



2021 in Review *with the* South of Downtown Community Development Organization

David Schmidt, Interim Executive Director

Compiled by: Allie Christianson, Isabel Salas, and Kat Wiese



At a glance...

We thought this year would be different - didn't we all? Amid a still-changing global pandemic, social isolation and disconnectedness as we figure out together how to gather safely and when, ups and downs with our economic and housing stability, and renewed calls for social justice for our BIPOC and low-income neighbors, we are so thankful to have spent this year alongside you. There is no other place we would rather be than by the sides of our friends, neighbors, and community partners to continue building community in the ways that we sought together this past year. This report details what we view as our collective achievements throughout 2021 and how we did this work together, by neighbors, for neighbors. Here's how it's laid out:

Civic Engagement & Advocacy

Including: Engaging Voters
Information Sharing & Growing our Collective Knowledge

Community Building & Creative Placemaking

Including: Sustaining our Creative Placemaking Initiatives
Creative Workshops & Projects
Holding Space for Community & Celebrating Creative Neighbors

Affordable Housing

Including: Information Sharing & Power Building
Developing and Implementing Tools
Funding for & Developing Affordable Housing

Neighborhood Infrastructure and Access to Opportunity

Including: Access to Services
Access to Economic Opportunity
Increased Market Access
Developing and Implementing Tools

Investing in Resident Leadership & Continuing the Work

Civic Engagement & Advocacy



Engaging Voters

- With our former community organizer, Chueqa Yang, we grew our Get Out the Vote Efforts to engage voters through:
 - Hiring 5 Get Out the Vote canvassers to go doorknocking and reach our neighbors where they're at.
 - Expand the Civic Sidewalk Series through partnering with Civic Nebraska to reach 5 gathering spaces in Everett and Near South, University Place and Clinton.
 - Host Party at the Polls with our partners at F Street Community Center and Lincoln Parks and Recreation to celebrate voting in the Spring election.
- With our Collective Impact Lincoln (CIL) partners, we hosted a City Council Candidate Forum to get to know candidates running for City Council! We got to chat about issues that we've heard about from our neighbors, including affordable and quality housing, access to healthy food, among others.

Information Sharing & Growing our Collective Knowledge

- The South of Downtown Redevelopment & Strategic Plan and South of Downtown Innovation Planned Unit Development (PUD) were developed by neighbors and stakeholders over the past few years, and in this year alone, we hosted 3 more virtual conversations to gather community input as they were going through the City's approval processes.
 - Check out the Downtown Innovation [PUD Guide & Interactive Map](#), created by our intern, Ava!
- To center our resident voices, we joined the Prosper Lincoln Stronger Neighborhoods implementation team.
- With our CIL partners, we hosted 4 Community Builder Workshops to reach our neighbors in Belmont, Clinton, Everett, Hartley, Near South and University Place and an end-of-year celebration too!



Community Building & Creative Placemaking



Sustaining our Creative Placemaking Initiatives

The Creatives in Community (CIC) program was developed as a way to not just generate community projects, but equip our neighbors to design and implement those projects themselves. Creatives in Community is a neighborhood-focused placemaking education and residency program focused on asset-based community development that centers sustainable resident-led change. This program is led by SDCDO and LUX Center for the Arts. Learn more [here](#).

- Creatives in Community Placemaking Program
 - Residency w/Karla Hernandez Torrijos at SDCDO
 - Held participatory poetry performance at El Barrio en Vivo.
 - Worked with 90+ Arts and Humanities students on a poetry and gratitude workshop.

- CIC Workshops - 30+ participants
 - SDCDO and LUX hosted a day-long creative placemaking workshop followed by a study hall wherein participants could pitch their own projects.
- CIC Project Funding - Bike LNK, Kendra Limon
 - The CIC residency and educational workshops were funded by Southeast Community College and the Lincoln Arts Council. Their funds made it possible for the Bike Party LNK and a small scale mural project by Kendra Limon to take place in addition to the residencies.

Creative Workshops & Projects

- Place and Print VIRTUAL Workshops w/ Isaiah Jones
 - Around 20 participants learned DIY screen printing, history of NE posters, advocacy and more.
- SEE HER HERE wheat paste mural project
 - 100 LPS students at Arts and Humanities Focus Program and Lincoln High School depicted 45 women in wheat paste murals around the neighborhood resulting in 100 portraits half of whom were women nominated from the community. Murals are located at F Street Neighborhood Church, Lincoln Literacy, Arts and Humanities Focus Program, 1235 S 11th St., and the South of Downtown Art Hub.



- Slow Your Roll Intersection Mural - learn more [HERE](#)
 - SDCDO worked with Bike LNK, Pepe's Bistro, NeighborWorks Lincoln, Partnership for Healthy Lincoln, and BicycLincoln and the City of Lincoln to design, fund and paint a more than twenty five foot diameter street safe mural just south of the 11th and B St intersection with a great yellow smiley face sandwiched between the text "Slow Your Roll."



Holding Space for Community & Celebrating Creative Neighbors

- Black History Black Futures Coloring Book
 - It is amazing to see the corners of the GLOBE this coloring book has reached from elementary, high schools, and middle schools around the city, to Omaha public libraries, and even schools in Africa! With 79 downloads, more than 450 printed copies, and 15 groups and classrooms we estimate this coloring book has been a resource to more than 2,200 people!

- Safety Conversations
 - Over the summer, we gathered to talk about what safety looks and feels like in our neighborhoods. We had three community conversations over the summer to hold space for for our neighbors to share their experiences, connect, and to just be. We also partnered with Indigo Bridge Bookstore to create a BIPOC affinity group!
- Porch Art Palooza
 - Outdoor art tour organized with Tugboat Gallery featuring 34 stops, 44 makers, a couple bands, and interactive art activities. Hundreds of folks turned out, generating thousands of dollars for local creators and incentivized by the donations of 12 local businesses who contributed gift cards to attendees.
- 2nd Friday Art Walks
 - We are Present in the Spaces Between - in celebration of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month
 - El Barrio en Vivo - in celebration of Latine Heritage Month
 - U CAN'T TELL ME NOTHING JUST BY LOOKIN' - Artie Mack
 - Welcome to the Table: Art Walk with LPS



Affordable Housing



Information Sharing & Power Building

- On January 27th, we gathered with neighbors and community partners with the Nebraska Housing Advocacy Collaborative to share testimony on housing bills at the NE State Legislature. Over the course of the legislative session, we saw LB320 pass, which was the most comprehensive set of changes to the nebraska Residential Landlord-Tenant Act since it was created! This packaged 7 housing bills and went in effect in late August.
- Director of Community Engagement, Isabel Salas, was featured on an LNK TV special about women and covid and shared information about how evictions are impacting our neighborhoods, what resources are available, and how to take action.
- Together with our Renters Together, Collective Impact Lincoln (CIL), and Nebraska History Museum partners, we hosted the Evicted Experience, which featured a listening session with State Senator Anna Wishart, a virtual tour of the NE History Museum Evicted Exhibit, as well as a First Friday screening of Gabriella Parson's film, Behind on Rent. Watch the film [here](#).

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- In continuing the housing justice momentum, we hosted Housing Justice lobby days with our CIL partners and got to engage even more of our neighbors in advocating for affordable, adequate, and accessible housing!

Funding for & Developing Affordable Housing

- Together with our CIL partners, we developed the Equitable Development Scorecard, which lays out our community values for what affordable, adequate, and accessible housing looks like, feels like, and should be strived for in our neighborhoods and City as a whole.
- Last year, we among many City and nonprofit partners, saw the creation of the Tenant Assistance Project (TAP), which provides free legal counsel to folks facing eviction in Lincoln. This year, we continued our support of TAP, worked with the City of Lincoln to get out information about emergency rental assistance funds, and advocated for continued funding for the program. Not only was TAP funded in Lincoln, but in our neighboring city of Omaha too!



Developing & Implementing Tools

- We secured \$2M in funding from the Department of Economic Development (DED) and Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) for a revolving loan fund that helps our neighbors secure stable paths to homeownership.
- We also purchased the CenterPointe property on 13th St to develop into affordable housing in the next few years!

Neighborhood Infrastructure & Access to Opportunity



Access to Services

- We teamed up with Bryan Health, Lincoln Parks and Recreation, and Lincoln Community Learning Centers to host a Bryan Health & Hire event at F Street Community Center. This was a an incredible pilot project that reached 92 of our neighbors in Everett and Near South. Together we were able to:
 - Provide 8 students with free back-to-school physicals.
 - Help 16 neighbors apply for jobs with Bryan Health.
 - See one of the biggest group of volunteers from Bryan Health for an event! It was such an honor working with their team!
- Unite Nebraska
 - We connected with Unite Nebraska, which is a platform that helps nonprofits automatically connect the folks they serve to other service providers. With our Collective Impact Lincoln (CIL) partners, we joined the platform and are now able to connect the neighbors we reach to vital community services near them, all without the burden of making that first call for assistance falling on our neighbors.



Access to Economic Opportunity

- We know that our neighbors are talented and resourceful! After the removal of ash trees along F Street and other parts of our neighborhood, we didn't want that lumber to go to waste! Together with our Nebraska Forestry Service, Big Red Firewood and Sawmill, and Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) partners, we started the Urban Lumber Project, in which students in LPS industrial tech classrooms build items for our community with repurposed ash lumber and other repurposed lumber. What we're so excited about with this project is that we are paying students as neighbor consultants, investing their skills and expertise, and uplifting their awesome pieces of art, sharing them with our community!
- We grew our partnerships with EmployLNK and the American Job Center to connect our neighbors to employment opportunities, services, and job trainings, including a drive-thru, walk-thru, bike-thru job fair at Gateway Mall this spring.
- We have been so delighted to participate in the Raise the Wage Nebraska Coalition, which is a ballot initiative campaign to raise our state's minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2026!





Increased Market Access

- Last year, we launched the online South of Downtown Makers Market, and we continued it into this year and grew it even more! In supporting our neighborhood creatives, we
 - Hosted 2 online Makers Markets in Spring and Summer.
 - Hosted our first ever hybrid in-person and online market in November.
 - Hosted a Meet the Makers Event for the Summer Market, which featured studio tours and mini-interviews with makers.
 - Hired Neighborhood Website Specialist, Choul Luak to help us with the online market and improve its accessibility!

Developing & Implementing Tools

We know how important it is to have tools to center resident lived experience and cement in our city processes that your voices matter, and your experiences are expertise. Together with neighbors and community partners, we saw the development and implementation of the following:

- The Redevelopment & Strategic Plan (R&S Plan) was unanimously approved by Lincoln City Council, the implementation of which will be guided by the Implementation Team, a group of neighbors who work with City staff to ensure that resident voices are continually centered in this process!

[Read more about the R&S Plan here.](#)

- The South of Downtown Innovation Planned Unit Development (PUD) was unanimously approved by Lincoln City Council! This is a zoning tool that our City partners use to ensure the balance of live/work/play in our neighborhoods, and it also removes previous zoning restrictions that restricted the development of affordable housing and small businesses. [Read about the PUD more here.](#)
- We launched the Sustainable Economic Development Extension (SEDE), which is an initiative with a goal to expand access to the tools and resources that our neighbors need to determine their own economic futures and thrive. We believe deeply in the ability of our collective knowledge to support us all holistically. We launched SEDE to invest in our collective knowledge and leadership to:

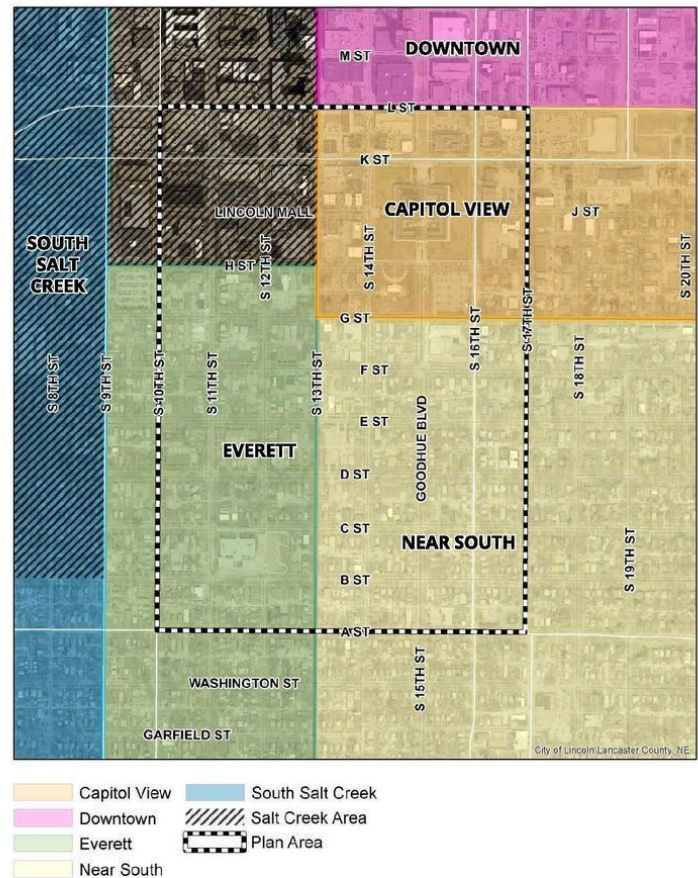


Figure 1.1 - Plan Area Map

- Skillshare in community markets.
- Host neighbor-led workshops for creative entrepreneurs and job seekers.
- Expand accessibility of resources that help our community not only achieve economic stability but to thrive.



Investing in Resident Leadership & Continuing the Work

Throughout all of our 2021 programs, SDCDO organizers have maintained a commitment to not only working alongside residents towards neighbor-led improvements but also equipping them to lead, from immediate improvements like placemaking projects to long-term systems and infrastructure changes.

The Implementation Team is an outstanding example of not only inviting neighbors into development processes but also supplying them with the time and resources to fully engage. The Implementation team is modeled after progressive movements in cities around the country that have paid neighborhood residents as consultants so that they can lead the way in decision making. This comes at a key point for the South of Downtown focus area with the approval of the South of Downtown Redevelopment and Strategic Plan. The South of Downtown Implementation Team is the only of its kind in the City of Lincoln!

Over the next few years, the team will work directly with City employees to implement the Redevelopment and Strategic Plan. With a neighborhood that is 95% rental and largely low-income, it is an uphill battle providing sustainable opportunities for residents to engage. The South of Downtown Implementation team is an enormous step in ensuring redevelopment is truly a neighbor-led process, made accessible to all.



As you can see, our year has turned out differently than we had imagined at the end of 2020, but it has been such an honor and joy spending it alongside you all. Though 2022 may continue to surprise us, and we may face new and unprecedented challenges, we have faith that this work, which has been led by our neighbors since the very beginning, will continue to grow to meet the needs of our community no matter what. We can't wait to see you in the new year, neighbors, partners, and friends!

With the utmost gratitude,

Your South of Downtown Community Development Organization Team