



CONNO

DECATUR COALITION OF NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS
TWO-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

JUNE 2024

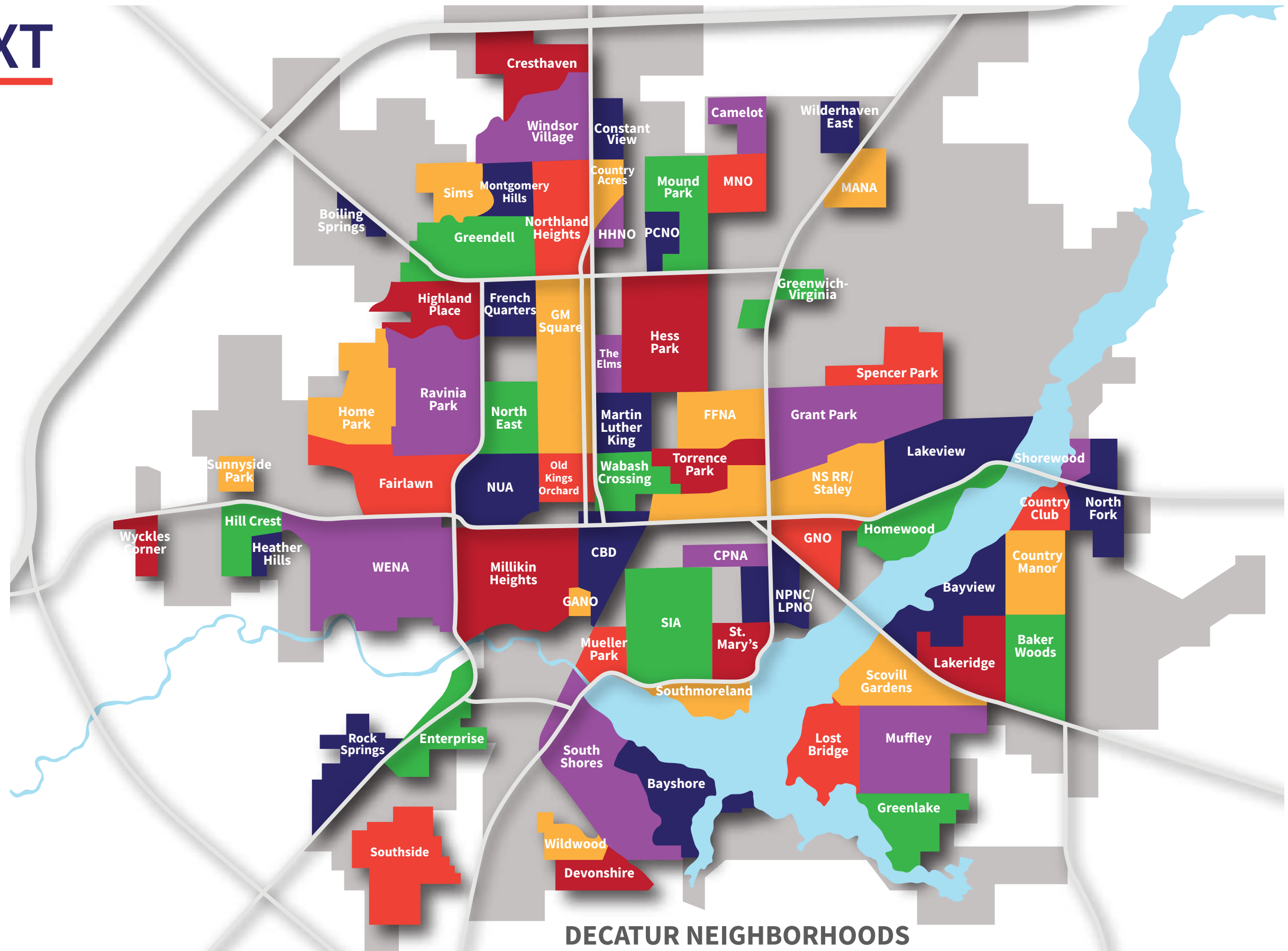
PURPOSE + MISSION

The *purpose* of CONO is to support the formation, development and empowerment of grassroots neighborhood organizations within the city boundaries of Decatur, Illinois, by sharing ideas with, and providing support to, neighborhood representatives, by promoting skills development (i.e., training opportunities and technical assistance) and by promoting neighborhood and political awareness.

The *mission* of CONO is to support more desirable neighborhoods within the City of Decatur, Illinois by improving all aspects of safe and enjoyable living.



CONTEXT



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CONO EXECUTIVE BOARD

Kathy Williams, President

Dr. Dana Ray, Vice President

Ayn Owens, Secretary

Sue Barnhart, Treasurer

Kent West, At-large Director

Verlyn Rosenberger, At-large Director

Lisa Smith, At-large Director

CONO ACTIVE MEMBERS

Clokey Park Neighborhood Association

GM Square

Greenwood Neighborhood Association

Holiday Hills Neighborhood Organization

Millikin Heights

Neighborhood United

Nelson Park/Lyons Park Neighborhood Organization

Old Kings Orchard

Southside Improvement Organization

Torrence Park Neighborhood

West End Neighborhood

SPECIAL THANKS

Cordaryl “Pat” Patrick, Director of Economic and Community Development, City of Decatur

Richelle Dunbar, Assistant Director of Economic and Community Development, City of Decatur

Aaron Eubanks, Neighborhood Program Specialist, City of Decatur

CONO'S ROLE + THE PLAN

CONO is a vital resource for neighborhood groups and residents of Decatur. As Decatur's umbrella organization for neighborhood groups, CONO is a conduit between the City and grassroots organizations, amplifying community voices and projects.

CONO was recently engaged as part of the Jasper Street Great Streets Great Neighborhoods Roadmap, which sought the input of several neighborhoods along the corridor. With the adoption of the Roadmap in September 2023, it became clear that a strategic plan was necessary to foster the operation and growth of CONO as a citywide organization.

The development of this strategic plan is the result of a half-day in-person CONO Board member retreat and biweekly Executive Board meetings from January through April of 2024. During this period, a series of goals and projects were identified by the Executive Board to support member organizations, increase the number of active neighborhood associations, and improve public participation and quality-of-life for Decatur residents.



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GOAL: EXPAND SCOPE + REACH OF COMMUNICATIONS

GOAL: EXPAND SCOPE + REACH OF COMMUNICATIONS

CONO plays a vital role in capacity building of neighborhood associations. CONO also provides communications between various neighborhood groups and Decatur City Council and other local government agencies. A variety of communications tools are needed to all stakeholders on resources, education and community building across the City of Decatur.

ACTION STEPS

Improve internal communications systems. Developing an established internal communications protocol, a system of standardized email addresses, and primary points of contact are individual recommendations to streamline and improve internal communication within the organization and to better handle outside communications.

Maintain and expand online presence. CONO relies on its Facebook page as its primary tool for external communications. This page is utilized to announce events, programs, and to amplify community efforts by its member organizations. Continued upkeep of the Facebook page ensures that residents can easily access CONO news and information in a central location. Dove, a local non-profit organization, maintains a landing page for CONO on its website. The continued updating of this landing page is another tool that may expand the scope and reach of CONO communications.

Create a CONO brochure. Raising awareness among Decatur residents and businesses of CONO's existence and services is another key challenge facing the organization.

A large group of people is gathered outdoors for a community event. The scene is filled with people of various ages and ethnicities, some sitting in folding chairs and others standing. In the background, there are trees and a building. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple color. Centered over the image is the text "GOAL: HOST REGULAR COMMUNITY EVENTS" in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

GOAL: HOST REGULAR COMMUNITY EVENTS

GOAL: HOST REGULAR COMMUNITY EVENTS

CONO is a support network for community events, providing resources and capacity to neighborhood organizations that serve as lead organizers. CONO may also organize and host a variety of events that are targeted towards the entire City of Decatur. CONO plans to host regular events to offer programming on key topics.

ACTION STEPS

Define event types and themes. Focusing on certain themes (such as safety or environmental) will allow CONO to narrow the scope of potential events in a given year and focus resources on a shortlist of potential events.

Schedule events. Once a shortlist of potential events is created, CONO may select events and determine scheduling. For events that require outside partners, such as a neighborhood organization or industry professionals, scheduling should be collaborative in order to maximize participation from those groups in the organization of the event and high attendance from the public.

Recruit sponsors and funding partners. Sponsorships and partnerships can greatly improve the resources that can be devoted to an event. Sponsorships may include businesses or non-profit organizations. CONO may also work with the City of Decatur or other government agencies as funding partners.

Review events annually. Reviewing a previous year's events annually allows CONO to identify areas for improvement and determine the feasibility of creating recurring events.

GOAL: HOST REGULAR COMMUNITY EVENTS (cont'd)

In previous meetings, CONO has discussed a variety of event types and elected to move forward with a diverse series of events. Event themes include:

Public safety. Organized in tandem with local police and fire departments as well as the County Sheriff's office, this event is geared towards fostering safe habits. CONO also assists in the National Night Out event to build stronger relationships between law enforcement and the general public.

Neighborhood awards. As an umbrella neighborhood organization, CONO is well suited to identify and amplify successful projects and involved individuals. This event raises awareness of CONO and serves as a fundraiser.

Neighborhood clean-ups. Organized by neighborhood organizations, CONO can help provide resources and build partnerships with organizations like Beautify Decatur and the City for effective clean-up events.

Christmas cookie bake. Cookie bakes are an effective method of bringing different communities together during the holiday season.

Health- and science-focused events are potential events for future consideration.



GOAL: PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECTS

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The Decatur City Council recognized CONO as the official neighborhood organization of the City of Decatur in 1997. CONO can leverage this position to support more local neighborhood organizations by advocating at City Council, obtaining funding, sponsoring, and disseminating grants for local projects.

ACTION STEPS

Secure funding. Obtaining funding from the City of Decatur and/or private partners will create a funding pool for projects.

Develop application process. CONO has already drafted an application form for neighborhood project grants, continuing to formalize this document and make it more readily available online will reduce barriers for those applying for funding.

Develop selection criteria. Assigning points to potential projects (based on community benefit, cost effectiveness, etc.) will streamline the selection prioritizing process of future neighborhood project grant applications.

Provide support and monitor projects. By leveraging its community partnerships, CONO can make introductions and create partnerships to make successful projects. CONO may also use surveys for recipients to measure success of projects.

Evaluate and adjust process as needed at the end of each year.



GOAL: IMPROVE INTERNAL SYSTEMS + DEFINE RESPONSIBILITIES

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The diverse and broad scope of CONO's requires a well-defined strategy and efficient management of resources. As a plan largely focused on internal operations, periodic revisions to organizational operations are action steps aimed at more effectively achieving CONO's mission.

ACTION STEPS

Review and update bylaws periodically to be current with the mission and operations of CONO. It is organizational best practice to continue to evaluate bylaws to ensure organizational policies advance the organizational mission. Such changes may include redefining responsibilities of executive roles and streamlining processes.

Define job descriptions. Currently, there are a variety of one-time and recurring tasks that do not have a specified procedure from CONO executive members. Identifying these tasks and assigning them to an executive member will improve the effectiveness of the Board and streamline operations. As job descriptions are defined, special consideration should be given to the workload of each Board member and ensure that responsibilities are assigned equally.

Introduce organizational and business membership option. Bringing in outside businesses and organizations will increase CONO's resources and funding levels. Defining a membership option and its benefits will also create an avenue for local organizations to become more involved in community initiatives. Membership may be structured into different "levels" tailored to an organization's size and commensurate with benefits offered by CONO.

Create an organizational vision for operational growth and adjust annually as needed.



IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION

| GOAL: EXPAND SCOPE + REACH OF COMMUNICATIONS | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Step | Lead Executive Board Member | Partner(s) |
| Develop an internal communications protocol. | Full Executive Board | N/A |
| Create a system of standardized email addresses. | Secretary | Google, Dove |
| Identify primary points of contact. | Full Executive Board | N/A |
| Continue to update Facebook page, website. | Secretary | Dove |
| Explore feasibility of creating Instagram, other social media account. | Secretary | N/A |
| Determine feasibility of creating a webmaster position for web presence. | Full Executive Board | N/A |
| Develop a CONO brochure. | Full Executive Board | City of Decatur, Dove, Funding Partners, Decatur Area Arts Council |

IMPLEMENTATION

| GOAL: HOST REGULAR COMMUNITY EVENTS | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Step | Lead Executive Board Member | Partner(s) |
| Define event types and themes. | Full Executive Board | City of Decatur |
| Create a shortlist of events. | Full Executive Board. | Partner organizations, Treasurer |
| Schedule events. | At-large Directors. | Partner organizations, industry professionals |
| Recruit sponsors and partner organizations. | President, Vice President | City of Decatur, funding partners, Heart of Illinois Community Foundation |
| Assist in advertising events and communication. | Secretary | Community partners |
| Review events annually. | Full Executive Board | N/A |

IMPLEMENTATION

| GOAL: PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECTS | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Step | Lead Executive Board Member | Partner(s) |
| Secure funding for neighborhood grants program. | President, Vice President | City of Decatur, funding partners |
| Formalize grant application and share with partners. | Full Executive Board. | Community partners |
| Create defined selection criteria for grants. | Full Executive Board. | City of Decatur, funding partners |
| Create a committee to review grant applications. | President, Vice President | City of Decatur, funding partners |
| Connect grantee to organizations with capacity to support, if needed. | At-large directors | Grantee, community partners |
| Provide a post-grant survey to monitor success and solicit feedback. | Full Executive Board | Grantee |
| Review previous year events and adjust process as needed. | Full Executive Board | Grantee, City of Decatur, funding partners |

IMPLEMENTATION

| GOAL: IMPROVE INTERNAL SYSTEMS + DEFINE RESPONSIBILITIES | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Step | Lead Executive Board Member | Partner(s) |
| Review bylaws and update as needed. | President, Vice President | Executive Board |
| Define job descriptions. | Full Executive Board | N/A |
| Create business and organizational membership structure. | Treasurer. | City of Decatur, funding partners |
| Create an organizational vision for growth. | Full Executive Board | N/A |
| Evaluate and adjust vision annually. | Full Executive Board | N/A |