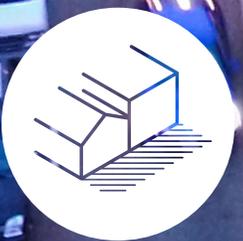
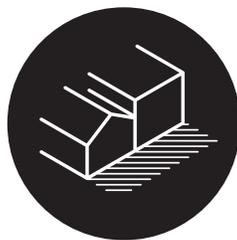




KENMORE BETTER BLOCK AFTER-ACTION REPORT





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The Kenmore Better Block was generously supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

A LETTER FROM THE BLOCK CAPTAIN

When I first came across the concept of Better Block, I knew it was tailor-made for a place like Kenmore, an area with so much untapped potential but a degree of self-loathing it doesn't deserve. Kenmore is a community of hardworking, blue-collar people, a great history, and a beautiful streetscape. It's also one begging for a new identity as its grip on the old one is slipping away.

Over the summer of 2017, the Akron Public Schools announced its plans to close Kenmore High School, a mainstay in the community for 100 years, and merge it with a rival high school. Having been our own city decades ago, the community rallied around its high school much like a small town would. Unfortunately, the school still closed. It felt like that part of our identity was being stripped away.

Several months later, Huntington Bank, Kenmore Boulevard's only commercial bank, announced it would be closing its doors, a punch in the gut to the business owners already weary of disinvestment in the area.

Yes, Kenmore needed an identity, but it also needed hope.

Conceiving of Kenmore Better Block was not an easy task. Some people saw things as being simply beyond repair, a lost cause. Still, others wanted to help but couldn't visualize themselves moving beyond small efforts to something bigger that engaged both citizenry and the business community. Still, others (myself included) didn't quite know where it was all going but were committed to fumbling through the messy Better Block process to figure it all out. (And—believe me—if you do it right, it is messy.)

Kenmore has creativity and craftsmanship in its

blood. A prime example is Lay's Guitar Shop, a fixture here for more than 50 years. They have built, repaired, and modified guitars for the likes of Dan Auerbach, Joe Walsh, and—unwittingly—Jimmy Page. The storefront is an unassuming one known mostly by those in the industry, underappreciated by neighborhood passers-by. What if Lay's were celebrated for the community asset it is and something residents could be proud of?

Then there are the eight recording studios in the neighborhood. They're quiet, unknown even to one another. But during Better Block, we uncovered how these quiet giants can be the key to our neighborhood's resurgence. These very same artists are now meeting and brainstorming ways we can harness the Better Block energy into ongoing pop-up, and, perhaps permanent, creative spaces.

Yes, Kenmore is a music neighborhood, but not the showy kind with big lights and fancy stages. We're just people who like to get together with friends on a Friday over a beer and some good music, something we continue to do with our Busk Until Dusk events and pop-up venue, Live Music Now!.

We are rock and roll, and it's a brand that was just waiting to get out. With the help of fantastic sponsors like 427 Design and Evolve Creative Group, Better Block enabled us to create a brand that transcends any one business or entity and harness the energy of a community that, when knocked down, gets back up over and over again. Now we know it. There's a little more spring in the step of the kids walking down Kenmore Boulevard, and people all over the city and county are talking about Kenmore, not with noses turned up, but with eagerness to see what's next. And we're excited to show them.

Sincerely,
Tina Boyes

INTRODUCTION

The Kenmore Better Block had three main objectives: ensure that the momentum generated from the Better Block continued and worked to benefit the Kenmore neighborhood, bring together organizations and residents that are active in the neighborhood, and rediscover Kenmore's identity.



From left to right: Kyle Kutuchief, Tina Boyes, Jason Roberts

Kenmore is full of passionate, engaged, and creative residents who are all ready to make changes to their neighborhood. I was thrilled to be a part of this project, given its history, its infrastructure, the local businesses, and the vision the local team had for Kenmore Boulevard. The three-block area chosen for the Kenmore Better Block has the potential to be a vibrant pedestrian area with a strong identity and will eventually become a destination in the Akron area. Kenmore is changing, and I am excited to have been given a chance to play a small role in it.

*-Colin Amos
Better Block
Project Manager*



BACKGROUND

Before Better Block



Background of Kenmore

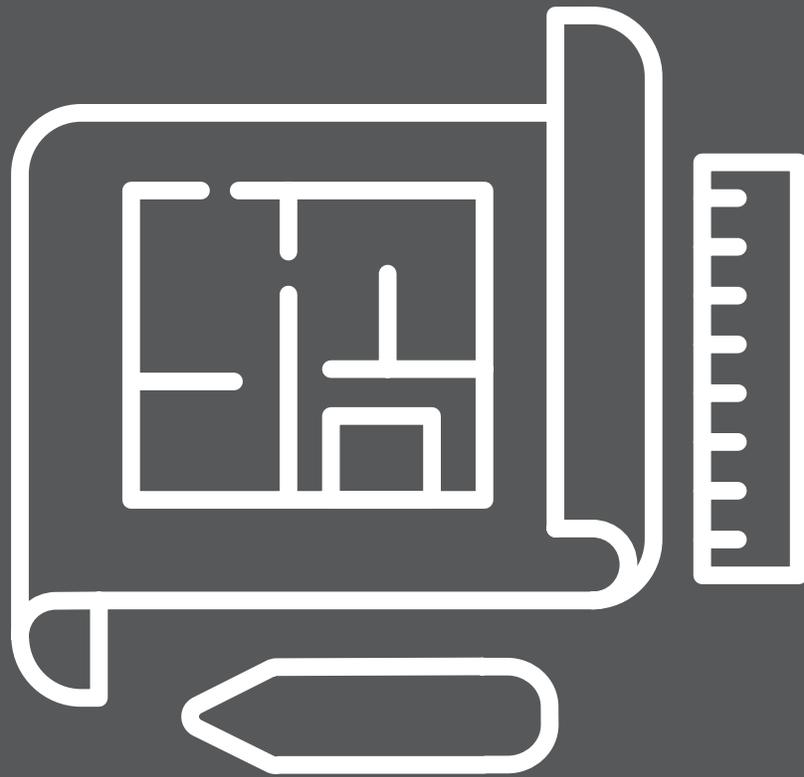


The Kenmore neighborhood is a tightknit community in southwest Akron, Ohio. The center of the neighborhood is Kenmore Boulevard, a nearly 100-foot-wide road with continuous building frontage. Kenmore Boulevard, which once had a streetcar system running its length, has now been converted into a four-lane road separated by a median and on-street parking. Kenmore Boulevard is mainly used as a thoroughfare to get to downtown Akron. Few people stop on the boulevard to patronize the local businesses and restaurants. Those who do rarely spend much time in Kenmore after visiting their destination.

Over the past few decades, economic decline and disinvestment have greatly affected the neighborhood. The closing of local businesses has led to little activity and public life on the block. Also, the closing of Kenmore High School has left many residents with a feeling of lost neighborhood identity. Despite Kenmore's

difficulties in recent years, it has great potential due to its engaged residents and architectural form.

The Better Block project addressed both sides of Kenmore Boulevard, from 16th Street to approximately 13th Street. The area was chosen due to a number of factors: its potential for partnerships with local businesses, lack of street level parking lots (a huge benefit to the continuity of the block), vacant buildings that could be used to house pop-ups, an empty lot that could be converted into public space, and the two bus stops located on Kenmore Boulevard. The 13th Street to 16th Street stretch of Kenmore Boulevard is the core of the business district and, should long-term redevelopment occur, will become the economic center of the neighborhood.



THE PROJECT

THE PARTNERS

The Kenmore Better Block would not have been possible without a dedicated local team.

Tina Boyes



Tina is a 20+ year veteran of the marketing and communications field. For 13 years, Tina was the vice president of marketing and communications for Akron Community Foundation, where she oversaw the community foundation's brand and that of its more than 500 funds, serving as their ambassador to the media and public. In 2011, Tina helped to lead a five-year rebranding and donor-engagement effort that generated more than 200 new funds and \$75 million in gifts to Akron Community Foundation.

In 2016, Tina began feeling called to a new way of life. Then a resident of Wadsworth, she and her family left the suburbs and moved back to the Kenmore neighborhood (where she and her husband grew up) in order to be part of a new neighborhood-based, mission-focused community called The Chapel: Kenmore. Shortly after, she became an inaugural board member of the Kenmore Neighborhood Alliance, a diverse, nonpartisan, community-focused organization that improves life in the Kenmore neighborhood of Akron.

As the chair of KNA's Kenmore Better Block, Tina experienced an even deeper calling into community work, so she left her role at Akron Community Foundation to dedicate herself to community service. Now, she uses her marketing, copywriting, and branding experience as a freelance strategist and newly appointed executive director of Kenmore Neighborhood Alliance.

Todd Ederer



Real estate has been engrained in Todd Ederer's experience dealing with many aspects of the development and investment process. His skills include analysis, financing, acquisition, construction, leasing, management, and sales. Inspired by travel, personal observation, and study, he has learned the importance of place-based space as promulgated by principles of New Urbanism and Incremental Development, and an integration of individual buildings within their surroundings matters. He believes that creation of new surrounds are best developed within the context of neighborhood, district, corridor, and overall environment.

Kyle Kutuchief



Kyle Kutuchief was named Akron program director of the Knight Foundation in May 2015.

In Akron, the birthplace of Knight Newspapers and the foundation, Knight focuses on downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods through investments in talent, opportunity, and engagement. Akron is also part of Reimagining the Civic Commons, a Knight-supported national initiative that seeks to counteract economic and social fragmentation by revitalizing and connecting public spaces.

Previously, Kyle worked in higher education and was a part of two initiatives to strengthen regional collaboration. He has served on a number of nonprofit boards and acted as president of [Torchbearers](#), a young professionals organization focused on leadership development and community service. Kyle has received Akron's 30 for the Future Award, Cleveland's 25 Under 35 Movers and Shakers Award, and Torchbearer's Friend of Young Leaders Award.

Kyle earned his Bachelor of Arts in political science from The Ohio State University and a Master of Public Administration from The University of Akron.

Jason Segedy



Jason Segedy formerly served as the Director of the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS), where he oversaw the allocation of all federal transportation funds in Greater Akron.

Jason brings 20 years of transportation and urban planning experience to the position. Additionally, in 2012 he served as Chairman of the Board of the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium, a \$4.5 million planning effort spanning 12 Northeast Ohio counties.

Jason holds a bachelor's degree in Geography from the University of Akron and a master's degree in Geography and Urban Planning from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Dylan Garritano



Dylan Garritano is a City Planner for the City of Akron and joined the Comprehensive Planning Division in 2017. Dylan earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Mount Union and studied Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Minnesota.

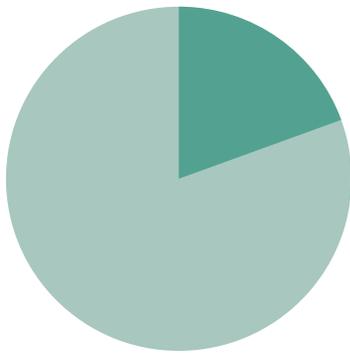
THE SURVEYS

The Surveys

The Kenmore Better Block started with a survey of the community to see what kind of interventions should be included in the project. The survey hoped to capture the vision that the residents of the neighborhood had for Kenmore Boulevard.

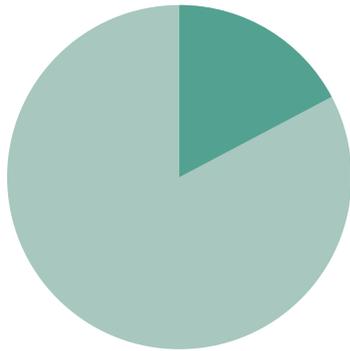
We asked residents what Kenmore's greatest issues are, what kind of public infrastructure improvements they would like to see, what kind of businesses should locate on the boulevard, and what are their favorite places around Akron that should inspire the design.

Kenmore residents overwhelmingly responded with a desire for increased safety, reduced traffic speeds, and economic development in the form of stores, restaurants, or coffee shops.



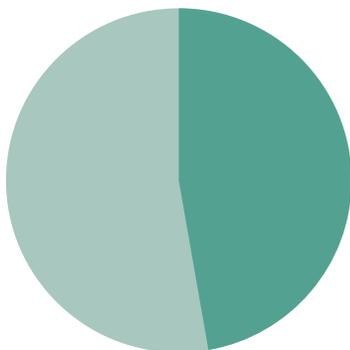
20%

asked for better sidewalks



16%

asked for protected bikelanes



42%

asked for a restaurant or coffee shop

Better Block Kenmore Community Survey

Help us find the best ways to improve Kenmore during our demonstration.

1. **What's your primary way of getting around Kenmore?**

Mark only one oval.

- Driving
 Walking
 Public transit
 Biking
 Other: _____

2. **What's your secondary way of getting around Kenmore?**

Mark only one oval.

- Driving
 Walking
 Public transit
 Biking
 Other: _____

3. **How would you rate your typical commute?**

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not good	<input type="radio"/>	Very good				

4. **What challenges do you face getting around Kenmore?**

Better Block Improvements

5.

What improvements would make your commute more comfortable?

Check all that apply.

- Protected bike lanes
- Better sidewalks
- Crosswalks
- Shade
- Public seating
- Better lighting
- Other: _____

6.

What do you like most about Kenmore Boulevard?

7.

What would you like to see more of on Kenmore Boulevard?

8.

What physical changes would you like to see, such as public seating, parking, lighting, parklets, trees etc.?

9. **What recreational and enrichment activities would you like to see added or changed, such as youth programs, performances, and classes?**

10. **What additional resources do you think are needed on Kenmore Boulevard?**

11. **What are some of your favorite spots around your community and Akron and why?**
This can include anything -- restaurants, parks, shops, a particular street, etc.

Personal Information

12. **What's your zip code?**

13.

How old are you?

Mark only one oval.

- Under 12
- 13-17
- 18-34
- 35-54
- 55-74
- Over 75

14.

What is your ethnic/racial background?

Check all that apply.

- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black/African-American
- Caucasian/White
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native American/Indigenous
- Other: _____

15.

What is your annual household income?

Mark only one oval.

- Under \$20,000
- \$20,000 - \$35,000
- \$35,000 - \$50,000
- \$50,000 - \$75,000
- \$75,000 - \$100,000
- Over \$100,000
- Other: _____

16.

What is your job and industry?

17.

How did you hear about Better Block Kenmore?

Mark only one oval.

- Poster
- Facebook
- Word of mouth
- News article
- Other: _____

18.

Are you interested in volunteering?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

19.

If yes, please provide your email.

Powered by



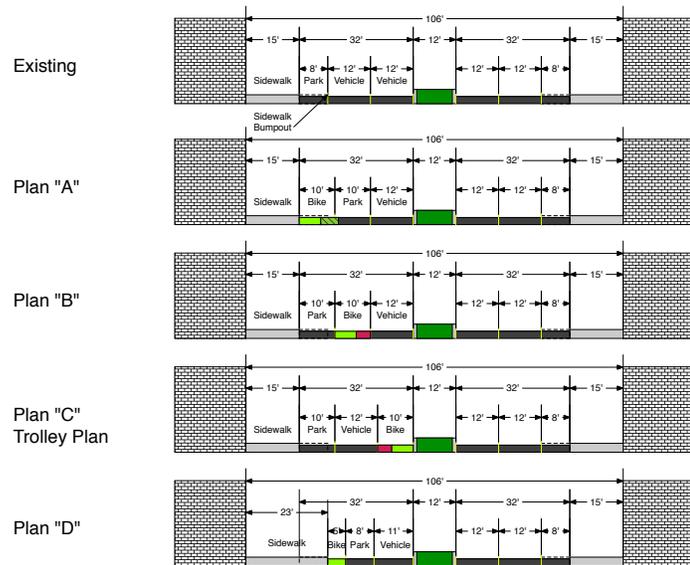
THE DESIGN

Based on the survey results from the community, we created a list of interventions to build on Kenmore Boulevard.

Public Infrastructure

Bike Lanes

The survey results showed that residents wanted to build bicycle infrastructure and slow traffic on Kenmore Boulevard. We decided to redesign the street to include protected bike lanes in each direction. Working with the local team, we created a number of possibilities for the type of bike lane to be installed, as seen in the graphic below.



Plan A consists of replacing the current on-street parking with a bike lane, protecting it with on-street parking and reducing Kenmore Boulevard to one lane. However, we realized that having the bike lane against the sidewalk would prove tricky for cyclists because of the bumpouts at the intersections.

Plan B has bike lanes that are not protected by on-street parking, exposing the cyclists to moving traffic, and reducing Kenmore Boulevard to one lane. This plan would be the easiest to build and for drivers to adjust to, but is less safe for the cyclists.

Plan C, “The Trolley Plan,” is based upon the tracks of the old streetcar system that used to run along Kenmore Boulevard. The main benefit of this plan would be the easy integration of the bike lane to other sections of Kenmore and eventually to the Towpath Trail.

Plan D, the one that was eventually agreed upon, is a similar design to Plan A, the main difference being the addition of a sidewalk extension to take over the on-street parking. Plan D provides on-street parking protection for the bike lane and narrows the 12-foot drive lane to 11 feet. The narrower road will slow traffic down through Kenmore and the sidewalk bumpout will provide more sidewalk space and prioritize pedestrians. Each of the bike plans included the same number of on-street parking spots as currently exists. The only change made to the street to accommodate the bike lanes is the closing of one lane of traffic.

Sidewalk Extensions



In order to slow down traffic on the boulevard, we needed to implement a “road diet,” or a thinning of the street. The sidewalk extensions were an integral part in making the street smaller. We widened the sidewalk by 8 feet, taking over the existing on-street parking. In order to differentiate the new sidewalk area from the bike lane, we cut a geometric patterned stencil out of vinyl and used tempera paint to color the sidewalks. We populated the new sidewalk with seating and trees to help foster the cafe seating environment on Kenmore Boulevard. Although the seating areas associated with other interventions were more heavily used, the sidewalk extensions played an instrumental role in slowing traffic and thinning the street.

Crosswalks, Intersection, Bumpout

During the Better Block workshops, we realized we had enough left over budget and time to create an intersection treatment for Kenmore Boulevard and 15th Street. Our intersection design already called for bike lane striping and a curb bumpout to accommodate cafe seating for the Alto pop-up coffee shop, but we decided to enhance the intersection more with crosswalks, pedestrian islands, and bumpouts on each corner. Crosswalks formalize pedestrian crossings and increase visibility to cars. When bumpouts are coupled with pedestrian islands in the middle of the street, pedestrians can cross one lane at a time and be protected in the middle of the street. The islands and bumpouts also force cars to make a wider, slower turn on to Kenmore Boulevard, leaving plenty of space for cyclists and pedestrians.

Crosswalks, Intersection, Bumpout



Economics and Local Businesses

Pop-Up Shops and Food Trucks

Another theme that frequently reoccurred in the survey results was economic development along Kenmore Boulevard. We wanted to demonstrate the economic potential that Kenmore has by highlighting existing local businesses, helping to seed new ones, and showing the available, vacant buildings. We asked that all of the businesses on Kenmore Boulevard activate their storefronts for the Better Block. We built Wikiblock display shelves for stores to assemble and stock with merchandise to create displays on the sidewalk.



We also wanted to provide an opportunity for potential local businesses to test ideas. Alto Coffee set up a temporary store in 992 Kenmore Boulevard. They served coffee and ice cream and used our Wikiblock furniture and the bumpout to create cafe seating out front.

“My wife, Helaina, and I love our home: Kenmore. I had been coming to First Glance student center since I was 16 and have formed deep friendships with residents of this neighborhood through the years. After accepting a position on staff at First Glance, we purchased our dream home in Kenmore and have been happy residents for nearly two years. We love the people of Kenmore, and have dreamed of owning a coffee shop on the Boulevard. When the opportunity to live out our dream at Better Block was presented, we knew this was the perfect way to introduce our idea to the community. The response from everyone was overwhelmingly positive, and our pop-up was an incredible success.

We believe in the people of this community. Our coffee company is named “Alto,” which is Italian for “higher,” and that is because we wholeheartedly want to uplift our community and show the rest of Northeast Ohio what an amazing place this is. We think that Better Block is a great example to what our neighborhood can achieve when people believe in it. So whether it be coffee shops and restaurants, skateparks and corner stores, or theaters and community gardens, Better Block was the seed and this little neighborhood is growing. We are simply ecstatic to be a part of it. We’ll be working on the details for a permanent location for Alto Coffee Co. in the near future. Stayed tuned. The sky’s the limit for Kenmore.”

– Jeremy DePace
Owner and Operator of Alto Coffee

Beer Garden



Next to Kenmore Komics, there is an empty ivy-covered lot that is locked and gated by a wrought-iron fence. We wanted to open the lot and allow it to be used by the community as a gathering space. Due to the density of Kenmore Boulevard, there is very little public, open space. We were inspired by the pocket park on Kenmore Boulevard between 13th Street and 14th Street, and wanted to create a similar space on the other end of the Better Block area. The team decided to create a beer garden in the

ivy-covered lot and set a stage in the parking lot across the street. Local volunteers spent countless hours in the weeks leading up to the Better Block building a deck for the lot that helped formalize the space and make it more comfortable. The beer garden provided a space for residents to gather and spend time with their neighbors while enjoying local music and beer.

Local Partnerships



Bus Stop and Bike Share Drop Off

For a city block to be successful, every method of transportation has to be included, not just cars. This ideology was one of the core themes of all of the interventions on Kenmore Boulevard. We wanted to create a city block where there were several options of transportation, all of which were equally accessible, convenient, and safe.

Within the Better Block site boundaries on Kenmore Boulevard, there are two existing Akron METRO bus stops, both of which are regularly utilized by residents. However, there is no infrastructure at the bus stops for increased comfort or protection from the elements. We partnered with Akron METRO to promote the bus system and design more formalized bus stops on Kenmore Boulevard. At each bus stop, we created our Wikiblock bus stop to provide seating and a shade structure. The bus stop also served

as signage for the bus schedules and routes. We also painted a striped bus pull-off in the street. The buses pull into this space, which allowed for the passengers to safely and efficiently board or exit the bus. The formalization of the bus stops on Kenmore Boulevard promoted the bus system as a viable method of transportation around Akron for all residents.

We also partnered with Summit Cycling to have a pop-up bike share on Kenmore Boulevard for the Better Block. Set up next to the bus stop, Summit Cycling provided bikes, including electric pedal assist bikes, for residents to use on the newly created bike lanes. The creation of a bike share and protected bike lanes promoted cycling within the Kenmore neighborhood and showed how feasible and convenient cycling around Akron can be.

Kenmore Boulevard



Activation and Programming



Mural and Kids' Play Area

One group we love working with is 8-80 Cities, out of Toronto. The group's guiding philosophy is that a public space should be able to accommodate everyone between 8 years old to 80 years old. Despite Kenmore being a diverse neighborhood with many different age groups represented, there are very few activities and spaces for kids. First Glance Student Center is the only place on the boulevard that is designed for kids and teenagers. We decided to create a public place where kids of all ages are welcome and can be entertained. We partnered with a local artist to outline an interactive paint by numbers mural that could be completed by kids during the Better Block. We also created a play area with toys and games and other activities for kids.

Music and Stage

The Kenmore neighborhood of Akron has a long history as an influential music district. There are five local recording studios on Kenmore Boulevard as well as a music store and the legendary Lay's Guitar Repair, who has worked with artists such as Joe Walsh, Bad Company, and Cream. To pay homage to Kenmore's music history, we brought in the city of Akron's ShowMobile Stage, as well as Jilly's Music Room sound techs, to pop-up in the parking lot across from the beer garden and Kenmore Komics.

Before the Kenmore Better Block, there was very little collaboration between the local recording studios. Through the planning process of the Better Block, we were able to bring the studios together to write and record a song about Kenmore, called "Bones of the Boulevard", written by Kenmore singer songwriter Jim Ballard.

THE MARKETING

Our most valuable in-kind sponsorships were 427 Design, Evolve Creative Group, and Summit County Public Health. 427 designed our logo, t-shirts, and print materials, which included business card-sized handouts, volunteers distributed at music related events, including Highland Square PorchRokr Festival, a daylong music festival that draws thousands of people to a nearby neighborhood. The cards were easy to put in a wallet and very cost-effective to print. We also printed yard signs, which we placed strategically throughout Kenmore and in areas around the PorchRokr Festival. Other printed pieces included a print ad in our local lifestyle publication, the Devil's Strip, a billboard in a high-traffic section of the neighborhood, bag stuffers for our local grocery store, and concert bill-sized posters that hung in storefronts of local retailers to reinforce the music theme of the event. The cost of all print materials was covered by the Summit County Public Health sponsorship. T-shirts were also a big hit and offered the opportunity to fundraise for the event while building community brand.

Evolve Creative Group created a website and social media plan, which played a big part in our success. We created and shared articles about our local businesses, music scene, and more, and we were sure to create individual Facebook events for each of our musical artists to use to promote their specific appearance. We also created a two-minute promotional video, which we shared on our website and via social media. This garnered 23,000 views on Facebook alone.

The goal was to make Kenmore seem more welcoming and accessible to outsiders, but also to give our neighborhood residents something to be proud of.

Finally, we gained quite a bit of earned media for the event. We staggered our press releases—one about three months out to announce the event, another about four weeks out to announce our funding for the event and full lineup. Thus, we were able to gain a bump in media attention during the last month of the event planning. Kenmore Better Block representatives appeared on the local alternative radio station and on morning and afternoon shows on Akron's news radio station. We also gained TV coverage from several stations in Cleveland. We were always helpful and available to the media, building trust with them early on. One TV station covered us twice to promo the event, and multiple print publications covered Kenmore Better Block-related stories more than once. One TV station was covering a shooting that occurred in the neighborhood when, in an attempt to somewhat control the narrative, a resident put the station in touch with the Better Block team. Working with them, we were able to offset the negative with the positive developments in the neighborhood. The same shooting was covered by our local newspaper, and the addition of the Better Block message definitely changed the trajectory of that story.

– *Tina Boyes, Block Captain*

Kenmore Morris Column



THE FABRICATION

Wikiblock

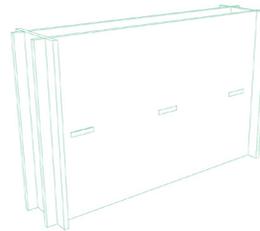
Wikiblock is an open-source toolkit of designs for benches, chairs, planters, stages, bus stops, beer garden fences, and kiosks that can be downloaded for free and taken to a makerspace where a CNC router (a computer-aided machine) can cut them out of a sheet of plywood. Most products can then be assembled without glue or nails, and used instantly to make a block better.

For the Kenmore Better Block, we cut:

2 Bus stops



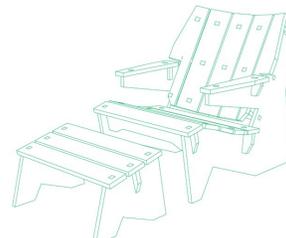
10 Barrier Planters



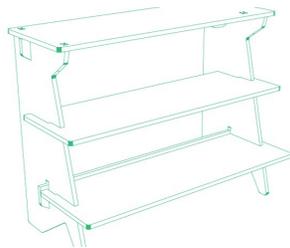
15 Cafe Sets



1 Adirondack Chair



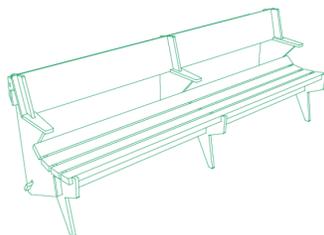
5 Display Cases



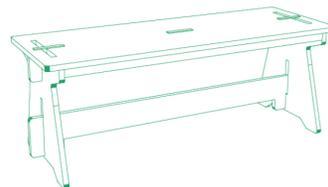
1 Morris Column



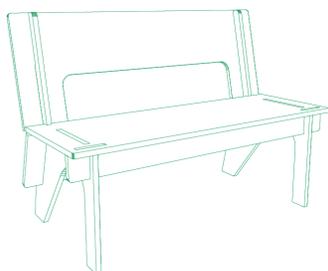
2 Davis Benches



2 Greenline Benches



2 Dreambox Couches



2 Bike Racks



Bio Med

When a Better Block takes place, connections happen. In Kenmore, we needed access to a CNC router to cut the Wikiblock elements. A Kenmore resident and teacher from the Bio-Med Science Academy, Christina Aronhalt, heard that a CNC router was needed and asked if her school could partner with Kenmore Better Block. Bio-Med Academy's teaching method relies heavily on problem solving, critical thinking, and creating a sense of community. These qualities made the school the perfect partner for the fabrication step of the planning process, and allowed the students a hands-on opportunity to learn how to run a CNC router. Keagan O'Mara, the shop teacher, helped with the process, and said that it allowed them to approach digital fabrication in a new way. "Partnering with Better Block to work on Wikiblock street furniture has really helped us utilize our CNC machine in new ways, and help develop a corps of students who are capable and confident in its use," she said. "Our students have also seen first-hand how they can apply design and engineering skills to help make a positive impact on their local community."



During the three weeks working with BioMed Science Academy, the students were trained on how to use the machine, load a file, and execute a project. While the projects were being cut, we gathered in the room next door to study other organizations that build with purpose. We also discussed what it means to build and design with a goal in mind, how to collect data, and how to identify and solve a problem in your community.

The partnership with Better Block Foundation allowed the students of BioMed Science Academy the opportunity to help design, fabricate, and assemble elements that will serve a bigger purpose for the community, while developing skills that will be useful in the future. According to Christina Aronhalt, "The students involved in this project used important 21st-century skills that our school focuses on that are vital for their future. They worked collaboratively as a team and worked to problem solve when necessary. The students learned a new physical skill that could contribute to their future, but they also learned to build important 21st-century skills such as collaboration and problem solving." The students walked throughout the campus and discussed potential future projects that could utilize the CNC router. They targeted issues, like organization for materials and creating folding walls for studying in privacy. Partnering with Bio-Med helped with Better Block's bringing organizations together and fostering partnerships within the community. "Sense of community is an attribute of Bio-Med Science Academy," said Christina Aronhalt. "We were happy to team up with a wonderful organization that has a common vision on the importance of community."

– Kai Wick, AmeriCorps VISTA and Wikiblock Program Director

THE BUILD AND WORKSHOPS



Build Metrics



68 gallons of paint



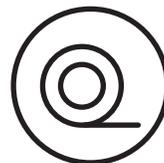
7 broken mallets



61 Volunteers



53 Sheets of plywood



540 yards of duct tape

Volunteer Schedule

August 30, 2017	6:00-9:00	Median mulching, beer garden: stringing lights, some wikiblock, Bike lanes, measuring and striping etc.
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August 31, 2017	9:00-12:00	Bike Lanes, painting, sidewalk stencil
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	2:00-5:00	Bike lanes, painting, sidewalk stencil
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	5:00-8:00	Stencils and painting
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September 1, 2017	9:00-12:00	Wikiblock building, set up, landscaping
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	4:30-10:30	Beer garden operation
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	4:45-7:30	Information table
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	5:30-7:30	Feedback and data collectors
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	7:30-10:30	Information center
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		Feedback and data collection
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		Trash pickup
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		Tear down/cleanup
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September 2, 2017	11:30-5:30	Beer garden operation
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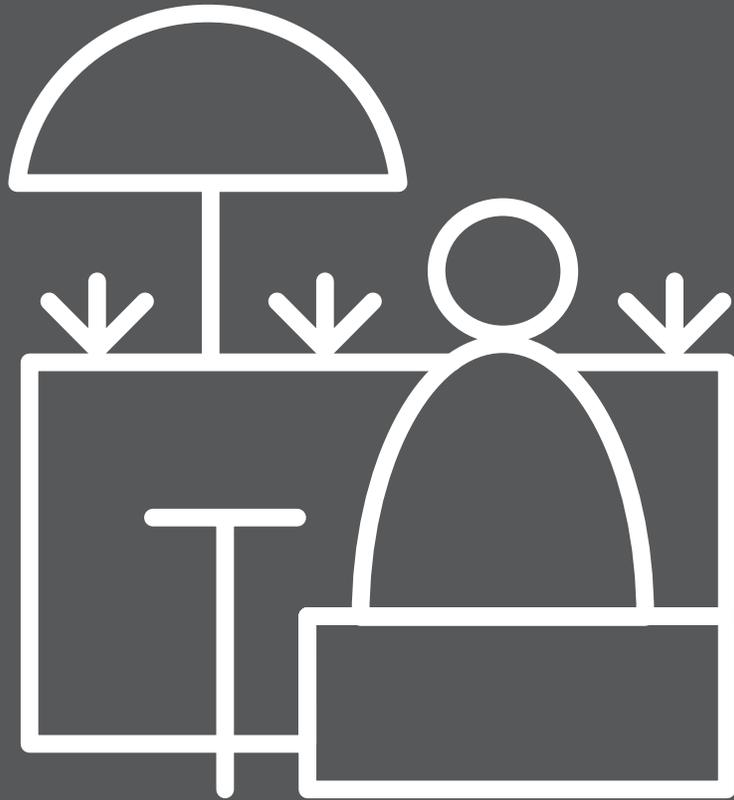
	12:00-2:30	Information Table
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	1:00-3:00	Feedback and data collection
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	2:30-5:00	Information Table
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	3:00-5:00	Feedback and data collection
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	5:00-8:00	Tear down and cleanup
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THE BETTER BLOCK

PROGRAMMING SCHEDULE

Throughout the Better Block, there were different elements of programming to highlight local arts and businesses. The schedule consisted of music demonstrations and workshops, and performances by local artists, building on Kenmore's identity as a music and arts-centric district.

Friday, September 1, 5-10 P.M.

Guitar Department

6 p.m. – *EarthQuaker Devices Bass Clinic*

8:30 p.m. – *EarthQuaker Devices Guitar Clinic*

Lay's Guitar Shop

6 – 8 p.m. *Joe Heindel inlay demo*

Metro Dental Lab

5 – 9 p.m. – *Kenmore Night Market*

Rialto Theatre

6:30 – 7:30 p.m. – *Ukulele Play-Along*

8:30 – 9:30 p.m. – *The Electric Pressure Cooker*

10:30 – Midnight – *Afterparty w/Run Thomas*

Run

Kenmore Branch Library Parking Lot

6-10 p.m. – *First Glance Outdoor Skatepark*

Jilly's Music Room Stage

5 p.m. – *Mr. Pink ('70s – '00s Rock Favorites)*

6 p.m. – *Blonde Boy Grunt and the Groans (Outlaw)*

7 p.m. – *Zack & the Bright Lights (Soulful Indy)*

8:30 p.m. – *The Living Deads (Rockabilly Punk)*

Calhoun Recordshop

5:40 p.m., 6:40 p.m., 8 p.m – *DJs*

Various Locations

Buskers, or street performers, set up at various locations between 13th and 16th Street throughout the event

Saturday, September 2, Noon-5 P.M.

Guitar Department

2 p.m. – *EarthQuaker Devices Bass Clinic*

4 p.m. – *EarthQuaker Devices Guitar Clinic*

Lay's Guitar Shop

All Day – Guitar-making demo

Metro Dental Lab

3 – 9 p.m. – *Kenmore Night Market (3-9 p.m.)*

Rialto Theatre

2:30 – 4 p.m. – *Paint and Sip*

Jilly's Music Room Stage

12 p.m. – *Outdated View (Blues/Rock)*

1 p.m. – *Rachel & the Beatnik Playboys (Americana/Blues)*

2 p.m. – *Red Rose Panic (Hip-Hop)*

3:30 p.m. – *Robert T. "The Real Soul Pleaser" and the Brand New Bag Band performing the music of James Brown*

Calhoun Recordshop

12:40 p.m., 1:40 p.m., and 3 p.m. – *DJs*

Kenmore Better Block



THE BUSINESSES

The Rialto Theatre

The Kenmore Better Block brought to the Kenmore neighborhood a chance to see what could be for the community and the business district. We saw locals using the evening to walk and bike the Boulevard, using the business district as an opportunity to shop, buy, and experience entertainment for a weekend. We saw people from the Greater Akron area enjoy places on the Boulevard they have never seen or known were here. (We actually even had some locals say they never knew some of the businesses were even here.) The business owners had the opportunity to showcase their stores a larger audience than they usually get in a regular day or night. From a personal standpoint, we, as owners of The Rialto Theatre, were upset watching people normally leave and businesses close up for the evening, because it was such a sight to see. However, as the Better Block event was shutting down, we were starting another event for the community that evening.

The more immediate impact for The Rialto Theatre was economically. The Better Block helped sustain what we do on a normal Friday or Saturday night. However, I think the biggest thing it did, was show us that if we could strengthen the business throughout the weekend, I believe the other businesses on the Boulevard could

as well. From a communal aspect, we have heard people say, “We need more nightlife, more places for people in the neighborhood and surrounding areas to go and socialize.” Our reply was that Better Block helped begin addressing these questions for the future.

We, and other local community leaders, have been starting to talk about the possible quick wins we can make now to build on the momentum of the Better Block. Nate (my business partner and brother) and I have already started talking about other buildings to purchase so we can offer more arts and nightlife. Unfortunately, that isn’t as easy while maintaining the business we have now, but it’s one of our top priorities.

To reiterate, I believe the most important aspect of the Better Block here in Kenmore was the appreciation of the community and the willingness to make this a successful place. Before, we at The Rialto Theatre thought we were on an island, and so did other business owners; however, after the event, we opened up doors for business owners and the community to begin the conversation of reconnecting Kenmore.

– Seth Vaill, Owner of the Rialto Theatre

The Guitar Department

The Guitar Department hosted guitar workshops and demonstrations. They partnered with EarthQuaker Devices, a legendary Akron pedal company, to have a pop-up display on the sidewalk showcasing their different pedals.

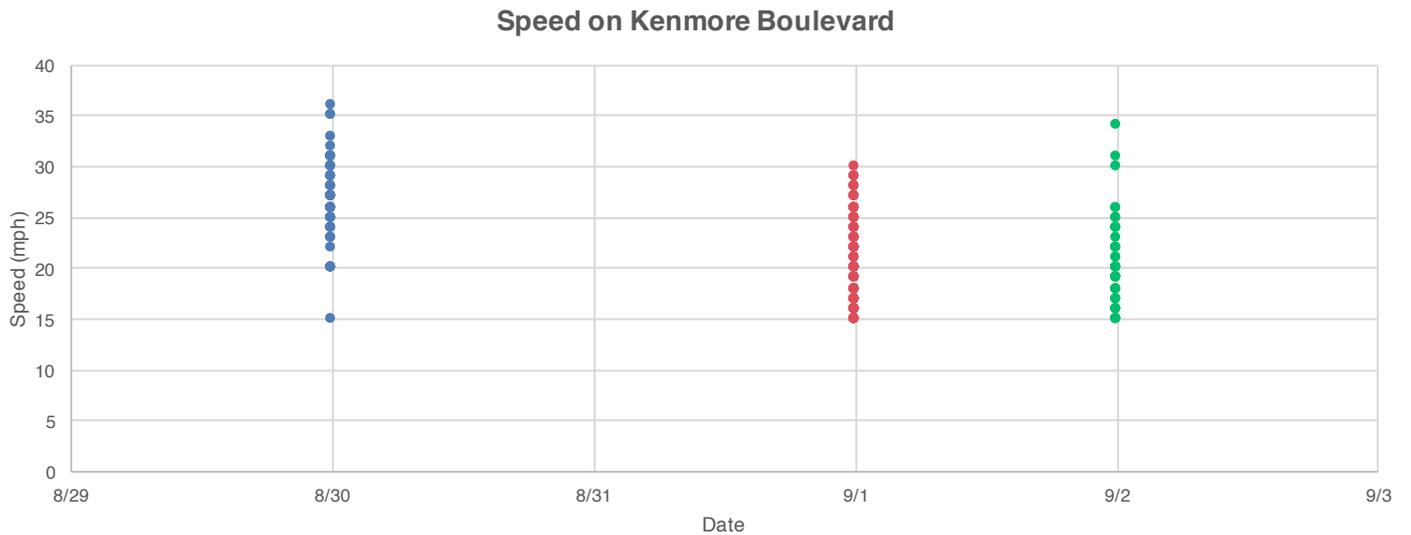


THE DATA

Kenmore Data

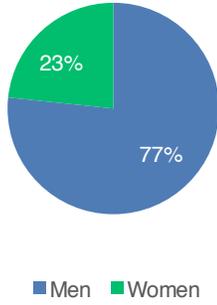


Before and after impressions of Gehl's 12 Quality Criteria. As seen in the graph, the ratings of Kenmore Boulevard increased drastically during the Better Block.

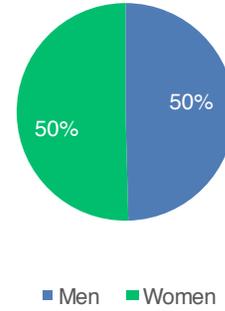


Average traffic speeds on Kenmore Boulevard were collected using the police speed signs posted at each end of the Better Block area. As seen in the graph, the average speed decreased throughout the week. The standard deviation for each day decreased as well, as fewer people sped through the Better Block area.

Men vs Women Before

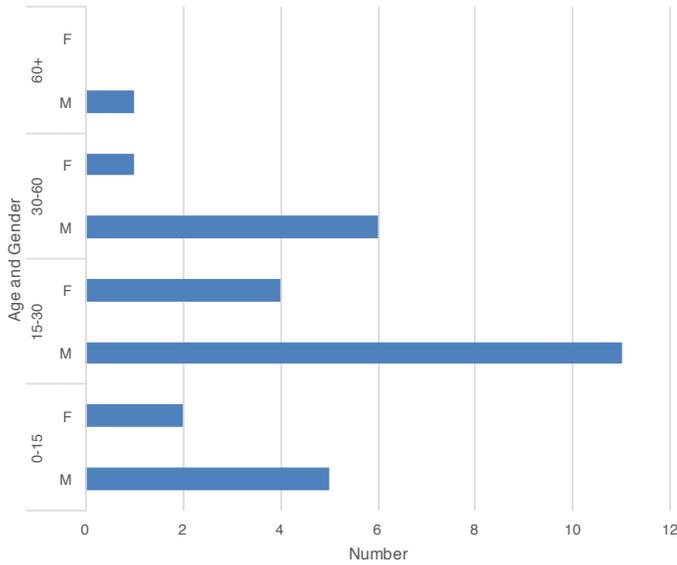


Men vs Women After

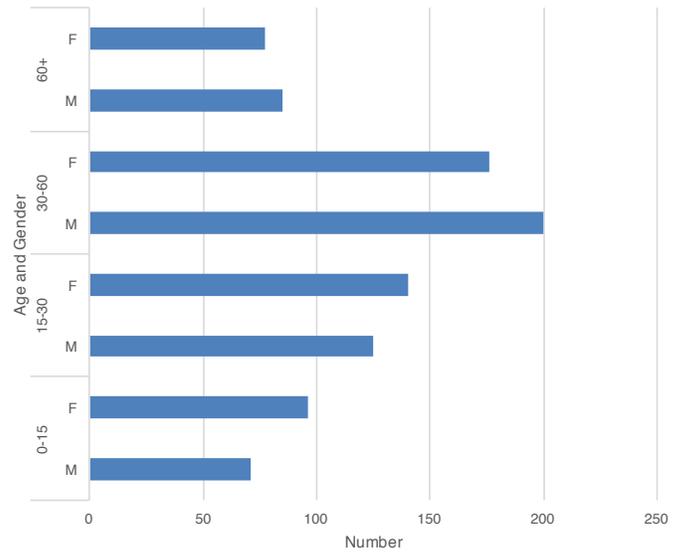


Ratio of Men versus Women on Kenmore Boulevard before and during the Better Block. The presence of women in an area is indicative of the perception of safety in the space.

Age and Gender Before



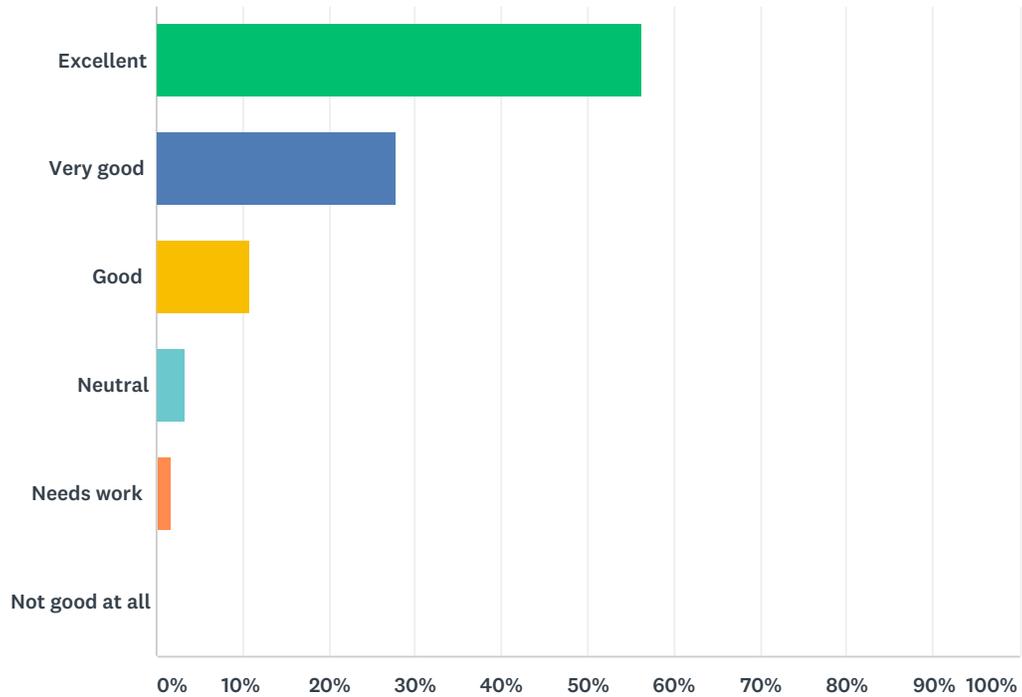
Age and Gender After



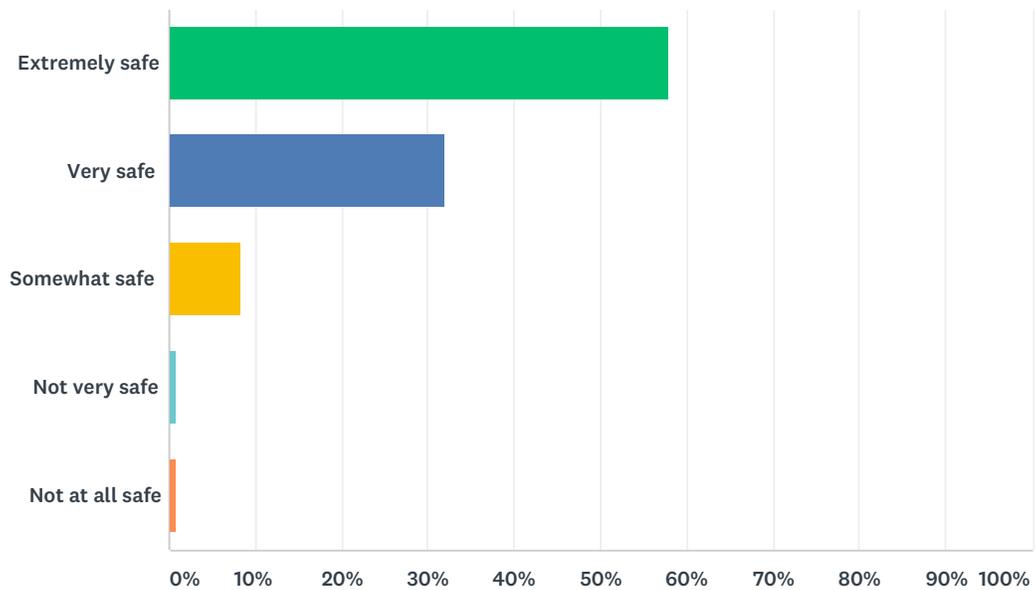
The graphs above show the age and gender distribution before and after the Kenmore Better Block. A more even distribution of age and gender is representative of the success of the space. It shows that people of all ages feel comfortable and are entertained in the area.

RESPONSE

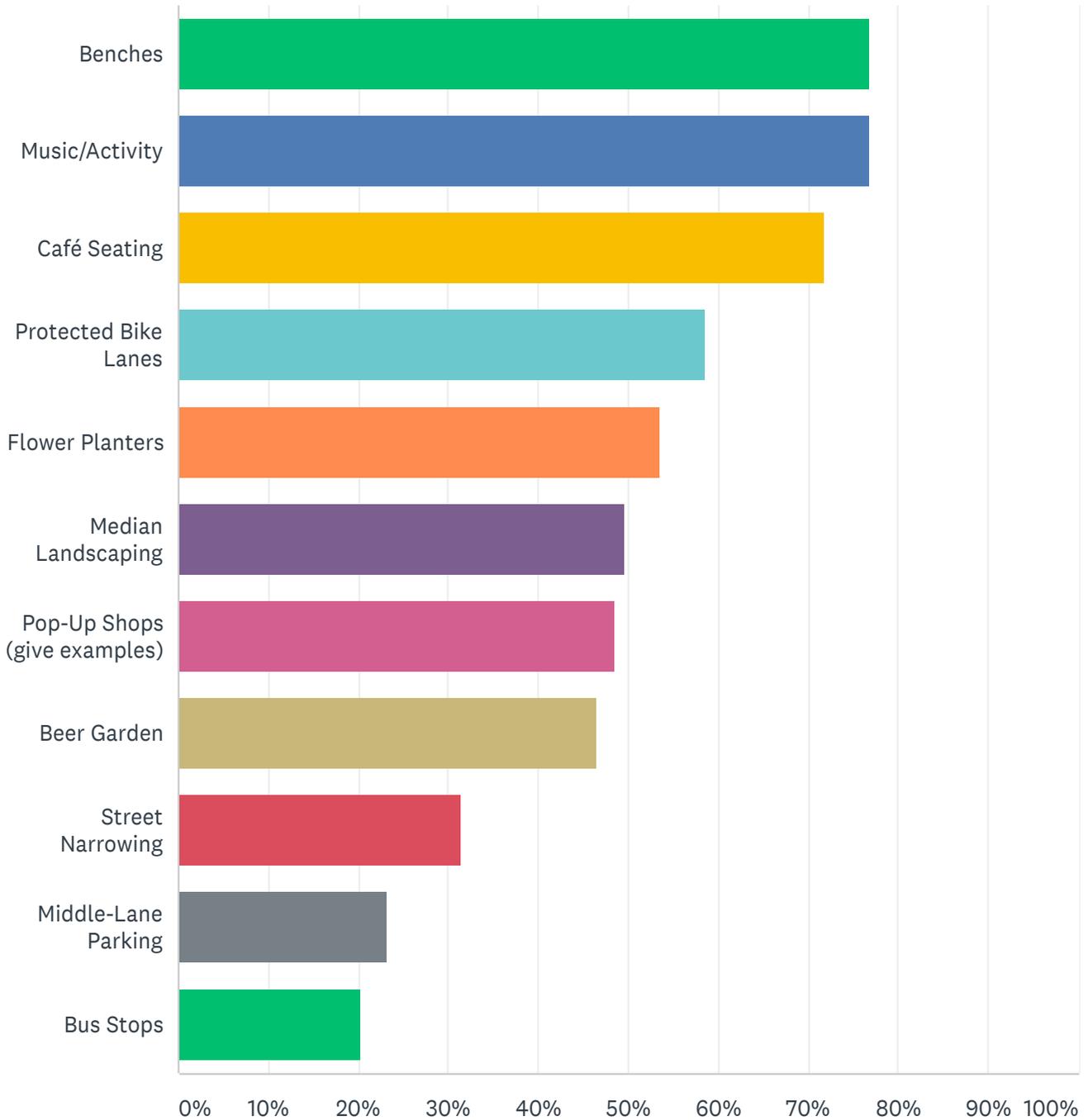
What Was Your Overall Impression of Better Block?



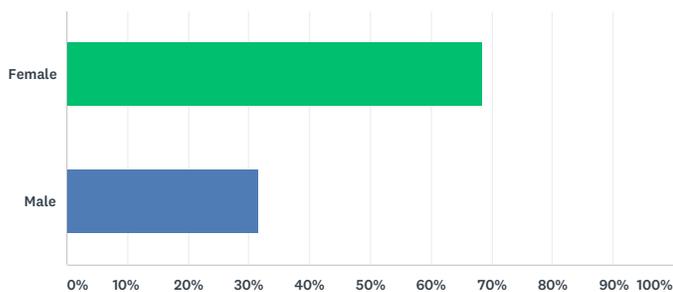
How Safe Did You Feel on Kenmore Boulevard During Better Block?



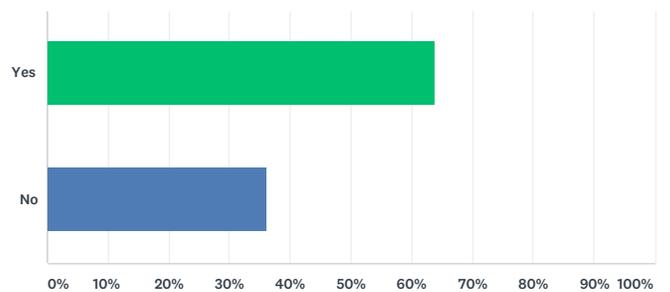
Which Elements Would You Like to See Continue?



What is Your Gender?



Are You a Kenmore Resident?



TESTIMONIALS

Ethicrace Pop-Up Shop

Terrance Bailey, the owner of the soon-to-open clothing store called Ethicrace, was one of the many business owners to pop-up during the Kenmore Better Block. We provided him with Wikiblock display cases to showcase his clothing line. Terrance, who has lived in Kenmore for many years, was overjoyed to see his street come back to life. He said, “For the first time in years, people just walked up and down the street with a smile on their faces.”

Kenmore Police Officer

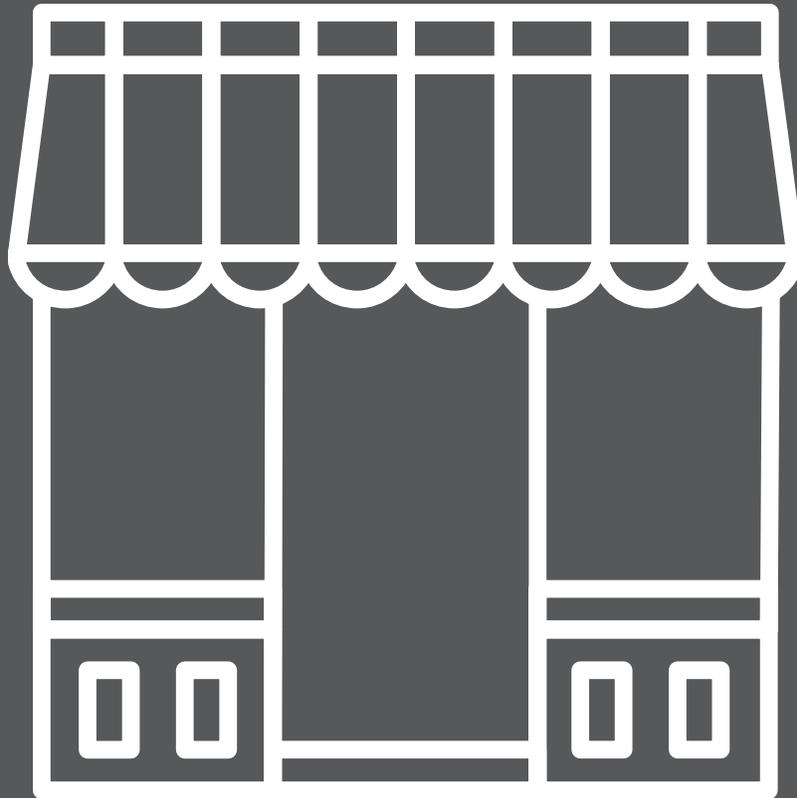
During the Better Block, we were collecting traffic speed data from the speed limit signs when a police officer called us over and helped take some measurements in specific areas using his radar gun. We were talking to him about his experiences on Kenmore Boulevard and what it was like to patrol the area. He said that the biggest complaint that he gets from residents is speeding down Kenmore Boulevard. Although there is rarely a driver speeding significantly above the posted speed limit, due to the design of the area, it feels fast to pedestrians. The continuous building frontage and storefronts make Kenmore a walkable district. However, with such a wide street and relatively high traffic speeds, walking down the boulevard becomes unpleasant. When asked about the new design of Kenmore Boulevard, the officer was very supportive. He said, “I would love Kenmore to look like this permanently. There is no reason for this street to have four lanes.”

General Response

The general response gathered from attendees of the Better Block was overwhelmingly positive. Many passed by during our clean up and asked if everything could stay out for a while longer. Despite some difficulties at first, all of the interventions were well received by the community. At first, there were concerns about moving the on-street parking, specifically in front of the dentist office and the hair salon. There was a lack of understanding on how the new design would function and provide the same amount and type of parking. However, once the bike lane, sidewalk extension, and adjusted on-street parking were implemented, they understood and were happy with the results.

Another popular concern was that the narrowed street will not be accessible for emergency vehicles. However, during the Better Block, multiple ambulances and fire trucks were able to navigate the street with sirens on efficiently and easily.

All of the concerns of the Better Block were mitigated once the designs were in place and the residents of Kenmore were excited to see their street turn into a vibrant walkable district.



PROGRESS + STEPS

PROGRESS SINCE BETTER BLOCK

Busk Until Dusk



We have been using the Wikiblock furniture out on the streets during our Busk until Dusk events, which are a continuation of one of the most successful aspects of our Better Block event, the street performers. On October 6, more than a dozen local performers opened their guitar cases and put out their buckets and played half-hour sets in front of the Rialto Theatre and Studio 1008, and the night ended with a triple bill at the Rialto Theatre. Our pop-up coffee shop, Alto, also reopened for the night and utilized the furniture in the vacant space they occupied during Better Block. We plan to continue that event in the spring. While obviously not as large-scale as Better Block, this event drew a couple hundred people to Kenmore Boulevard during and after the event, which is a huge improvement to people being scared to go there. In addition, Wikiblock bus stops are still being used by community members, and our Morris Column has a bill or two on it announcing an upcoming local event. Live Music Now! is a partnership between Kenmore Neighborhood

Alliance and four other entities: Kenmore resident, singer-songwriter and producer Jim Ballard; recording artist, sound engineer and boulevard studio owner M. Thomas Kinkade; Open Tone Music, a nonprofit composed of jazz musicians who offer weekly music lessons in Kenmore; and Big Love Network, a neighborhood improvement organization that recently relocated its office to Kenmore. All musical partners program their own night each month in order to offer diverse, high-quality entertainment that draws the community and visitors back to Kenmore Boulevard. Patrons are suggested a sliding-scale donation at the door, with all the money they donate going directly to the artists performing that night. The goal is to create a culture of generosity toward artists in an effort to change Kenmore's image in the broader community and prove it a viable place for artists to invest their time and talent. Craft beer sold at the event benefits Kenmore Neighborhood Alliance.

– Tina Boyes, Block Captain

Todd Ederer

Kenmore Better Block provided the community a living reminder of past excitement while showing a glimpse of what will be. Since the event, several people have expressed interest in opening businesses on the Boulevard. We are currently working with folks for a good food kitchen carryout restaurant with some inside seating in the small corner building on 15th Street. The sidewalk bumpout for additional outside seating is now on the radar screen of City of Akron Engineering. It may actually happen with the recent passage of local Issue 4 providing additional funding for streets as well as police and fire departments. In hindsight, the strong community support for the Issue may have been enhanced with Kenmore and the other Better Blocks in the City by showing residents (and voters) the possibilities of enlivened streets.

Enthusiasm continues through the Kenmore Neighborhood Alliance with its formation of a Projects Committee. First project is designation of a Historic Business District. The Kenmore Historical Society endorses this effort and has supplied significant information on the

buildings. Dialog has commenced with local restoration architects and State of Ohio Historic Preservation Office. Second project is marking and signage for the Kenmore Loop connecting bicyclist on the popular Ohio and Erie Towpath to the Kenmore Business District and residents to the trail. This also is on the radar screen of city engineers.

We continue to evaluate and execute possibilities with other buildings on the Boulevard. We have entered into a short-term lease agreement with two photographers for Camera Obscura Arts. They will utilize the space for studio shoots and events while working on feasibility and funding for the darkroom. The New Kenmore Ideal will be activated by the Kenmore Neighborhood Alliance Events Committee working with the neighborhood recording studio owners and musicians.

Life is looking better on the “Bones Of The Boulevard.”

– Todd Ederer

Community Development Corporation (CDC)

In migrating to a CDC model, the Kenmore Neighborhood Association will initially be focused on continuing to build our neighborhood brand. We will also focus primarily on the main three-block business district where the Better Block event took place. We are currently working through a fellow Knight Foundation grantee on a design-your-own-mural coloring book and art contest in hopes we can get more murals beautifying our gateway and blighted spaces on Kenmore Boulevard. We will also continue to build on our placemaking efforts by holding music-related events. We will soon be implementing the pop-up storefront concept in the form of a live performance venue this winter, with a generous property owner offering use of his space for basically the cost of utilities. This has activated our hidden network of studio

owners and musicians. Volunteers will gather to improve the space and we are considering creating new Wikiblock furniture to specifically suit that venue.

After Better Block, we were awarded a two-year, \$240,000 grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to hire an executive director and implement some of the branding and events-based work we have begun. We will also begin to create a vision and plan for the organization that includes continued creative place-making and economic development. We believe the success of Better Block was part of the reason we received this funding, and we look forward to continuing the good work we've begun.

– Tina Boyes, Block Captain

Bike Lane on Kenmore Boulevard



STEPS FOR THE FUTURE

From the Better Block, there have been many positive changes to Kenmore Boulevard. To continue building on the momentum created by the Kenmore Better Block, we recommend addressing the following areas: activation and programming, economics and local business, public infrastructure and local partnerships. The newly formed Community Development Corporation will be instrumental in helping to oversee the development and activation of Kenmore Boulevard.

Activation and Programming

The Busk Until Dusk events are continually activating the street, giving residents a reason to visit the Boulevard while contributing to the developing identity of Kenmore. Continuing to activate the Boulevard through programming is essential in bringing people back to the area and redeveloping Kenmore as a destination within the greater Akron region. The types of programming on Kenmore Boulevard will help

to determine the identity and character of the neighborhood. For example, hosting a local music festival will help identify Kenmore as a music district within the greater Akron area. We also recommend hosting an event on the 1-year anniversary of the Better Block to showcase the progress that has been made and keep the momentum moving forward.

Public Infrastructure

Moving forward, the Better Block team recommends advocating for making physical changes to the street. Implementing traffic calming changes, like adding bike lanes and reducing the number of through traffic lanes, as done during the Better Block, will help to solve the issues of traffic speeds and also help brand Kenmore as a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood. Working with organizations, such as the League of American Bicyclists (www.bikeleague.org) and People for Bikes (peopleforbikes.org), can provide new grant opportunities and resources to advocate for bike infrastructure. Continuing to encourage businesses to utilize the sidewalk in front of their stores will help create a cafe seating environment and bring public life back onto the street. Working with the City to make the bumpout at 992 Kenmore Boulevard permanent to accommodate cafe seating will also help promote public life on the street. Through the creation or support of a Public Improvement District, Tax Increment

Reinvestment Zone, or a Tax Increment Finance Zone, the CDC can advocate to the city for changes to be made to the street and sidewalks. Raising funds through development fees, impact fees, or special area impact fees, as well as advocacy, will help speed up the process of making permanent physical changes to Kenmore Boulevard.

Landbanking local properties is an effective way for the Community Development Corporation to control how buildings and properties are developed and renovated as well as what kinds of businesses are locating in the neighborhood. The CDC can ensure that buildings are renovated with best urban design practices in mind such as large storefront windows, permeability to the street, and mixed ground floor uses. Forming a Commercial Community Land Trust can also help to promote affordability for local tenants and address unwanted displacement.

Local Partnerships

We recommend continuing to foster and pursue relationships formed with the partnering organizations of the Kenmore Better Block, notably the Akron METRO. The CDC can work with the public transportation system to improve efficiency and comfort of the buses and bus stops on Kenmore Boulevard will help transform the neighborhood transformation system into a multimodal network.

The CDC can also work through the City's various neighborhood and community programs, like the Neighborhood Business District Program to make physical improvements to the block.

Contact in Akron METRO:
Antoine Buie
antoine.buie@akronmetro.org

Economics and Local Business

Support of local business is vital for the redevelopment of Kenmore. The CDC can incentivize local businesses through assistance with advertising and event planning, or financially, through micro-grants, investments, and loans. The CDC can also influence best urban, design practices from local businesses. Incentivizing businesses to remodel and create larger street facing windows, having street merchandise stands, or cafe seating will help to transform Kenmore Boulevard.

The Community Development Corporation can help found and support small, local businesses turning the pop-up shops from the Better Block into brick and mortar institutions. The creation of micro-lending programs with bridge financing and technical assistance from local financial or lending institutions or from the University of Akron.

Fundraising and Capacity Building

There are many ways CDCs can raise funds to undertake the redevelopment of Kenmore Boulevard. In addition to the private grants mentioned above and the local structural public financing (PIDs, TIFs, etc.), CDCs can apply for federal and state funding, and in particular, Community Development Block Grant funding. Joining the Main Street America Network (www.mainstreet.org/home) can provide new opportunities for training, grants, and new partnerships.

To continue the support of the development of Kenmore Boulevard, Better Block is using the leftover money from the Kenmore Better Block to help found a new event space. 952 Kenmore Boulevard is being renovated with a redone bar, a new stage, and back wall. The space will be used to host concerts and programming and continue to activate Kenmore Boulevard.

For more resources on Community Development Corporations, visit www.community-wealth.org.



THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



**KNIGHT
FOUNDATION**



Earthquaker Devices

Kenmore Komics & Games

First Glance

Summit County Councilman Tim Crawford

Fred Zumpano

Subway

Francesca Thoricht

