



THE HOUGH CULTURAL DISTRICT:

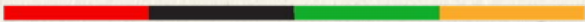
A Strategic Roadmap for Preserving People and Community in Place

DEVELOPED THROUGH THE:

HOUGH

Cultural Preservation Project

A STRATEGY FOR PEOPLE AND PLACE



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aerial Image of Hough Neighborhood. CREDIT: Cleveland.com

The Hough Cultural Preservation Project arrives at a pivotal moment for one of Cleveland's most historically significant Black communities.

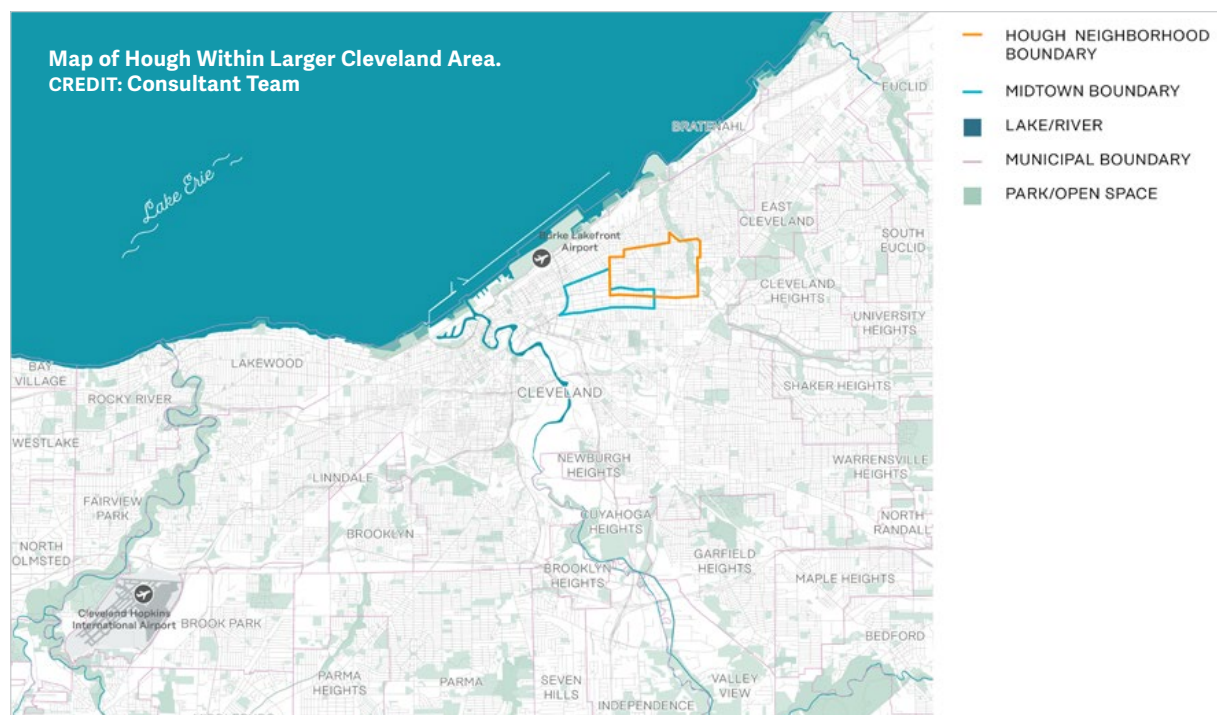
For generations, Hough has anchored civic life, nurtured local culture, promoted entrepreneurship, and cultivated community leadership. Residents have built churches and businesses, established cultural organizations, and created a vibrant community life all despite decades of disinvestment. That long legacy of responsible stewardship in the midst of challenges is the inspiration and foundation of this roadmap.

Today, Hough's history intersects with a wave of public infrastructure investment, housing development, philanthropic commitments, institutional expansion, and community wealth-building initiatives that will reshape the neighborhood in profound ways. New resources bring real opportunity: stronger neighborhood conditions, expanded economic mobility, and long-term benefits for residents. History, however, offers a cautionary lesson that investment alone does not guarantee fair outcomes. Without a framework that emphasizes cultural preservation as part of a community-rooted process, growth can become fragmented, existing residents can miss out on key opportunities, and cultural displacement can prove just as destructive as physical demolition.

The Hough Cultural Preservation Project was developed through fifteen months of community engagement, oral history collection, research, planning, and collaboration. Our work aligns the investments, organizations, initiatives,

and opportunities already shaping Hough's future while offering a different premise for planning the future of Hough: The best starting point for such planning is not what Hough lacks but what generations of residents have worked hard to build and sustain. Those existing strengths of the community, some made of brick and mortar and some intangible, are the most valuable resources available for shaping the next chapter of Hough's community life.

For that reason, the Hough Cultural Preservation Project's methodological approach has drawn directly upon the voices and visions of members of the Hough community. What emerged from this process was a clear and consistent vision. Residents expressed a desire for a neighborhood where cultural identity is visible and celebrated, where young people see a future for themselves, where elders are recognized as keepers of knowledge and memory, where entrepreneurship is supported, where public spaces invite connection between neighbors, and where investment contributes to community stability rather than to the displacement of residents. Equally important, residents emphasized the need for greater coordination, accountability, and community influence over the decisions shaping their own neighborhood. Taking this community-based vision seriously has led to the roadmap presented here, one which makes cultural preservation the central organizing principle through which economic development, community



development, and neighborhood revitalization may all more reliably generate lasting benefits to the community.

The roadmap is built upon four pillars: People, Place, Power, and Prosperity. Together, these pillars strengthen community leadership, reinforce neighborhood identity, enhance the community's ability to govern itself, create pathways for economic opportunity, and protect long-term residents from the threat of displacement. These pillars are themselves grounded in a shared belief in the value of community. Within that community perspective, culture is viewed as an asset, property ownership's stabilizing effect on neighborhoods is acknowledged, and the accumulation of community knowledge is recognized as a form of genuine expertise.

To translate these principles into action, the Hough Cultural Preservation Project identifies a series of Cultural Activation Zones where targeted investments, cultural programming, public realm improvements, and community ownership strategies can be concentrated to create visible and measurable impact. These zones are connected by a broader district-wide strategy that strengthens economic development and promotes impact investments along corridors, improves connections between members of the community, supports the development of cultural destinations, and reinforces Hough's identity as a historically validated cultural district. The roadmap also advances the creation of a community-controlled governing body, a unique type

of neighborhood association that would help coordinate community organizations, steward implementation of the roadmap, and advocate for residents.

Development is already reshaping Hough. Change is inevitable, but what exactly that change will include and who will benefit from it is up to us. Investment, growth, and development can create meaningful opportunities when guided by community priorities and responsible stewardship of the local culture. Such growth should strengthen what already exists, reinforce Hough's cultural identity, and expand opportunity for the same residents who have sustained the neighborhood through decades of transition. Cultural preservation is not separate from development. It is one of the tools through which development produces lasting community benefit.

Hough enters this moment with assets that cannot be measured in acreage, the potential for economic development, or projected investment. Generations of residents have built institutions, relationships, traditions, and systems of mutual support that continue to shape community life today. Aligning those strengths with the opportunities emerging across the neighborhood is the central task of this roadmap. The path forward rests on a simple premise: cultural preservation, community ownership, and shared prosperity are most durable when they reinforce one another. The next chapter of Hough's story should be shaped by the very people whose stewardship made that future possible.



Introduction

BACKGROUND AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

One of *Cleveland's* oldest neighborhoods

Hough is one of Cleveland's oldest neighborhoods, established in 1799 and shaped over more than two centuries by migration, cultural development, and the determination of residents to define their future on their own terms.



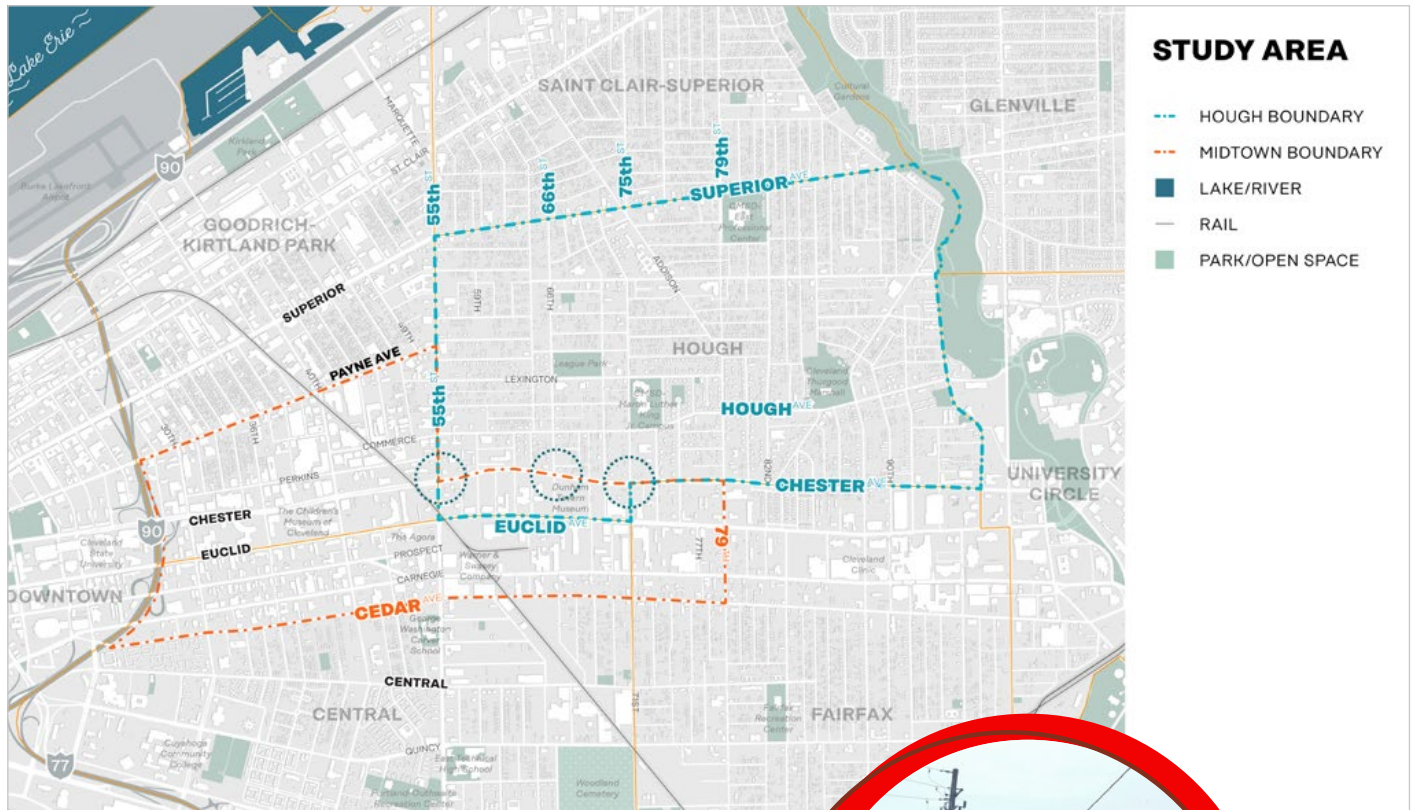
Covering approximately 1.5 square miles on Cleveland's Near East Side, the neighborhood extends from East 55th Street to East 105th Street between Euclid and Superior avenues. Its location places Hough at the center of one of the region's most consequential corridors: positioned between downtown Cleveland and University Circle, Hough is adjacent to the Cleveland Clinic, Case Western Reserve University, and some of the region's most influential institutions. Nearly 10,000 residents live within a community that spans two distinct yet interconnected geographies: Lower Hough, anchored by the East 55th and East 66th corridors along with the Ingleside Local Landmark District, and Upper Hough, whose history is closely tied to the expansion of University Circle and the institutions surrounding it.

But the neighborhood's legacy goes far beyond its geography. Hough produced the first independent African American museum in the United States, hosted the legendary nightclub Leo's Casino at the height of its influence, sustained Hough-owned enterprises through decades of structural barriers, and became home to one of Cleveland's earliest and most influential Black Muslim congregations, Masjid Bilal. Thousands of commuters, students, clinicians, and patient-families pass through Hough daily moving between University Circle and downtown, often unaware of Hough's rich cultural heritage.

Hough's proximity to some of the most well-resourced institutions in the region has produced planning attention

in abundance. Indeed, few neighborhoods in Cleveland have been studied as extensively as Hough. Corridor plans, housing studies, and community engagement efforts have documented neighborhood conditions with painstaking accuracy and often produced thoughtful recommendations. Observable change, however, has rarely followed. Accountability mechanisms have been weak and the responsibility for implementation of proposals has often been unclear, with no adequately resourced entity present to coordinate action over the long term. Much is at stake, both for the long-term survival of Hough's cultural legacy and the wellbeing of its residents, who face extraordinary displacement pressures.

Fortunately, investment arriving in Hough today is arriving fast and at scale. The Midline, announced in May 2026 as the largest industrial redevelopment in modern Cleveland history, will transform more than 350 acres of long-vacant land into a connected employment district and public greenway. The Superior Midway, a protected corridor for bicycles and pedestrians envisioned to extend eastward from downtown to East 55th Street, will strengthen connections between Cleveland's urban core, MidTown, and the neighborhoods that surround Hough. Mayor Justin Bibb's proposed Housing Innovation Zone, a tax increment financing district, spanning approximately 1,372 acres across Hough and St. Clair Superior, is projected to bring between \$41.9 million and \$118.7 million in redirected public investment over thirty years. Together, these investments are reshaping the physical, economic, and mobility infrastructure surrounding the neighborhood.



Shore-to-Core-to-Shore Presentation. CREDIT: City of Cleveland

THE HOUGH CULTURAL PRESERVATION PROJECT IS THAT FRAMEWORK.

The Hough Cultural Preservation Project is the framework that can responsibly guide this investment. This project is the first planning engagement for Hough that prioritizes cultural preservation—that is, the protection of the conditions under which a community produces, transmits, and governs its own cultural life — over the important but secondary factors of economic development, real estate finance, and placemaking. Note that *cultural preservation* is more than simply *historic preservation*. Where the latter focuses on buildings or monuments in the built environment, *cultural preservation* aims to honor and explore the lived experience within a neighborhood. With this in mind, the consultant team and the community together articulated a specific and achievable vision: the formal designation of Hough as Cleveland's Black Cultural District, governed by a majority-resident governing body, anchored by four Cultural Activation Zones, and supported by institutional partners committed to an equitable and enduring future for the people who built this place.

The Hough community welcomes the investment that is arriving in support of this vision and is ready to help lead and steward their collective future in ways that will benefit all concerned.



E. 55th Street. CREDIT: Consultant Team
E. 66th Street. CREDIT: Consultant Team

PURPOSE OF THIS ROADMAP

THIS IS A ROADMAP, NOT ANOTHER STUDY

The distinction matters enormously to the community that asked for it. Hough has been studied thoroughly for fifteen years but with little follow-up in terms of implementation.

This document operates from a different premise entirely: the community has already decided where it is going, and the only work remaining now is to map the route, identify who holds the wheel, and assess the road conditions.

This roadmap is built on the conviction that planning for prosperity is a more honest, effective approach to the future than merely managing decline. The conventional approach for disinvested neighborhoods treats poverty as the baseline and stabilization as the ceiling. That premise is rejected here. Hough deserves to be resourced, celebrated, and invested in on its own merits and its own terms. That shift in orientation changes every downstream decision: who leads, what gets built, who benefits first, and what success actually looks like when the work is complete. Prosperity is not a reward at the end of a long implementation timeline. It is the required orientation from day one.

Every strategy in this document is written with its impact in mind. This requires not only identifying the changes that need to be made but asking further who these changes benefit, by when the changes should be completed, and how we will know they are effective. For this reason, the three-stage framework this roadmap produces leads to clear impact milestones to be achieved rather than simply broad principles to (somehow) be applied. The corresponding planning logic moves from value (Part II) to strategy (Part III) to action (Part IV), and the four pillars of this work, People, Place, Power, and Prosperity, are not separate program areas but four dimensions of a single, simultaneous transformation. We pursue this approach in the conviction that Hough residents deserve to stand on their street in 2030 and see fundamentally positive changes for the people who have lived there for decades.

WHY A CULTURAL DISTRICT?



Unity & Community Mural. Credit: Studio Past Times

Hough does not need to *become* a cultural district. It already *is* one.



Scholars and cultural policy practitioners use the term Naturally Occurring Cultural District to describe exactly what Hough represents: a place where cultural assets, creative practitioners, and community institutions have clustered organically over generations. The neighborhood itself provides the conditions, relationships, spaces, and shared identity that make that clustering possible. Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts grow from the ground up rather than being imported from the outside, and they are distinguished by something that no top-down cultural district can manufacture: genuine rootedness in the neighborhood fabric. The sonic legacy

of Leo's Casino, the community land sovereignty of the Hough Community Land Trust, the food traditions and agricultural practice of Chateau Hough, the visual art and curatorial vision of Invigorate Gallery, the spiritual architecture of Masjid Bilal, the baseball history embedded in every corner of League Park, and the intergenerational knowledge carried by families who have called this neighborhood "home" across multiple generations — these are not assets waiting to be assembled into something. They are integral elements of a naturally occurring cultural district that has existed for decades, sustained by people who never needed an official designation to know the value of what they had.



Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts are often invisible to those outside the neighborhood precisely because they grow quietly from within the community rather than announcing themselves through civic marketing campaigns. That invisibility is not a measure of their value but a reflection of who has historically held the power to decide what counts. The formal “Cultural District”

Cultural districts are among the most powerful tools available to communities seeking to align civic identity, economic opportunity, and resident-led community governance within a single geographic framework.

assert that this place has a specific cultural identity worth protecting and that the people who produced it have the right to govern its future. The formal designation also creates the conditions for an economy that serves residents first and attracts mission-aligned investment, supports community wealth-building enterprises, and protects the families — those whose presence made this neighborhood worth investing in — from being planned out of the place they built. These people, who sustained Hough through its most difficult decades, represent the essence of

what the district can become. Adopting the Cultural District framework is the best way to make sure their authority over Hough's future is written into the governing logic of every decision that follows.

THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The Journey *behind* the HCPP

In 2022, a group of Hough residents traveled to Memphis to tour Black cultural institutions.

When they came home to Cleveland, they asked themselves a question: why not here?

That question, posed by people who knew Hough's history from the inside, set in motion the community conversation that eventually became the Hough Cultural Preservation Project. MidTown Cleveland Inc. had been building toward this moment since 2021, developing the institutional relationships, corridor investments, and community trust that would make a formal cultural district planning process both possible and credible. The simple conversation among Hough's residents about the community's future eventually led to a co-design process lasting more than a year that would place community knowledge, oral history, and resident authority at the center of every decision from the first session to the last.



1. Memphis Study Tour. CREDIT: MidTown Cleveland
2. Project Site Visit. CREDIT: Consultant Team
3. Town Hall Forum I. CREDIT: MidTown Cleveland

LISTENING TO THE HOUGH COMMUNITY

In August 2025, Rhodes Heritage Group, Third Space Action Lab, Interface Studio, and &Access began a structured, phased engagement process with the Hough community. The Hough Cultural Preservation Project was designed based on the belief that the people who have lived in, sustained, and loved Hough are the foremost authorities on what it needs and what it deserves. The process was organized across three sequential tasks, each building directly on the findings of the one before.

TASK 1: *Discovery and Analysis*

Established the evidentiary foundation for the entire project through deep archival research, stakeholder mapping, and community assessment across the study area. The team reviewed prior planning documents, documented the historical figures and cultural events tied to the district's corridors, and held listening sessions, oral history interviews, and a public town hall to emphasize the importance of community voice from the outset. The result was a comprehensive picture of who Hough is, what it has carried, and what its people have always envisioned for themselves.

TASK 2: *Visioning and Concept Development*

Translated the insights gathered in Task 1 into a set of guiding principles and values that reflect the district's identity and shape the design standards and programming philosophy of the Project. The team expanded the district's data infrastructure, conducted additional oral history interviews, and confirmed the project's principles through a second round of advisory sessions and a community town hall. What emerged was a shared framework, authored by the community, that gives the proposed Cultural District its planning logic and sense of direction.

TASK 3: *Real Estate & Economic Development Framework*

Moved the work from vision to viability, developing a concept framework for the Leo's Arts and Music Collaboratory and conducting a parcel-by-parcel assessment of the East 75th Street corridor. The team evaluated market demand, zoning conditions and opportunities for zoning variance, financial feasibility, and public realm conditions, producing a development plan with design strategies for land activation, cultural infrastructure, and pedestrian-oriented improvements. Community engagement continued through a final round of advisory sessions, oral history interviews, and a closing town hall that grounded every recommendation in resident priorities.

ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Across fifteen months, the Hough Cultural Preservation Project communicated with more than eight hundred participants through oral history interviews, community work sessions, conversation circles, virtual workshops, town hall forums, Core Team Advisory sessions, and supplemental outreach events. Each engagement format was part of a responsive design cycle, where what the community said in one task became the foundation for decisions in the next. The framework for this process of community engagement can be summarized as follows:

QUANTITATIVE REACH & ENGAGEMENT

Measuring Community Reach & Participation

SUPPORTING ACTIVITY

Core Team
Advisory Meetings:

+10
SESSIONS

INTIMATE ENGAGEMENT

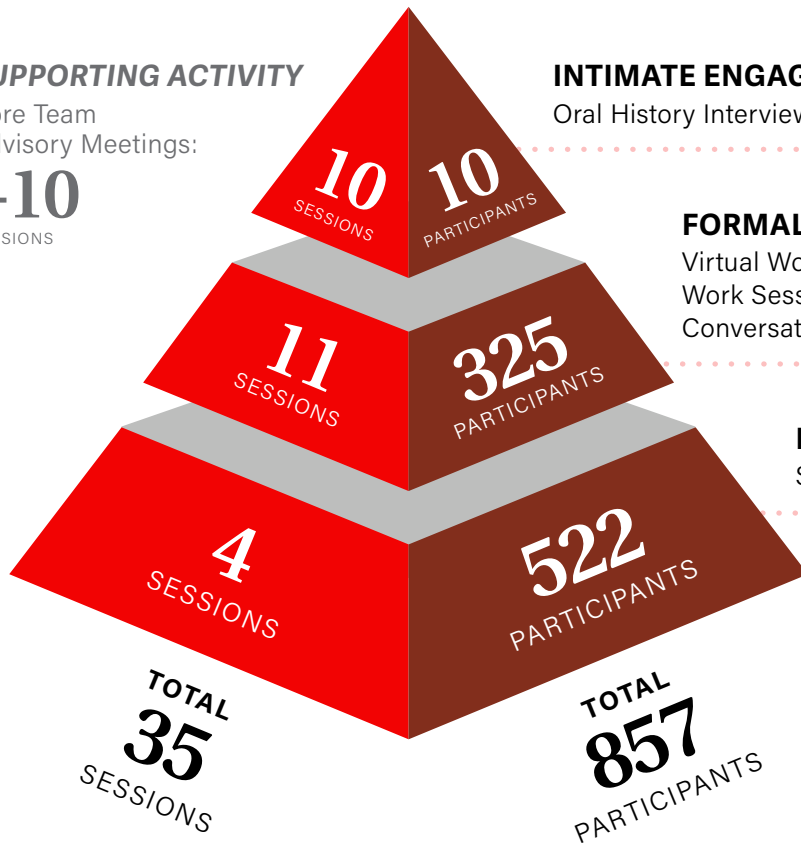
Oral History Interviews

FORMAL ENGAGEMENT

Virtual Workshops, Community
Work Sessions, Town Hall Forums,
Conversation Circles

BROAD OUTREACH

Supplemental Outreach Events



ROADMAP OVERVIEW

This Cultural District Roadmap is the result of careful deliberation on the insights learned from the communication described above. Intended as a deliberate progression from vision to action, the Roadmap reflects the Hough Cultural Preservation Project's conviction that the authority to shape Hough's future resides in the community's knowledge of its past and aspirations for its future.

The remainder of the roadmap is organized as follows:



PART II:

Context –
What Hough Values

This part of the roadmap documents what Hough possesses today: its cultural assets, its community landmarks, its planning history, and the values that make this intervention both necessary and possible. This section is the foundational analysis that undergirds the Project.



PART III:

Cultural District Vision –
Strategies for a Brighter Future

This part translates the values and aspirations outlined in Part II into a framework for action. Community values can be distilled in four main Pillars, which in turn generate 20 corresponding Strategies. Strategies map onto four Cultural Activation Zones across the Hough landscape, each with specific projects, investment priorities, and a spatial logic that binds the four zones to a common district identity.

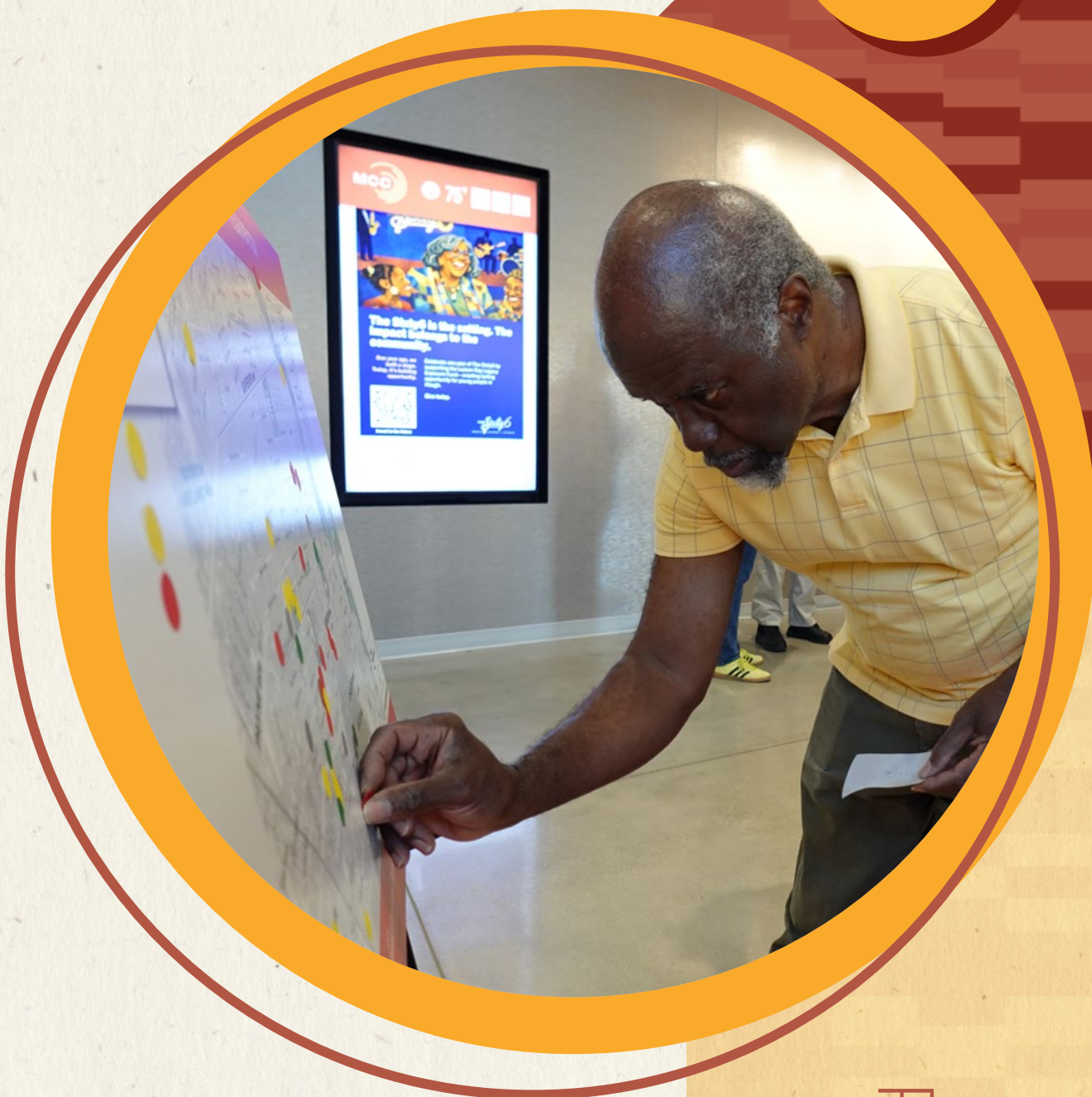


PART IV:

Pathways Forward –
Taking Accountable Action

The final part of the roadmap converts vision into accountability. Each strategy is paired with action items that name who is responsible, for what sequence of actions, and through what funding mechanisms. The three-phase implementation structure and the governing body framework ensure that this document functions as an operating tool long after the planning process has concluded.

These three parts together chart a path from visionary values to built environment.



Context

What Hough Values

TIMELINE

1799

HOUGH SETTLED

Founding of one of Cleveland's oldest neighborhoods.

1891

LEAGUE PARK OPENS

Becomes a major baseball hub.

1903

HOUGH HOME BAKERY OPENS

Establishes a prominent local business.



1904 ▲

HOUSE OF WILLS FOUNDED

Becomes the state's largest Black-owned funeral home and symbolizes early Black economic self-help.

1945 ►

CLEVELAND BUCKEYES WIN NEGRO WORLD SERIES

Historic Black baseball championship at League Park.



1950s

TRANSITION TO BLACK MAJORITY NEIGHBORHOOD

Major demographic shift following World War II.

1953

AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM FOUNDED

Establishes the first independent African American museum in the United States.

1963

LEO'S CASINO OPENS

Becomes Cleveland's premier R&B and Motown venue.

1966

HOUGH UPRISING

Neighborhood turning point that preceded community development efforts.

1967

CARL B. STOKES ELECTED MAYOR OF CLEVELAND

First Black mayor of a major U.S. city. Policies affected East Side neighborhoods, including Hough.

1967 ▼

HOUGH AREA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (HADC) FORMED

Pioneers community-led redevelopment after the uprising.



227 years of continuous community history

1970 ▶

FATIMA FAMILY CENTER ESTABLISHED

Becomes a key social services and community hub.



1979 ▼

FANNIE LEWIS ELECTED TO CITY COUNCIL

Cleveland's longest-serving councilwoman, serving from 1980 to 2008.

1970

HADC ACQUIRES MCDONALD'S FRANCHISE

Demonstrates the capacity of African Americans to plan, build, and operate businesses.

The Legacy of Fannie Lewis

JUNE 6, 1926 - AUGUST 11, 2008

Fannie Mae Lewis spent more than three decades as the City Council representative for Ward 7, serving the Hough and Glenville neighborhoods from 1979 until her death in 2008. Her tenure defined what it meant to fight for a community in which the city had systematically underinvested for generations. Lewis was a daughter of Hough in the fullest sense, having grown up in the neighborhood and watched it absorb the consequences of redlining, urban renewal, and the 1966 Uprising. She dedicated her political life to reversing those consequences one block at a time. Among her many accomplishments, she championed the rehabilitation of League Park when the city had all but abandoned it, understanding that the restoration of a place where Satchel Paige pitched and the 1945 Negro World Series champion Cleveland Buckeyes played was not simply a parks project but an act of cultural preservation. She fought for affordable housing, job opportunities for Clevelanders on construction projects, neighborhood investment, and a voice for residents in planning decisions, doing so with a directness and tenacity that made her one of the most consequential local officials in Cleveland's modern political history.



Her legacy in Hough is simultaneously physical and organizational. The rehabilitation of League Park that she championed stands today as one of the most historically significant community baseball facilities in the country, surrounded now by the Gateway66 development that will help carry her neighborhood into its next chapter. The Allen Estates development, named after two community builders she inspired, Carolyn Allen and Robert Allen, is part of the wave of investment she helped make possible. Lewis established a model for what it looks like when a community finally has someone in the room who refuses to leave without results. Hough's residents have always shared her conviction that smart, community-centered development and cultural preservation are not opposing forces but two expressions of the same fierce pride in the people and possibility of Hough.

1979

LEAGUE PARK TICKET HOUSE ADDED TO NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Preserves an important piece of Cleveland history.



1983

AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM MOVES TO HOUGH

Solidifies its role as a cultural cornerstone in the neighborhood.

2010 ▲

CHATEAU HOUGH VINEYARDS AND WINERY ESTABLISHED

Represents a modern social enterprise supporting neighborhood revitalization.

2023

MARTIN LUTHER KING PLAZA PURCHASED

NREUV acquires the site with plans for mixed-use development, business incubator space, and affordable housing.

1985

LEXINGTON VILLAGE OPENS

Signals a new era of development and neighborhood renewal.

2014

LEAGUE PARK RESTORED

Preserves historic sports heritage and creates a new public asset.

2024 ▼

HISTORIC MARKER UNVEILED

Hough Uprising added to Cleveland Restoration Society's Civil Rights Trail.

1993 ▼

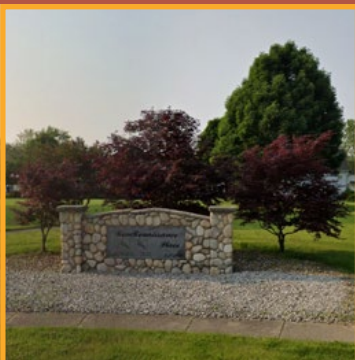
RENAISSANCE PLACE

Resident investors create a middle-class housing enclave consisting of 20 newly constructed, single family homes.

2019

DAVE'S MARKET OPENS

Addresses decades of food insecurity and provides a neighborhood anchor.



**This timeline reflects selected chapters in Hough's expansive history, and the community knows better than anyone that there is far more to celebrate, document, and honor. We have included this amplification of Hough's cultural narrative as one of the strategies in the HCPP Roadmap.*



THE EIGHT COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

#1

Remembered

#2

Visible

#3

Cultured

#4

Accessible

#5

Connected

#6

Intergenerational

#7

Accountable

#8

Invested

KEY ASPIRATIONS

Key Aspirations of Hough Residents for Their Community

Hough residents are clear on what they value about their neighborhood and what they aspire for it to become in the future.



The aspirations identified below surfaced during the community engagement process. The eight aspirations that Hough residents hold for their community — that it be Remembered, Visible, Cultured, Accessible, Connected, Intergenerational, Accountable, and Invested — are the community's own reading of their home, the conceptual foundation on which everything that follows in this roadmap is built.

The identification of these eight aspirations is community authorship in practice. Cultural preservation protects and preserves both the tangible and intangible aspects of a community's cultural life. Holding space for the past, present and future requires honoring the cultural agency of the people themselves as the primary authority for analysis rather than merely stakeholders consulted after the framework has already been built. By documenting the following eight community aspirations, the strategic pathway forward that will be expressed in Part III is all the more credible because it has a solid basis in the community's own experience and intentions.

Cultural preservation protects and preserves both the tangible and intangible aspects of a community's cultural life.

KEY ASPIRATIONS:

1

REMEMBERED



Penn Square. An Arrival Point During the Great Migration

Tracing *Hough's* Roots

Hough residents have a deep appreciation of the community's remarkable history.

Given this, it comes as no surprise that they aspire for that history to be remembered, not obscured by progress that may be misaligned with community priorities. Hough is one of Cleveland's oldest neighborhoods, established in 1799 and shaped across more than two centuries by migration, various cultural influences, and the organized determination of its residents to define themselves on their own terms. The House of Wills, founded in 1904, became the state's largest Black-owned business. Penn Square is remembered by residents as a welcoming place to arrive in Cleveland by train during the Great Migration. League Park hosted the 1945 Negro World Series champion Cleveland Buckeyes.

Leo's Casino hosted Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, Otis Redding, and Stevie Wonder when no downtown Cleveland venue would. The African American Museum, founded here in 1953, was the first independent African American museum in the United States. The 1966 Uprising produced the Hough Area Development Corporation, one of the nation's first community development corporations, rapidly organized in under a year by residents who refused to wait for institutional permission to rebuild what had been taken. Ironically, this rich historical significance goes virtually unacknowledged in Hough's current built environment and in the way the broader Cleveland community has come to understand this neighborhood.

Remembered

KEY CONSIDERATIONS



Juneteenth 2026. CREDIT: MidTown Cleveland

SHAPED BY EXTERNAL POLICY

Hough's current conditions are the product of federal redlining, urban renewal displacement, and targeted disinvestment — not the failure of the community that survived them.

NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT, LOCALLY UNDER RECOGNIZED

The historical legacy embedded in these streets has no physical expression in the built environment, making the depth of this neighborhood's history invisible to the thousands of people who pass through it daily.

COMMUNITY-LED ACTION AS HISTORICAL PATTERN

From Hough Area Development Corporation in 1967 to the Hough Community Land Trust today, organized self-directed community response has been a consistent feature of this neighborhood across every decade of its modern history.

A NARRATIVE THAT NEEDS RECLAIMING

Online search results, media coverage, and the broader Cleveland civic conversation still center on the 1966 Uprising as the defining story of Hough, obscuring the rich cultural production, extensive entrepreneurial history, and admirable community leadership that preceded it, survived it, and continues today.

HISTORY CARRIED BY THE PEOPLE

The oral traditions, lived memories, and intergenerational knowledge held by Hough's longtime residents represent an irreplaceable body of cultural heritage that exists almost entirely outside any formal preservation infrastructure.



I think history fuels it all. The Hough history fueled the [Hough Community] Land Trust. The Hough history brought us back to the community after it was burned out. Right. So that's what brought us back."

CAROLYN ALLEN,
HOUGH COMMUNITY LAND TRUST,
CORE TEAM ADVISORY

KEY ASPIRATIONS:

2

VISIBLE

Knowing *You've Arrived*

As hinted above, to be remembered, history must be visible. Hough has one of the richest concentrations of Black cultural identity of any neighborhood in Cleveland, yet almost none of it can be seen in the built environment. The small businesses that existed along 66th and Hough Avenue, historic Penn Square, the sonic legacy of Leo's Casino, the baseball history of League Park, the food sovereignty of Chateau Hough, the visual inspiration of Invigorate Gallery, the spiritual architecture of Masjid Bilal and Dunham Avenue Christian Church, and the oral traditions passed on by the families who have lived here for generations contribute to an environment rich in culture. What is missing is the physical expression that makes that cultural identity visible to everyone who passes through. There is nothing on East 75th Street, for example, that marks where Leo's Casino stood. There is no signage or indicator that orients a visitor arriving on the HealthLine toward the valuable cultural assets a block north. This gap between what Hough really is and how Hough reads in the landscape was one of the most important realizations experienced by the original group of Hough residents who visited Memphis, where the local history is still very much alive and visibly celebrated. Hough residents and cultural advocates desire the same for their community: that Hough's status as an important Black Cultural District be unmistakably visible to



everyone who enters it. This is critical to maintaining Hough's authenticity, preventing displacement, and strengthening community pride.

90%

of Hough residents
identify as Black,
representing one
of Cleveland's most
concentrated and culturally
distinct communities

0

**dedicated cultural
wayfinding
installations** currently
orient visitors arriving on
the HealthLine to cultural
assets in the study area

5

**nationally and regionally
significant cultural
landmarks** within the
study area with no
interpretive infrastructure
connecting them

1999

**Rock and Roll Hall
of Fame designation**
of Leo's Casino as a
historic landmark has
no physical marker at
the site

Visible

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

AN UNIDENTIFIED CULTURAL DISTRICT –

Hough is already a cultural district by every meaningful measure. The assets are here, the identity is here, and the community that produced them is here. What is absent is the formal designation and physical expression that make that identity legible to the city around it.

CULTURAL WEALTH WITHOUT CULTURAL VISIBILITY –

The depth of cultural production in this neighborhood has no equivalent expression in the streets, corridors, or public spaces that tens of thousands of people move through daily, making the community's identity invisible to precisely the audience that investment decisions depend on.

IDENTITY AT RISK WHEN IT IS INVISIBLE –

A neighborhood whose cultural identity is not expressed in the built environment is a neighborhood that outside investment can redefine without resistance, because there is nothing in the landscape to tell a developer, a planner, or a newcomer who this place already belongs to.

A COMMUNITY THAT KNOWS –

Across every engagement session, residents described the cultural richness of this neighborhood with specificity, pride, and authority. The gap is not in the community's knowledge of its own identity. It is in the built environment's failure to reflect that knowledge.

THE HEART OF BLACK CLEVELAND –

Multiple residents across multiple engagement formats asked the same question: how do we become the heart of Black Cleveland? The answer begins with making what already exists impossible to miss.



Juneteenth 2026.
CREDIT: MidTown Cleveland

“

As you go deeper into Hough, there is little character. When you come into Hough, you should know you have arrived.”

CAROLYN ALLEN,
HOUGH COMMUNITY LAND TRUST,
CORE TEAM ADVISORY

KEY ASPIRATIONS:

3

CULTURED

A Vibrant Neighborhood

As observed above, a recurring theme in the aspirations Hough residents expressed for the future of their community was the importance of preserving and celebrating Hough's Black cultural identity. The preservation and promotion of art and cultural activities was seen to play a central role in this regard. Many Hough residents described the community as an artistically rich and culturally vibrant neighborhood where art, music, storytelling, gardens, churches, and community landmarks serve as living expressions of Black culture and resilience. However, residents consistently pointed to a lack of public spaces in which the considerable creativity and talent already in Hough can be expressed for all to enjoy. Community members acknowledged that while they regularly spend money on the arts across Cleveland, they would prefer to circulate their dollars in Hough but can't because they don't know what's happening in their own neighborhood.

Beyond being sources of enjoyment, art and cultural activities were also viewed as essential tools for healing,

connection, and intergenerational learning. Community gardens, cultural sites, and creative spaces were identified as valuable assets that contribute to residents' wellbeing and collective memory.

Participants also stressed the need to invest in children and youth through arts programming, creative career pathways, mentorship, gardening, dance, and other cultural experiences. They called for a planning process that is transparent, resident-driven, and inclusive of schools, faith communities, artists, and neighborhood voices. Ultimately, the session reinforced the idea that arts and culture should serve as a foundation for preservation, healing, community ownership, and future development. Such an approach would help ensure that Hough's history and cultural legacy continue to thrive for generations to come.

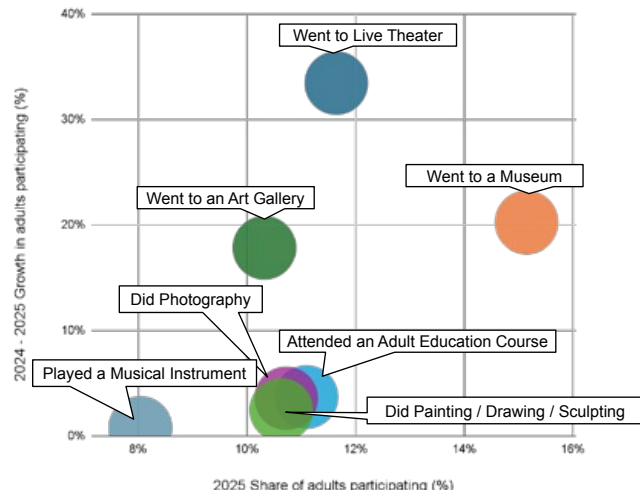
There is already so much culture, creativity and talent in Hough, but it's not visible - residents expressed that art, music, performances are experienced in churches, in homes, or people leave Hough/Cleveland to be able to create - In Memphis, when the space was there for residents to perform, they performed and created anywhere! Our beautifully talented residents began signing, rapping, and reciting poetry everywhere and all the time on this trip - it was incredible to see. Juneteenth in Hough is a great example of space for residents to express themselves artistically - but it doesn't often happen outside of home or church in everyday lives.

Adults in Cleveland are increasingly participating in Arts / Cultural Activities.

A growing number of adults are engaged in arts and cultural activities activities. This includes attending live theater, museum, art galleries, and adult educational courses.

Though traditional, large scale music and entertainment venues are struggling, this suggests an opportunity to capture visitors in more affordable, lower-intensity arts and culture pursuits.

Growth And Share Of Adults Participating In Arts / Cultural Activities In Cleveland Msa, 2024 - 2025



Cultured

KEY CONSIDERATIONS



CULTURE AS THE CONNECTIVE TISSUE OF COMMUNITY —

Art, music, storytelling, gardens, and faith communities are considered by members of the Hough community to be the primary mechanisms through which healing happens, memory is transmitted, and intergenerational connection is maintained.

YOUTH ARE THE NEXT GENERATION OF CULTURE BEARERS —

Children and young people were identified as most at risk of losing connection to Hough's cultural legacy and most in need of investment through arts programming, creative career pathways, and culturally grounded experiences that give them a reason to stay.

RESIDENT-DRIVEN OR NOT AT ALL —

The community was explicit that cultural programming must be transparent, resident-driven, and inclusive of schools, faith communities, artists, and neighborhood voices rather than imported from outside institutions.

PRESERVATION THROUGH PRACTICE —

Arts and culture are being actively produced by the Hough community today. For Hough, then, designation as a Cultural District would not be merely the application of an archival label but the recognition of a spirit of resilience and creativity that is very much alive in the community.



1. Woman Smiling in Memphis. CREDIT: Amber Ford.
2. Young People in Memphis. CREDIT: Amber Ford.
3. Leo's Casino Arts and Music Collaboratory's third annual Funk not Fight Love Fest, June 28, 2026. CREDIT: Linda Berry Wheatt, Facebook.

KEY ASPIRATIONS:

4

ACCESSIBLE

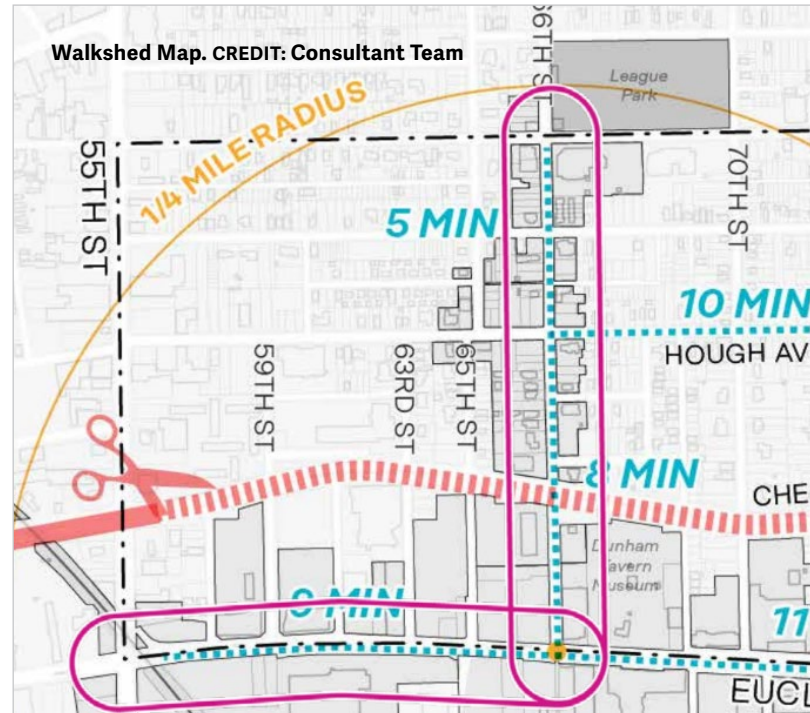
Safe, Walkable Streets



Another aspiration the residents of Hough have for their community is that its physical environment be more accessible to all. This is important both for the residents' own ability to safely and efficiently traverse their neighborhood as well as for visitors to be able to discover the treasures that Hough holds.

Hough is a neighborhood designed for movement, anchored as it is by the HealthLine Bus Rapid Transit along its southern edge and traversed daily by thousands of commuters, clinicians, and students moving between University Circle and downtown. That transit infrastructure represents one of the most significant mobility assets available to any neighborhood on Cleveland's East Side. Opportunities for facilitating this mobility are many, from safety improvements to E. 55th that will provide a bike connection and connect Hough to the lakefront, to Wade Park streetscape initiatives currently underway.

At the same time, much of the built environment within the study area actively discourages the kind of movement between cultural anchors that a functioning district requires. Broken sidewalks, inadequate lighting, and



dangerous crossings were named by residents in every single engagement session as the most immediate barriers to daily life. Chester Avenue carries six lanes of high-speed traffic and has functioned as a physical and social wall between Hough Heights and Hough Harlem for decades, fragmenting a neighborhood that residents understand as one community. That wall falls hardest on the more than one in three households in Hough with no vehicle available, and nearly half of all renter households, for whom safe walkable streets are critical. Residents were clear that the investment arriving in Hough is an opportunity to finally close the gap between the neighborhood's transit assets and its pedestrian reality.

The gap between Hough's transit connectivity and its internal walkability conditions is one of the most concrete and solvable problems in this roadmap.

37%

of households in the study area have no vehicle

88%

tree canopy sites identified along Chester Avenue that remain unplanted

6

lanes of high-speed traffic on Chester Avenue, which carries less traffic than its design anticipates

Accessible

KEY CONSIDERATIONS



Transit Shelter Honoring Stephanie Tubbs-Jones.
CREDIT: Downtown Cleveland

TRANSIT-RICH, PEDESTRIAN-POOR –

Hough sits on one of Cleveland's most significant transit corridors yet has some of the most dangerous pedestrian conditions on the East Side, a contradiction that the district's cultural ambitions cannot absorb.

CHESTER AVENUE, DIVIDING WHAT RESIDENTS KNOW IS ONE COMMUNITY –

Residents characterized Chester Avenue not merely as a street with a pedestrian problem but as a social and cultural "wall" that has not only socially separated Hough Heights from Hough Harlem for decades but also isolates Hough from amenities like grocery stores and health care.

VACANCY SEEN BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE –

The first message the landscape sends to anyone arriving in the district is disinvestment, regardless of the cultural richness that exists there.

A BURDEN FALLING HARDEST ON THOSE WHO BUILT THE MOST –

The 18.3% of Hough residents over 65 and the 20.2% under 18 are the two populations most dependent on a walkable, safely constructed environment and the two populations the current conditions most consistently fail.

MULTIFUNCTION SPACE MISSING –

Residents identified the absence of multifunction gathering spaces as one of the most consistent gaps in the neighborhood's physical landscape.

“

I think what I've noticed as I ride through the neighborhoods on the east side, our east side is so filled with vacant lots that that's where the disconnect comes in when you go. And this is definitely for me, a tale of two cities.”

GWENDOLYN GARTH,
KINGS & QUEENS OF ART, CORE TEAM ADVISORY

KEY ASPIRATIONS:

5

CONNECTED

Bringing *Together* Cultural Assets



Hough's four Cultural Activation Zones — the Penn Square at East 55th, Black Avenue at East 66th, the Leo's Casino Corridor at East 75th, and the residential areas connecting them — hold a concentration of cultural assets that exists nowhere else in Cleveland. The challenge is that these four zones are not yet connected to each other in any meaningful way through the physical landscape. Walking from the Penn Square to Black Avenue, or from Black Avenue to the Leo's Casino Corridor, means traversing stretches of Hough Avenue that offer no community programming, no pedestrian amenities, no sense of arrival, and few reasons to linger. The corridors between the anchors do not function as connectors but feel, instead, like gaps. At the same time, the district sits at the geographic center of one of the most consequential urban infrastructure opportunities in Cleveland's modern history. The Midline greenway will extend trail connections along East 55th and East 66th, while the Superior Midway introduces a protected bicycle and pedestrian connection linking downtown Cleveland to the district's western edge. The HealthLine continues to provide high-frequency transit



Family Fun Zone. CREDIT: NewTown Macon

service along Euclid Avenue. Taken together, these investments position Hough within one of the region's most significant emerging mobility networks.

Hough is disconnected in another important sense as well: digitally. Currently, roughly only a quarter of Hough households have reliable internet access, whereas the citywide average is over three-quarters. This limited digital connectivity restricts the residents' access to not only information but to opportunities for work, study, networking, and much more.

4

Cultural Activation Zones

with no continuous pedestrian programming or amenities

6

major external infrastructure investments converging around the study area

2.5M

annual visitors to University Circle, the district's closest institutional neighbor, who do not currently route through Hough

1

east-west Rapid Transit Authority bus route — Hough Avenue — connecting all four Cultural Activation Zones, with minimal pedestrian infrastructure alongside it

Connected

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

EXTERNALLY WELL-CONNECTED, INTERNALLY FRAGMENTED –

Hough sits at the intersection of four major regional infrastructure investments and has internal conditions that make movement between its own cultural anchors feel unsafe and purposeless.

INEFFECTIVE CORRIDORS –

In a cultural district, the streets between destinations are as important as the destinations themselves. Hough's corridors currently fail to serve as effective connectors, undermining the district's ability to operate as a coherent place rather than a collection of isolated assets.

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE CREATING OPPORTUNITY AND PRESSURE SIMULTANEOUSLY –

The Opportunity Corridor, Midline, Superior Midway, and East Side Housing Innovation Zone (Tax Increment Financing District) position Hough at the center of a regional investment moment that will generate new movement through the district regardless of whether the district is prepared to receive it.

UPPER HOUGH AND LOWER HOUGH DIVIDED –

The physical and social distance between the East 55th corridor and the East 75th corridor reflects a longstanding divide between two sub-geographies that residents understand as one connected neighborhood but experience as two.

UNDERUTILIZED CULTURAL DISTRICT GATEWAY –

Carrying over two million passengers annually, and one of the busiest transit lines in Cleveland, the HealthLine (Bus Rapid Transit) passes through the district's southern edge without any orientation toward the cultural assets immediately to the north, making this one of the most accessible yet most underused entry points in the district.



Core Team Members at E. 66th Street.
CREDIT: MidTown Cleveland

“

Increasing connectivity, improving infrastructure. That's the one that's huge for me. My wife and I walk the neighborhood.”

KEITH BENFORD,
BLACK AVENUE CORRIDOR,
CORE TEAM ADVISORY

KEY ASPIRATIONS:

6

INTERGENERATIONAL

Spanning Generations

Hough is simultaneously one of Cleveland's oldest and youngest communities, with 18.3% of its population over 65 and 20.2% under 18, making it a neighborhood where the transfer of cultural knowledge between generations is both urgent and endangered.

The elders who hold the living memory of League Park, Leo's Casino, the Uprising, and the decades of organizing that followed are irreplaceable to the district's identity. The young people who are growing up in Hough right now are the generation that will either carry that identity forward or leave in search of a neighborhood that has something better for them. Both populations are currently underserved by the district's physical and programmatic landscape. Once young people reach eighth grade, as one resident stated bluntly, "the neighborhood stops caring." The gathering spaces, programming infrastructure, and paid jobs that would give youth a reason to stay are largely absent. At the same time, the 18.3% of residents over 65 who built this community face an environment that makes daily life increasingly difficult without safe crossings, accessible sidewalks, and spaces designed for people who cannot drive. The distance between these two generations is not inevitable, however. It is the product of a neighborhood that has not had the resources to invest in the infrastructure that connects them.



Fatima Kids Club.

CREDIT: Catholic Charities Diocese of Cleveland

18.3%
of Hough residents
are over 65,
compared to 16.9%
citywide — the elders
who built and held this
community together

20.2%
of Hough residents
are under 18 —
the generation that will
determine whether what
was built here endures

40 YRS
is the median age
in Hough, reflecting
a community that spans
multiple generations
with different and often
unmet needs

9,878
total residents,
in one of Cleveland's
most intergenerational
neighborhoods, with
infrastructure currently
designed for neither
end of the age spectrum

Intergenerational KEY CONSIDERATIONS



Memphis Study Tour: CREDIT: MidTown Cleveland

A LIVING ARCHIVE THAT IS AGING –

The oral historians, culture bearers, and longtime stewards who carry the deepest knowledge of Hough's identity are the neighborhood's most time-sensitive resource, but there is currently no formal infrastructure to capture, protect, or transmit the knowledge they hold.

YOUTH WITH UNTAPPED POTENTIAL –

Residents named the absence of dedicated youth programming, paid roles, and spaces designed for young people as a consistent driver of disengagement, particularly after middle school, and a reason young people leave the area.

ELDERS WHO BUILT BUT DESERVE BETTER –

The residents over 65 who held Hough together through its hardest decades face a built environment with broken sidewalks, unsafe crossings, and gathering spaces that are often inaccessible to people who cannot drive.

INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTION, A CULTURAL PRESERVATION STRATEGY –

The transfer of cultural knowledge across generations through oral history, craft, tradition, memory, and place-based identity is the mechanism through which a cultural district survives beyond its founding generation.

TWO HOUGHS, ONE COMMUNITY –

The divide between Upper Hough and Lower Hough is partly geographical and partly generational, with different populations concentrated in different parts of the study area and insufficient infrastructure connecting their daily lives and shared cultural identity.

3

is the average household size, reflecting extended family networks and intergenerational living arrangements that are a cultural asset in themselves



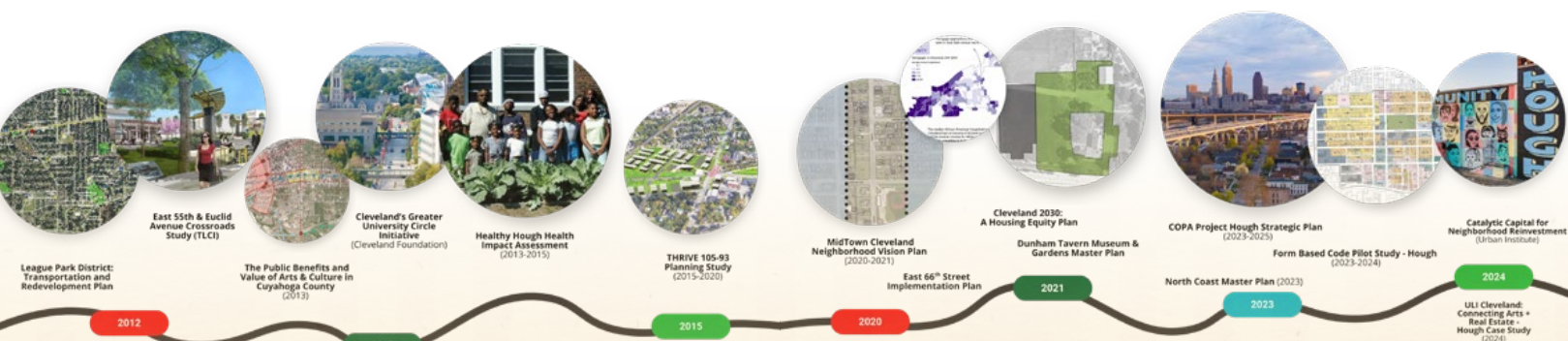
Once young people reach eighth grade, the neighborhood stops caring.”

ALANA,
HOUGH RESIDENT,
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPANT

KEY ASPIRATIONS:

7

ACCOUNTABLE



15 Years of Extensive Planning

Hough has been studied and discussed for over fifteen years.

The East 66th Street TLCI Implementation Plan, the Cleveland 2030 Housing Equity Plan, and the MidTown Vision Plan each produced rigorous findings and sound recommendations. What Hough has so far lacked, however, is a neighborhood-wide governing board with the authority to coordinate action among stakeholders, partner with institutions, and ensure that the most promising recommendations are implemented. Without such a governing board, organizations operating in Hough have worked in institutional isolation from each other, with no shared directory, means of coordination, or

common communication platform. Moreover, institutional partners have made consequential decisions about the district's future without any formal accountability to the community most affected. A governing board can bring both the needed alignment and accountability. Such a board will also allow the Hough community to hold itself accountable for its own future: Will Hough stand by while good plans that could benefit the neighborhood continue sitting on the shelf, or will community members enable a representative board to take action to see those plans implemented?

10+

major planning processes
over 15 years
producing sound
recommendations

33

residents who expressed interest
in governance roles
during Hough Cultural Preservation
Project engagement, with 18 willing
to serve in leadership capacity

0

neighborhood-wide
coordinating
entities
with authority over
district-level decisions

Accountable

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

PLANNING WITHOUT GOVERNANCE, FINDINGS WITHOUT IMPLEMENTATION –

Every prior planning process in Hough produced accurate findings and appropriate recommendations. However, without a governing entity representing the Hough community, there has been no way to make those recommendations actionable, permanent, and accountable to the community.

THE SAME PEOPLE CARRYING THE LOAD –

A core group of fewer than ten residents has represented the community across multiple planning processes without compensation, coordination support, or any mechanism to convert their participation into binding authority. This is a structural failure, not a community one.

INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS OPERATING WITHOUT A SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK –

The organizations and institutions working in Hough carry out significant and valuable work. The lack of formal mechanisms for coordination, transparency, or community accountability, however, has produced duplication of results, gaps in the same, and decisions that residents learned about only after they had already been made.

READY TO GOVERN –

Thirty-three residents stepped forward during the Hough Cultural Preservation Project process to express interest in governing roles. The community's capacity for leadership is not in question. What is missing is the structure that would formalize and resource that leadership.

NEIGHBORHOOD-WIDE COMMUNICATION –

Following the April 2026 town hall, multiple developers contacted MidTown Cleveland and expressing interest in the district. Now is the time to bring residents and cultural institutions together through a neighborhood-wide communication platform that provides residents the information and tools to guide the investments that are coming.



There is nothing more special about other neighborhoods than Hough. We just need our community to feel that way about our neighborhood again.”

ANTUNESIA HARRIS,
INVIGORATE GALLERY,
CORE TEAM ADVISORY

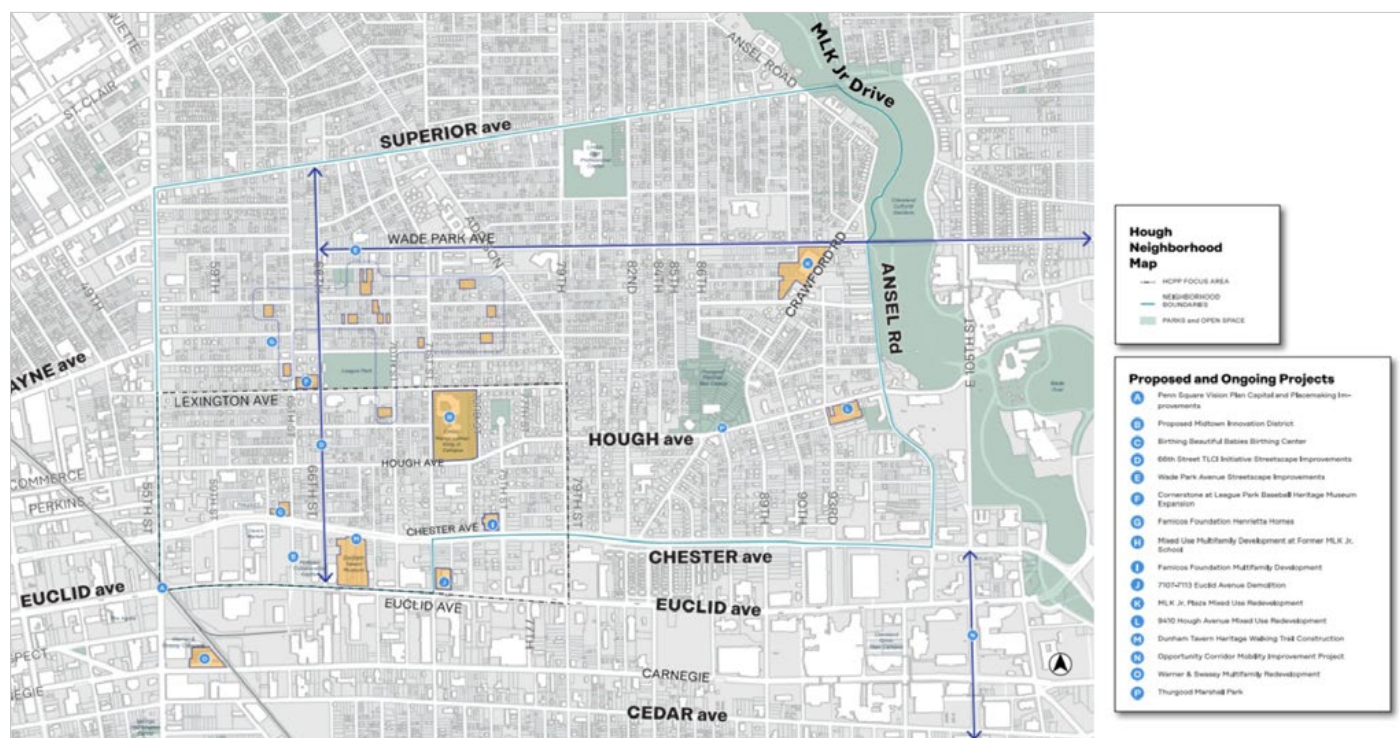
KEY ASPIRATIONS:

8

INVESTED

Massive Investment Potential

Hough sits at the center of the most significant convergence of public and private investment on Cleveland's East Side by community investors in generations, and the community's capacity to direct that investment toward its own residents has never been more urgent. The Western Reserve Land Conservancy has received \$10 million in funding from the Bezos Earth Fund to activate 600 vacant lots in the study area. The Hough Community Land Trust has a \$1 million commitment. Black Avenue streetscape construction will begin soon along



CREDIT: HCPP Consultant Team

476%

property value appreciation, in the study area between 2010 and 2022, averaging 34% annually

\$10M

in funding from Bezos Earth Fund targeting 600 vacant lots within the cultural district footprint

\$1M

Cleveland Foundation commitment to Hough Community Land Trust capitalization

\$41.9M

to \$118.7 million projected projected thirty-year East Side Housing Innovation Zone, a proposed Tax Increment Financing District for the Hough and St. Clair Superior district

Invested

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

E. 66th Street. The Martin Luther King High School site redevelopment represents the largest single development in Hough in a century. The Midline and Superior Midway are collectively reshaping the mobility infrastructure surrounding the district, increasing access between Hough, downtown, University Circle, and the broader region. Mayor Bibb's proposed Housing Innovation Zone, an East Side Tax Increment Financing District, projects between \$41.9 million and \$118.7 million in redirected public and capital investment over thirty years across Hough and St. Clair Superior.

Yet, Zip-code-based lending discrimination cuts Black entrepreneurs and homeowners off from the capital they need to participate in the investment wave arriving around them. As Antunesia Harris stated, lenders simply do not finance in Hough's zip code. Drew Lucco added that it is easier to find a lender for seventeen million dollars than for five hundred thousand. The gap between the investment arriving in Hough and the capital available to Hough's resident investors is the defining economic condition of this planning moment.

25.1%
homeownership
rate in Hough,
compared to 40.9%
citywide, reflecting both
the legacy of redlining
and the urgency of anti-
displacement investment

INVESTMENT ARRIVING FASTER THAN THE COMMUNITY'S CAPACITY TO DIRECT IT –

The scale and pace of investment converging on Hough is without recent precedent on Cleveland's east side. The governance structures, financial tools, and community ownership mechanisms needed to direct that investment toward residents are still being built.

PROPERTY VALUE APPRECIATION, A DISPLACEMENT ALARM –

A 476% appreciation rate in a neighborhood where homeownership is 25% is not evidence of neighborhood health. It is evidence of speculative pressure building against a community with limited tools to resist it.

CAPITAL ACCESS REMAINING STRUCTURALLY BLOCKED –

Zip-code-based lending discrimination in Hough is a documented practice. Black entrepreneurs and homeowners, Hough's resident investors, are being cut off from conventional financing in a neighborhood where tens of millions of institutional dollars are actively flowing, producing a gap that no amount of investment will resolve without deliberate intervention.

A COMMUNITY WITH DEMONSTRATED ENTREPRENEURIAL CAPACITY –

Chateau Hough, Invigorate Gallery, and the 5.6% self-employment rate in the study area demonstrate that Hough's entrepreneurial culture is alive and active. What is missing is the capital access, business infrastructure, and procurement alignment that would allow that culture to compound.

WEALTH GENERATED HERE MUST STAY HERE –

Economic activity in and around Hough has historically generated wealth for institutions and investors outside the neighborhood. Without the tools to require local circulation of investment dollars, Cultural District designation risks becoming one more cycle in which Hough provides the cultural identity and someone else captures the economic benefit.

FROM COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS TO ACTION

To summarize, the values Hough residents hold are reflected in eight clear aspirations they have expressed for the future of their community:

- 1 **REMEMBERED**
that the neighborhood's rich history **would be remembered,**
- 2 **VISIBLE**
that its unique cultural identity **would be clearly visible,**
- 3 **CULTURED**
that Hough's art and cultural life **would be supported and celebrated,**
- 4 **ACCESSIBLE**
that all areas of the community **would be accessible and movement safe,**
- 5 **CONNECTED**
that the physical and social connections between these areas **would be strengthened,**
- 6 **INTERGENERATIONAL**
that the different generations within the community **would all be equally served,**
- 7 **ACCOUNTABLE**
that decision-makers and institutions **would maintain accountability for their decisions, and**
- 8 **INVESTED**
that investment **would create tangible benefits for residents.**

Taken together, these aspirations form a community-defined vision for Hough's future. They describe what residents value as well as what must be true for cultural preservation, neighborhood revitalization, and equitable development to advance together.

Part III translates these community-defined aspirations into a Cultural District Vision, organized through a set of implementation pillars and strategies designed to align investment, policy, partnerships, and action around the priorities that were identified during the engagement process.



Cultural *District Vision*

Strategies for a
Brighter Future

PART III

PILLARS OF CULTURAL PRESERVATION

Cultural preservation is the practice of sustaining the conditions under which a community continues to produce, transmit, and govern its cultural life across generations.

In Hough, that practice depends on four pillars that were identified directly on the basis of community voices:

People

WHO WE ARE

HOUGH IS SPEAKING.

Center residents voices with:

- Connectivity
- Identity
- Storytelling

Place

WHERE WE GATHER

HOUGH IS HOME.

Build spaces that honor community with:

- Placekeeping
- Investment
- Corridors

Power

WHAT WE SHAPE

HOUGH IS RISING.

Work together to decide what comes next with:

- Governance
- Ownership
- Policy

Prosperity

HOW WE THRIVE

HOUGH IS BUILDING.

Create systems where growth stays in Hough, with:

- Commerce
- Business
- Wealth Creation

PEOPLE centers on the community’s primary resource, namely, its residents, whose identity and knowledge constitute the district’s cultural authority.

PLACE refers to the physical and spatial landscape that may either reflect or erase that community’s presence, depending on how it is utilized and developed.

POWER alludes to the governance and ownership structures that determine who is accountable for the district’s future.

PROSPERITY establishes the economic conditions that determine whether the cultural production taking place in Hough generates wealth and other benefits for the people who live there.

THESE FOUR PILLARS ARE INTERRELATED: a community of people displaced from its place loses essential conditions for the preservation of its culture; a community without the power to govern itself loses influence over what that place becomes; and a community without prosperity loses the capacity to sustain either its people or its place.

Each of the four pillars gives rise to a set of proposed strategies for realizing the potential of that pillar in the Hough community. The total 18 strategies, described in more detail in the sections below, are summarized in the following table.

PILLARS STRATEGIES AT A GLANCE

Each of the four pillars gives rise to a set of proposed strategies for realizing the potential of that pillar in the Hough community. The total 18 strategies, described in more detail in the sections below, are summarized in the following table.

18 STRATEGIES AT A GLANCE			
People	Place	Power	Prosperity
PE-01: Build Cultural Narrative	PL-01: Hough Avenue as Neighborhood Connector	PW-01: Community Land Ownership	PR-01: Commercial Activity
PE-02: Youth as Decision-Makers	PL-02: Chester Avenue Vibrancy	PW-02: Establish the governing body	PR-02: Expand Capital Access
PE-03: Anti-Displacement Preconditions	PL-03: Strengthen District Identity	PW-03: Structure Wealth-Retaining Partnerships	PR-03: Develop Business Pipelines
PE-04: Coordinated Community Communications	PL-04: Reinvest in Safe Streets	PW-04: Build Organizational Capacity for Small-Scale Organizations	PR-04: Stabilize Homeowners
	PL-05: Convert Vacant Land		PR-05: Emerging Investments

PILLAR STRATEGIES

People

WHO WE ARE

Hough’s residents are the stewards of this district’s past, present, and future. The People pillar reinforces the structures that ensure community stewardship remains visible, influential, and enduring as new investment reshapes the neighborhood.

This pillar builds the organizational infrastructure, cultural visibility, and community-wide coordination needed to make resident leadership durable and self-sustaining. The concrete People-oriented strategies presented in the table below will strengthen resident self-governance, cultural representation, youth engagement, and anti-displacement protections. This coordinated effort will advance a narrative that reflects Hough’s history and aspirations while countering longstanding mischaracterizations. Paid opportunities for young people will create pathways

into cultural stewardship and district self-governance, ensuring the next generation participates in shaping the neighborhood’s future. Anti-displacement measures will safeguard the families whose long-term commitment sustained Hough through decades of disinvestment. A coordinated communications and engagement framework will align residents, institutions, and community organizations around shared information, shared accountability, and a shared vision for the district. This will ensure that Hough’s transformation is led by the people who call it home.

People STRATEGIES

PE-01

Build and Amplify a Resident-Led Cultural Narrative for Hough

Community context: Residents consistently described the gap between how Hough is seen from the outside and how it is lived from the inside. External perceptions perpetuate stereotypes while community voices remain without platform or resources to counter these mischaracterizations.

- Develop and amplify resident-led stories, histories, and identities that counter negative external perceptions of Hough, build pride in the community, and raise the neighborhood’s profile through intentional cultural marketing, events, and digital presence.
- Launch resident storytelling campaign and Hough Heritage profile series with Signal Cleveland Documenters.
 - Define Hough brand identity and visual language; launch @HoughCleveland digital presence.
 - Build and maintain a community directory of all organizations, programs, and resources.

Position Young People as Decision-Makers and Paid Cultural Ambassadors

Community context: Engagement processes in Hough have consistently failed to include youth as actual decision-makers. Young people in this neighborhood receive Hough's cultural memory and have the highest stake in what the community becomes, yet they have been the least resourced participants in any roadmapping process.

PE-02

Embed youth voices and formal decision-making authority into all governing body structures, programming, and placemaking initiatives. Create paid ambassador roles tied to Cultural District activation.

- Design a paid Youth Ambassador role and leadership pathway; partner with MidTown Cleveland and local community organizations.
- Reserve formal seats on the Governing Board for youth representatives within 18 months.
- Develop a paid intergenerational mentorship pipeline.
- Establish a connection with the Resiliency Corps.

Formalize Anti-Displacement Protections as a Precondition for All Investment

Community context: Every resident who participated in engagement sessions named displacement as the defining threat to the neighborhood's future. The pattern is clear: revitalization without protection means the people who built the neighborhood leave before they get the chance to benefit.

PE-03

Protect current residents from displacement pressure caused by rising property values. An Anti-Displacement Fund should be operational in advance of large-scale physical investments. Partner to activate community partners work on anti-displacement strategies as a Year 1 priority before large-scale investment begins.

- Partner to activate community partners work on anti-displacement strategies as a Year 1 priority before large-scale investment begins.
- Expand Hough Community Land Trust capacity; pursue right-of-first-refusal on all Land Bank sales within the district boundary (balanced with Tax Increment Financing and Bezos housing/greenspace strategies).
- Include an anti-displacement clause in all Cultural Compact agreement with partners to help support the retention of the district's character.

Establish a Coordinated Community-wide Communications System

Community context: Organizations in Hough have relied on the volunteer service of the same ten generous people to carry out fifteen years of engagement. They have worked in isolation without a shared directory, no coordination table, and no common platform, a situation that has unavoidably led to duplicated efforts.

PE-04

Create a verified registry of residents, businesses, and non-governmental organizations, then coordinate existing programming to eliminate duplication by establishing a shared digital/communication platform and monthly coordination table.

- Establish a monthly Hough organizational coordination table with formalized structure, and rotating facilitation.
- Develop a shared digital platform: unified newsletter, events calendar, resource hub, and hire part-time communications coordinator to manage.
- Map programming duplication across all active Hough-serving non-governmental organizations; publish consolidation recommendations.

STRATEGY IN FOCUS

People

Establish a Coordinated Community-wide Communications System (PE-04)



Timeline:
0–6 months

Create a verified registry of residents, businesses, and non-governmental organizations, then coordinate existing programming to eliminate duplication by establishing a shared digital/communication platform and monthly coordination table.

PE-04 ACTIONS:

1. Establish a monthly Hough organizational coordination table with formalized structure, and rotating facilitation
2. Develop a shared digital platform: unified newsletter, events calendar, resource hub, and hire part-time communications coordinator to manage
3. Map programming duplication across all active Hough-serving non-governmental organizations; publish consolidation recommendations.

WHY IT MIRRORS HOUGH.

Newham's presenting problem was identical to Hough's that PE-04 is meant to address: fragmentation. Teams across the borough were using multiple tools without a central system to coordinate efforts or share insights. Their platform became the central hub for both internal departments and resident-facing engagement, including community assemblies and participatory budgeting. Hough's governing body can build the same architecture from the first month of operation.

PRECEDENT IN PRACTICE

London Borough of Newham, England
People Powered Places program,
powered by Go Vocal
2018–PRESENT

One of London's largest and most diverse boroughs built a centralized community engagement platform that replaced fragmented, siloed tools across departments. Their Queen's Market Good Growth Program, a £4.1 million neighborhood planning initiative, used Go Vocal to engage residents in land use, affordable workspace priorities, and public space design. The platform translated materials into Gujarati, Bengali, and Urdu to reach communities traditional processes consistently missed.

5X Increase in resident engagements after centralizing to one platform

89% of resident felt more connected to their local area

82% felt greater say in how neighborhood funding was allocated

Place

WHERE WE GATHER

Physical investment within the Hough Cultural District will strengthen safety and the sense of belonging and connection between residents, while at the same time making the neighborhood's cultural identity visible in its streets, public spaces, and built environment.

The Place pillar focuses on the physical conditions that shape daily life and community experience. The Place-oriented strategies presented below will strengthen connections between the Cultural Activation Zones, transform Hough Avenue into a more active neighborhood corridor, and reimagine Chester Avenue as a unifying civic spine rather than a longstanding barrier within the community. Investments in wayfinding, public art, streetscape improvements, and gateway features will make Hough's cultural identity visible to residents

and visitors alike. Public land and vacant parcels will become platforms for gathering, cultural expression, recreation, and community ownership, reinforcing the neighborhood's character while supporting future growth.

Together, these improvements will create a physical environment that communicates safety, belonging, and connection, ensuring that every investment contributes to a more vibrant, culturally grounded Hough.

“Everybody knows that Hough is filled with kids that just want to have fun and enjoy themselves. I like that we are trying to create a space for them.”

MIRACLE CALHOUN,
HOUGH YOUTH COUNCIL, CORE TEAM ADVISORY

Place STRATEGIES

PL-01

Transform Hough Avenue into the Neighborhood Connector

Community context: Hough Avenue is the only east-west Rapid Transit Authority bus route through the neighborhood, spanning all four Cultural Activation Zones. Residents described Hough Avenue's anchor businesses as sources of pride but also mentioned how the corridor fails to serve as an engaging connector between the neighborhood's cultural anchors. Hough Avenue runs alongside the highest concentration of vacant lots in the study area. Residents walk it every day and feel its neglect acutely.

Transform Hough Avenue from a pass-through corridor into the neighborhood's primary east-west connector and a destination in itself. Strengthen transit and pedestrian connectivity along the route and activate the corridor through coordinated programming, commercial activation supporting local businesses, and public realm improvements.

- Commission a Hough Avenue corridor study and complete pedestrian safety audit within 12 months.
- Activate 3 to 5 vacant lots for pop-up programming, which should include weekend markets and community events in Year 1.
- Apply for Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) federal grants; advocate for Hough Avenue as the next city corridor priority after Wade Park Avenue.

PL-02

Create Vibrancy along Chester Avenue

Community context: Chester Avenue came up in every single engagement session as a barrier that separates Hough from employment opportunities, mass transit, and amenities like grocery stores and health care in MidTown. Moreover, community members described the street as one you cross quickly, not one you feel comfortable strolling along.

Address the physical and social separation caused by Chester Avenue through traffic calming measures, streetscape improvements such as tree canopy restoration, and long-term reconstruction — healing the divide between Hough and MidTown.

- Deploy quick-build traffic calming at the highest-crash intersections.
- Map 135 to 140 missing tree canopy sites identified along Chester Avenue.
- Install street murals and public art at Chester/75th and other key pedestrian crossings.

PL-03

Strengthen District Identity

Community context: Residents described wanting to see themselves in the physical environment. The three corridor nodes carry deep community memory but no shared visual language that announces them as a destination.

Invest in district visual identity — wayfinding, gateway markers, mural programming, and interpretive elements — across the East 55th, East 66th, and East 75th corridor nodes.

- Activate 35 vacant lots on East 66th Street for pop-up and temporary cultural programming.
- Commission a broader Hough Cultural District visual identity design system and identify opportunities for immediate roll-out (including branded E. 66th streetscape amenities)
- Install Hough-centric wayfinding, gateway markers, mural programming, interpretive elements, and district signage throughout all three corridors.
- Establish East 75th Avenue as an entertainment and venue corridor anchored by Leo's Arts and Music Collaboratory.

PL-04

Rebuild the Pedestrian Network to Support Safe, Walkable Streets

Community context: Residents identified physical safety as a precondition for everything else. Broken sidewalks, missing lighting, dangerous intersections, and absent bus shelters came up in every engagement session as the most immediate barriers to daily life in Hough.

Remediate the highest-crash intersections, repair broken sidewalks, and add pedestrian-scale amenities as the physical foundation for all other place investments.

- Conduct a corridor lighting audit in the study area and prioritize installation of pedestrian-scale lighting.
- Enroll priority routes in the 50/50 Sidewalk Repair Program; install community-designed bus shelter art at all Hough and Chester corridor stops.
- Engage Resiliency Corps as front-line stewards for tree maintenance and corridor monitoring.

PL-05

Convert Vacant Land into Community-Owned Cultural and Economic Assets

Community context: Hough has 936 vacant lots representing 30% of the study area, a direct consequence of systematic redlining from 1940. Residents considered these lots to be opportunities with untapped potential — future markets, gardens, and gathering spaces — and they identified community ownership as the condition that makes that potential real.

Transfer underutilized City Land Bank parcels to Hough Community Land Trust ownership and convert them into gardens, event spaces, pocket parks, and mixed-use developments that communicate cultural identity. NOTE: Parcels secured through PW-01 land acquisition are the primary source for this strategy.

- Negotiate Land Bank interim use agreements; activate first 3 lots within 12 months.
- Activate funding awarded by the Bezos Earth Fund with paid Resiliency Corps stewards.
- Apply Nature-Based Solutions Pattern Book with cultural identity mandate: murals, culturally significant roadmappings, community-designed furnishings.

STRATEGY IN FOCUS

Place

Strengthen District Identity (PL-03)



Timeline:
0–24 months

Invest in district visual identity — wayfinding, gateway markers, mural programming, and interpretive elements — across the East 55th, East 66th, and East 75th corridor nodes.

PE-03 ACTIONS:

1. Activate 35 vacant lots on East 66th Street for pop-up and temporary cultural programming.
2. Commission a broader Hough Cultural District district identity design system, including gateway markers, street signage (banners, utility box wraps, a series of historical installations), and mural program throughout all three corridors.
3. Establish East 75th Avenue as an entertainment and venue corridor anchored by Leo's Arts and Music Collaboratory.

WHY IT MIRRORS HOUGH.

Hough is experiencing the same structural challenge as faced by Crenshaw: major regional infrastructure investment impacting a historically Black neighborhood without a visible cultural identity in place. Destination Crenshaw's core argument was that transit investment could either erase a neighborhood or offer it an opportunity to announce itself, depending on whether the community moves first. PL-03 is Hough's move. The same New Markets Tax Credit instrument that funded \$30M of Destination Crenshaw is available in Cleveland.

PRECEDENT IN PRACTICE

Destination Crenshaw, Los Angeles
1.3-mile open-air outdoor museum
Crenshaw Boulevard
2020–PRESENT

When the Metro K Line threatened to displace Crenshaw's historically Black commercial corridor in Los Angeles, community leaders seized the transit investment as an opportunity to make cultural permanence physical and visible. Destination Crenshaw became a \$100 million, 1.3-mile open-air museum along Crenshaw Boulevard — including more than 100 commissioned works by Black artists along with gateway markers, pocket parks, wayfinding, and interpretive elements that turned infrastructure disruption into the most concentrated expression of Black cultural identity in Los Angeles. The design was led by Perkins & Will, the same firm behind the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture.

\$100M total investment in corridor identity, public art, & placemaking

100+ works by Black artists commissioned along the 1.3-mile corridor

\$30M in New Markets Tax Credits — a financing tool actively used in Cleveland

Power

WHAT WE SHAPE

It is essential that a governance framework be established to ensure Hough's residents have a coordinated voice and vision for the future of the neighborhood.

This pillar establishes the structures necessary for residents to guide the neighborhood's future with clarity and accountability. Central to this work is the creation of a majority-resident governing body responsible for stewarding the district's vision, partnerships, and resources. The governing body is the institutional vehicle through which every other strategy outlined in this Roadmap is implemented, resourced, and sustained. The various strategies within the Power pillar presented below will strengthen community ownership through

the Hough Community Land Trust and other shared-equity models, expand organizational capacity among neighborhood-based institutions, and establish Cultural Compacts — written agreements that clarify expectations between residents, anchor institutions, and development partners. Together, these tools will create a foundation from which community priorities can be translated into lasting action, even as leadership, investment, and market conditions evolve.

“We have been seeing finances go outside of our community and around our community. They built downtown, then they built University Circle — and they just jumped over MidTown. This is big for us. We want to make a statement here.”

RON FUQUA,
LEO'S CASINO ART AND MUSIC COLLABORATIVE,
CORE TEAM ADVISORY

Power STRATEGIES

PW-01

Secure Permanent Community Ownership Through Strategic Land Acquisition

Community context: Community ownership of land is the most durable anti-displacement tool available. Residents know that who owns the land determines who benefits from investment. New investment is most sustainable when it leads to new opportunities for the people already here.

Acquire strategic Land Bank sites within the Cultural District and transition them to community ownership through the Hough Community Land Trust or shared-equity models. NOTE: Acquired parcels serve as the primary land source for PL-05 open space conversion.

- Map all Land Bank parcels by node; identify the top 20 priority sites adjacent to Black Avenue, 75th Street, and Hough Avenue.
- Negotiate Land Bank transfer agreements; develop first 5 sites using community-defined design standards and community developer preference.
- Explore commercial property community ownership structures so businesses own — not just rent — their spaces in the district.

PW-02

Establish a Governing Board with Majority Resident Control

Community context: There is currently no neighborhood-wide entity with the authority to coordinate action on behalf of Hough as a whole. Grass-top foundations and Community Development Corporations hold power without formal accountability to residents. The governing body changes that.

Create a formal governing body with majority resident control and binding authority over the Cultural District to plan implementation, identity, resource allocation, and project coordination.

- Convene founding governance design session within 6 months of Hough Cultural Preservation Project Roadmap completion.
- Draft governing body articles of incorporation and governance charter with 51% resident board composition as a non-negotiable requirement.
- Develop Cultural Compacts between the governing body and each institutional partner to specify each partner's commitments and to ensure transparency and alignment with the district's cultural values.
- Secure a first-year governing body operating budget of \$150,000–\$250,000 through philanthropic support, with MidTown Cleveland serving as fiscal agent during the governing body's formation period.

PW-03

Structure Partnerships to Generate, Retain, and Circulate Wealth Within Hough

Community context: Anchor institutions sit at Hough's boundary, but their economic benefits don't circulate within the neighborhood. Residents identified this proximity gap consistently.

Leverage anchor institutions to initiate community wealth building strategies that generate, retain, and circulate wealth within Hough through procurement commitments, hiring pipelines, and shared-equity enterprises.

- Establish quarterly partnership coordination table within 12 months, chaired by a representative of the governing body.
- Engage local partners on the vision for Leo's Casino Arts and Music Collaboratory.
- Explore Buy the Block resident investment model with partnering organizations.

PW-04

Build Organizational Capacity for Small-Scale Organizations

Community context: Hough's community organizations carry decades of resident trust that no outside contractor can replicate, but they are chronically under-resourced.

Provide back-office shared services and cohort-based capacity building so Hough-based organizations can operate sustainably and compete for administrative and operational funding.

- Conduct capacity and feasibility assessments for Invigorate Gallery, Chateau Hough, and other small-scale developers.
- Establish a Nonprofit Advantage fiscal sponsorship partnership; distribute first round of organizational capacity grants.
- Design and pilot a participatory budgeting process for governing body discretionary funds.

STRATEGY IN FOCUS

Power

Establish a Governing Board with Majority Resident Control (PW-02)



Timeline:
0–18 months

Create a formal governing body with majority resident control and binding authority over Cultural District resource allocation.

PW-02 ACTIONS:

1. Convene founding governance design session within 6 months of Hough Cultural Preservation Project Roadmap completion.
2. Draft governing body articles of incorporation and governance charter with 51% resident board composition as a non-negotiable requirement.
3. Develop a Cultural Compact as a formal accountability agreement between the governing body and all strategic partners.
4. Secure a first-year governing body operating budget of \$150,000–\$250,000 through philanthropic support.

WHY IT MIRRORS HOUGH.

The Black Cultural Zone and the Hough Cultural District arrive at the same moment from the same conditions. Both are historically Black neighborhoods facing displacement pressure from multiple directions, both hold extraordinary cultural assets that have never been formally recognized or protected, and both have communities that see the value in coordinating in partnership with institutions. The BCZ's sequencing, Collaborative first, CDC five years later, validates the HCPP's insistence that the CPO begin as a community governing body, in partnership with MidTown Cleveland, before it becomes a development entity. The 168-partner governance network BCZ built is the proof that community authority can scale without losing its accountability to the people it represents. The CPO is Hough's version of what East Oakland built in 2014, and the strategies that follow are the work that the governing body makes possible.

PRECEDENT IN PRACTICE

📍 **Black Cultural Zone Community Development Corporation, East Oakland, CA | 2014 - Present**

When gentrification began accelerating through East Oakland in the early 2010s, a coalition of Black residents, cultural workers, faith institutions, and grassroots organizations did not wait for a planning process to protect what they had built. Convened in 2014 by Eastside Arts Alliance, the East Oakland Black Cultural Zone Collaborative designated a 50-square-block area as the Black Cultural Zone, governed entirely by a community-led body committed to keeping Black residents, businesses, and culture bearers in place. It is important to note that the Collaborative did not begin as a CDC, but operated for five years as a coalition, building governance capacity and community trust before incorporating the Black Cultural Zone Community Development Corporation in 2019 as its implementing arm. That strategy, community governance first, formal legal entity second, is precisely the logic the HCPP applies to the CPO. BCZ has since paid more than \$800,000 into East Oakland through stewards, businesses, and partnerships, across a network of 168 partner organizations.

50+ square blocks

Designated as the Black Cultural Zone by a community-led Collaborative formed in 2014, with a CDC incorporated five years later only after the governance foundation was in place

168 partner organizations

Anchored in the BCZ Collaborative including 106 General Assembly members, which is the governance infrastructure that makes community authority more than advisory

\$800,000+

Invested directly into East Oakland through stewards, businesses, and collaborative partnerships in a single year, with 17,000+ community members reached through the Community Stewards program between July 2024 and June 2025



Community Member Voting. CREDIT: Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative.

Prosperity

HOW WE THRIVE

The wealth generated by the Hough Cultural District will strengthen the people, businesses, and institutions that have sustained the neighborhood through decades of change.

The Prosperity pillar focuses on ensuring that new investment creates meaningful opportunity for existing residents, entrepreneurs, homeowners, and cultural workers. The strategies for this pillar presented below will support Hough-owned businesses, cooperative enterprises, and neighborhood-based commercial activity as central components of the district's identity and economy. Targeted capital programs, technical assistance, and financial navigation services will help address longstanding barriers to financing and

business growth. Additional actions will support homeownership stabilization, expand pathways for local enterprises to occupy storefront and commercial spaces, and connect residents to the economic opportunities emerging through major investments surrounding the district. These strategies will help ensure that growth generates lasting community benefit, strengthens local wealth-building, and expands economic participation for those most deeply invested in Hough's future.

“It is easier to find a lender for 17 million than for \$500,000. There are a lot of folks that want to do a lot of things. What we can do with this project is create clearer pathways to resources.”

ANTUNESIA HARRIS
INVIGORATE GALLERY, CORE TEAM ADVISORY

Memphis Study Tour. CREDIT: MidTown Cleveland



Prosperity STRATEGIES

PR-01

Establish Commercial Activity as Characterizing the Cultural District

Community context: Hough residents have watched businesses leave as investment attention arrived and rents rose. Currently, the only affordable commercial spaces are on the exterior-facing corridors.

Advocate for affordable commercial spaces within Hough and provide support for emerging retail businesses not ready for their own brick and mortar location (markets, incubator spaces).

- Commission a cultural corridor market study to identify available commercial spaces, tenant mix, ownership patterns, and leasing barriers across all four Cultural Activation Zones.
- Develop a Hough Business Directory cataloging for Hough-owned business, creative enterprise, and community organization currently operating in the district.
- Advocate for affordable leasing from institutional property owners as new developments come online with commercial spaces available.
- Provide support for emerging small scale developers from the community such as Chateau Hough, Invigorate Gallery, and Leo's Casino Arts and Music Collaboratory. This can include assisting with feasibility studies and plans to advance their projects, help identifying resources, and partnering on programming at these properties to create immediate retail opportunities through markets, vending, etc.

PR-02

Expand Access to Capital Through Targeted Financial Tools

Community context: Hough's entrepreneurs are not inexperienced; they are systematically excluded by the capital systems built around them. Traditional lending disqualifies the businesses that need support most.

Build fast-turnaround micro-grant and bridge loan programs alongside entrepreneurial training programs to expand capital access for Hough-based businesses.

- Partner with local organizations for entrepreneur preparedness including documentation coaching and business roadmap development.
- Coordinate with local financial institutions to address appraisal gap mortgage program launch with Hough designated as the first market.
- Advocate for a Hough-specific capital access program; formally challenge zip-code lending discrimination.
- Explore a Regulation Crowdfunding structure that allows for Hough residents to purchase ownership stakes in new or existing development projects.

Develop Business Pipelines to Grow Hough-Based Enterprises

Community context: Hough's entrepreneurial culture is alive and actively producing, and the work ahead builds the pathway that takes that energy from home-based operation to storefront to scaled enterprise.

PR-03

Create structured growth pathways for Hough-based businesses across all sectors (home-based to storefront to scaled enterprise), with Leo's Arts and Music Collaboratory, Invigorate, Chateau Hough, and the Baseball Heritage Museum as flagship creative economy anchors and Hough as a regional cultural destination.

- Develop a business incubator framework with a first-offer-to-Hough policy; identify second-stage spaces for graduating businesses.
- Conduct LAMC site feasibility study; convene community design sessions.
- Seek NEA Our Town grant and OCFC capital grant for Leo's Arts and Music Collaboratory.

Stabilize and Retain Existing Homeownership

Community context: Homeownership in Hough is substantially lower than in Cleveland as a whole due to decades of redlining. The homeowners who are here are an irreplaceable asset that is at risk. Homeowners who held this neighborhood through the hardest times are now facing rising property taxes and deferred maintenance costs.

PR-04

Address the documented gap between existing programs and the residents who need them by connecting homeowners to city repair programs, establishing a governing-body navigator role for repairs, and building an emergency repair fund to prevent displacement before it happens.

- Conduct a homeowner needs audit via door-to-door survey by Q4 2026.
- Build governing-body navigator role and resource guide; connect residents to repair grants and OHFA programs immediately.
- Host quarterly homeowner clinics.

Strengthen the Connection between Hough and Emerging Investments

Community context: The Midline, East Side Housing Innovation Zone (Tax Increment Financing District), and Cleveland Innovation District are converging. Residents have seen public investment reshape other neighborhoods and see the confluence of these investments as an opportunity to help shape the future of Hough.

PR-05

Align the Cultural District with the Midline, Housing Innovation Zone, Bezos Earth Fund, and other opportunities, and position Hough as a regional cultural destination in every investment prospectus produced for external funders by presenting a heritage-tourism and destination-economy narrative.

- Secure a formal governing body seat in emerging investments planning processes so residents shape how those investments align with Hough's future.
- Present the Hough Cultural District as a named regional destination in the Midline, East Side Housing Innovation Zone investment prospectus circulated to external funders.
- Negotiate with the City of Cleveland to make Cultural District alignment a formal scoring criterion in East Side Housing Innovation Zone project applications.

STRATEGY IN FOCUS

Prosperity

Center Commercial Activity as Characterizing the Cultural District (PR-01)



Timeline:
0–24 months

Create affordable commercial spaces within Hough and provide support for emerging retail businesses not ready for their own brick and mortar location (markets, incubator spaces).

PR-01 ACTIONS:

1. Commission a cultural corridor market study to identify available commercial spaces, tenant mix, ownership patterns, and leasing barriers across all four Cultural Activation Zones.
2. Develop a Hough Business Directory cataloguing for Hough-owned business, creative enterprise, and community organization currently operating in the district.
3. Advocate for affordable leasing from institutional property owners as new developments come online with commercial spaces available.
4. Provide support for emerging small scale developers from the community such as Chateau Hough, Invigorate Gallery, and Ron and Maria Fuqua. This can include assisting with feasibility studies and plans to advance their projects, help identifying resources, and partnering on programming at these properties to create immediate retail opportunities through markets, vending, etc.

WHY IT MIRRORS HOUGH.

Roseland and Hough are both historically Black neighborhoods where a wave of public and private investment is raising values in the very neighborhoods that give each place its character. TREND's move was to make the corridor itself community-owned, so residents capture the upside of the activity they generate rather than watching it accrue to outside landlords. Hough already carries a commercial legacy that runs from House of Wills and Hough Bakery to Chateau Hough, Martin Luther King Plaza, the Madame CJ Walker Business District, and Angie's Soul Food at Penn Square. PR-01 treats that activity along East 55th, Black Avenue, and the Leo's Casino Corridor as a defining characteristic of the cultural district rather than a byproduct of it. The Regulation Crowdfunding structure TREND used is open to Hough today, and paired with Cleveland CDFI capital such as the Black Renaissance Fund and the financing relationships at Cleveland Development Advisors, Jumpstart, ECDI, LISC, and the Urban League, it gives residents a way to own the storefronts that hold the neighborhood's commercial memory. Commerce in Hough has always been cultural, and PR-01 keeps the people who built it on the ownership side of what comes next.

PRECEDENT IN PRACTICE

Chicago TREND, Roseland Medical and Retail Center

Community-owned commercial corridor asset
Roseland, Chicago, IL
2024–PRESENT

In Chicago's Roseland neighborhood, on the Far South Side where the Chicago Transit Authority is extending the Red Line and lifting the value of the commercial corridor around it, the Chicago TREND Corporation set out to put a neighborhood shopping center into the hands of the people who already shop there. TREND bought the 27,000-square-foot Roseland Medical and Retail Center and an adjacent vacant parcel for \$6 million from DL3 Realty, a firm whose managing partner grew up in Roseland and sold at a favorable price to keep the asset in community hands. Rather than financing the purchase through a single owner, TREND structured it as a Regulation Crowdfunding offering that let residents buy in for as little as \$1,000, drawing 52 small-dollar investors into shared ownership while TREND held a 51 percent stake to shield them from loss. The center stands across from Roseland Community Hospital and stays fully occupied by the clinics, pharmacy, and local businesses that serve the roughly 300,000 people across the Roseland Medical District. This arrangement has made the commercial corridor itself, rather than a single landmark, the engine of neighborhood wealth.

\$6M to acquire the center and an adjacent parcel, keeping a fully occupied commercial corridor asset in community ownership rather than selling to the highest outside bidder

50+

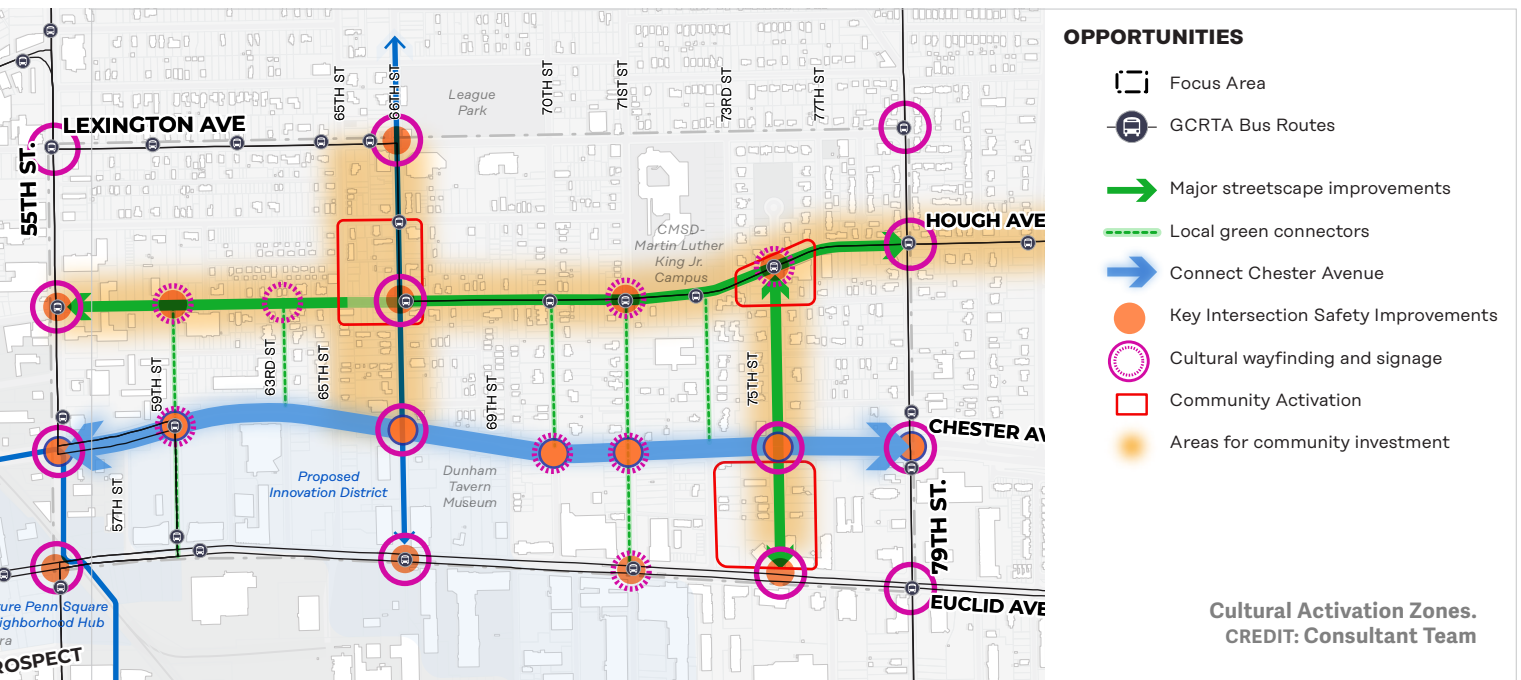
small-dollar investors, many of them Roseland residents, who became co-owners of the shopping center for as little as \$1,000 each

\$1,000

minimum buy-in that turned neighbors into owners through a federal Regulation Crowdfunding offering, a community-ownership instrument Hough can run in Cleveland alongside Community Development Financial Institution capital such as the Black Renaissance Fund



THE CULTURAL ACTIVATION ZONES



A Cultural Activation Zone is a defined geographic area within the Hough Cultural District where strategies from all four pillars converge.

These are locations where physical investment, community programming, economic development, and governance mechanisms intersect in a specific place — where a resident or a visitor arrives and knows, from what they see and feel around them, they are somewhere that has been intentionally shaped by and for this community.

The Hough Cultural District is organized around four Cultural Activation Zones connected by two primary corridors. Each zone has a distinct character, a set of existing cultural assets, and a defined role in the district's overall identity. Taken together, they create the spatial framework for a neighborhood that is physically coherent, culturally grounded, and economically functional.



Dancing in Hough. CREDIT: MidTown Cleveland

*Activation Zone:***Penn Square:
E. 55TH AND EUCLID**

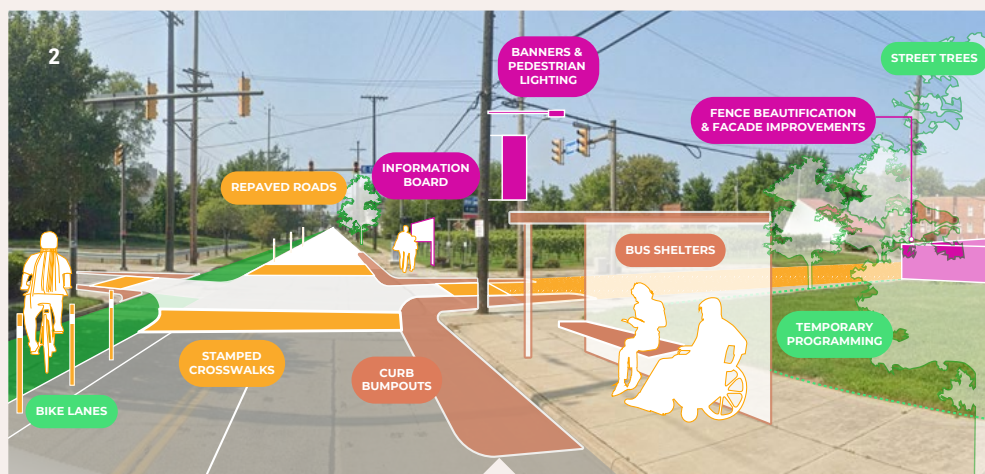
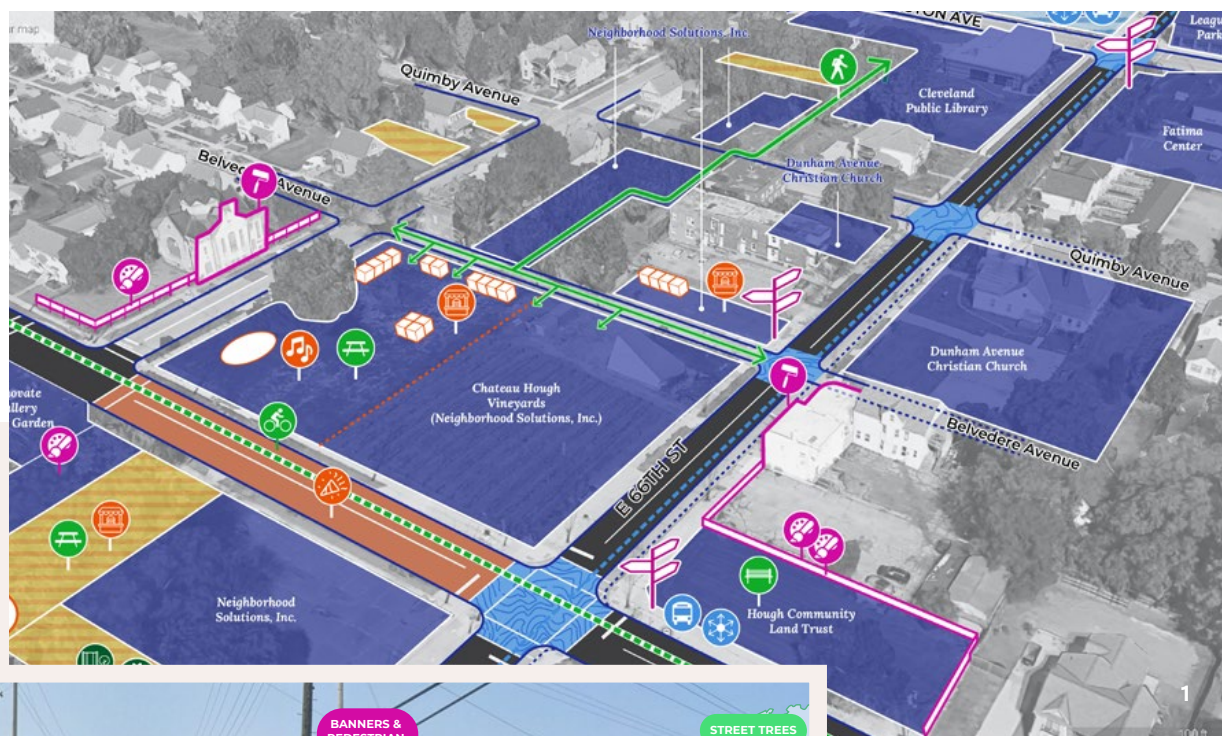
MidTown Cleveland Staff Survey Railway Overpass at E55th and Euclid Ave. CREDIT: MidTown Cleveland



MidTown Cleveland Staff Survey Railway Overpass at E55th and Euclid Ave. CREDIT: MidTown Cleveland

Known historically as Penn Square, the intersection of East 55th Street and Euclid Avenue has been a point of arrival into Cleveland for nearly two centuries, the place where the Pennsylvania Railroad once welcomed travelers and where generations of Black families stepping off the train during the Great Migration first set foot in the city they had chosen as home. Today the Euclid corridor carries the HealthLine and thousands of daily commuters through the western edge of the study area, yet offers little in the way of seating, pocket parks, or tree canopy to

invite lingering. The Cleveland Foundation anchors this stretch, the Warner and Swasey redevelopment is delivering housing and commercial space at the gateway's edge, and the Mandel Foundation's Downtown Connector Trail connects the district to the lakefront, CHEERS, and the Superior Midway. With 33 parcels in the zone and 10 publicly owned, this gateway has the land base and institutional momentum to become the most visible entry point into the district.



1. Street-level rendering of E 66th Street at Hough Avenue facing west, with proposed enhancements.

2. Aerial rendering of E 66th Street & Hough Avenue, with proposed enhancements.

Activation Zone:

Black Avenue: E. 66TH STREET

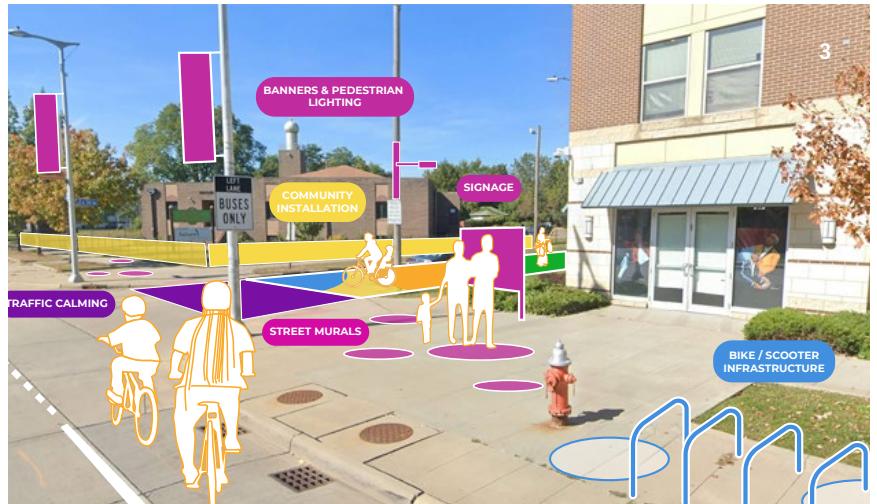
Black Avenue is the cultural identity corridor and the historic heart of the district. It is one of the study area's most walkable stretches, free of the barrier created by Chester Avenue to the north. Chateau Hough is here. The Invigorate Gallery is here. Fatima Family Center anchors the community's social infrastructure at the northern end of the corridor, and Dunham Memorial Church stands as one of the neighborhood's longest-serving faith institutions. League Park, where Satchel Paige played

and where Cleveland's baseball heritage lives on, anchors the eastern end. With 77 parcels (43% owned by institutions and nonprofits), Black Avenue has the land pipeline for the Hough Community Land Trust acquisition and the cultural assets to become the district's defining public space. Construction to enhance the streetscape and add a trail, sidewalks, and other amenities begins here in 2027. Steps to highlight Hough's cultural identity in the built environment, including murals, wayfinding, and community-designed elements, must be coordinated with City construction documents before that window closes.

Activation Zone:

Leo's Arts & Music Collaboratory E. 75TH STREET AT CHESTER AND EUCLID

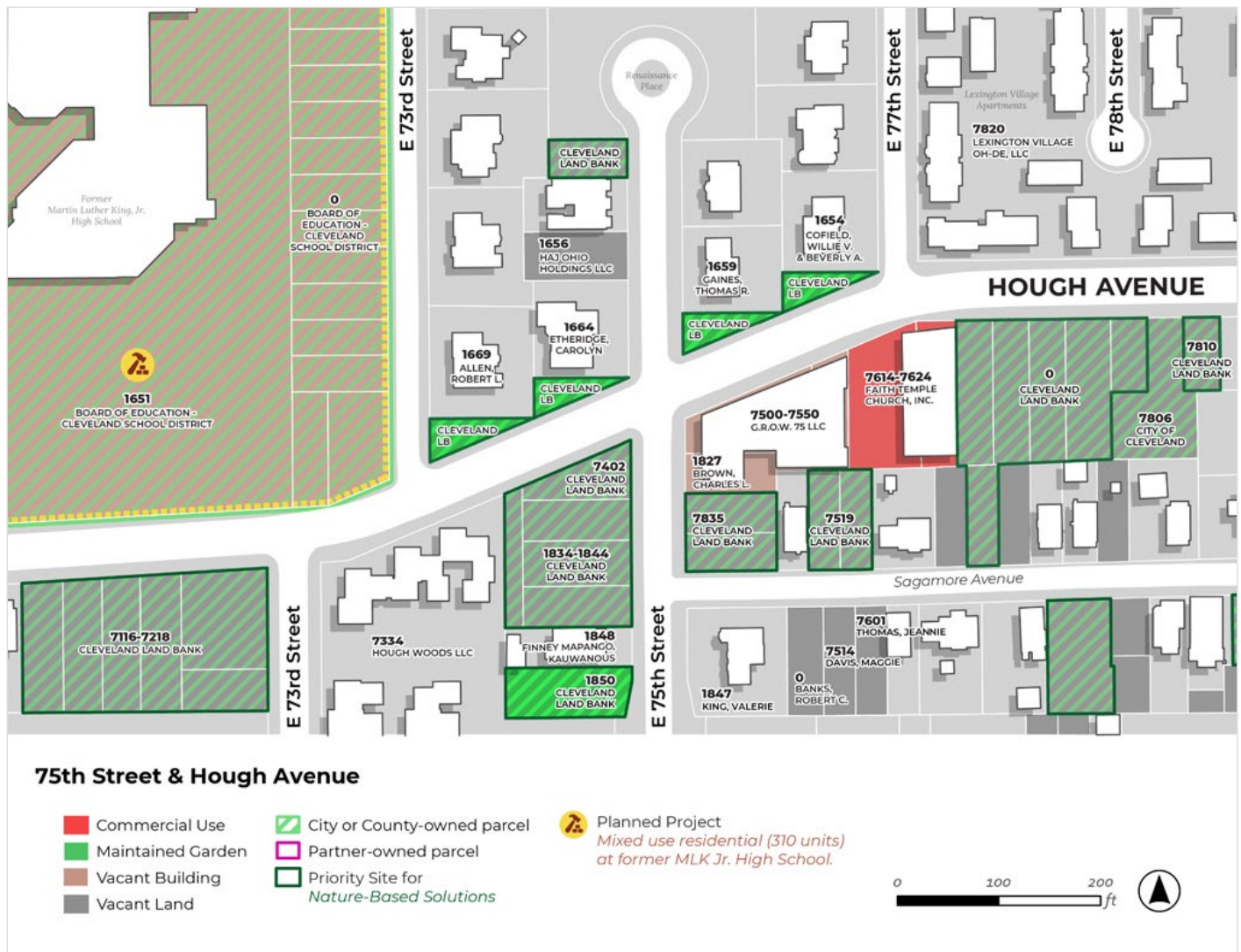
E. 75th Street, once home to Leo's Casino, has enormous potential as a place to continue the rich cultural and musical legacy of Hough. North of Euclid lies a primarily residential enclave with underutilized single-family and multifamily properties. Opportunities exist to leverage existing site control and to acquire adjacent properties for adaptive reuse, but a clear vision for the corridor is essential for any zoning or funding challenges to be addressed. This corridor has the land, the legacy, and the organizational momentum to become the most significant creative economy anchor in Cleveland's Black community.



4. E 75th Street & Euclid Avenue facing West, with proposed enhancements.

5. Activation in Inglewood Historic District, with proposed enhancements.

6. SW corner at E 75th Street & Chester Avenue, with proposed enhancements.



Activation Zone:

The Eastern Gateway: E. 75TH AND HOUGH

The Eastern Gateway is the community anchor at the district's eastern threshold. Lexington Village and Renaissance Place contribute to the residential character. The eleven-acre, former Martin Luther King Jr. High School site is the most significant near-term development

decision in this zone. With 28 parcels (13 Land Bank controlled), the challenge and opportunity here are the same: ensuring that every unit built here comes with a commitment to the existing residents who held this corner through the long years when no one was watching.

HCPP - Public Realm Strategy Descriptions

MAJOR STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS

Infrastructure upgrades on key corridors for safety and comfort, such as widened/safer sidewalks, street trees, lighting, seating, transit stops, curb management, bike facilities, and stormwater/landscape elements.

GREEN CONNECTORS (NEIGHBORHOOD GREENWAYS)

Defined by the City of Cleveland as low-speed neighborhood streets that prioritize biking and walking, often using traffic calming, street marking and signage.

CONNECT CHESTER AVENUE

A corridor-focused strategy to improve safety, continuity, and mobility along Chester Avenue through placemaking, traffic calming and street section redesign, strengthening it as a cultural and mobility spine.

KEY INTERSECTION SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

Targeted redesign of high-conflict intersections using proven safety treatments, such as curb extensions, safety signals, or improved lighting, in alignment with the City of Cleveland's Street Safety Toolkit.

CULTURAL WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

Coordinated signage, markers, and visual identity elements that improve navigation and information-sharing, and reinforce the cultural district's identity and destinations.

CULTURAL ACTIVATION ZONE

Programming of public and underutilized spaces with events, markets, performances, or temporary uses to increase activity, visibility, and build a recurring calendar of community happenings.

AREAS FOR COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

Priority areas for focused public and private investment in infrastructure, infill housing, small business development, commercial activation, and improved public realm and neighborhood conditions.

\$10 million Bezos Earth Fund grant
will activate 600 vacant lots into green
spaces in Hough and St. Clair - Superior.
CREDIT: City of Cleveland

HOW HOUGH STAKEHOLDERS CAN CONTRIBUTE TO CULTURAL PRESERVATION

Businesses

The businesses currently in Hough have an important role to play in the process of Hough’s cultural preservation described above.

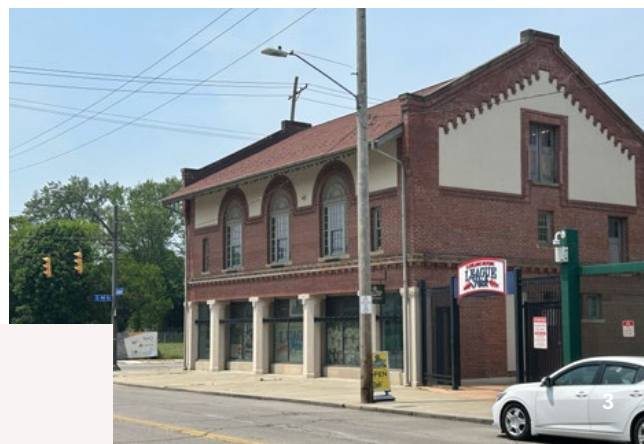
Imagine what could be achieved if ...

Hough’s existing businesses collectively promoted the neighborhood as a destination for commerce, culture, dining, entertainment, and community celebrations that attract residents, visitors, and investment.

Business owners and strategic partners activated the public realm to foster safety, a sense of belonging, and expressions of local culture,, transforming sidewalks, storefronts, and gathering spaces into vibrant environments that reflect the neighborhood’s identity and heritage.

New and existing commercial properties were reimagined as accessible, move-in-ready “white-box” retail spaces, lowering barriers for entrepreneurs, artists and creatives, and community-serving businesses to launch and grow locally.

Grassroots entrepreneurs and established businesses had access to shared back-office support services, including accounting, legal assistance, marketing, technology, human resources, and business coaching, allowing them to focus on innovation, growth, and community impact.



5.6%
Hough's
Self-employed
Population

304
Entrepreneurial
Households

506
Self- or Family-
employed
Households

Faith-Based Institutions

48

Estimated number
of religious
institutions within
Hough

1st

mosque (Masjid Bilal
Of Cleveland) built
from the ground up

in Greater Cleveland and
the first mosque built by
a predominately African
American congregation
in the United States.

Similarly, Hough's faith-based institutions play a central role in the community and possess a unique voice for advancing cultural preservation.

Imagine what could be achieved if...

Communities of Faith collaborated to access shared financing, technical assistance, and trusted contractors, enabling them to preserve historic buildings, address deferred maintenance, and strengthen their role as long-term community anchors.

Congregations partnered with community-based organizations to expand social services and strengthen community impact, supporting youth development, family stability, health, education, workforce readiness, and neighborhood wellbeing.

Churches, Community Development Corporations, and mission-driven real estate developers worked together on strategic property acquisition and community activation, transforming underutilized assets into spaces for housing, entrepreneurship, arts and culture, education, and neighborhood revitalization.



Homeowners

Finally, Hough homeowners are in a position to support and benefit from cultural preservation of the community.

Imagine what could be achieved if ...

Existing homeowners leveraged home equity as a preservation and wealth-building tool, accessing affordable financing for aging-in-place improvements, energy-efficiency upgrades, and the restoration of historic properties that strengthen neighborhood character and long-term value.

Residents had access to a trusted network of contractors, preservation artisans, and skilled tradespeople, making it easier to complete high-quality repairs, renovations, and restoration projects while supporting local workforce development.

Low-income households were supported by programs that reduced the burden of property taxes, insurance costs, home repairs, and ongoing property maintenance, allowing these homeowners to remain safely in their homes.

Middle-income families were able to access flexible home financing and consolidation solutions, enabling them to repair and renovate existing homes, build generational wealth, and create pathways to sustainable homeownership within the community.

25.1%
Hough
Homeownership
Rate

40.9%
Cleveland
Homeownership
Rate



1,3. Residential properties in Hough.
2. Core Team member at home in Hough.





Pathways *Forward*

Taking Accountable
Action

PART IV

CURRENT AND PLANNED INVESTMENTS & PROJECTS

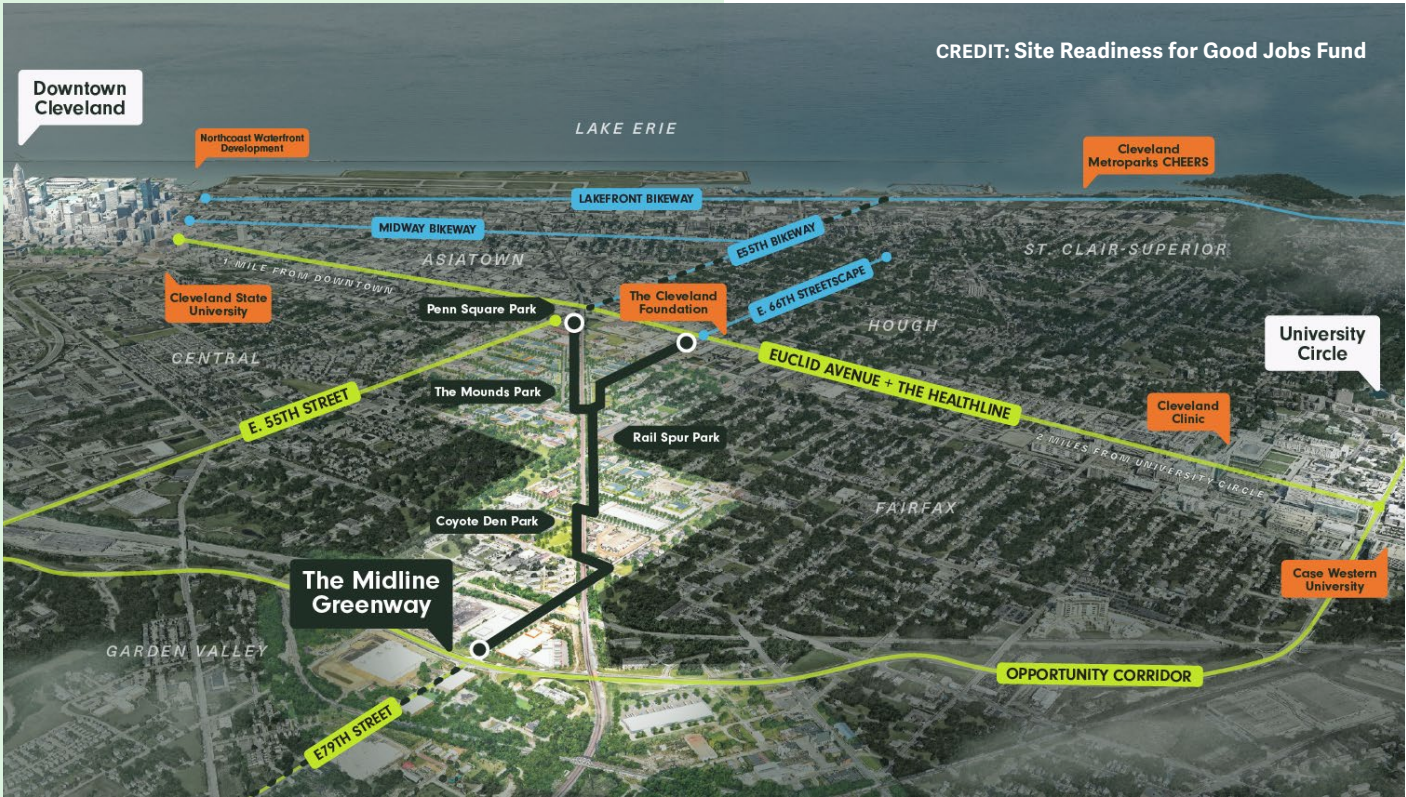


Until recently, Hough languished as far as development was concerned. Only two new single-family homes were built during the previous decade in Hough, Central, and St. Clair-Superior combined, while institutional investment occurred only along the community's edges.

However, Hough is no longer waiting. Across the study area, a significant and accelerating body of investment is already active or in the advanced stages of planning, representing the most concentrated wave of public, private, and philanthropic commitment the neighborhood has seen in a generation. Cleveland City Council has approved Mayor Justin Bibb's Housing Innovation District, a plan combining zoning reform, waived permit fees for new single-family construction, form-based code, and a new Tax Increment Financing district to spur new housing

and walkable development in the historically redlined East Side neighborhoods of Hough, St. Clair-Superior, and Central. That city-level framework, combined with the Bezos Earth Fund's vacant lot activation work, the Cleveland Foundation's campus planning, the Black Avenue streetscape, the Midline greenway, the Superior Midway, and the Leo's Arts and Music Collaboratory development, means the district is receiving simultaneous investment across housing, public realm, cultural infrastructure, regional mobility, and public finance at a scale that no prior planning period has produced.

The table that follows makes clear not only this scale of development but also that these initiatives are not unrelated projects. They are the early steps of infrastructure development for the cultural district proposed in this roadmap.



■ COMPLETED ■ UNDERWAY ■ PROPOSED

INITIATIVE	LEAD ORGANIZATION	TYPE	INVESTMENT/ SCALE	STATUS
9410 Hough Avenue Rehabilitation	Northern Real Estate Urban Ventures / Sullivan Land Services Co.	Affordable Housing / Community Services	\$47M redevelopment; 116 one and two-bedroom units at 60% Area Median Income; The Hub community amenity center with health, education, employment, and arts programming	Complete; ribbon cutting April 2026
Bezos Earth Fund Vacant Lot Activation	Western Reserve Land Conservancy	Public Realm / Green Space / Ecology	\$10M application; 600 lots across study area; 800 trees to be planted over 3 years	Awarded
Birthing Beautiful Community Birthing Center	Birthing Beautiful Community	Community Health / Cultural Services	New birthing center serving Hough and surrounding East Side communities	Under Construction
Black Avenue Streetscape	MidTown Cleveland Inc.	Public Realm / Infrastructure	Funded streetscape construction along East 66th Street corridor	Active; construction underway 2026
Cleveland Harbor Eastern Embayment Resilience Strategy (CHEERS)	Cleveland Metroparks / Port of Cleveland / Partners	Lakefront Infrastructure / Recreation / Ecology	Multi-decade lakefront transformation reconfiguring Lake Erie's shoreline with new recreation, trails, and open space connected to East 55th Street gateway	Planning and implementation phases underway
Cleveland Housing Investment Fund	Bibb Administration/ Local Initiatives Support Corporation / KeyBank	Affordable Housing Finance	\$100M fund; \$18M city grant + \$20M KeyBank anchor; average \$1M to \$5M per project	Active 2025; first commitments closed October 2025
East 55th Street Safety Action Plan	City of Cleveland	Pedestrian Safety / Infrastructure	Targeted safety improvements along East 55th Street corridor addressing high-crash conditions and pedestrian access	Planning Underway
East Side Housing Innovation Zone	Bibb Administration	Public Finance / Infrastructure	\$41.9M to \$118.7M over 30 years (Hough / St. Clair-Superior district); combined 30-year potential \$182M	Proposed; legislation pending City Council vote
Gateway66 at League Park	Frontline Development Group / Woda Cooper / University Hospitals	Mixed-Income Housing	80 units, 82,237 sq ft; \$3M UH mission-related investment; \$5M City of Cleveland; \$27M total budget; minority and female-owned developer	Under construction; completion anticipated 2026
Hough Senior Living	Cleveland Housing Network Housing Partners	Affordable Senior Housing	Affordable senior housing units within study area	Financial closing complete; construction began October 2025; completion expected early 2027
Leo's Arts and Music Collaboratory	Ron and Maria Fuqua / Democracy Collaborative	Cultural Infrastructure / Adaptive Reuse	6 parcels in Ingleside Local Landmark District, East 75th Street	Active; pre-development planning underway

■ COMPLETED ■ UNDERWAY ■ PROPOSED

Lexington Avenue Streetscape	City of Cleveland / Partners	Public Realm / Infrastructure	Streetscape improvements along Lexington Avenue corridor supporting pedestrian connectivity and district identity	Planning and implementation phases underway
Martin Luther King High School Redevelopment	Private Developer	Mixed-Use Housing / Commercial	310 units, 2 commercial spaces, 3-acre community park; 11-acre site	Largest single development in Hough in a century; planned
Martin Luther King Plaza Redevelopment	Northern Real Estate Urban Ventures (NREUV)	Affordable Housing / Black Business Market Hall	Affordable housing units, market hall for Hough-owned businesses, entrepreneurship program with Cuyahoga Community College	Active 2023-present
Midline	Site Readiness for Good Jobs Fund / LAND Studio	Regional Greenway / Employment District	350+ acres; trail connections planned along East 55th and East 66th; largest industrial redevelopment in modern Cleveland history	Announced May 2026; master planning underway
Northeast Ohio Medical University Healthcare Innovation Hub	Northeast Ohio Medical University	Institutional / Healthcare / Innovation	Healthcare innovation hub at MidTown Collaboration Center, East 66th and Euclid	Opening Summer 2026
Off-Site Construction Market Pilot	City of Cleveland / County Land Bank / Mandel Foundation / Cleveland Foundation	Housing / Manufacturing Innovation	20 modular and stick-built homes on city-owned vacant lots, E. 65th and E. 67th	Launching 2026
Opportunity Corridor Boulevard	Ohio Department of Transportation / City of Cleveland	Regional Infrastructure / Mobility	3-mile boulevard connecting I-490 at East 55th to University Circle; repositions Penn Square of study area	Complete
Parkside Homes East	Cleveland Housing Network Housing Partners / Famicos Foundation / Burten Bell Carr	Affordable Housing / Homeownership	\$22M investment; 55 lease-purchase homes across Hough, Buckeye, Glenville; families at or below 60% Area Median Income	Under construction; move-ins began March 2026
Resiliency Corps	City of Cleveland Office of Sustainability	Workforce / Public Realm	20 Hough residents at \$20/hr, 28 hrs/month; public realm maintenance, tree planting, senior support	Pending funding award; launching Fall 2026
Superior Midway	City of Cleveland / NOACA / Partners	Mobility Infrastructure / Public Realm	Protected bicycle and pedestrian corridor connecting downtown to East 55th Street	Planning and implementation phases underway
Wade Park Avenue Streetscape	City of Cleveland / Partners	Public Realm / Infrastructure	Streetscape improvements along Wade Park Avenue corridor supporting pedestrian connectivity and neighborhood identity	Planning and implementation phases underway
Warner and Swasey Redevelopment	Pennrose / MidTown Cleveland	Adaptive Reuse / Mixed-Income Housing	\$64M; 112 rental apartments (phase 1), 28 units + 20,000 sq ft commercial (phase 2); 194,000 sq ft historic manufacturing facility at 5701 Carnegie Avenue, Penn Square of study area	Construction began January 2026; leasing targeted January 2028

PHASED APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION

The work of building the Hough Cultural District does not begin with construction itself. It begins with the foundation that makes construction irreversible: the governance structures, community ownership tools, anti-displacement protections, and shared cultural identity that ensure everything built in this community is built for the people already here. The three stages below provide a way of organizing all eighteen strategies presented in Part III in a deliberate, overarching sequence: governance before construction, protection before growth, and visibility as the culmination of everything that comes before it.



TIMELINE

IMMEDIATE (0-12 MONTHS):

Actions that must begin before large-scale investment arrives. These are designed to establish a base of knowledge, ensure residents are protected, and secure a governing role for the community before decisions are made without them. the Cultural District operating as a self-sustaining community-owned ecosystem.

SHORT TERM (12-36 MONTHS):

Actions that build on the foundation. These include activating corridors, advancing the governing body's authority, opening the business pipeline, and moving toward formal Ohio Arts Council Cultural District designation.

LONG TERM (36+ MONTHS):

Actions that consolidate and scale. These include full corridor transformation, completion of Leo's Arts & Music Collaboratory, development of Community Land Trust land portfolio at scale, and the Cultural District operating as a self-sustaining community-owned ecosystem.

STAGE 1: LAYING THE FOUNDATION

2025 - 2026

Stage 1 is nearly complete. The team analyzed prior studies, listened closely to the full spectrum of community perspectives, documented community memory as a rigorous planning framework, and assessed the spatial, economic, and development potential of the district. The deliverable is this roadmap: a shared vision, knowledge base, and institutional alignment that positions Hough to enter Stage 2 ready to build.

People WHO WE ARE

PE-01 Build and Amplify a Resident-Led Cultural Narrative for Hough

PE-04 Establish a Coordinated Community-wide Communication System

Power WHAT WE SHAPE

PW-02 Establish a Governing Board with Majority Resident Control

Place WHERE WE GATHER

PL-03 Strengthen District Identity

STAGE 2: BUILDING

2026 - 2027

Stage 2 is where additional governance structures that make resident leadership durable are built and activated. Formal protections of residents against displacement are operationalized before large-scale physical investment accelerates. Cultural Compacts are executed with founding institutional partners to clarify expectations between stakeholders. Community wealth-building vehicles are activated. At the close of Stage 2, Hough will have a centralized community voice to speak for outcomes that are in the community's best interests.

People WHO WE ARE

PE-02 Position Young People as Decision-Makers and Paid Cultural Ambassadors

PE-03 Formalize Anti-Displacement Protections as a Precondition for All Investment

Place WHERE WE GATHER

PL-01 Transform Hough Avenue into the Neighborhood Connector

PL-02 Create Vibrancy along Chester Avenue

PL-05 Convert Public Lands into Community Assets

Power WHAT WE SHAPE

PW-01 Secure Permanent Community Ownership Through Strategic Land Acquisition

PW-03 Structure Partnerships to Generate, Retain, and Circulate Wealth Within Hough

PW-04 Build Organizational Capacity for Small-Scale Organizations

PW-05 Develop Meaningful Cultural Compacts

Prosperity HOW WE THRIVE

PR-01 Establish Commercial Activity as a Characteristic of the Cultural District

PR-04 Stabilize and Retain Existing Homeownership

PR-05 Strengthen the Connection between Hough and Emerging Investments

STAGE 3: MAKING IT VISIBLE

2028 – 2030

Stage 3 is where everything built in Stages 1 and 2 becomes visible across the neighborhood. Hough-based enterprises occupy commercial space in all four Cultural Activation Zones. Public spaces along Hough and Chester Avenues are redesigned, programmed, and culturally legible. The Leo's Arts and Music Collaboratory opens as the district's flagship creative economy anchor. The Ohio Arts Council formally designates the Hough Cultural District. The district operates as a self-sustaining, community-governed cultural engine connected to a growing regional mobility network that includes the HealthLine, Opportunity Corridor, Midline, and Superior Midway.

Place WHERE WE GATHER

PL-04 Reinvest in Multi-modal Network for Safe Streets

Prosperity HOW WE THRIVE

PR-02 Expand Access to Capital Through Targeted Financial Tools

PR-03 Develop Business Pipelines to Grow Hough-Based Enterprises

CONCLUSION



Core Team Listening Session. CREDIT: Consultant Team

The Hough Cultural Preservation Project is grounded in internationally recognized approaches to cultural preservation that emphasize living communities, cultural continuity, and resident stewardship. Hough is a neighborhood whose cultural identity, woven across generations of Black creative life, entrepreneurial determination, spiritual practice, and intergenerational knowledge-keeping, deserves the institutional backing to match its depth.

A cultural preservation framework shifts attention away from narratives of decline and toward the people, institutions, and traditions that have sustained Hough through decades of change. Community history lives in the memories of elders, congregations that endured through long years of disinvestment, artistic traditions passed down through generations, and the daily efforts of families who maintained a sense of place even as many residents moved away. Generations of residents practiced stewardship long before planners developed language to describe that work. This roadmap seeks to align that stewardship with the resources, authority, and investment needed to carry it forward.

The convergence of new investment around Hough represents a genuine moment of possibility, and this community is positioned to shape it. The designation of Hough as Cleveland's Black Cultural District creates an institutional framework within which residents can exercise the cultural citizenship they have always

possessed, with the backing of policy and resources rather than facing institutional resistance. It creates conditions under which Black spatial imagination, the creative practice through which generations of Hough residents have built places that affirm Black life and belonging, can become the organizing logic for what the neighborhood builds next.

Hough already has laid a foundation for this work. Residents have defined their priorities, put words to their vision, and informed every major recommendation contained in this roadmap. The spatial framework, governance model, economic strategy, and preservation tools presented here emerged through sustained dialogue with the people who know this neighborhood best. Implementation now becomes the central task. Success will depend on translating community knowledge into action, building durable partnerships, and maintaining accountability to the commitments outlined here. Hough has always known what it is. The work ahead is ensuring that future investment, public policy, and institutional partners acknowledge, align with, and coordinate around this community-grown vision.

"Hough is on a comeback trail. This is a new day in Hough."

FANNIE LEWIS



Appendicies

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY

ADMINISTRATIVE FUNDING: Money used to keep an organization running by covering staff salaries, office costs, and day-to-day operations.

ARTISTS & CREATIVES: The musicians, visual artists, performers, designers, writers, and cultural workers whose practice can express Hough's identity.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT: Funding directed at physical assets (buildings, land, infrastructure, equipment) that are expected to have a useful life beyond the year they are purchased.

COMMERCIAL ACTIVATION: The process of bringing storefronts, corridors, and underused commercial spaces to life through business occupancy, programming, and foot traffic.

COMMUNITY ACTIVATION: Resident-driven programming, events, and organizing that brings people into shared space and shared purpose.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (CDC): a not-for-profit organization incorporated to provide programs, offer services and engage in other activities that promote and support community development.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INSTITUTION (CDFI): a mission-driven financial organization that must be certified by the U.S. Treasury and provide capital to economically distressed and historically underserved communities.

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE: The formal structures (boards, bylaws, voting processes, accountability mechanisms) through which residents exercise real decision-making authority that shape their neighborhood.

COMMUNITY INVESTOR: An organization, institution, or business that directs financial resources, in-kind support, or technical capacity toward Hough's development.

COMMUNITY-ROOTED PROCESS: A planning approach in which the community holds meaningful authority over decisions, methods, and outcomes rather than serving as a source of input for conclusions others have already reached.

CULTURAL COMPACT: A written agreement between the governing body and institutional partners operating within the Hough Cultural District that defines each partner's specific commitments to community benefit, transparency, and alignment with the district's cultural values.

CULTURAL DISTRICT: A defined geographic area recognized for its concentration of cultural assets and community identity, supported by policies and governance structures that protect and sustain that character over time.

CULTURAL PRESERVATION: The active protection of both the tangible and intangible expressions of a community's identity, including its buildings, oral traditions, music, faith, and the social conditions that allow those traditions to be transmitted across generations.

CULTURE: The living, breathing way of life that connects generations through the food, music, language, faith, memory, gathering practices, and daily acts of community.

ENDOWMENT: A permanent fund whose principal is invested and whose returns are used to support ongoing operations.

GRANT: A one-time or time-limited gift of money from a funder to an organization for a specific purpose.

GOVERNING BODY: The governing entity to be established by the Hough Cultural Preservation Project to hold decision-making authority over planning, investment, and community benefit in the Cultural District.

IMPACT INVESTMENT: Capital deployed with the stated intention of generating measurable social or environmental benefit alongside a financial return.

NATURALLY-OCCURRING CULTURAL DISTRICT: A geographic area where cultural identity, institutions, and community traditions have developed organically over generations through the sustained presence of a community rather than by external designation.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION: A resident-led body that represents the interests of people who live in a defined geographic area.

OPERATIONAL FUNDING: Money that covers the recurring costs of running a program or organization that administrative funding alone does not fully address, including program staff, materials, and delivery costs.

RESIDENT INVESTOR: A person who lives in Hough (renter or homeowner) and has a direct, personal stake in the neighborhood's future.

STRATEGIC PARTNER: An organization, agency, or institution that contributes resources, relationships, or capacity toward Hough's goals.

TARGETED INVESTMENT: Deliberately directed resources (funding, capital, programs, or policy tools) concentrated in a specific geography or population.

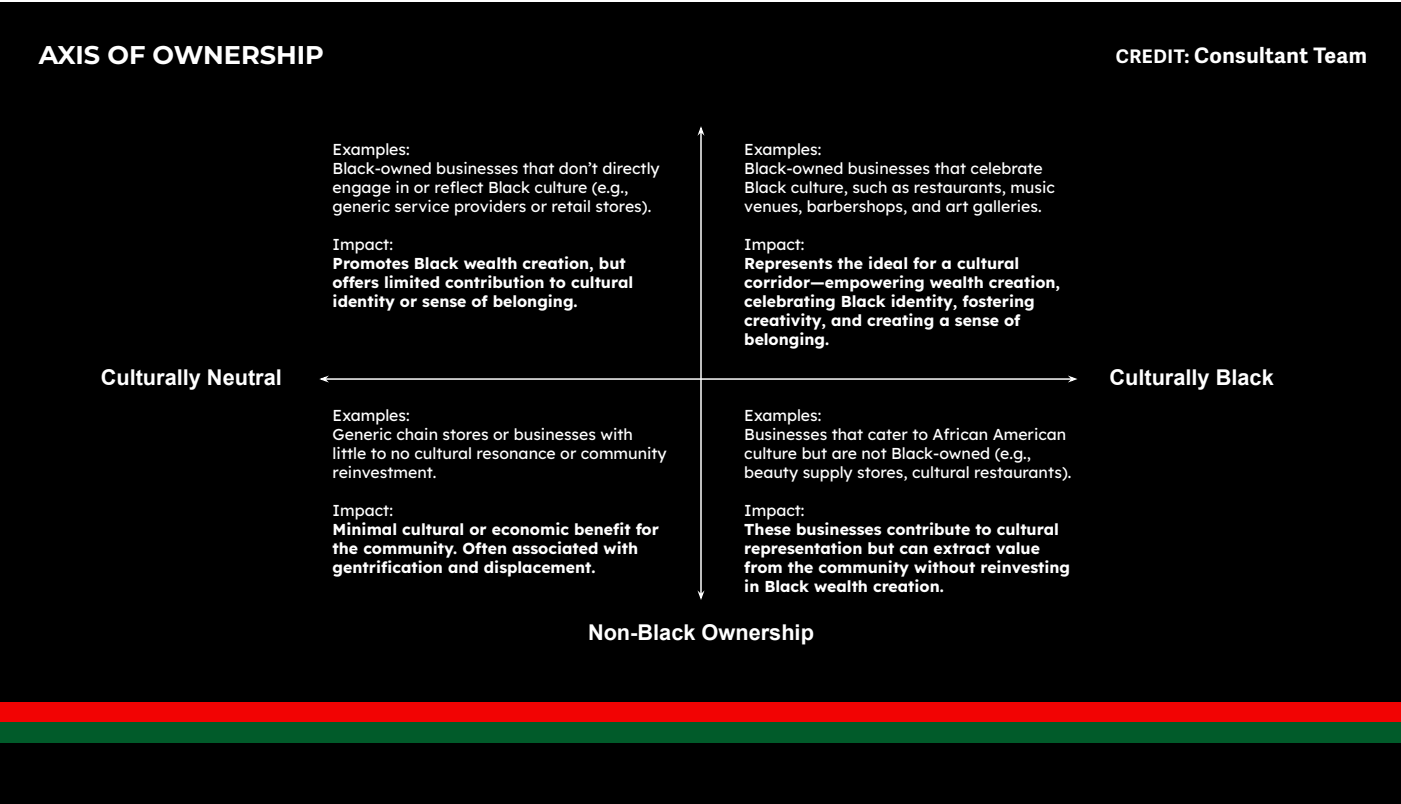
UNDERUTILIZED ASSET: A property, space, or resource that exists within the community but is not being used to its full potential, including vacant lots, underoccupied buildings, and underprogrammed public spaces.

ZONING: The legal framework through which a city divides land into designated categories that determine what can be built, how it can be used, and at what scale.

ZONING VARIANCE: A formal exception granted by a local zoning board that allows a property owner or developer to deviate from existing zoning requirements for a specific site or project.

APPENDIX B

BUSINESS AND COMMERCE IN HOUGH:
TYPES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON CULTURAL PRESERVATION



BLACK OWNERSHIP

The *Axis of Ownership* helps us understand how businesses contribute to both cultural vitality and economic empowerment within Black communities. It maps enterprises along two dimensions: ownership (Black-owned versus non-Black-owned) and cultural alignment (culturally Black versus culturally neutral). The model highlights four quadrants, each producing different outcomes for wealth creation, identity, and community development.

The lower-left quadrant represents non-Black-owned, culturally neutral businesses. While these enterprises may provide goods and services, they typically offer limited cultural relevance and often contribute little to community wealth-building. In some cases, they can accelerate displacement and gentrification.

The upper-left quadrant includes non-Black-owned businesses that engage with Black culture. These establishments may strengthen cultural representation and attract community participation, but much of the economic value generated leaves the community rather than building local wealth.

The lower-right quadrant consists of Black-owned businesses that are culturally neutral. These enterprises create opportunities for Black entrepreneurship and wealth generation but may not significantly reinforce cultural identity or belonging.

The upper-right quadrant represents the ideal destination: Black-owned, culturally Black businesses that simultaneously generate wealth, celebrate Black identity, foster creativity, and create a strong sense of place and community connection.

Shifting more enterprises into the upper-right quadrant requires intentional investment and ecosystem support. Communities must expand access to capital for Black entrepreneurs, provide technical assistance and business development resources, and create pathways for local ownership of commercial property. Equally important is supporting enterprises that authentically reflect local culture through art, food, entertainment,

retail, and community-centered experiences. Public policy, anchor institutions, philanthropy, and consumers all play a role by prioritizing procurement, patronage, and investment in businesses that both reflect Black culture and build Black wealth. When ownership and cultural expression align, communities can create sustainable economic growth while strengthening identity, belonging, and long-term prosperity.

FORMS OF COMMERCE AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

Basic categories include:

Food & Beverage: Sit-down and carryout restaurants, fast food, cafes, breweries, bars, coffeeshops – where food and drink is prepared outside of the home

General Merchandise, Apparel, Furnishing, Other: Clothing, furniture and home goods, books, sporting goods, electronics, toys, hardware, jewelry, etc.

Neighborhood Goods & Services: Grocery stores, pharmacies, convenience stores, barber shops, nail salons, liquor stores, dry cleaners, etc.

Non-Retail: Doctors offices, banks, gyms and exercise, libraries, schools, churches, child care, professional services, manufacturing, wholesalers

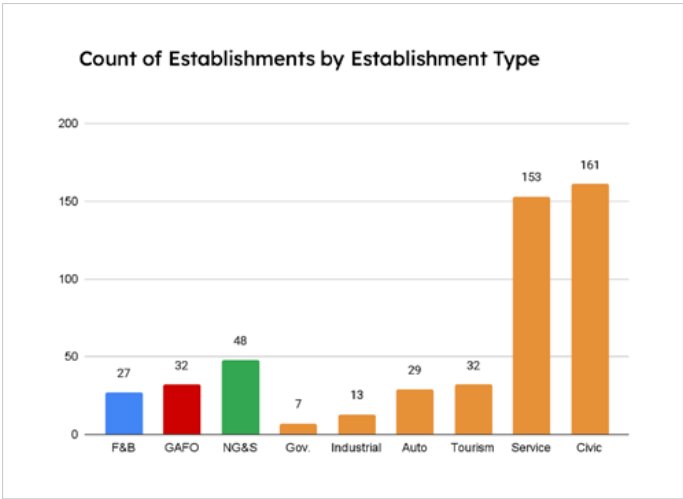
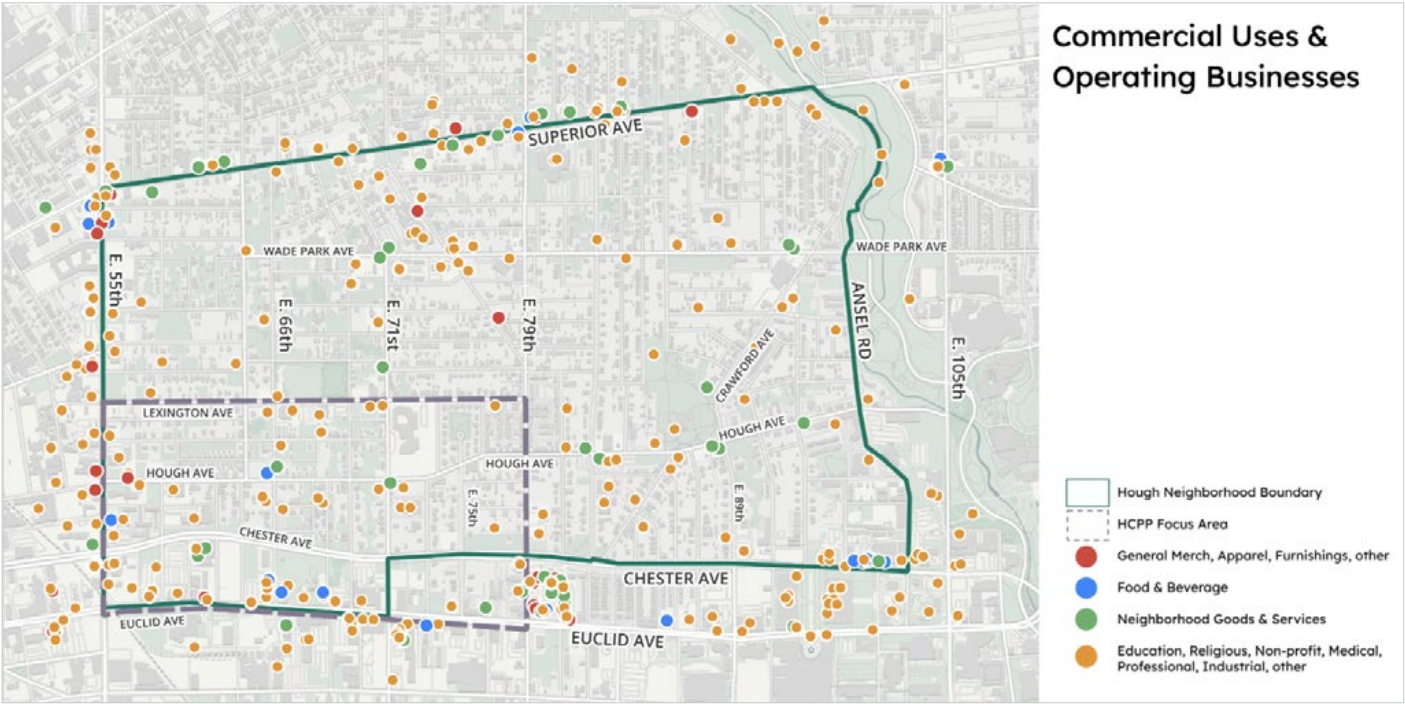
Generally speaking, customers travel the least distance for items they purchase most often. Specialized products are more likely to attract customers from a wider range of distances. Businesses are more successful when they are located close to other successful businesses. Characteristics of each retail category include:

Food & Beverage: Location and proximity to other retail determines customer visit patterns. Coffee shops on commuter routes, for example, function differently than those in retail districts. Specialty and destination restaurants draw visitors from a wide range of distances.

General Merchandise, Apparel, Furnishing, Other: Customers tend to engage in comparison shopping, often visiting multiple stores of the same type close to one another (as in apparel districts or with furniture stores). Clustering of stores encourages customers to visit more than one business per trip. Specialized goods (for example, bike shops, record stores) draw customers from farther away.

Neighborhood Goods & Services: Nearby residents and frequent commuters are the main customers. Convenience is key, so location and accessibility matter most. There doesn't tend to be much comparison shopping before making a purchase. Price points tend to be lower. Frequency of visits is relatively high: daily, weekly, or multiple times per month.

DISTRIBUTION OF BUSINESSES BY TYPE IN HOUGH



APPENDIX C

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY	DATE	FORMAT	FOCUS
Core Team Advisory Session	Ongoing	Working session	Foundational framework and values
E66 Friends and Neighbors	Ongoing	Community meeting	Black Avenue corridor coordination
Oral History Interviews	Ongoing	One-on-one interviews	Personal experiences
Virtual Workshop I	August 2025	Online session	Culture and Neighborhood Identity
Community Engagement Work Session I	September 2025	Work Session	Arts and Culture Ecosystem
Town Hall Forum I	September 2025	Town Hall	Project Progress Update
MidTown Conversation Circle 1	November 2025	In-person	Neighborhood identity and belonging
MidTown Conversation Circle 2	November 2025	In-person	Cultural assets and displacement
MidTown Conversation Circle 3	November 2025	In-person	Economic opportunity and business barriers
Small Business Focus Group	December 2025	Virtual	Small business needs and capital access gaps
Community Workshop	January 2026	In-person workshop	Spatial priorities and node strategy
Community Engagement Work Session II	March 2026	Community workshop	Community Ownership
Virtual Workshop II	April 2026	Online session	Public Realm
Town Hall Forum II	April 2026	Public town hall	Roadmap presentation and adoption

