

Miami Hills

Neighborhood Plan



An aerial photograph of a residential neighborhood. In the foreground, there is a large green golf course with several holes and a small pond. The middle ground shows a dense residential area with many houses and trees. In the background, there are more houses and a large building complex, possibly a school or community center. The overall scene is a mix of greenery and urban development.

Table of Contents

What is a Plan?	1
Understanding the Neighborhood	2
Neighborhood Character	3
Community Engagement	4
Strategic Plan	6

Acknowledgments

City of South Bend:
Mayor James Mueller

District 5 Common Council Representative:
Jake Teshka

Department of Community Investment:
Tim Corcoran, Director of Planning
Chris Dressel, Senior Planner
Michael Divita, Principal Planner
Elizabeth Maradik, Principal Planner
Andrew Netter, Property Development Analyst

Special thanks to all of the residents, area organizations, and institutions that shared their thoughts about the future of the Miami Hills Area.

What is a Plan?

A plan is a guide for making decisions about what kind of development and services are appropriate, how resources should be allocated, and how issues residents, business and property owners, and others in the area are concerned about should be addressed. A plan is a statement of what a neighborhood or other area of the city wants to achieve, and it provides a strategy to reach those goals.

A plan expresses a shared long range vision for the future. Developed through a public engagement process, a plan identifies and documents physical, social, and economic trends and conditions. Then, it provides goals and strategies that communicate an area's intended direction to residents, business and property owners, service providers, and other decision makers. A plan ensures an area's needs are met and new development is accommodated while the positive aspects and character of the area is maintained. A plan may address both the built environment and social issues, and it is created in context of the strategic needs and priorities of the larger region.

Providing a comprehensive program for improving an area, a plan looks to create more attractive, convenient, efficient, equitable, and healthy places for present and future generations. Plans typically identify strategies and programs concerning the following:

- Land use (appropriate locations for commercial, industrial, residential, and mixed use development),
- Housing types and density,
- Design and development standards,
- Business development,
- Public facilities and infrastructure (including parks, streets, sidewalks, bicycle facilities, lighting), and;
- Other matters important to the community.

A plan will continually evolve to meet the changing needs of a community. A plan provides a broad framework for future development and a starting point for more detailed planning and public engagement as individual projects are pursued.

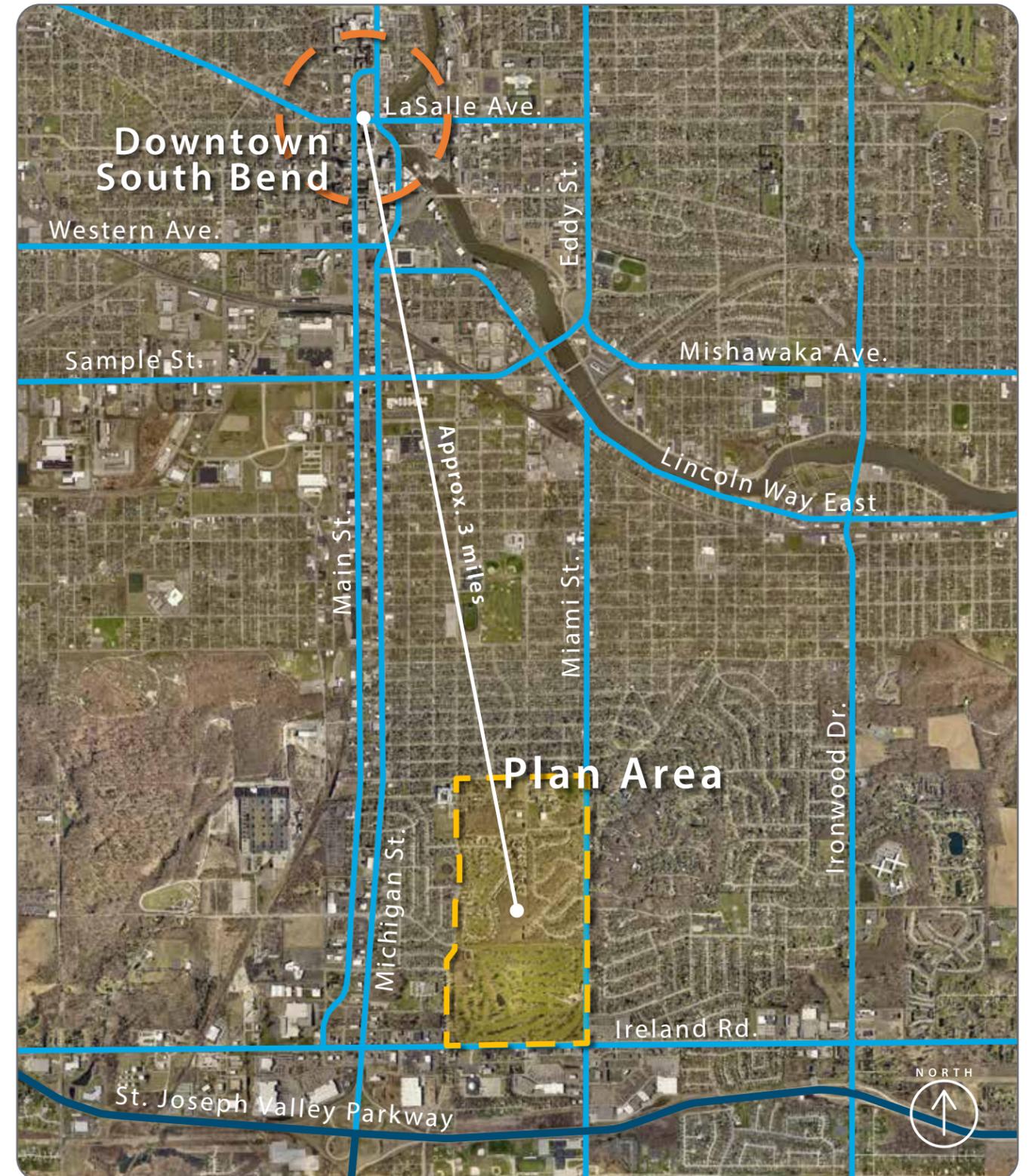
Purpose of this Plan

The Miami Hills Neighborhood Plan was developed in order to identify short and long-term improvements for the area.

The purpose of the plan is to accomplish the following:

- Classify future land uses and activities that are appropriate in the planning area; and
- Identify and prioritize small targeted neighborhood improvements based on public input and analysis of current conditions.

The project boundary for this planning initiative is defined by Donmoyer Avenue to the north, Miami Street to the east, Ireland Road to the south, and Fellows Street to the west.



Miami Hills Neighborhood context map

Understanding the Neighborhood

The Miami Hills Neighborhood is characterized by regional assets (Erskine Park Golf Course); neighborhood institutions (Monroe Elementary School and Hebrew Orthodox Congregation); stable land use (few vacant lots); a variety of housing types; and proximity to retail/commercial business found in Miami Village and the Erskine Hills Shopping District.

While bounded by major streets, there is a lack of east-west connectivity. The area is served by Transpo bus routes, #6 and #8.

The **Miami Hills Subdivision** is characterized by small (800-1000 sq. ft.), single-story homes of fairly uniform design. Streetscapes have sidewalks in good-fair condition but few ADA curb ramps or street trees.

The **Miami Hills Apartments** opened in 1973 and have 150 units. No major investment in the property has been made recently, and units need to be upgraded or rehabilitated.

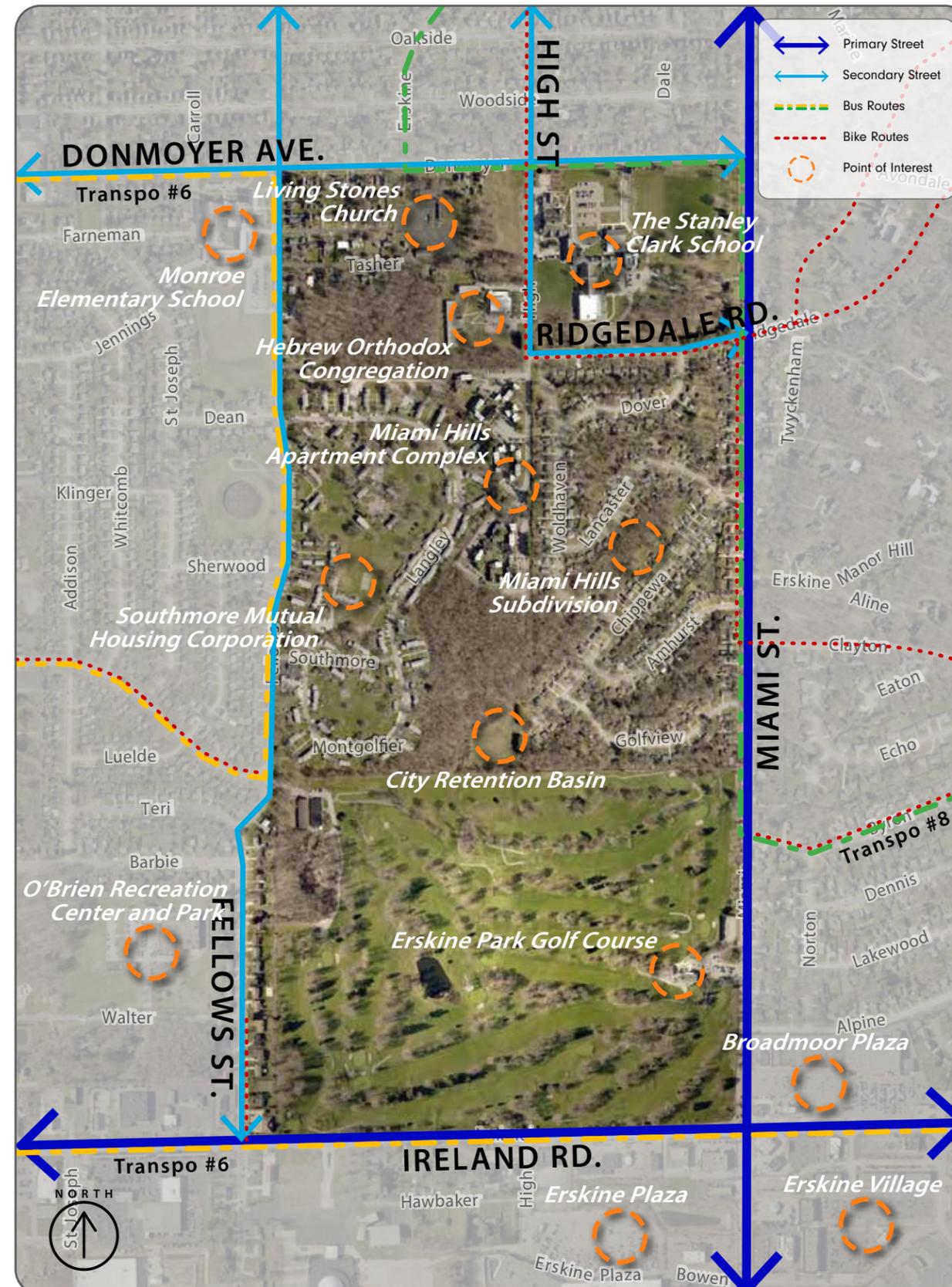
Southmore Mutual Housing was created as defense worker housing during World War II and is now a mutually owned housing complex containing 350 units in the form of 2-, 4-, and 6-unit structures.

The **Hebrew Orthodox Congregation** started in South Bend in 1887 and moved to its current High St. location in 1971. The congregation provides programs and services to Jewish families in South Bend and surrounding area.

Living Stones Church was founded in 2006 and is currently located on Donmoyer Ave. The congregation focuses its community efforts on the south side through partnerships, outreach, and events.

The City of South Bend **Erskine Park Golf Course** opened to the public for play in 1925 and includes a clubhouse building available for wider community use.

Monroe Elementary School is a public school serving grades kindergarten-5th grade. The public school serves all of the Miami Hills neighborhood.



Existing conditions map for the Miami Hills Neighborhood

The Stanley Clark School is an independent coeducational school and serves children preschool-8th grade.

The City's **Retention Basin** provides storm water management to the broader area.

The **O'Brien Recreation Center and Park** is a City of South Bend facility open to the public. It includes a fitness center, skate park, and park space.

The **Erskine Hills shopping district** along Ireland Rd. includes multiple shopping centers (Broadmoor Plaza, Erskine Plaza, and Erskine Village) as well as several restaurants and retail establishments.

Miami Street is characterized by four lanes of high speed traffic with mature street trees located in generous tree lawns. It also has multiple wide intersections, sidewalks either missing or in fair-poor condition. Average annual daily total measures 10,000 - 13,000 vehicles.

Ireland Road is a four lane, high traffic street that generally lacks sidewalks. In this area the street runs along the southern edge of the of Erskine Park Golf Course and features auto-oriented retail. Average annual daily total measures 17,000 - 19,000 vehicles.

Fellows Street has excessive travel lane widths from Donmoyer Ave. to Chippewa Ave., areas of missing sidewalks, and an oversized Fellows-Chippewa intersection. It includes a portion of Transpo Route 6 (South Michigan/ Erskine Village). A variety of housing types are found along the street.

Donmoyer Avenue has sidewalks in fair to poor condition and includes a portion of Transpo Route 8 (Miami/ Scottsdale). A variety, by age and type, of single-family houses and institutional uses are along the street.

High Street terminates at the Miami Hills Apartment complex and lacks sidewalks in the area. The street contains a signed shared bicycle route between Ridgedale Rd. and Donmoyer Ave.

Neighborhood Character



Miami Hills subdivision single-family houses



A Miami Hills Apartment complex building



Southmore Mutual Housing Corporation units



Donmoyer Avenue single-family house



Miami Hills subdivision single-family houses and streetview



Fellows Street single-family houses



Miami Street single-family houses and streetview



Erskine Park Golf Course



The Stanley Clark School



Monroe Elementary School



Living Stones Church



Hebrew Orthodox Congregation

Community Engagement

Overview

Due to the impacts of COVID-19 across the United States, the City of South Bend was unable to host public meetings for the purpose of gathering input from neighbors in the Miami Hills Neighborhood. Instead, a virtual engagement process was developed to capture feedback by targeting residents, property owners, and other area stakeholders.

Stakeholder Conversations

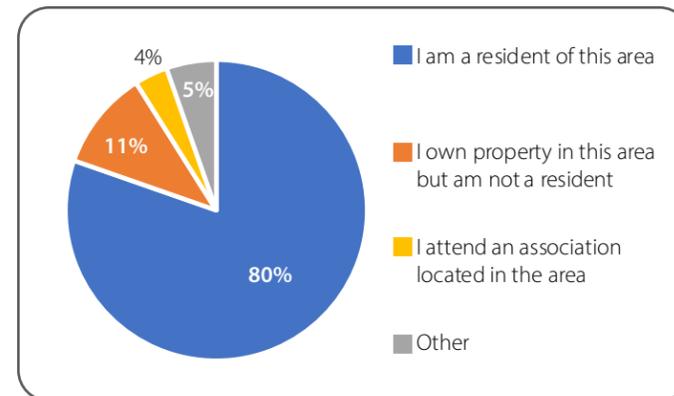
In addition to being invited to participate in a survey, the City held informal virtual meetings with key stakeholders and institutions to discuss the planning process and share their history, current operations, and future plans.

Key themes / points shared with the City include:

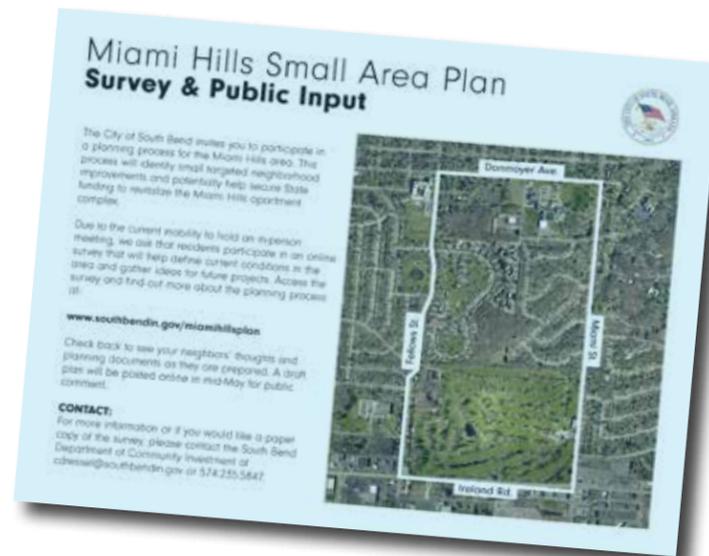
- The operations and conditions at the Miami Hills Apartments has had a negative influence on the neighborhood through real and perceived issues.
- The neighborhood is stable and its housing is of good value. It has potential for future growth in value given its proximity to key retail destinations and other popular locations.
- While residents see the area as walkable for recreational trips, a lack of safe, convenient connections to adjacent destinations make practical non-car trips less desirable.
- The Miami Hills Neighborhood has limited access to existing park space with a large portion of the neighborhood more than a 10-minute walk to a park per The Trust for Public Land Park Serve®.
- Long time institutions and new stakeholders are forging partnerships to aid neighborhood families, bringing an ongoing opportunity for quality of life improvements for residents.

Virtual Workshop

In place of public meetings, the City developed an online interactive survey that mimicked the methods of collecting feedback at public meetings by having participants list, locate, and prioritize responses. In the form of interactive maps, responses could be assigned to a specific location and were visible to all. Postcards were mailed to all residents, property owners and stakeholders of the Miami Hills Neighborhood announcing the process and sharing a link to the project webpage where they could access the survey. In addition, paper copies were available to those that wanted one. A follow-up postcard was sent to remind recipients of the survey and the official close of the survey period.



Breakdown of respondents to the survey based on association to the area



Mailer sent to residents and property owners of the Miami Hills Neighborhood

Exercise: Map My Neighborhood

What we asked

1. Where do you go in and around the Miami Hills Area?
 - Think of where you and others go in and around the Miami Hills Area on a weekly basis. Where are those places that you and others enjoy going? List as many as you can think of.

What we heard

"I enjoy walking my dog through Southmore and along Fellows...I enjoy walking the hills of Chippewa, Woldhaven, and that neighborhood."

"The skateboard park and O'Brien park are lovely places for families."

"My friend(s) and I walk from our apartments in Southmore down Fellows."

Sample of responses

The most frequent travel purpose was retail/commercial (shopping) with the vast majority in the Ireland Rd. corridor, followed by recreational travel within the neighborhood, and travel to other residences inside and outside the neighborhood.

What we asked

2. How do you get around?
 - Think about your answer above about your favorite places in the Miami Hills Area. Now think about how you get from place to place. What are some of the typical routes that you take? What type of transportation do you use (walk, bike, car, etc.)?

What we heard

"[I] only drive because the sidewalk[s] are not wide enough or smooth enough to ride a bike or walk."

"Sometimes I walk down to the shops on Ireland, sometimes I bike up to Notre Dame; Fellows, Donmoyer, and Twyckenham."

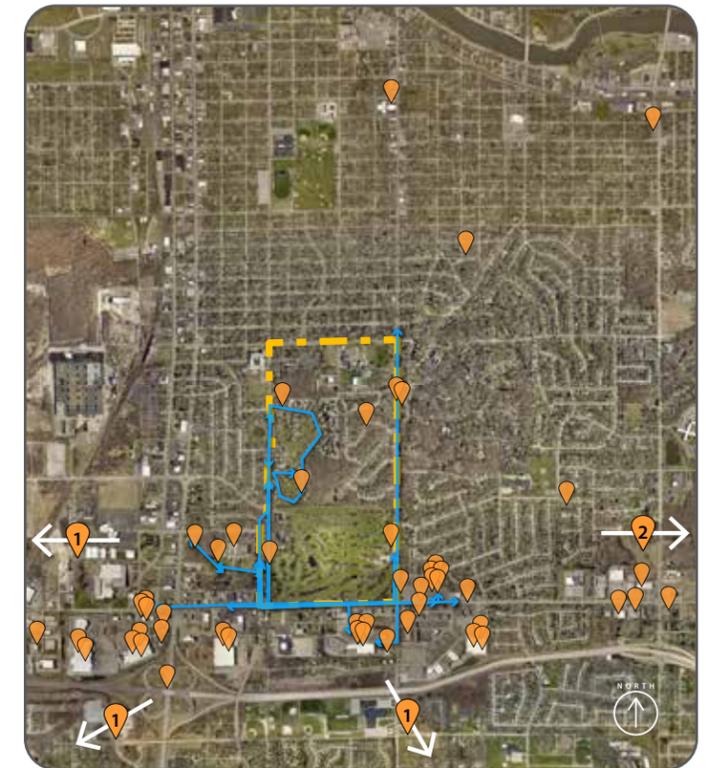
"I typically walk and bike if I am staying in the Miami Hills Area."

Sample of responses

Residents responded that they traveled within and around the plan area using multiple methods.

Most trips are completed by car. Walking and biking trip are generally reserved for recreational purposes.

Preferred routes of travel included Fellows St., Ireland Rd., Miami St., Southmore Mutual Housing streets, and Walter St.



Map results of where residents go in and around the Miami Hills Neighborhood and how they travel to these places

Exercise: Areas for Improvement

What we asked

1. What is the smallest easiest project that could be accomplished that would have a positive effect on the Miami Hills Area?
 - Think of things that you notice throughout the Miami Hills Area. What is a quick and easy project that could have a positive effect on the area?

What we heard

"Consistent curbs and sidewalks to make neighborhood more walkable."

"Clean up debris and over grown brush."

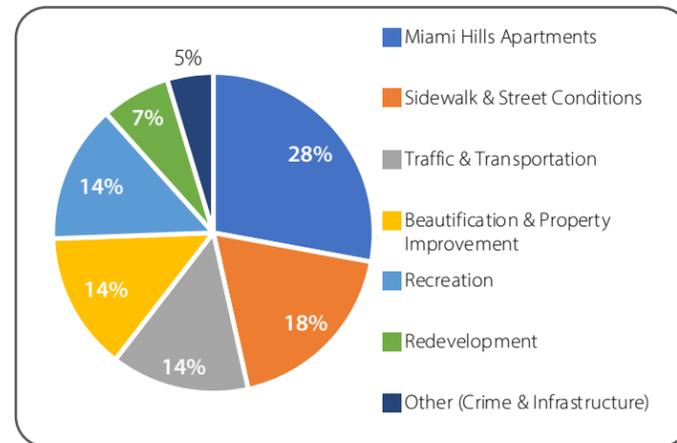
"Change the high speed roads to pedestrian and bike traffic friendly roads."

"Reconfigure intersection of Ridgedale Rd. - Woldhaven Dr. - High St."

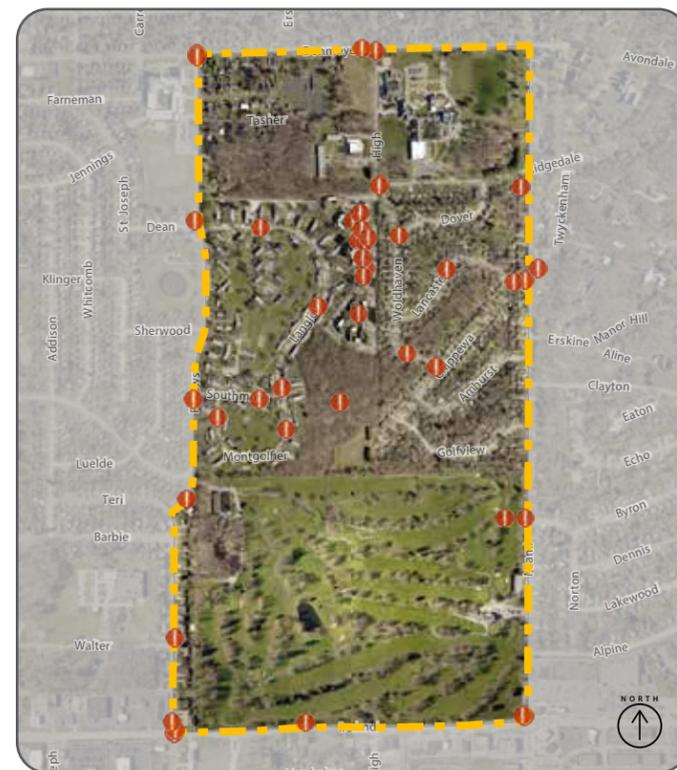
Sample of responses

Based on responses the survey, the following themes for improvements are seen as priorities:

- **Miami Hills Apartments** – There were several responses referencing the Miami Hills Apartments complex. Most were concerns about appearance and public safety based on recent observations and historic patterns of activity.
- **Sidewalk and Street Conditions** – install missing sidewalks; repair/replace sidewalks in poor condition; and repave/repair streets.
- **Transportation and Traffic Conditions** – narrow intersections and improve paving markings for safer pedestrian crossings; add bus shelters at existing bus stops; and calm traffic through narrowing of streets.
- **Beautification and Property Improvement** – provide home improvement opportunities; clean up debris/trash/overgrowth; and introduce flowers and landscaping.
- **Recreation** – introduce parkland, playground facilities, trails, and other recreational space.
- **Redevelopment** – Redevelopment of property into commercial / retail, school, and recreation area(s).



Responses to the survey question grouped into common themes



Map responses of areas that need improvement in the Miami Hills Neighborhood

Exercise: Land Use

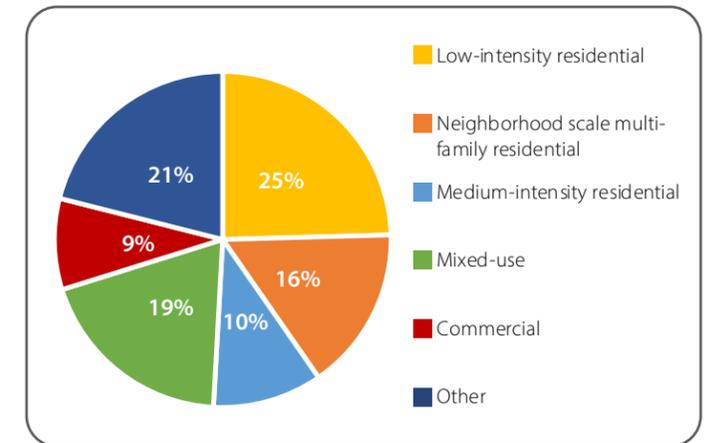
What we asked

1. What Land Use Types Are Missing?
 - Think of the Miami Hills Area. Of the land use categories listed, which should there be more of or which are missing in the area, if any?
2. Now, think of the Miami Hills area. Given the pattern of development and land-uses that are currently spread through the area, are there any land-use types that there should be more of or are missing in the area? Where might these additional land-use types fit within the Miami Hills area?

What we heard

Based on the themes that were generated by the survey, respondents have prioritized the following land use categories for the Miami Hills Area.

- **Residential** – The vast majority of respondents favored maintaining or increasing residential character through land use, with the majority favoring low intensity residential. This is shown on the map along the Fellows Street corridor south of Chippewa; in the area of the Miami Hills Apartments; and at the southeast corner of High and Donmoyer. Medium density residential was favored mainly on the City owned vacant land property containing the retention pond. Neighborhood scale multifamily residential was not favored according to the mapped result.
- **Mixed Use / Commercial** – When looking at the Mixed Use and Commercial land use themes, mixed use was mainly concentrated along the Ireland Road/ Fellows Street corridors and near the Donmoyer/Miami intersection. Commercial was not favored according to the mapped result.
- **Other** – Most responses to the other category of land use favored the addition of an open space, park, or wooded space. Per the map, this was mainly favored within the existing Erskine Golf Course, the City owned vacant land property containing the retention pond; and the Miami Hills Apartments site.



Responses to the survey question grouped by land use category



Map responses of where additional land use types should / could be located in the Miami Hills Neighborhood

Strategic Plan

Based on the neighborhood current conditions and an analysis of survey responses, the following strategic plan goals have been developed to guide recommendations for future land use and improvements in the Miami Hills Neighborhood:

Plan Goals

The following goals were identified through the process to develop the Miami Hills Neighborhood Plan:

1. Upgrade infrastructure conditions.
2. Improve safe connections for non-motorized travel both within the neighborhood and to surroundings.
3. Explore opportunities to introduce park/recreational space by working with South Bend Venues, Parks, and Arts plus other area institutions and stakeholders.
4. Support the production and maintenance of a range of housing types, including new construction and rehabilitation of market rate and affordable rental housing.
5. Support beautification efforts within the neighborhood.

Land Use

A key to a thriving, healthy neighborhood is having a mix of compatible land use types that allow people to live, work, shop, eat, and play within walkable distances. Land use and zoning regulations need to support pedestrian friendly streets; desirable environments for people to live, work, and visit; and needed services for nearby residents.

Much of the current land use in the Miami Hills Neighborhood is stable and few vacant parcels exist. These uses are included in the current land use map and further described as follows:

- **Low-intensity residential:** single family houses, duplexes, accessory dwelling units (ADUs)
- **Medium-intensity residential** – apartment buildings between 5- 10 units
- **Commercial** – offices, retail, restaurants (larger scale and auto-oriented)
- **Institutional**
- **Recreational**
- **Vacant / Undeveloped**

Future Land Use Map

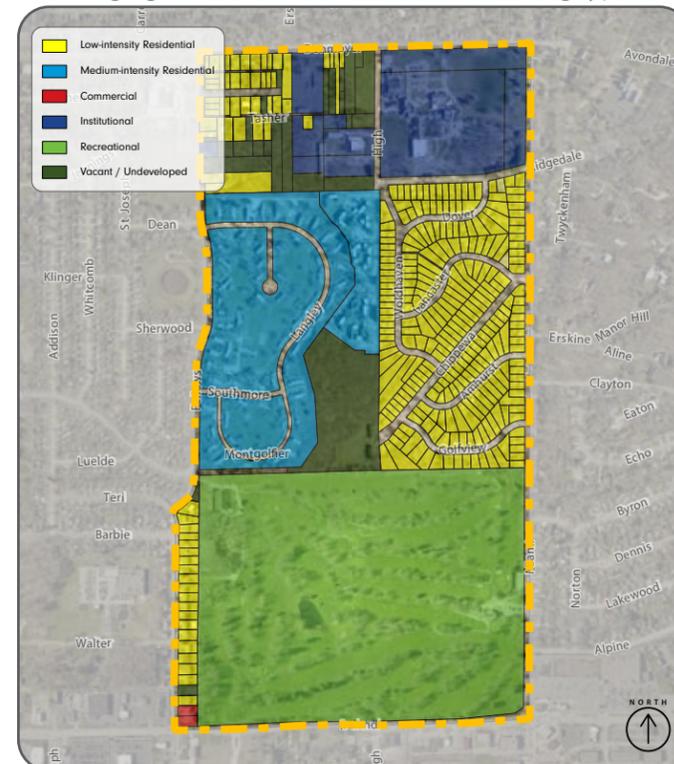
The following additional land uses are proposed in the Miami Hills Neighborhood:

- **Low / Moderate Intensity Residential:** single family houses, townhomes, tri-plexes, four-plexes, ADUs.
- **Mixed-use:** mix of small-scale shops, apartments, studios, cafes, offices on one property.

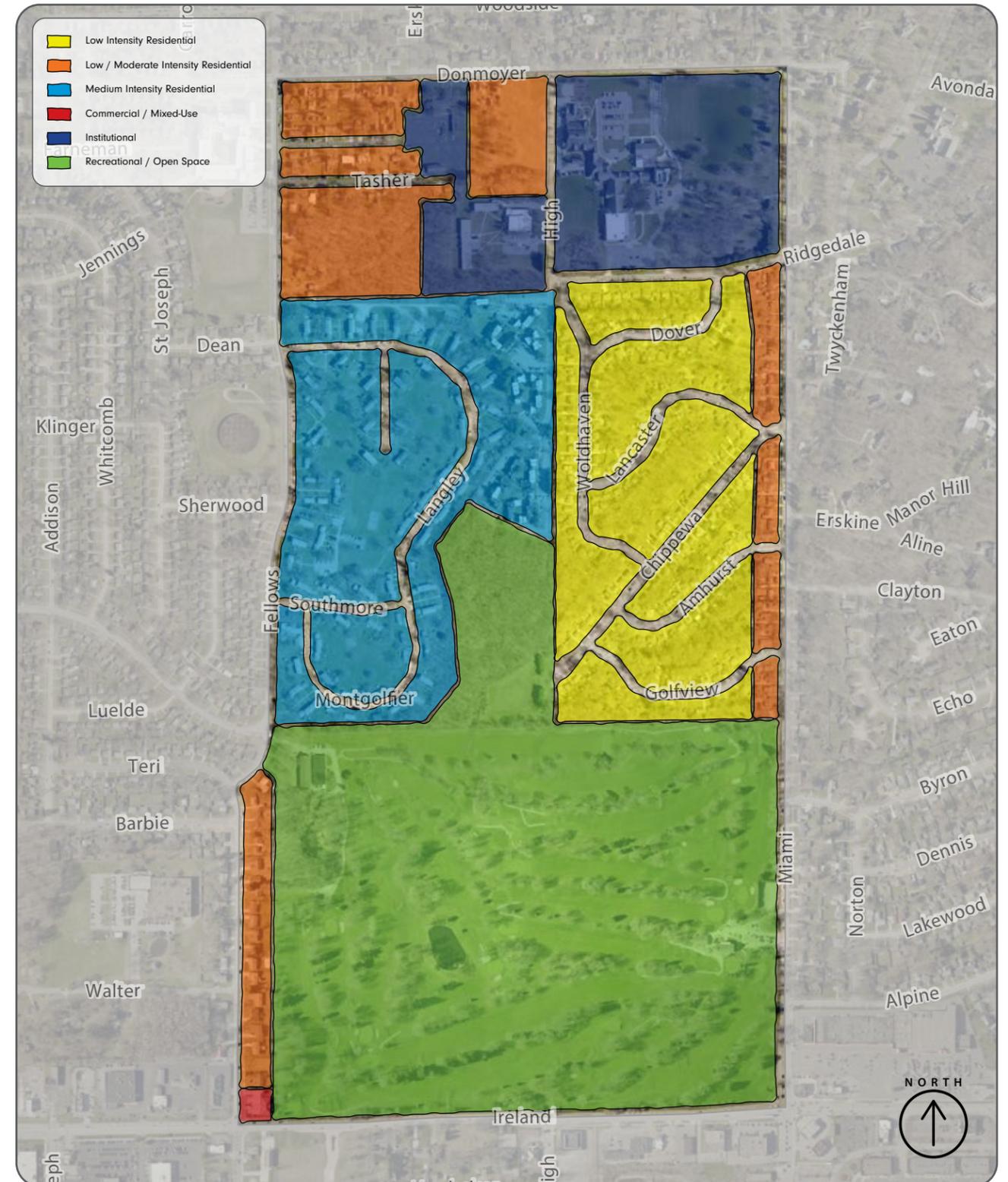
These future land use changes within the Miami Hills Neighborhood are proposed to foster a variety of housing types allowing for a slight increase in residential intensity while complementing the existing character of the area.

The introduction of low/moderate intensity residential land use could occur along Miami St. and Fellows St., should a property owner wish to. Housing types that could be built include: duplexes; accessory dwelling units (ADUs); townhomes; tri-plexes; or four-plex. This proposed land uses would allow additional units on each parcel, but most properties would remain unchanged.

In the northwest corner of the neighborhood, inclusion of low/moderate density residential land use would allow the existing residential character to be maintained while encouraging infill of vacant lots with new housing types.



Current land use for the Miami Hills Neighborhood.



Proposed future land use map for the Miami Hills Neighborhood.

Projects

The following improvement projects, organized by plan goal, are proposed for the Miami Hills Neighborhood:

1. Goal – Upgrade infrastructure conditions.

- Project – Make Sidewalk Improvements.
 - Sections where sidewalks are missing are the highest priority. Curb and handicapped ramps would be included if within the same block. Existing sidewalks in poor condition are the second priority.
- Project – Install missing ADA ramps.
 - Install throughout the neighborhood with a concentration in the Miami Hills subdivision and the highest priority at signalized or other high pedestrian intersections.
- Project – Add bus shelters.
 - Install at existing stops along TRANSPO routes that utilize Fellows St. Specific locations should be guided by ridership numbers.

2. Goal – Improve safe connections for non-motorized travel both within the neighborhood and to surroundings.

- Project – Implement road diets through traffic calmings and intersection improvements.

A Road Diet repositions pavement markings to better meet the needs of all road users. The AADT on Miami St. (10,000-13,000) makes it a good candidate for a road diet in many instances per Federal Highway Association (FHWA) guidelines.

- Miami St. from Donmoyer Ave. to Ireland Rd. – introduce a three lane layout with a single traffic lane in each direction plus a designated center turn lane. This layout serves to reduce vehicle speed; protects left hand turns; and makes pedestrian crossings safer. The remaining space would be dedicated to on-street bike lanes and a buffer as space allows.
- Fellows St. from Donmoyer Ave. to Chippewa Ave. – stripe parking lanes to visually narrow traffic lanes in order to reduce traffic speed and introduce comfort to traffic lanes.
- Intersections within road diet areas – narrow and/or improve excessively wide intersections either through interim or permanent construction to aid safe pedestrian crossing.

3. Goal – Explore opportunities to introduce park/recreational space by working with South Bend Venues, Parks, and Arts plus other area institutions and stakeholders.

- Project – Since the available land is limited for a potential new park, seek opportunities for a public-private partnership for publicly accessible green space.
- Project – Explore a non-motorized trail connection between existing ends of Chippewa Ave. This would allow users to have a safe, convenient east-west travel corridor between Miami St. and Fellows St.

4. Goal – Support the production and maintenance of a range of housing types, including new construction and rehabilitation of market rate and affordable rental housing.

- Project – Support efforts to improve Miami Hills Apartments.
 - Complete plan process to support a potential application for state funds by property owner.
 - Partner with South Bend Code Enforcement to uphold city codes and respond to citizen complaints.
- Project – Target the Miami Hills Neighborhood with existing City of South Bend home improvement programs.

5. Goal – Support beautification efforts within the neighborhood.

- Project - Increase the number of street trees either in conjunction with street corridor improvements or via a residential tree planting program.
- Project - Encourage neighborhood beautification through cleanups and other organized efforts.
 - Neighborhood residents, leaders, and stakeholders coordinate with South Bend Code Enforcement and partner with neighborhood leaders to arrange clean-ups as an opportunity for capacity building



Potential projects map for the Miami Hills Neighborhood.

Miami Hills

Neighborhood Plan

