



## Revitalization taking root along East Washington Street

Kathleen McLaughlin March 22, 2014

Joe Cox picked a winning location for his bicycle shop in Fountain Square, and he hopes to do it again on East Washington Street.

Cox plans to move Joe's Cycles into a historic Oddfellows lodge, which he'll buy from the Englewood Community Development Corp. after a major renovation.

The building is near Willard Park, one of four sites on the four-mile stretch from Interstate 65 to Sherman Drive that could be transformed in the next five to seven years. At least that's the hope of East Washington Street Partnership, a collaboration of not-for-profit community development corporations, or CDCs, that recently released a plan targeting the sites.

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[A map of Washington Street's identified revitalization areas](#)

"It's not there yet," Cox said. "Obviously, I think we're ahead of the curve."

The heavily traveled corridor is a hodgepodge of vacant industrial sites, used-car lots and small retail strips. The plan, "Re-energize East Washington Street," envisions the return of economic opportunity in the form of blue-collar jobs, business startups and education. And it appears to be based on real momentum, such as the pending sale of the former P.R. Mallory site to a developer who will invest \$10 million.

The CDCs may submit the document to the city for incorporation into long-term plans that would guide any publicly funded redevelopment efforts, said Joe Bowling, director of the East Washington Street Partnership, which includes the Englewood CDC, Indy-east Asset Development and Southeast Neighborhood Development.

In the meantime, the CDCs are focusing their efforts on four “catalyst” sites along East Washington, plus the residential area around Highland Park, northeast of I-65 and Washington Street.

The plan embraces East Washington’s industrial history, which is evident from gaping, vacant eyesores like the P.R. Mallory site at Gray Street, as well as the thriving business of Horner Electric Inc., which has its headquarters at 59 S. State Ave. and even added a facility. While encouraging new mixed-use development and pointing out the need for a better pedestrian environment, the plan also calls for improved truck access to the industrial sites on the south side of the corridor.

With four acres, the P.R. Mallory industrial complex, which formerly produced Duracell batteries, represents the single-largest redevelopment opportunity, and that could be imminent. Southeast Neighborhood Development, which owns the property, has it under contract with a group led by David Horth of Indianapolis.

Horth, a principal of Mallory Partners LLC, confirmed that it’s under contract but declined to discuss his plans while the sale is pending. Bowling said Mallory Partners’ development, which he estimated at \$10 million, is in keeping with the “Re-energize” document’s vision. That plan calls for a campus setting that brings together startup “maker” businesses and education. A portion of the vacant land could be converted to a community green space, while a new charter school building fronts Washington Street, Bowling said.

Adjacent to the Mallory site, Englewood CDC and TWG Development plan to build affordable senior apartments on three acres owned by the city of Indianapolis, which last year demolished and cleared the former Crown Laundry.

A number of small improvements are under way around the Englewood CDC’s headquarters on Rural Street. Englewood Christian Church plans to double the capacity of its Daystar child care, which has a waiting list for each of its 100 slots, Bowling said. The CDC is also supporting some small startups, which include a tamale shop, a bakery and deli, and an artisan co-working space.

Nearest to downtown, the plan calls for converting the complex five-way intersection at Southeastern Avenue and Shelby Street into a pedestrian-friendly gateway to East Washington Street. While there’s no ready source of funds to improve the streetscape, businesses like Indiana City Brewing at 24 S. Shelby St. are already being drawn to the area around Angie’s List’s headquarters, Bowling said.

The next hot spot east is at Oriental Street, near Ivy Tech Community College’s automotive technology building and the former Ford assembly building, which is owned by Indianapolis Public Schools. Ivy Tech has considered relocating its automotive program, Bowling said, but the CDCs hope to create an environment that would encourage the college to stay and expand its presence.

Around Willard Park, the Riley Area Development Corp. is planning to spend more than half a million on five units of new owner-occupied housing, Bowling said. The Riley CDC also has a grant to improve pedestrian access to the park, which sits on the south side of Washington Street, disconnected from the neighborhood on the north side, he said.

The park itself is envisioned as an east-side destination with the addition of youth soccer fields, a bike park and pop-up concession stands.

The Oddfellows building is not far from the park on the northeast corner of Washington and Hamilton Avenue. Cox, who already closed his shop in Fountain Square, said he hopes to have it reopened by July 1. He plans to later add artist studios and space for spinning classes on the second floor.

Cox said he was drawn to East Washington because he needed a larger building for his business, and he foresees it becoming even more of a high-traffic area. Bus rapid transit is on the drawing board, and the street has an exit on I-65, he noted.

Cox also thinks the Willard Park neighborhood will eventually become a magnet for house flippers, similar to Fountain Square.

When he first opened Joe's Cycles in 2007, the Indianapolis Cultural Trail was being discussed, but there was no telling when it would reach Fountain Square. Now the neighborhood is full of new bars and restaurants.

"People thought we were crazy when we put the shop there," Cox said. •