

# *Avondale*

Cincinnati, Ohio

## Executive Summary

This site profile is part of a series that spotlights mixed-income community transformations that emphasize health and wellness in their strategic interventions. The Mixed-Income Strategic Alliance produced these profiles to better understand the health implications

grappling with the legacy of deep and persistent poverty in many neighborhoods. A 2017 Comprehensive Housing Market Analysis conducted by the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development<sup>1</sup> found that Cincinnati's housing market has improved steadily in recent years as economic conditions have become more stable. The sales vacancy rate in 2017 was estimated at 1.5%, and the estimated rental vacancy rate was estimated at 7.3%. Demand for housing was projected to grow much faster than the number of units currently being constructed, with a 3-year projected demand of 9,525

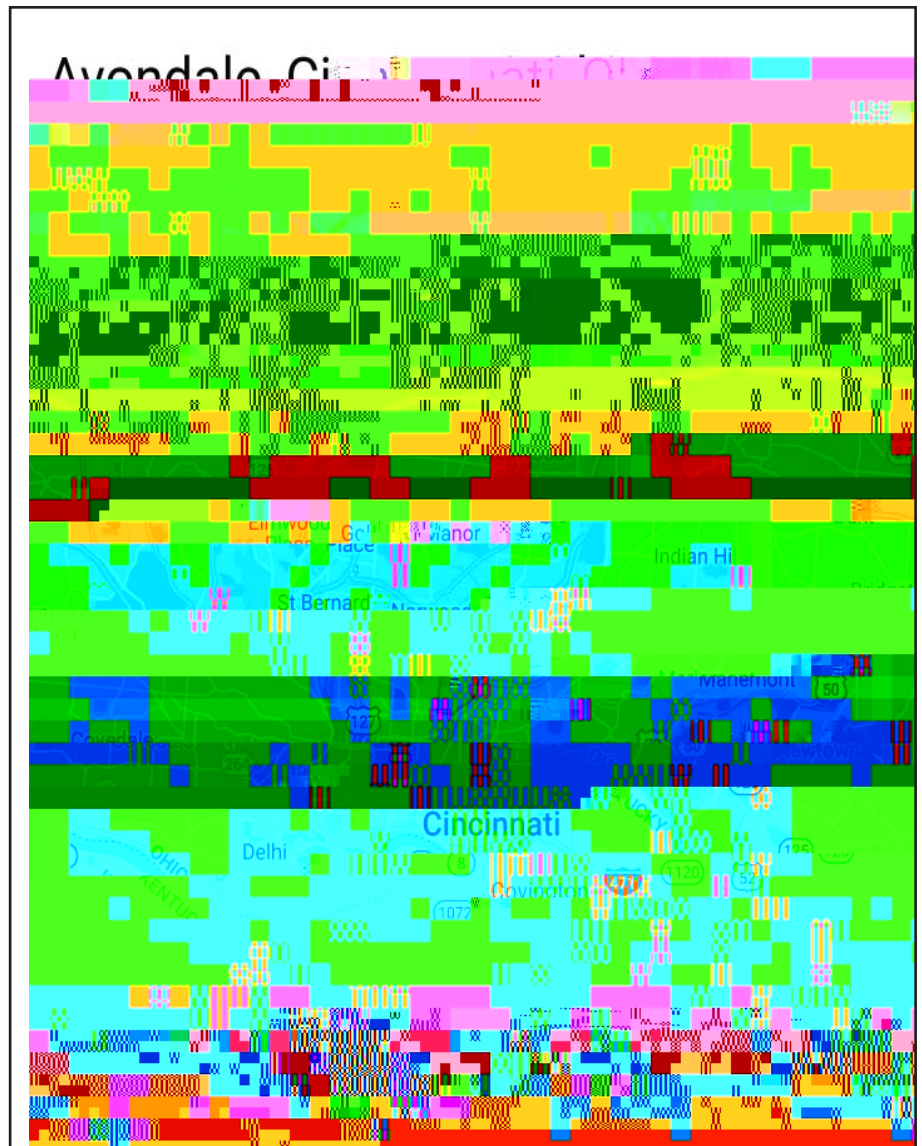
the five properties were foreclosed. Soon after, The Community Builders purchased them and worked with local partners to apply for redevelopment funding that would assist them in addressing residents' health conditions and improve their quality of life.<sup>7</sup>

In 2012, TCB was awarded a Choice Neighborhood Implementation grant, in partnership with CCHMC, INNOVATIONS in Community Research and Program Evaluation (the hospital's community research and evaluation program), the Cincinnati Department of Public Health, Avondale Development Corporation, the Urban League of Greater Cincinnati, Cincinnati Public Schools, and The Center for Closing the Health Gap in Greater Cincinnati. The applicant partnership sought to redevelop the five affordable housing properties into mixed-income housing, with the hope that this revitalization would in turn improve conditions in the Avondale neighborhood more broadly and boost the housing market neighborhood-wide. TCB and its partners planned to provide major infrastructure investments to the area and to address education, safety, employment, and other resource needs among residents.

The five targeted developments—Alameda Apartments, Crescent Court Apartments, Poinciana Apartments, Maple Apartments, and Somerset Apartments—are historic early 20th century buildings along Avondale's main street, Reading Road.<sup>11</sup> Prior to their acquisition by TCB, they were HUD assisted affordable housing. Now redeveloped, the properties are known as The Pointes at Avondale. As of 2018, all 140 original units have been redeveloped, and 60 new units have been built. TCB's aim is to redevelop property over a span of eight city blocks, building an additional 119 units in the final two phases of the project, totaling 319 housing units (140 preserved rehabbed units and 179 newly developed units). When done, the redevelopment will include nine properties<sup>12</sup> and will include a health center, a grocery store, and a town center.<sup>13</sup> TCB is also in the process of building and renovating other sites throughout the Avondale neighborhood to improve its long declining infrastructure.

### Key Actors/Stakeholders

As identified above, the partnership that applied for the Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant was a broad one. Those stakeholders have stayed active and committed to the redevelopment, with important con-



tributions coming from (in addition to TCB) CCHMC, The Urban League of Greater Cincinnati, Cincinnati Public Schools, Avondale Development Corporation, Center for Closing the Health Gap, and the Cincinnati Health Department (CHD). Many additional local organizations outside the Choice partnership have also shown commitment to addressing Avondale community challenges.

### Funding

In addition to the \$29.5 million Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant, TCB secured \$3 million from Ohio State Historic Tax Credits, funding from the HUD Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP), Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit, Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit. In addition, a host of other funding was generated from the City of Cincinnati, KCDC Investment, LLC, Ohio Housing Finance Agency, Metropolitan Sewer District, and the Ohio Department of Transportation.<sup>14</sup> TCB's 2018 report to HUD cites a total of \$114.7 million in leveraged investments to date, including grant spending, public/private loans, grants and equity. Of the initial \$29.5 million in Choice

Neighborhoods dollars, \$21,002,000 was spent on

door newsletters delivered every month, as well as many other ways to stay in contact) and their commitment to building authentic relationships and advocating strongly for programs and initiatives that benefit residents.

***Avondale Children Thrive: the BUILD Health Challenge Grant***

Avondale Children Thrive (ACT)<sup>18</sup> is a cross-sector col-

## Measurement, Evaluation, & Outcomes

### Evidence of Progress

As part of the grant conditions, Avondale Choice Neighborhoods tracks and reports data on their health initiative outcomes. TCB's Community Life department also conducts annual surveys that incorporate HUD's required evaluative measures. The BUILD Health Challenge grant, still in its first year, has not yet released reports on their program outcomes.

INNOVATIONS in Community Research and Program Evaluation at CCHMC is the data evaluation partner for the Avondale Choice grant. INNOVATIONS is charged with gathering and tracking data on education for Choice Neighborhoods residents enrolled in Cincinnati Public Schools. Data on other outcomes are collected and reported to INNOVATIONS by other partners (and thus INNOVATIONS cannot be responsible for variance in data collection methods and reporting). In addition, as with many Choice Neighborhoods initiatives, there are other challenges to data collection and analysis, as cited on the Avondale Choice Neighborhoods Data Dashboard. These include small sample sizes, lack of comparison data for all measurements, and the self-report method of data collection. In addition, data collection and analysis was not able to track individual residents over time. As a result, Avondale data reflect a cross-section of the residents inhabiting the buildings in the year reported, but cannot necessarily be taken to reflect changes in the initial population.

### Outcomes

Local leaders point to several sources of information that indicate progress has been made. Note that local leaders include safety-related data as they recount how living conditions have improved for Avondale residents, thus further contributing to the overall health of the community. This reflects the breadth of the local perspective on the relevant social determinants of health.

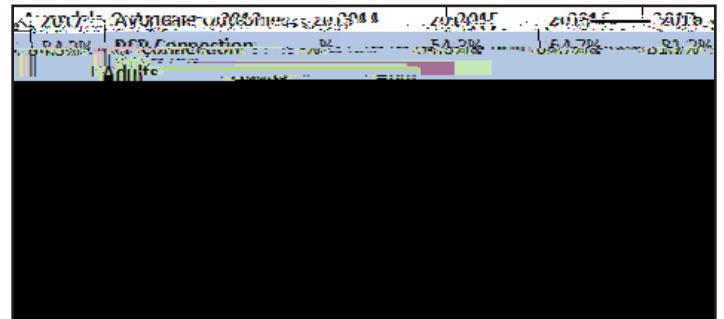
#### *Primary Care Provider and Health Insurance Access*

The Center for Closing the Health Gap in Greater Cincinnati's robust efforts to connect Avondale residents to healthcare seem to have been very successful, building on the greater opportunities for healthcare coverage provided by the Affordable Care Act. Between 2014 and 2017, there was a 30% increase in residents reporting that they have a primary care provider (PCP), moving from 54.3% to 84.3% of residents completing the survey. In the same period of time, the percentage of Avondale children with a primary care provider also jumped sharply upward, from 44% to 95%.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, between 2013 and 2017, there was a 34% increase in residents who reported having health insurance, going from 65.1% to 99.3% of residents.<sup>22</sup> These conditions were measured consistently over the period of the

Choice Neighborhoods grant and represent a significant gain by residents in their access to health resources and coverage.

#### *Choice Adult Residents' Perceptions of their Safety*

Interviewees often cited safety as a major issue in the Avondale community as a whole (particularly at the Choice sites), and resident-reported data from the beginning of the Choice redevelopment in 2014 indicate that crime was a significant concern. Efforts by the ADC to address safety, however, seem to have had some impact in changing residents' perceptions, as reflected in self-reports over time. In the 2014 TCB survey, 58% of residents reported feeling safe all or most of the time inside their apartment building, while only 37% reported feeling safe all or part of the time outside their building in the Avondale neighborhood.<sup>23</sup> Top safety concerns identified by residents were guns, followed by violence (fights, shootings, stabbings) and broken/unlocked doors.<sup>24</sup> In 2015-2016, 78% of Choice residents surveyed reported feeling safe all or most of the time in their apartment, and 55% reported feeling safe all or most of the time in their neighborhood.<sup>25</sup> In 2017, 80% of



residents surveyed felt safe in their apartment building (a 21% increase since 2014), while 62% reported feeling safe in the broader Avondale neighborhood.<sup>26</sup> As noted, these are not health-related findings per se, but they reflect a significant change in residents' perceptions about their broader well-being, and thus in the social determinants framework used by the Avondale partners, this information is viewed as a marker in a positive direction.

### Key Takeaways

Consciousness of residents' health needs and the broader economic, social, and environmental conditions that affect health outcomes—i.e., the social determinants of health—have been a central theme of redevelopment in Avondale since its earliest days (and even before). That focus on health and health outcomes has continued as redevelopment has moved through several phases. Thus, even though it is early (and data are too limited) to track the impact of the health strategies deployed, there are several interesting takeaways from the story of Avondale so far.

***The strong presence of health partners in Avondale's redevelopment partnership has provided deep knowledge of the health sector, a broad perspective on the social determinants of health, and the potential for considerable investment in addressing health needs.***

The impact of having CCMHC, CHD, INNOVATIONS, and the Center for Closing the Health Gap in Greater Cincinnati as such strong and active partners provided a wealth of expertise and sustained commitment in developing health and health-related strategies as part of Avondale's plan. It also provided a unifying framework and

that their data collection and analysis are still in process,  
so more and better data may be available in the near

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

