

Neighborhood Identity



Introduction

As Louisville Metro continues to implement the process of creating a stronger city by creating stronger neighborhoods, it becomes increasingly important to recognize and celebrate the rich diversity of these neighborhoods. The character, quality and distinctiveness of every part of the city is born of the particulars of its geography, topography, residents, streets, houses, local landmarks, businesses and history. Portland's identity was initially uncovered through interactions with a broad group of its residents during the Neighborhood Assessment Process, which will be more fully explained later in this chapter. Additionally, walking and driving tours, picture-taking excursions, and numerous encounters with and reminiscing by long-term Portland residents added invaluable glimpses into this large and diverse part of Louisville. Finally, the facts and artifacts of Portland through the years that are housed and interpreted within the wonderful Portland Museum, are a must-see for anyone wishing to know and understand this historic neighborhood.

History

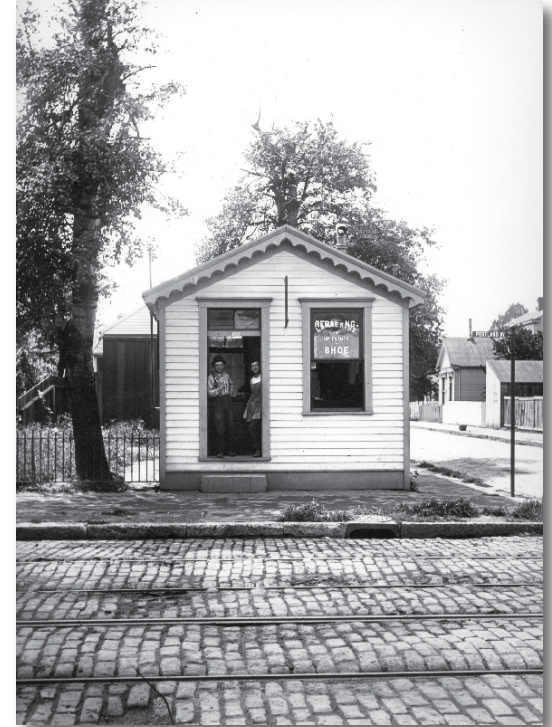
Portland is a neighborhood bordering the western edge of downtown Louisville and is generally bordered by Tenth Street to the east, The Ohio River to the north, Market Street to the south and Interstate 264 to the west. It developed in the early nineteenth century paralleling the rise of Shippingport and Louisville to the east. Laid out by the surveyor Alexander Ralston in 1811, it was part of a 3,000-acre tract of land purchased from Henry Clay and Fortunatus Cosby by Gen. William Lytle of Cincinnati. The first commercial buildings were built in 1812 and within the next few years the town included a wharf, a warehouse, taverns, foundries and shipyards all located to take strategic advantage of Portland's Ohio River frontage.

Eventually, Gen. Lytle expanded the boundaries of Portland to Thirteenth Street on the east and Fortieth Street on the west through the sale of additional lots. As the businesses engaged in all sorts of river-related commerce flourished the need for a greater work force increased. In order to accommodate not only this enlarging working-class population's housing demand, but to also make it possible for the businesses serving this population's every-day needs to locate within the neighborhood, the original lots of Portland were sub-divided into smaller

and smaller lots. The typical small lot sizes and high development density seen in Portland today is the current evidence of this period of rapid growth.

Ethnic and cultural diversity has always been a trademark of Portland. Some of this neighborhood's earliest settlers came from France soon after the beginning of the eighteenth century. Ireland's potato famine of the mid-eighteen hundreds sent many Irishmen and their families to Louisville, Shippingport and Portland. These Irish workers were instrumental in the construction of the local railroads and canal. Jim Porter, perhaps Portland's most famous early personality, moved to the town from next-door Shippingport. Known as the Kentucky Giant, Porter owned and operated taverns in both Shippingport and Portland and would eventually serve as Portland's representative to Louisville's City Council. Squire Jacob Earick, whose house is believed to have been built around 1811 or 1812 and which still stands within the boundaries of Portland's National Historic District, was the town's first magistrate. Court was held in the main floor of the house and the local jail was only a flight of stairs away in the home's basement.

While the natural obstacle of the Falls of the Ohio instigated the founding of both Portland and Shippingport it eventually became viewed as a major barrier to further commercial development. The fortunes of Portland were altered with the construction of the Louisville & Portland Canal which opened in 1830. At that point in time the necessity for all boats and river traffic to unload and portage their goods and passengers around the falls ended. Commercial transportation initiatives switched to a focus on rail lines instead. Plans were made for a Lexington-Portland railway and Portland officially incorporated in 1834 in anticipation of this development. Louisville businessmen, wanting to retain the profitable transfer business around the Falls, sought to terminate the rail line in Louisville. Compromising, Portland agreed to be annexed in 1837 and Louisville agreed to lay track along Main Street connecting the wharves of both towns. In 1842, angered by the failure of the railroads to directly connect to either wharf, Portland demanded and regained their independence. Ten years later, however, the citizens voted to become part of Louisville once and for all. Thereafter, the wharf and warehouses in Portland gradually became empty as the Portland Canal was deepened and widened in 1871 to accommodate larger boats.



Early twentieth century view of 2032 Portland Avenue-shoe repair business



Since the earliest days of settlement, floods have been a recurring destructive force to the area. The 1937 and 1945 floods drove many families and businesses from the neighborhood as the entire area became inundated. A flood wall, which displaced over 140 homes, was begun in 1948 and completed in 1957. The eventual construction of Interstate 64 separated Portland even farther from the banks of the Ohio River.

Many large historic homes testify to the days when Portland's reputation was primarily that of an important river port city. The majority of its residential character, small lots and small shotgun style houses, which still remains today, is evidence of this neighborhood's working class origins where immigrants and local transplants alike lived and worked alongside each other in the commerce of a typical 19th-Century Ohio River town. The original bustling commercial district on the river is barely perceptible today. Viewed from atop the floodwall Portland's days of river town prominence can be seen as only a suggestion of roads, with the wharf buried beneath the riverbank and the buildings long disappeared beneath an undergrowth fed by the Ohio River's regular flooding.



Early Portland neighborhood-serving retail store seen here in the mid-twentieth century.



Demographics

Population Highlights

	<u>Fairfield</u>	<u>Louisville Metro</u>	<u>Metro Statistical Area*</u>
Total population	12,979	692,604	1,026,598
Race			
White	9,479 (73 %)	562,462 (77.3 %)	849,262 (82.8 %)
Black	2,049 (23 %)	120,159 (18.8 %)	141,623 (13.8 %)
American Indian	26 (0 %)	1,625 (0.2 %)	2,683 (0.3 %)
Asian	48 (0 %)	9,043 (1.3 %)	10,227 (1.0 %)
Other race	86 (0 %)	4,208 (0.6 %)	5,756 (0.6 %)
Two or more races	278 (2 %)	11,741 (1.7 %)	15,694 (1.5 %)
School enrollment			
Elementary/Middle (1-8)	1954	77,261	116,261
High School (9-12)	719	27,969	56,902
Commuting to work	4061	329,098	492,621
Car, truck, alone	2128 (76 %)	265,977 (80.8 %)	404,166 (82.0 %)
Carpool	925 (23 %)	26,222 (7.9 %)	53,769 (10.9 %)
Public transportation	275 (0.7 %)	10,096 (3.1 %)	10,898 (2.2 %)
Walk	156 (0.4 %)	6,556 (2.0 %)	8,485 (1.7 %)
Bicycle	24 (0 %)	737 (0.2 %)	924 (0.2 %)
Work at home	70 (0.2 %)	7,248 (2.2 %)	11,587 (2.4 %)
Occupation	3930	334,936	581,256
Mgmt, professional	525 (14 %)	110,677 (33.0 %)	156,207 (31.2 %)
Service occupations	796 (20 %)	47,217 (14.1 %)	69,712 (13.9 %)
Sales and office	967 (25 %)	95,673 (28.6 %)	129,756 (27.9 %)
Construction, etc.	494 (13 %)	28,105 (8.4 %)	46,067 (9.2 %)
Production and transportation	1,120 (28 %)	52,620 (15.7 %)	88,144 (17.6 %)
Median household income (in 1999 dollars)	\$ 21,998	\$ 49,161	\$ 40,821
Poverty Status	4315 (33 %)	84,145 (12.1 %)	109,575 (10.7 %)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Census <http://impfinder.census.gov/>
 Census Tract 2 (Bk. Gap 1-4) 3 (Bk. Gap 1,2) 4 (Bk. Gap 1,2) 21 (Bk. Gap 1-4) 23 (Bk. Gap 1,2) 29 (Bk. Gap 1)

*Geographic and population area of Jefferson County and its surrounding counties.



Demographics

Housing Highlights

	Fairland	Louisville Metro	Metro Statistical Area*
Total housing units	5,332	305,835	438,235
Occupied housing units	4,610 (87 %)	287,012 (93.8 %)	412,050 (94.0 %)
Vacant housing units	722 (13 %)	18,823 (6.2 %)	26,185 (6.0 %)
Median home value	\$ 38,638	\$ 102,000	\$ 102,300
Owner-occupied	2,410 (52 %)	186,358 (65.0 %)	282,466 (68.6 %)
Renter-occupied	2,200 (48 %)	100,654 (35.0 %)	129,584 (31.4 %)
Year structure built			
1995 – 2000	220 (.04 %)	25,272 (7.6 %)	45,187 (9.9 %)
1990 – 1994	36 (.01 %)	16,065 (5.3 %)	29,527 (6.8 %)
1980 – 1989	158 (.03 %)	26,509 (8.6 %)	45,234 (10.3 %)
1970 – 1979	161 (.03 %)	53,928 (17.6 %)	81,702 (18.6 %)
1960 – 1969	275 (.05 %)	56,326 (18.4 %)	72,875 (16.6 %)
1950 – 1959	476 (.09 %)	54,813 (17.9 %)	68,267 (15.6 %)
1940 – 1949	761 (14 %)	28,392 (9.3 %)	36,608 (8.4 %)
1939 or earlier	3245 (.61 %)	46,670 (15.3 %)	60,625 (13.8 %)
Total	5,332 100 %	305,835	438,235

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Census <https://www.census.gov>
 Census Tract 2(Pk Gap 1-0)3(Pk Gap 1,2)4(Pk Gap 1,2)21(Pk Gap 1-0)23(Pk Gap 1,2)24(Pk Gap 1)

*Geographic and population area of Jefferson County and its surrounding counties.

Defining Characteristics

Every neighborhood within the Louisville Metro area is unique; carrying with it particular histories, residential architectural styles, defining businesses, and residents with both collective and individual stories to tell. Portland's contemporary character is the result of over 200 years of accumulated river tales, political winds, working men's and women's successes and woes, and the continuing journeys of a predominantly working-class population that has consistently reached to create a nurturing and supportive life for its families and friends. The legacy of all of this history is a neighborhood that finds itself sufficiently intact, with an engaged population of both life-long residents and relative newcomers, to constructively coordinate their efforts to maintain and expand its positive assets, both physical and cultural, and to concurrently strive to fight against the losses it sees occurring to its once-strong labor force and its rapidly-aging physical infrastructure.

The Population Highlights and Housing Highlights shown in the tables above give an indication of neighborhood-wide statistics drawn from the U.S. 2000 Census. As in most neighborhoods, area-wide statistics don't begin to capture the nuances of all the sub-districts and the differences between one corner of a neighborhood and another. As described below, in the Neighborhood Assessment Program description, Portland's large physical size demanded that the neighborhood be temporarily divided into distinct sections for the purpose of ease of analysis and public participation. The Portland Planning Task Force was able to identify 4 distinct "regions" of Portland based on such differences as architectural character or historical development period, dominant land use types, or sub-areas that have been created over the years by the forces of purely physical and psychological boundaries and dividers such as major commercial corridors and rail lines.

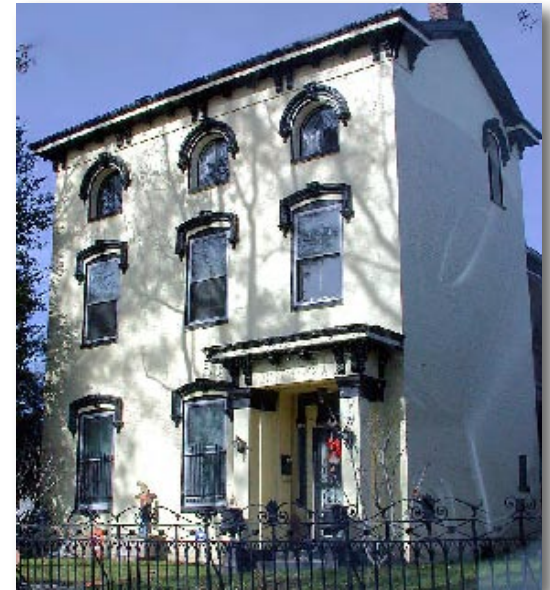
In general, this two-century old neighborhood finds itself falling behind the median statistics for both Louisville Metro and the U. S. Census Bureau's Metro Statistical Area in most, if not all, demographic data categories. The summary statistics for Portland's "Median Household Income" (45% below the Louisville Metro median of \$49,161), for Portland's Poverty Status (nearly three times Louisville Metro's 12.1 %) and Portland's Median Home Value (37% of Louisville Metro's \$103,000 median value) show that overall, Portland is struggling to maintain healthy levels of resident income, jobs, housing stock and overall economic vitality that are critical for a neighborhood to satisfy its current residents' needs and to flourish to the point of becoming an attractive destination for relocation.



The district of Portland that lies east of 22nd Street shows an even graver situation in need of focused, collaborative initiatives to stabilize existing housing stock, implement economic development efforts to increase educational attainments and job readiness, and to introduce new and restored elements of neighborhood-serving commercial establishments and the typical neighborhood amenities of public green space and walkable pedestrian environments.

Glaring statistics for this “Portland – Area A”, as identified for the Neighborhood Assessment Program, include a Census 2000 median household income of only \$18,241, and a median home value of only \$37,066. Add to these numbers the facts of 40% poverty status, 18% housing vacancy rate, a 59% renter-occupied housing rate and the fact that 75% of the 1,395 housing units in this district of Portland were constructed prior to 1949.

Despite the warnings and indications of being a struggling and challenged neighborhood, that would otherwise be seen through only the narrow-focused lens of a demographer, Portland’s rich heritage and engaged resident base combine to provide a much more positive picture. The accompanying photographs display the breadth and wealth of the wonderful historic structures that are found throughout Portland. It’s impossible to inventory and catalogue each of the 5,332 housing units in Portland or the additional dozens of commercial and institutional buildings that enliven driving and walking along Portland’s streets in this neighborhood plan. However, these few images and the list of buildings that would qualify for National Historic Register nomination found in the appendix, help confirm the wonderfully rich heritage that is Portland’s. Street after street of Portland is filled with hundreds of clapboard shotgun houses, interspersed with bungalow and Craftsman-style homes. Brick commercial buildings and long-established churches can be found both in the midst of predominantly residential districts and clustered together to form commercial nodes and shopping corridors. Examples of these are Portland Avenue as it stretches between 22nd Street to the east and 35th Street to the west, 22nd Street as it extends southward from the I-64 interchange at Portland Avenue and a larger commercial block that is bounded by Portland Avenue, Bank Street, 33rd Street to the west and the railroad track on the east. Of course, the National Register District which is located just north and west of the Northwestern Parkway / Portland Avenue / 33rd Street intersection contains a wealth of well-preserved historic structures and streets that vividly recall Portland at the height of its 19th-Century prominence.



Neighborhood Assessment Process (NAP)

In anticipation of undertaking the Neighborhood Planning Process, as prescribed in the Louisville Metro Neighborhood Planning Guidebook, the Center For Neighborhoods, in association with the Louisville Metro Department of Neighborhoods, facilitated a series of Neighborhood Assessments in Portland. The work of this process allowed the Portland Planning Task Force wonderful opportunities to engage Portland residents through surveys, conversations and public workshops for the purpose of gathering input from all interested parties about current conditions and perceptions of the neighborhood. Portland residents, church leaders, and business owners came together and identified current assets, both physical and social, of their neighborhood. They also spent many hours identifying the positive aspects of Portland that they want to maintain or increase as well as the negative aspects and daily challenges of living in Portland that need addressing. Participants were able to freely discuss concerns and clarify their wishes for a stronger, more vibrant Portland where everyone is able to pursue an enhanced quality of life.

As members of the Portland Planning Task Force fully participated in the four Neighborhood Assessments, they were able to arm themselves with the collective information and resident input generated by this program. Having heard the issues and wishes that were on the minds of their fellow Portland residents, task force members were fully prepared and informed in order to be as effective and efficient during the planning process as possible. The following page provides an overview of the Neighborhood Assessment Process, its components and its outcomes. The appendix of this Portland Neighborhood Plan contains the full Portland Neighborhood Snapshot, the final compilation of all four Portland assessments that shares the data collected from U.S. Census 2000, Portland Resident Quality-of-Life surveys and all four public participation workshops.



Portland Neighborhood Assessment Process

Portland Neighborhood Assessment Process

Mayor Jerry Abramson's vision for the merged government and for making Louisville Metro competitive included a plan to create quality neighborhoods that are vibrant and offer residents choices in housing, transportation, and recreation. The neighborhood assessment process (NAP) is an opportunity for neighborhoods to begin reviewing and planning their short term and long term goals and for taking action to make necessary changes and improvements. The neighborhood assessment process was created by the Center For Neighborhoods in partnership with Metro United Way and the Louisville Metro Department of Neighborhoods.

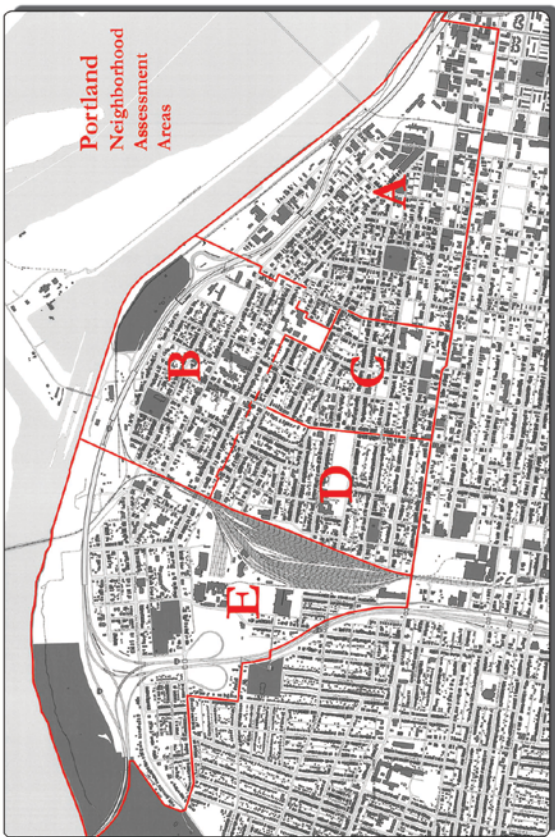
The neighborhood assessment process can be best understood by discussing its component parts. Portland's neighborhood assessment process was undertaken as a preamble to the larger neighborhood plan project. The size of Portland, both physically and population-wise, necessitated defining smaller and more manageable sub-areas for the purposes of assessment (A, B, C, D, & E - see map at left). The sub-areas were identified based on distinct characteristics and similarities, such as architectural cohesion, land-use, and boundaries. For example, the 22nd street corridor was identified as a physical boundary that separated sub-area A from its neighbors. Sub-areas C & D were combined into one large assessment area. Portland has a total of four NAPs: A, B, C & D, and E.



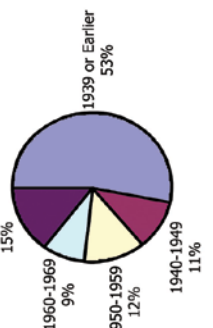
Step 1: Information Gathering

The Center For Neighborhoods collected 2000 Census demographic data on each of the four sub-areas from the U.S. Census Bureau's website (<http://www.census.gov>). Census information was collected on housing and population data. Examples of the statistical data in each NAP included household income, occupation, the number of owner-occupied housing units and rental-occupied housing.

In addition to gathering Census data, the Center For Neighborhoods provided a visual inventory of Portland by taking photographs throughout the neighborhood. These photos are used to identify and capture characteristic features of the neighborhood, such as commonalities in architecture or historic landmarks.



Year Houses Were Built

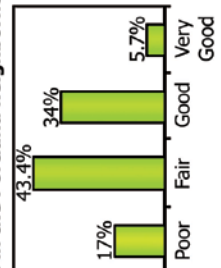


Step 2: Resident Survey

A Resident Quality of Life survey was administered to measure the residents' opinions and perceptions of their neighborhood. They were asked to rate items such as safety from crime or access to TARC on a four point scale of poor, fair, good, or excellent. The survey included questions related to the availability of services in the neighborhood, reasons why residents might stay or move away, and provided an open-ended opportunity for them to voice what things they liked best and what major problems they felt the neighborhood was facing.

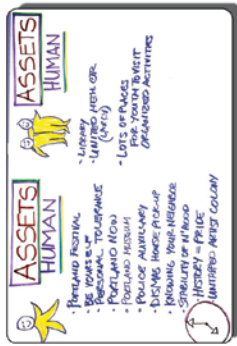
The Resident Quality of Life Survey was made available online through Survey Monkey (an online survey management tool) and also in hard copy format. In Portland, neighborhood leaders accepted responsibility for distributing, collecting and inputting the survey data into Survey Monkey. The Center For Neighborhoods was responsible for compiling the results of the surveys.

Overall, how would you rate the quality of life in the Portland neighborhood?



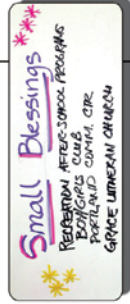
Step 3: Community Workshop

A community workshop is an open public meeting within the neighborhood for all residents to share their thoughts and ideas for how to improve their surroundings. A community workshop was held for each of the four sub-areas. Neighborhood leaders organized each workshop, determining the best location, time, and date. The Center For Neighborhoods provided residents with a preview of each Neighborhood Snapshot at the respective community workshop session. Each preview included the Census data, photographic analysis, and survey results.



The Center For Neighborhoods facilitated the four community workshops. The basic meeting agenda for a community workshop is as follows:

- Welcome
- Introductions
- Explanation of NAP
- Department of Neighborhoods overview (Kelly Long)
- Community assessment (by residents)
 - o Landmarks (identified on large map)
 - o Assets (physical, social, etc...)
 - o Issues (concerns, both social and physical)
 - o What if..... identification of actions and strategies to tackle issues and concerns
- Dot vote to prioritize problems (Residents)
- Break-out sessions
 - o Each group assigned an issue
 - o Using large index cards...
 - Develop a timeline for addressing the issue
 - Identify potential partners
 - Outcomes
 - o Report-out by group
- Action Matrix Presentation (Center For Neighborhoods)
- Index cards located within the matrix by timeline and partners
- Preview of final action matrix



Step 4: DON Review

After the community workshop, Center For Neighborhoods compiles the results of the workshop into a summary report. Photos of the workshop and the final action matrix are combined with the Census data and results of the quality of life survey. This comprehensive document is submitted to the Department of Neighborhoods for review, comments, and revisions.



Step 5: Final Document

Center For Neighborhoods makes all final revisions. The completed document is turned over to the Department of Neighborhoods for distribution to residents of the neighborhood.



Portland

Using each of the four sub-area NAPs, the Portland Planning Task Force, appointed by the Mayor, but not a Portland Now committee, produced a composite action matrix by combining the action matrices from the four smaller sub-areas. Additionally, a five-page composite Neighborhood Snapshot was developed by combining each of the four sub-area NAPs into one cumulative report for the entire neighborhood.