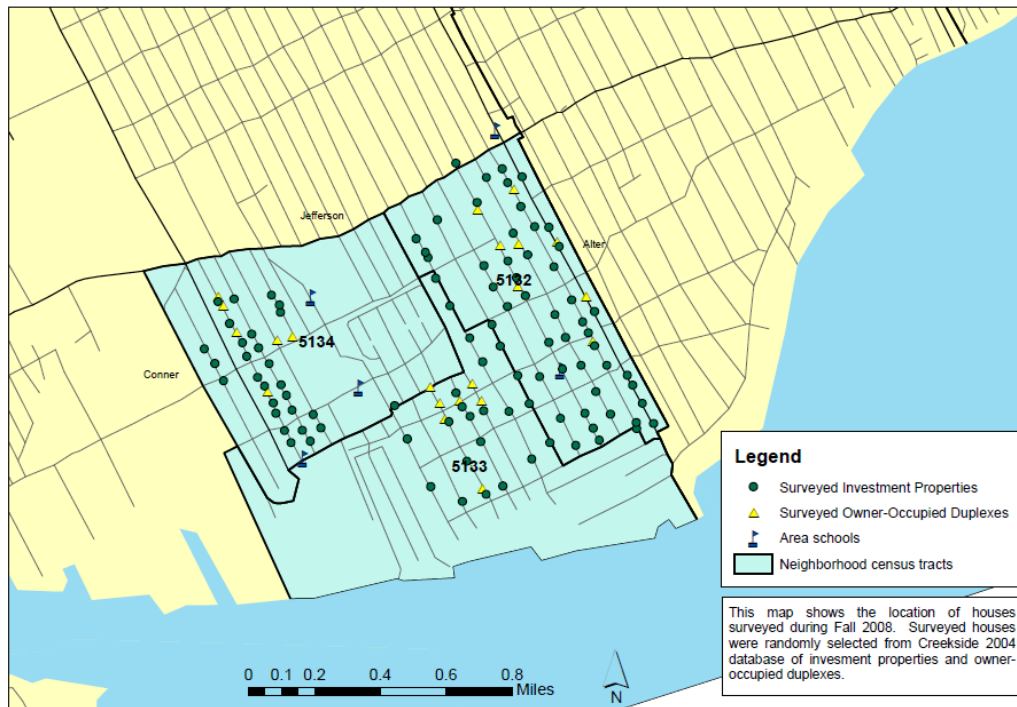
SOURCE: 2004 Creekside dataset and 2008 City Assessors Data

Many of the properties owned by larger landlords (who own five or more properties) have changed ownership since 2004. Nine property owners owned five or more properties according to the 2004 Creekside Investment property dataset, but only three of these property owners still owned five or more properties in 2008.<sup>20</sup>

### Analysis of Property Conditions in this Neighborhood

Creekside staff and interns conducted property conditions surveys of randomly selected housing from the two Creekside housing datasets. Houses were surveyed on 17 different streets (Algonquin, Alter, Ashland, Averhill, Chalmers, Continental, Eastlawn, Kitichener, Lakewood, Lenox, Manistique, Marlborough, Navahoe, Newport, Philip, Piper, Riverside, and Tennessee). Figure Four shows the locations of all surveyed houses.

Figure Four: Location and Ownership of Surveyed Housing in the Jefferson-Chalmers Neighborhood (2008)



### Neighborhood-wide results

Of the houses that were surveyed, 19.3 percent of houses were vacant and 10.1 percent of houses were potentially vacant. This compares to a city-wide vacancy rate of 22.2 percent and a nationwide vacancy rate of 11.6 percent.<sup>21</sup> However, this comparison may not be completely accurate. City-wide and nationwide rates included all housing units while this survey only looked at properties where the owner lived at a different address. This list included houses owned by banks and government agencies which are more likely to be vacant.

### Quality of investment properties

During property conditions surveys, Creekside staff and interns scored housing conditions based on the following categories: foundation, windows, door, siding, roof, stairs, and porch. Each category was given a score from 0 (no deterioration) to 3 (extreme deterioration). Creekside staff then added up all the criteria to determine the overall score. A sample survey is located in Appendix Four for more information.

After surveying, the overall results were:

- 19 properties (16.6%) were in excellent condition
- 32 properties (28.1%) were in good condition
- 36 properties (31.6%) were in fair condition
- 21 properties (18.4%) were in poor condition
- 6 properties (5.3%) were in critical condition

### Variations in Property Condition Data

Certain streets in the neighborhood have higher concentrations of vacant housing and housing in poor and critical condition than other streets in the neighborhood. With the exception of Alter Road (the easternmost street in the community), the eastern streets have higher rates of both vacant housing and housing in poor condition than the other two census tracts. On the western edge, Navahoe Street also had a higher concentration of housing in poor condition. Fewer houses were surveyed on Tennessee Street and Conner Avenue, so this analysis is missing some data from the western portion of the community.

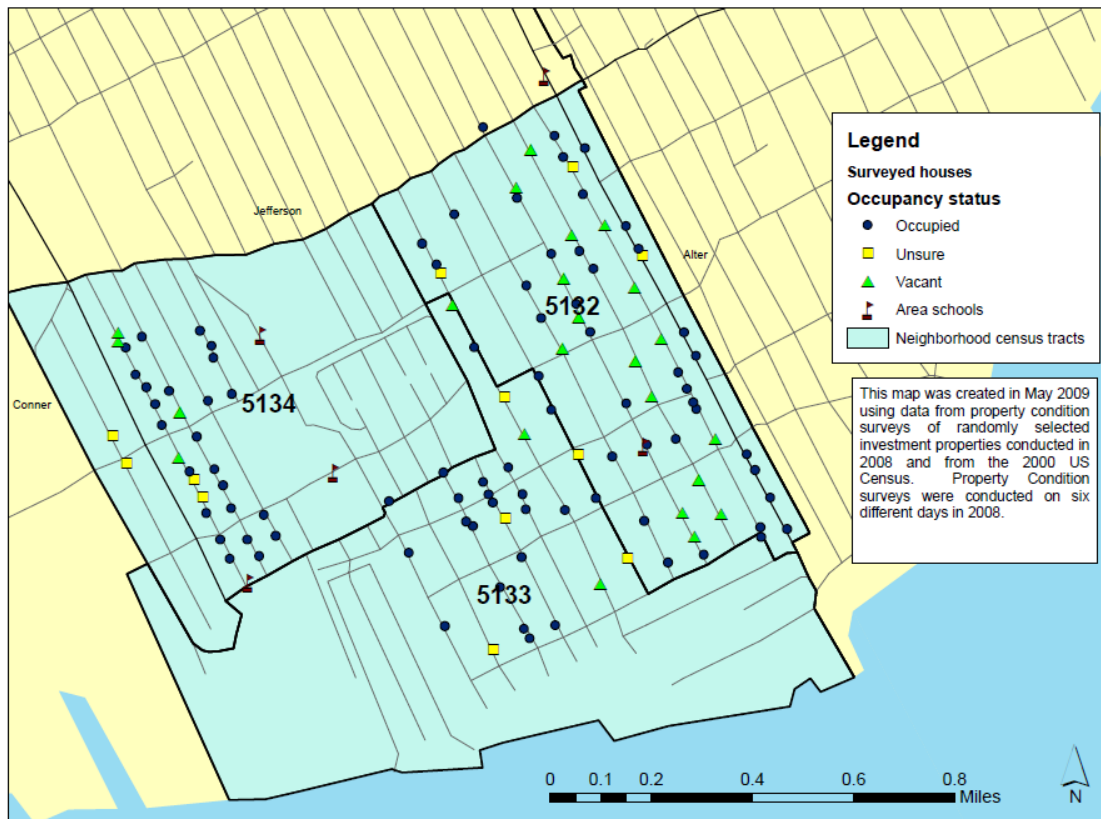
### Occupancy Data

	<b>Tract 5132</b>	<b>Tract 5133</b>	<b>Tract 5134</b>
Houses Surveyed (% of neighborhood)	56	28	34
Percent Occupied (% of census tract)	64.3	75	76.5
Percent Vacant (% of census tract)	28.6	10.7	11.8
Percent Unsure (% of census tract)	7.1	14.3	11.8

SOURCE: 2008 Property Condition Surveys

Figure Five shows the location of occupied and vacant houses throughout the community.

Figure Five: Occupancy Status of Surveyed Houses (2008)



### Property Condition Scores for Surveyed Houses

Figure Six shows the locations of houses in poor and critical condition while Figure Seven shows how the distribution of property condition scores differs between the three census tracts. There were significant differences between the three tracts. Census tract 5133, which also has the highest income (see Table One), had no properties that were in poor or critical condition. Census tract 5134 had few properties in critical condition but also had few properties in excellent condition. Census tract 5132, which also has the highest vacancy, had the highest number of properties in critical condition.

Figures five and six show how vacant houses and houses in poor and critical condition are clustered together. Many of the houses in poor and condition are also vacant. Of the 21 houses in poor condition, eight were vacant and two were potentially vacant. Six houses were in critical condition and all of these houses were vacant.

Figure Six: Surveyed Houses in Poor and Critical Condition (2008)

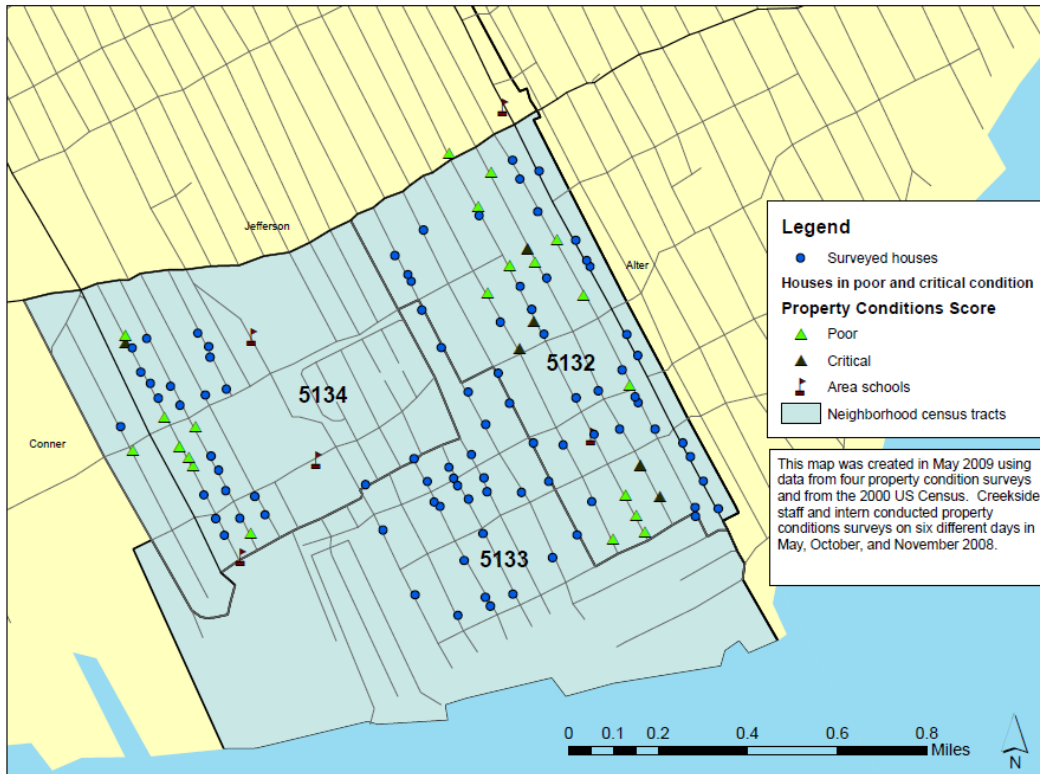
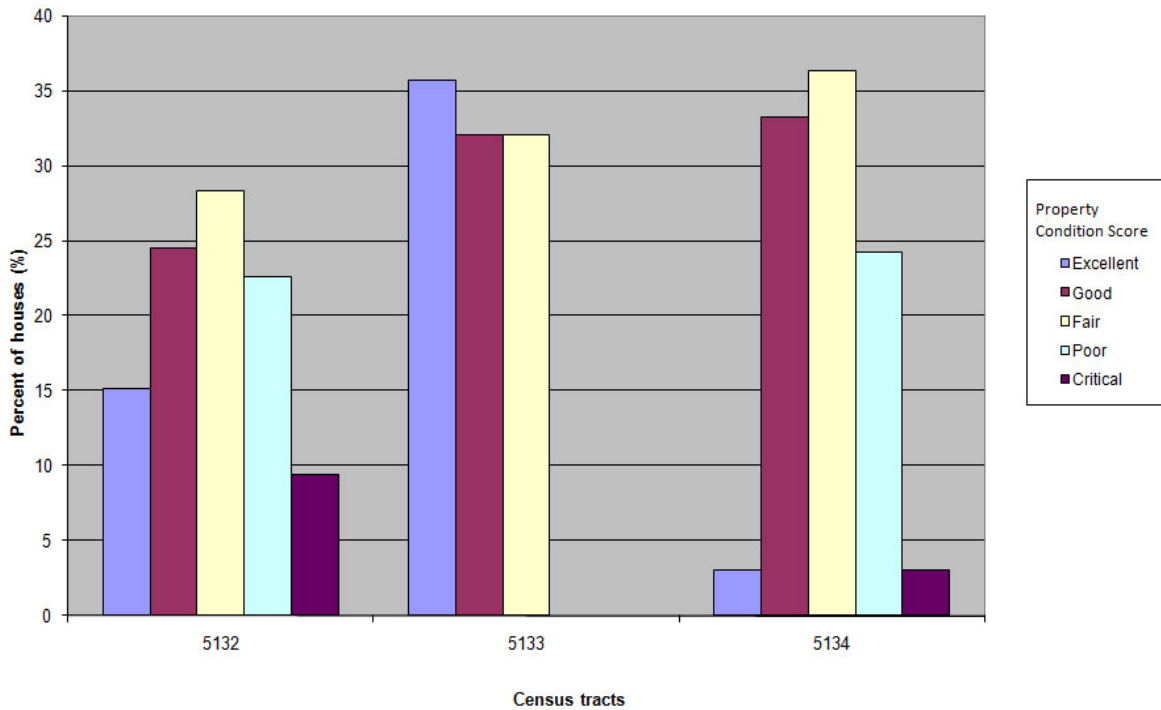


Figure Seven: Property Condition Scores for Neighborhood Census Tracts

Scores from Property Conditions surveys of randomly selected investment properties (2008)



## Interview Results: Community and City-wide Perspectives

### Landlord Interviews

All of the landlords who were interviewed lived on the same street where they rented properties. Because landlords lived in the same neighborhood as their rental properties, landlords described a stronger connection to the neighborhood than other landlords living outside the community might have. One landlord decided to buy the property next door so this house would not remain vacant. This landlord listed stabilizing his community and providing a place for families to live as two reasons for becoming a landlord. Two of the landlords brought properties in this neighborhood because they were familiar with this neighborhood and liked this neighborhood.

Many of the landlords saw advantages to living close to tenants. One landlord talked about forming a closer relationship with tenants while another landlord talked about how this proximity helped him to understand what was happening in the neighborhood and make sure that his investment properties were being maintained. One landlord stated that “I wouldn’t rent an apartment in an area where I wouldn’t want to live,” and he felt that he could better market his rental houses because he also lived on the same street.

In this neighborhood, many landlords live on fixed incomes. While rental incomes may help to supplement their income, landlords with limited resources may face challenges in maintaining properties. For this project, I interviewed one landlord with a fixed income who described the challenges in keeping up with repairs. The landlord described how if there is one slip or if you fall behind in one bill, then it is hard to catch up. S/he described how “that’s all I am doing, I am paying bills.”

In interviews, landlords also described recent decrease in rent prices. One landlord described how he lowered the rental prices because the amount that tenants can afford to pay has gone down. He stated that you “take the discount because you have to.” Another landlord commented that “even as expenses go up, you can’t raise rents.”

While maintenance was a challenge, some of the landlords recognized the importance of maintenance and providing a good home for tenants. As one landlord stated, “if you have a crappy house, you deserve crappy tenants.” All of the landlords live close to their property which may increase their incentives to have it well maintained. One landlord felt that maintenance was important but wanted more information on hazards reduction such as lead paint.

In addition to maintenance, landlords mentioned several other challenges. Two landlords talked about challenges with accessing city services and working with city departments. Landlords also talked about challenges in screening and finding tenants.

## **Renters' perspectives**

Much of the data about renters' perspectives is from 10 Creekside housing surveys (See Appendix Two for sample survey). While not enough surveys were collected for results to be statistically significant, some common themes emerged from the open-ended questions.

Renters in both Creekside Homes and in private market rental properties completed surveys. While the survey results contain less information than interviews would have, highlights from renters' surveys include:

- Four of the surveys highlighted affordability or low costs of housing as one of the reasons that they moved to this neighborhood.
- Survey respondents frequently mentioned crime and drugs as a concern. Six surveys listed this as one of their main concerns. Renters also expressed concern over abandoned buildings and safe places for children to play. This shows that a rental housing strategy plan should not only address housing conditions, but must also look at a broader neighborhood strategy.
- Positive aspects of the neighborhood included: neighbors, location (near river), and community organizations
- Renters' concerns over crime were very similar to the concerns of landlords and homeowners. Both renters and home owners highlighted some of the same community assets so many of the organizing initiatives that address quality-of-life will benefit both renters and homeowners in the community.

## **Overall Perceptions of this neighborhood**

*based on interviews and on survey responses*

The Jefferson-Chalmers community has specific assets that can distinguish this neighborhood from other neighborhoods, such as waterfront parks, active community and neighborhood organizations, and good access to retail with the Riverbend Shopping Plaza and shopping in Grosse Pointe Park. These assets were all highlighted by residents in the Creekside Housing survey (See Appendix Six). When asked about advantages of renting in this neighborhood, one landlord mentioned the wide range of housing options and income diversity in this neighborhood while another landlord mentioned that this area was close to Grosse Pointe Park but much more affordable.

While this neighborhood will be influenced by what happens in other neighborhoods, this neighborhood can have a clear identity.<sup>22</sup> However, this area can benefit from the amenities in other neighborhoods, such as Mack-Alter Square north of this neighborhood and shopping in Grosse Pointe Park. Conversely, the parks in this community will be assets for nearby neighborhoods.



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## Summary of Key Findings from Data Analysis

When determining future housing strategies, Creekside will want to take the following characteristic into consideration:

**Variation among neighborhood census tracts:** Demographic and housing data, including income, housing values, and vacancy rates vary between the different census tracts. Census tract 5132 has the oldest housing stock and the highest vacancy rate. Census tract 5133 has the highest home ownership rates and lowest poverty rates. Census tract 5134 has the highest amount of rental houses and the highest percentage of new development. This neighborhood has a diverse range of housing and this is reflected in differences between the census tracts.

**Low market-rate rental housing:** The median rental price for a three-bedroom house listed on MSHDA housing locator in the last year was \$725. With an aging housing stock, it could be challenging to maintain housing with current rental income levels.

**Small property owners:** Many property owners own very few properties in the community. Two-thirds of the properties in the Creekside investment property dataset are owned by landlords that own only one property in the community. Small landlord may have less experience and resources for maintenance. This also means that this neighborhood has fewer major landlords that could be a target of an organizing campaign.

**Local property ownership:** Many investment properties are owned by local property owners. The owners of 29 percent of investment properties in Creekside's dataset lived in the 48215 zip code. This high level of local ownership may be different than other parts of Detroit.

**High rate of housing Transactions:** Over 30 percent of surveyed investment properties changed ownership between 2004- 2008 and this high rate of transactions could affect neighborhood stability. While I do not have data on more recent changes, changes in ownership may have increased in this past year so Creekside may want to do more research to assess the current rate of changes in ownership in the community.

**Vacancy rate among properties:** While this neighborhood has many assets, the Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhood also faces challenges with vacancy of investment properties. Of the investment properties that were surveyed, 19.3 percent of houses were vacant and 10.1 percent of houses were potentially vacant. This is not a neighborhood-specific challenge, but a challenge that is common in many parts of Detroit.

## Chapter Three: Current Policy Context

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After understanding the housing conditions and the challenges in maintaining high quality-rental housing, a plan must look at the policy context for low-income rental housing. This chapter discusses relevant policies and available resources at the federal, state, and local level.

### **Federal Policies and Programs**

While policy discussions are changing with the recent foreclosure crisis, many housing policies ignore the role of the rental sector. The main federal policy to support rental housing is currently the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC). While this policy can help construct and preserve affordable housing, this program will have less of an effect of the maintenance of existing private market rental housing. Section 8 vouchers can provide subsidies for rent, but the Detroit Housing Commission and many other cities currently have a waiting list for Section 8 housing.<sup>23</sup>

### **State policies and programs**

Most of the support for rental housing at the state level is through the LIHTC program. The Michigan State Housing Development Authority has an Affordable Housing Community Action Plan with strategies that could support rental housing. This 5-year plan includes different workgroups, including rental implementation and neighborhood revitalization and community development.<sup>24</sup> Much of the rental implementation strategies focus on building or preserving LIHTC housing instead of private market rentals but the Neighborhood Revitalization and Community Development Workgroup contains strategies that may be relevant for Creekside's work. While not directly supporting rental housing, the strategy around improving public awareness around community organizing and development<sup>25</sup> could support outreach to renters.

### **City Policies and programs**

The City of Detroit currently has limited programs to support rental housing. The Detroit Housing Commission has some programs for renters, including Section 8 vouchers, but most programs through the Planning and Development Department's Housing Services office are geared towards homeowners. The Housing Services offers a lead reduction grant program for landlords<sup>26</sup> but the other home repair grants are geared towards improving owner-occupied housing. The Housing Services office also offers loans for rehabilitation and construction of low-income rental housing but funds are for rental projects with at least 20 rental units.<sup>27</sup>

Detroit's Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) Plan offers new funds for rental housing in eight different neighborhoods that the plan designates as targeted neighborhoods.<sup>28</sup> The

Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhood is not one of the targeted neighborhoods, so Creekside will not be able to take advantage of funds to improve rental housing through the NSP.

### **Upcoming policies**

While limited programs currently exist, rental housing could become a bigger priority and Creekside will want to pay attention to upcoming government policies. President Obama recently established a new Office of Urban Affairs within the Executive Office of the President.<sup>29</sup> At this time, the White House website did not have information about potential policies from this office, but Creekside will want to look for future information from this office.

While Creekside will not be able to use the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds allotted for targeted neighborhoods, this program does contain funds for several city-wide initiatives.<sup>30</sup> The NSP provides funds for the Detroit land bank, which could help Creekside rehabilitate or demolish vacant investment properties in the community. In addition, NSP funds may be used to establish a better data collection system. This data collection system could be extremely helpful for Creekside's future efforts.

## Chapter Four: Recommendations and Strategies

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Based on housing demographics and current policy conditions, this chapter includes six potential strategies for improving rental housing in this neighborhood. The following strategies do not include new development opportunities, but rather ways to work with the existing housing stock. Since Creekside is already pursuing development strategies, the strategies below will complement Creekside's existing work.

Each strategy is described in greater detail on the following pages. This plan does not prioritize any of the strategies as any initiative will require additional community discussion. Strategies are arranged into three tiers based on the organizational capacity needed for implementation. All strategies would require partnerships, so a more detailed partnership list is included on Appendix Five.

### **Tier One**

Either of these two strategies could be integrated into existing programs. While Creekside could start small with either of these strategies, with additional capacity, both programs could be expanded.

- Expanded Community Outreach and Organizing with Renters
- Information and Access to Supportive Services

### **Tier Two**

The programs below would be new additions to Creekside's previous work. Programs would require an additional amount of capacity, such as a new intern or community volunteers.

- Classes and Counseling for Renters and Landlords
- Landlord Assistance

### **Tier Three**

In order for programs to be thoughtful and effective, these strategies would all be large-scale partnership projects that would a higher level of commitment from Creekside.

- Code Enforcement
- Marketing Campaigns

## Tier One: Expanded Community Outreach and Organizing Programs for Renters

*While this strategy is included under Tier one, with additional capacity, this program could be expanded to reach more renters and involve them in Creekside programs.*

### **Overview**

Community outreach can help renters learn about their rights and address quality-of-life issues. Creekside is already involved in organizing and work with block clubs, so additional outreach would be a natural extension of Creekside's work.

In many other cities, community organizing programs involve bringing residents together to organize against a single landlord. Since most landlords own only one or two properties, organizing campaigns against one large landlord will be less effective. However, through outreach to tenants, Creekside can help to educate tenants about their rights<sup>31</sup>. In addition, organizing strategies can focus on activities that improve the quality of life for both tenants and landlords.

Through organizing campaigns, Creekside can conduct outreach to landlords that live in the community. Some of the landlords are also community residents and as residents, they may have a strong interest in maintaining the housing stock in the community.

### **Strategies for Implementation**

- Outreach to Jefferson Square and other large rental projects: Jefferson Square has 190 rental units but few residents in Jefferson Square are involved with Creekside programs. Through outreach to Jefferson Square residents, Creekside can engage new neighborhood residents and learn how Creekside programs can better support residents who live in this apartment complex.
- Increase relationships with churches: Outreach and building relationships will be an on-going process. But through increased relationships with churches, Creekside can outreach to more residents and attract a wider volunteer base.
- Focus on quality-of-life campaigns: While Creekside may be able to do less around improving housing conditions in the current policy context, through organizing, Creekside can work on a variety of issues that affect neighborhood conditions. Organizing will also help Creekside learn more about community members' concerns and what residents are already doing to improve their neighborhood.
- Develop education campaigns around renters' rights: With many landlords that own only one or two properties, organizing campaigns against a single landlord will be less effective. Instead, Creekside could focus on an education and outreach to let renters know about laws that support tenants and different ways renters can advocate for better housing conditions.

## **Resources**

Community Building Coming of Age: a handbook by the Urban Institute:  
[http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/COM\\_BLDG.PDF](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/COM_BLDG.PDF)

Midwest Academy: <http://www.midwestacademy.com/>

Center for Community Change resource library: <http://www.communitychange.org/library>

Starting a Tenants Association (geared toward single building apartments but could be adapted for scattered site housing): [http://www.tenantsandneighbors.org/how\\_to001.html](http://www.tenantsandneighbors.org/how_to001.html)

Enterprise Communities Resource Database: <http://www.practitionerresources.org/>

Case Study: Metropolitan Tenants Organization (MTO), Chicago IL  
information from Metropolitan Tenant Organization's website at <http://www.tenants-rights.org/>

The Metropolitan Tenants Organization (MTO) is involved with community organizing to help residents change their housing and neighborhood conditions. Through support and leadership development, MTO helps residents organize campaigns that both directly address housing conditions and that work on a wide range of activities to improve residents' quality-of-life. While organizing can improve building conditions, preserve housing stock, and stabilize tenancy, organizing can also help tenants get involved in broader changes in their community.

The MTO has several programs, but organizing is central of many of their programs and a key part of their philosophy. As described by the Metropolitan Tenants Organization, "we believe that any fundamental change in tenants' current conditions, whether it is getting repairs done in a building or achieving controls on rent are the result of a shift in power." With support from the MTO, tenant organizations have been able work on a variety of activities including rent reductions, food buying clubs, group legal assistance, and reducing criminal activity around the building. MTO has a special tenant organizing team to support organizing in senior housing.

While this organization provides an example of successful tenant organizing, the affordable housing challenges differ between the Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhood and many neighborhoods in Chicago. For example, many tenants in Chicago were organizing against condo buyouts, but this would be a smaller concern for the Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhood. Creekside would want to do further research on current challenges and how organizing can address the unique challenges of this neighborhood.

## Tier One: Information and Access to Supportive Services

### Overview

Services could include financial courses, access to other social services, youth programs, tenant associations, and many other services. Support services both help improve the standard of living of community members and help residents to become more invested in their community. Community Builders, a non-profit developer with affordable housing developments across the country, describes supportive services as helping “the double bottom line.”<sup>32</sup>

Other community development corporations provide services for tenants who live in their housing units. Because Creekside has a small staff, instead of providing services, Creekside could help residents to access existing services. While some Community Development Corporations (CDCs) focus on residents that live in their housing developments, Creekside Homes comprises a small portion of the renters in this community. Creekside could look at services not just for renters in Creekside Homes but also for renters throughout the community.

### Suggestions for Implementation

- Focus on partnerships and access to information: With a small staff, Creekside may have fewer resources and staffing to provide services. Instead, Creekside can serve as an information clearinghouse and help connect residents to existing services.
- Make sure that any Creekside resources complement other information providers: Creekside should see what information is available through Neighborhood City Hall or through phone lines such as 211. Creekside can look at how new information sources would complement existing programs or connect residents to existing sources of information.
- Look at whether there is transportation to existing services: Not all of the current services providers are accessible for community members that rely on public transportation. Creekside may want to look at whether residents have challenges with accessing services.
- Establish a tenant association with Creekside Homes: While many supportive services require additional capacity, a tenant association is a small program that Creekside can organize in partnership with residents in *Creekside Homes* houses.

### Resources

National Resident Services Collaborative: <http://www.residentservices.org>

Case Study: Southwest Housing Solutions

Information from Southwest Solutions website at <http://www.smsol.org/housing.php>

Southwest Solutions, located in Southwest Detroit, has both a counseling arm and a housing development arm. Their housing arm, Southwest Housing Solutions, develops and manages housing in this neighborhood and provides support and counseling for first-time home buyers. They provide a variety of services for renters in their units, including access to educational opportunities and employment, workshops on topics such as financial literacy, safety, and a tenant advisory council. Southwest Housing Solutions offers some programs for all community residents including eviction prevention counseling, tenant dispute mediation, after school programs, and numerous community events. In addition, Southwest Housing Solution has supportive housing for individuals who were once homeless.

Southwest Housing Solutions has a larger staff and a counseling arm of the organization so Creekside would face challenges implementing similar programs. Creekside could help community residents access similar services through partnerships and connecting to existing programs. Creekside can look at the programs that Southwest Solutions offers and see if there are similar programs in the Southeast Detroit neighborhood. If Creekside decides to form a tenant association, Southwest Housing Solutions could provide a model for organizing a tenant association.



## Tier Two: Classes and Counseling for Renters and Landlords

### **Overview**

Through providing individual counseling sessions or classes for landlords, Creekside can help residents learn rights and responsibilities of both tenants and landlords, how to report code violations, how to search for an apartment or screen tenants, and many other topics.

A non-profit housing finance agency can become a U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) certified counselor on topics such as rental assistance, homebuyer education, debt management and foreclosure prevention.<sup>33</sup>

### **Suggestions for Implementation**

- Use courses and counseling to build a network of landlords and renters: Through individual classes, Creekside can build new relationships with renters and landlords in this community.
- Identify current counselors on the East side and transportation to current counseling: If Creekside does not have the staffing and resources needed to provide counseling, they can make sure that residents have information and access to housing counselors.
- Identify unmet counseling needs: A few CDCs have counseling programs that are geared towards helping people become homeowners, but fewer CDCs offer counseling for rental housing. Creekside may want to do more research to see what counseling services for renters currently exist. United Communities Housing Coalition has housing placement counselors, so Creekside may want to see if renters in the Jefferson-Chalmers community have access to UCHC counselors.

### **Resources**

HUD List of Approved Counselors:

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/hcc/hcs.cfm?webListAction=search&searchstate=MI>

(HUD approved list does not include Southwest Solutions or UCHC)

United Communities Housing Coalition: offers placement services for homeless individuals or people at risk of being homeless.

<http://www.uchcdetroit.org/>

**Case Study: Lakeside CDC, Chicago, IL**

*Information from Lakeside CDC's website at <http://www.lakesidecdc.org> and from personal conversation with Brian White, Executive Director*

Lakeside CDC offers both individual counseling and group sessions to renters, first-time home buyers, homeowners, and condominium owners and associations. Different topics include tenant rights, credit repair and credit scams, and how to look for an apartment. Lakeside staff are certified by HUD and experienced with the Chicago Landlord Tenant Ordinance and fair housing issues.

In addition to work with renters, Lakeside CDC has recently increased their work with landlords. Lakeside CDC staff recognized that small landlords are sensitive to increases in costs, high turnover, or high repair costs so they held a seminar series with information on finding and retaining good tenants, evictions as a last resort, fair housing, establishing good relationships, and budgeting. 20 landlords attended this event and for many of the landlords, this workshop was their first official training.

Lakeside works in a neighborhood with a different market than the Jefferson-Chalmers community and with more properties in large apartment buildings so some renters will face different challenges. However, many of their workshop topics would be extremely relevant for renters and landlords in the Creekside community. Landlords in the Jefferson-Chalmers community may be interested in landlord seminars similar to the Lakeside's recent seminar.

While Lakeside CDC has been involved with counseling, this may be too time intensive for Creekside. If Creekside does not currently have the capacity for counseling, Creekside can instead identify the locations of certified counselors on the East side.

## Tier Two: Landlord Assistance

### Overview

Landlord assistance could take several forms, including property management services, technical assistance, grants, or landlord organizations. Fewer examples of landlord assistance exist compared to the other rental housing strategies, as landlord assistance may be seen as undue enrichment for business owners and people may question whether this is an effective use of resources.<sup>34</sup> However, Creekside has a unique group of landlords who live in the same neighborhood where they rent properties. Many of these landlords care about their community but still face challenges with repairs and would benefit from different types of assistance.

### Suggestions for Implementation

- Offer grants and information about energy efficiency and hazards reduction: While it could be controversial to give landlords grants for basic repairs, community members are more likely to support programs that help with energy efficiency or reducing hazards such as lead paint. The city has one program to help landlords remove lead paint, but Creekside may want to identify additional resources
- Build networks with local landlords: The landlords who were interviewed did not realize that other landlords both lived and owned property in this community. Through networking, landlords could discuss challenges and share potential resources and strategies. Networking could also help with joint marketing.
- Establish a tools library or skills bank: Grants will be challenging to fund, but Creekside could work on other low-cost solutions that benefit both landlords and homeowners. In earlier housing committee meetings, committee members talked about the idea of a skills bank to help with repairs. This program could benefit landlords who try to keep rent prices at a low rate. During landlord interviews, one landlord mentioned that a tools library would also be helpful for basic repairs
- Include landlord recognition with the annual Creekside awards: United Communities Housing Coalition recognizes landlords at their annual dinner<sup>35</sup> and Creekside could implement a similar program. This could help showcase landlords that upkeep their property while maintaining affordable rents.

### Resources (*Resource is specific to organizing neighborhood skills banks*)

Puntennay D. et al., “A Guide to Creating a Neighborhood Information Exchange: Building Communities by Connecting Local Skills and Knowledge,” (Asset-Based Community Development Institute, Northwestern University, 1998),  
<http://www.abcdinstitute.org/docs/abcd/LearningExchange.pdf>

## Tier Three: Code Enforcement

### **Overview**

The National Vacant Properties Campaign describes code enforcement as “the process by which local governments gain compliance with those land use laws, housing codes, building regulations, and permits over which they have authority.”<sup>36</sup> Residents have mentioned blight as a concern at previous community meetings and suggested code enforcement as a potential strategy.

Blight is a common concern not just for Creekside rental properties but also throughout Detroit. According to Michigan Legal Services, tenants’ most common complaints are around housing conditions.<sup>37</sup> Code enforcement with active tenant involvement could help renters address their concerns with poor living conditions.

### **Suggestions for Implementation**

- Partner with renters through community organizing: In a code enforcement strategy, Creekside would work with renters to address their living conditions. In this instance, a code enforcement strategy would be part of larger community organizing and education effort to help tenants learn about their rights.
- Combine new code enforcement efforts with current efforts around vacant properties: In addition to a larger code enforcement strategy around rental properties, Creekside could also focus efforts on vacant investment properties. Creekside is currently reporting dangerous buildings, so this would complement some of Creekside’s existing work. If Creekside wants to increase efforts to report dangerous buildings, the Detroit Vacant Properties Campaign has a Toolbox with many different suggestions.
- Combine efforts with resources to address the cost of repairs: The National Vacant Properties Campaign recommends that code enforcement also include a strategic use of resources and housing assistance programs.<sup>38</sup> There are many older building that require expensive repairs but rents are fairly low. Without additional resources, landlords may not have money to bring properties up to code.

### **Resources**

Campbell, J. “Solving Chronic Nuisance Problems: A guide for Neighborhood Leaders,” (Enterprise Communities 2001), [www.practitionerresources.org/cache/documents/19720.pdf](http://www.practitionerresources.org/cache/documents/19720.pdf). This document outlines a five-step approach and describes education and prevention needs that can happen before taking a punitive approach.

### **Case Study: Problem Properties Collaborative, Memphis, TN**

*Information from Problem Properties Mission and Platform (2008),*

[http://problemproperties.typepad.com/problem\\_properties/2008/09/problem-propert.html](http://problemproperties.typepad.com/problem_properties/2008/09/problem-propert.html) and

*Lockwood S and Trenholm T (August 29, 2008). Making our Homes Havens, not Hazards. Memphis Commercial Appeal.*

<http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/2008/aug/29/making-our-homes-havens-not-hazards/>

Steve Lockwood and Emily Trenholm, of the Community Development Council of Greater Memphis, stated that “it has long been said that we do not have a shortage of affordable housing in Memphis. What we have is a shortage of good, affordable housing.” Similar to Detroit and the Jefferson-Chalmers community, the city of Memphis faces many challenges with maintaining rental properties. To address problems with maintenance, community organizations have formed the formed Problem Properties Collaborative to address deteriorating properties throughout the city.

Two points of the Problem Properties Collaborative’s platform talk about code enforcement. One point is Community-based Code Enforcement, described as “systematic and ongoing collaboration with community-based organizations to identify and target high-priority properties neighborhood by neighborhood.” This is coordinated by multi-agency citywide team and combined with work to redevelop vacant lots. The Problem Properties Collaborative also lists proactive code enforcement as part of their platform. This type of enforcement relies more heavily on comprehensive data than the current complaint-drive system.

#### **Lessons for Creekside**

This collaborative has an emphasis on data-driven policies. Because Creekside has limited resources, data could help Creekside decide where to focus resources. While obtaining data can be difficult, Creekside can look at what data exists and discuss how they are using that data to focus efforts. This initiative is a collaborative between many different agencies, so Creekside would need to partner with other organizations if they were interested in a similar initiative. Detroit is looking at using funds from the Neighborhood Stabilization Plan to improve data collection so this data could be helpful for future efforts.

Creekside would need to address some potential concerns before implementing a similar program. The Problem Properties Collaborative discusses a registration system for landlords. In interviews, landlords complained about the current requirements and fees for landlords, especially given the low-market rate in Detroit. A registration system would increase requirements and hurdles for landlords. In addition, some landlords may not have the resources to fix up properties. This is mostly a punishment-based approach, but Creekside would want to combine efforts with incentive programs.

## Tier Three: Marketing Campaigns

### Overview

This neighborhood has many assets, but also has a fair amount of vacancy, especially in investment properties. Attracting new residents can help decrease vacancy and increase community activity and neighborhood safety. Through a marketing plan, Creekside can showcase the housing and the benefits of living in this neighborhood. Creekside Homes often has a waiting list for rental homes indicating a demand for quality affordable rental housing and a marketing plan could attract new residents.

Creekside can build off its previous work when starting a marketing campaign. Creekside has increased its community organizing efforts in the past year and this organizing will help to get residents involved in a marketing strategy. Through community surveys (See Appendix Six) and earlier community meetings, Creekside has collected information about different assets in the neighborhood that they could use for any marketing plan

### Suggestions for Implementation

- Involve a diverse group of residents in determining a marketing strategy: Many community members who are committed to this neighborhood could help with a marketing plan and help to showcase the assets in this neighborhood. Creekside has many relationships with schools and churches, so this could be an opportunity to strengthen that relationship.
- Partner with neighborhood block clubs: Block club leaders can describe what they love about their neighborhood and why they are involved in their community. Through working with block clubs, a marketing campaign can be developed as a community-driven process that will help build relationships between old and new residents.
- Determine the target populations: Marketing campaigns will vary depending on the target population. One landlord mentioned that he was hoping to market to retirees and looking for ways to outreach to this population. Depending on school closings, this neighborhood could also be marketed as an area for families. Through community discussions, Creekside can help determine their target populations and appropriate strategies to reach that population.

### Resources

LISC has developed two resources, *Building Neighborhoods of Choice* and *Gathering and Presenting Information about Neighborhood* that could help Creekside with any marketing strategies. While both resources talk about marketing for home ownership, the information is also helpful for marketing towards renters.

Recommendations/ Moving Forward with Strategies:

The six strategies are summarized in the table below:

Table Six: Overview of Rental Housing Strategies		
Strategy	Key Implementation Ideas	Example
<b>Tier One:</b> Expanded Community Outreach and Organizing with Renters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outreach to Jefferson Square and other large rental projects</li> <li>Increase relationship with churches</li> <li>Focus on quality-of-life campaigns</li> <li>Develop education campaigns around renters' rights</li> </ul>	Metropolitan Tenants Organization (Chicago, IL)
<b>Tier One:</b> Information and Access to Supportive Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on partnerships and access to information</li> <li>Make sure that any Creekside resources complement other information providers</li> <li>Look at whether there is transportation to existing services</li> <li>Establish a tenant association with Creekside Homes</li> </ul>	Southwest Housing Solutions (Detroit, MI)
<b>Tier Two:</b> Classes and Counseling for Landlords and Renters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use courses and counseling to build a network of landlords and renters</li> <li>Identify current counselors on the East side and transportation to current counseling</li> <li>Identify unmet counseling needs</li> <li>Offer grants and information about energy efficiency and hazards reduction</li> <li>Build a network with local landlords</li> <li>Establish a tools library or skills bank</li> <li>Include landlord recognition with the annual Creekside awards</li> </ul>	Lakeside CDC (Chicago, IL)
<b>Tier Two:</b> Landlord Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with renters through community organizing</li> <li>Combine new code enforcement efforts with current efforts around vacant properties</li> <li>Combine efforts with resources to address the cost of repairs</li> </ul>	Problem Properties Collaborative (Memphis, TN)
<b>Tier Three:</b> Code Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involvement of a diverse group of residents in determining a marketing strategy</li> <li>Partner with neighborhood block clubs</li> <li>Determine the target populations</li> </ul>	
<b>Tier Three:</b> Marketing Campaigns		

Guiding Principles for Strategy Selection

Before implementing any of the strategies, Creekside would want to assess capacity and meet with community members. With residents and key stakeholders, Creekside should first examine what Creekside's own capacity and resources are, who potential partners would be for specific strategies, and how strategies will complement Creekside's overall strategic plan and existing initiatives. Creekside should integrate the following principles in any strategy that they pursue.

- Connect housing strategies to a larger redevelopment strategy: While a housing strategy may focus on current renters and landlords, this strategy must also be part of broader comprehensive community development approach. Low-Income Housing Tax Credit projects have had a more positive impact on neighborhoods when they were integrated into larger redevelopment efforts; similarly, any Creekside housing strategy must be part of a larger plan.<sup>39</sup>
- Incorporate a community organizing component: For any strategy to be successful, organizing must be a component. This is also a central part of Creekside's mission of "encouraging resident engagement in sustaining a clean, safe and beautiful community."<sup>40</sup>
- Focus organizing around quality-of-life concerns: There are limited policies to support work with rental housing, especially with private market rental housing. However, as a neighborhood organization, Creekside can work with residents through a variety of programs to improve quality-of-life in the neighborhood.
- Partner with block clubs, churches and community organizations: Creekside has a small staff so any initiative would require partnering with other organizations. Block clubs in the community are committed to improving their street, so they would be natural partners for many of these strategies.
- Work with local landlords: Creekside has a unique demographic of landlords that purchased properties near their house because they were concerned with the abandonment in their neighborhood. While landlords may be committed to their neighborhood, they still face challenges maintaining their properties.
- Pay attention to new federal policies: With a new Office of Urban Affairs at the federal level, housing policies could change and Creekside will want to take advantage of any new programs. While Creekside cannot use many of the NSP funds, this program includes funds for a new data-collection system and a Detroit land bank that could be very useful for Creekside.



The Jefferson-Chalmers neighborhood has many assets such as natural features and a diverse array of housing types, but faces challenges with vacancy and the high cost of maintenance. However, interest in rental housing is increasing because of the current market conditions. This is an excellent time for Creekside to look at strengthening the rental housing stock in this community.

While few policies and programs exist to support the maintenance of affordable rental housing, this plan offers six different strategies and overall guiding principles that should inform any new effort. Through partnerships and expanded outreach, Creekside can work towards building a well-maintained, affordable housing stock and an engaged community of renters, homeowners, and landlords. Combined with Creekside's existing housing strategies, Creekside can work with other community organizations towards creating a continuum of quality housing opportunities in this community where residents can move from rental to owner-occupied housing in one community and individuals living in a diverse range of housing types can all see themselves as part of one community.

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<sup>13</sup> US Census Bureau, American FactFinder, Census 2000 Summary File 3, . [www.factfinder.census.gov](http://www.factfinder.census.gov).

<sup>14</sup> Michigan State Housing Development Authority, "Michigan Housing Locator." [www.michiganhousinglocator.com/](http://www.michiganhousinglocator.com/). Current rental prices were found through only one method for listing apartments. Landlords may also list through Craig's List, newspapers, for-rent signs, and word-of-mouth but I was not able to find rental prices for house advertised through these methods.

<sup>15</sup> US Census Bureau. American FactFinder. 2005-2007 American Communities Survey 3-year estimates, Data profiles. [www.factfinder.census.gov](http://www.factfinder.census.gov).

<sup>16</sup> Except for Jefferson Square Apartments, all of the rental housing developments were built after 2000 and not included in the 2000 US Census. However, the 2000 US Census data is the most recent housing data at the census tract level.

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<sup>18</sup> Continental Management, "Jefferson Square (541 Dickerson St)," [www.continentalmgt.rentlinx.com/Property.aspx?PropertyID=1831](http://www.continentalmgt.rentlinx.com/Property.aspx?PropertyID=1831)

<sup>19</sup> "Creekside Community Development Corporation Community Plan," (Department of Geography and Urban Planning, Wayne State University, 2005).

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