

### **Budish Launches Neighborhood Surge Program Aimed at Transforming the County's Disadvantaged Communities**

Pilot Program to Start in Cleveland's Central Neighborhood 5/20/21-Cuyahoga County Website

<http://executive.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/Neighborhood-Surge-Program.aspx>

CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OH - Today, during his sixth State of the County Address, Cuyahoga County Executive Armond Budish announced the launch of the Cuyahoga County Neighborhood Surge program, a new initiative designed to transform the County's underprivileged, most in need communities by pouring concentrated resources into a selected neighborhood to help lift it up across all areas. The County is proposing to begin the Neighborhood Surge program in Cleveland's Central neighborhood.

"Our first step with the Neighborhood Surge program is to get input from residents and community leaders in a specific community. Together, based on their priorities, we will come up with a holistic plan to address their needs," said Cuyahoga County Executive Armond Budish. "For a period of one year, we will actively concentrate our programs on that community, working to lift up the residents and businesses so that they can get the support they need to thrive. We cannot reach our fullest potential when segments of our community are left behind. By transforming the areas most in need, we can improve the lives of all County residents."

In partnership with former Cleveland Councilwoman Phyllis Cleveland, new Cleveland Councilwoman Delores Gray, and County Council President Pernel Jones, Jr., the County will begin the Surge program in Central neighborhood and allocate resources across several key areas, including job creation, small business supports, enhanced community services, and bridging the digital divide.

The County, along with OhioMeansJobs, Burten, Bell, Carr Development, Inc., and Cleveland Metropolitan Housing Authority will train Central residents for in-demand jobs. The County will also dedicate a portion of its summer job positions for youth in Central.

Funding for the program will also support the preparation of vacant sites to be shovel-ready for development, which will create new jobs for neighborhood residents and enhance desired community services.

The County will work with its small business assistance partners, the Economic Community Development Institute (ECDI), the National Development Council,

JumpStart, and the Urban League of Greater Cleveland to support existing businesses in the area and foster entrepreneurship among residents. Additionally, the County will work with other government agencies receiving American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to increase internet coverage by up to 70 percent for Central residents. The Surge program will also focus resources on road improvements, providing financial literacy and job coaching programs, and enhancing the Central neighborhood by including it in the tree planting initiative.

# Surge: Armond Budish plans to pump resources into Central neighborhood in pilot program

KARIN CONNELLY RICE | THURSDAY, MAY 27, 2021

In an effort to revitalize Cleveland's urban core one neighborhood at a time, [Cuyahoga County executive Armond Budish](#) announced last week that he is launching a new pilot program, the Neighborhood Surge program—an initiative designed to transform the underserved and overlooked neighborhoods by focusing concentrated resources into one community at a time.

The program kicks off in the Central neighborhood, and Budish says the planning is already underway. “We provide all different kinds of services all throughout the County,” he says. “There are plenty of needs out there and we try to address them all. But they're not unlimited resources, so we try to spread them out.”

Earlier this year, Budish says his chief of staff, Bill Mason, had an idea: to focus on one community and address all the needs at once. “We're trying to see if by surging resources in one area, they will get the support they need,” says Budish. “We're hoping to really transform a community.” He plans to accomplish this revitalization within one year.

Budish admits that surging a neighborhood requires a lot of support. “Any project like this requires a lot of coordination,” he says. “We already have a very good relationship with the key players in the Central area. It makes a lot of sense because in most places you spread the resources as widely as possible. We'll still do that, but to make a deep impact you need to focus on [one area].”

Budish says he has partnered with former [Cleveland City Council](#) member Phyllis Cleveland, new Cleveland Councilperson Delores Gray, and County Council President Pernel Jones, Jr. to work on the program, and he says he is coordinating with the City of Cleveland.

**Budish says the Neighborhood Surge program in Central has 10 focus areas:**

- 1. Provide job training for in-demand jobs, working with [Burten, Bell, Carr Development](#); [Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority](#) (CMHA); and [Ohio Means Jobs](#).**
- 2. Work with sector partnership employers to hire employees living in Central.**
- 3. [Cuyahoga County](#) will dedicate 20 summer positions for a youth summer jobs program.**
- 4. Prepare vacant lots for shovel-ready development.**
- 5. Create ongoing partnerships with organizations that provide loans to support existing small business and also foster entrepreneurship among residents, working with small business assistance partners [Economic Community Development Institute](#) (ECDI), the [National Development Council](#), [JumpStart](#), and the [Urban League of Greater Cleveland](#).**
- 6. Work with [Digital C](#) to close the digital divide and other government agencies use the receiving [American Rescue Plan Act](#) (ARPA) funds to increase internet coverage so that 70% of the neighborhood is connected (2,500 Central household to not have internet connections).**
- 7. Work on road improvements.**
- 8. Work with [Holden Forests & Gardens](#) on a tree planting program.**
- 9. Work with the [City of Cleveland](#) to improve the Cleveland Central Recreation Center.**
- 10. Work with [KeyBank](#) on a financial literacy program.**

**“We’re trying to cover as much as we can,” says Budish. “We’re trying to make a significant impact in a neighborhood.”**

**Budish and his team are already considering what neighborhood to tackle in a year, he says, with Maple Heights and East Cleveland among the list of contenders. But for now, he is optimistic about the transformation of Central.**

**“Lifting up a community like Central, if we can accomplish it here, the impact will be much broader than just Central,” he says. “Maybe we’ll look back in five years and say, ‘look what we’ve done.’”**

\*This is A Letter sent July 22, 2021 from Mary Louise Madigan | Director of Communications Cuyahoga County of Executive Armond Budish. This is what she sent in response to my Public Records Request for info about the SURGE Project. GG

## Addendum 3

### **Cuyahoga County Neighborhood Surge Project**

The goal of the Cuyahoga County Neighborhood Surge Project is to pour concentrated resources into a selected neighborhood, for a period of one year or longer, to help lift it up across all areas. The County is beginning the Neighborhood Surge Project in the Central neighborhood to help create jobs, support small businesses, increase availability of low-cost internet options for residents, and support the creation of enhanced community services in the area.

The Neighborhood Surge will allocate resources across several key areas:

Job Creation, Small Business Supports, Enhanced Community Services and Bridging the Digital Divide.

### **Job Creation**

- Explore opportunities for businesses involved in our three sector partnerships to hire neighborhood residents as well as persons being served in the diversion center.
- Engage Ohio Means Jobs to more intentionally support neighborhood residents with job training and job placement. CMHA Housing will assist with job training and placement.
- Ohio Means Jobs will assist with providing individuals in need of job training. Individuals will be trained for three weeks to one month and will receive a stipend while being trained. They will then be placed in jobs. The County Economic Development Department will follow them for 90 days to assess progress and ensure success.
- Use funds, which can properly be spent in the City of Cleveland, to support the preparation of vacant sites to be shovel-ready for development, especially development which creates new jobs for neighborhood residents or enhances desired community services.
  - Councilwoman Gray and Joy Johnson, Executive Director at Burten, Bell, Carr Development, Inc., to assist in determining sites that can be made shovel-ready for development projects.
  - Assist shopping plaza located at 37<sup>th</sup> and Central Avenue to accommodate construction of a grocery store.
- Work to connect Central residents with employment at Old Juvenile Court site.
- Human Resources to notify Joy Johnson or team member about available jobs at the County every Friday on an ongoing basis. Councilwoman Gray to determine and provide County with additional contact person(s).

- Include Central neighborhood in the County summer jobs program and earmark up to 20 positions (out of 100 total) and positions for the young adults ages 18-24 through the CCMEP program for Central neighborhood residents.

### **Support Small Businesses**

- Direct our small business assistance partners to support the existing businesses in the area and foster entrepreneurship with the Central Neighborhood residents. Partners include: ECDI, the National Development Council, and the Urban League of Greater Cleveland.
- Direct Cuyahoga County's SkillUp program to offer support to all small businesses in this area.
- The Cuyahoga County Department of Development will reach out to small business owners through the Burten Bell Carr Development Corporation. The Department will also reach out to residents who need assistance starting small businesses through the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority and the management of the Arbor Park housing development located in Central neighborhood.

### **Enhancing Community Services**

- Using funds, which can properly be spent in the City of Cleveland, to support enhanced community services including safety, recreation, and education. This might include casino tax revenue if authorized by County Council.
  - The County will attempt to utilize casino funds to assist in remodeling and repairing the Cleveland Central Recreation Center on Central Avenue.
- Convene anchor institutions through the Campus District, to discuss enhancing their support for neighborhood businesses and residents.
- As one approach to meeting resident and institutional safety concerns, consider extending the existing downtown Business Improvement District to include the area of the Old Justice Center, with an appropriate County financial contribution commensurate with its footprint in the area.
- Key Bank to provide financial literacy program to Central residents – ready and willing.

### **Bridging the Digital Divide**

- Expand current access to broadband initiatives in this neighborhood to advance equitable access to job training, virtual job fairs, education, and other essential services.

- There is approximately 5,000 unconnected households in Central neighborhood. There are three different options available to provide low-cost internet access within the Central neighborhood. Each of the options does not provide free internet, but monthly internet between \$15-\$18 per month.

#### Option 1: Widespread coverage of Central Neighborhood

- Partner with Digital C to provide coverage for approximately 90% of the Central neighborhood and up to 1,920 families internet access.
- Most expansive coverage with fastest and most reliable internet speeds
- Total cost: \$1,718,429
  - Installation cost: \$1,153,787
  - Household equipment (1,900 houses): \$564, 642
- Monthly internet cost: \$18/month

#### Option 2: Moderate Coverage of Central Neighborhood

- Partner with Digital C to provide coverage for approximately 70% of the Central Neighborhood and up to 720 families internet access.
- Moderately expansive coverage with fastest and most reliable internet speeds
- Total cost: \$555,456
  - Installation cost: \$375,814
  - Household equipment (500 houses): \$179,642
- Monthly internet cost: \$18/month

#### Option 3: Basic coverage of Central neighborhood

- Partner with PCs for People to provide coverage for approximately 20% of the Central neighborhood and up to 600 families internet access
- Less expansive coverage with comparable internet speeds, but less reliability
- Total cost: \$150,000
  - Installation cost: \$120,000
  - Household equipment (250 houses): \$30,000
- Monthly internet cost: \$15/month

- This option would require access to a fiber backbone at the Sterling Library or CMHA rooftop, or it would require the County to also bring fiber to the old Juvenile Justice Center building.

Finally, the County is actively exploring designating Central Neighborhood as one of the first County Equity Zones. This would include aligning County Public Works' road and bridge program into the area and work to get this area designated as a Federal Equity Zone which would bring federal funds to the area.

### **Tree Planting Initiative**

- \$100,000 investment in tree planting in Central neighborhood
- Old Juvenile Court eastern quadrant will eventually be torn down, allowing for open greenspace development containing trees, walking path, benches, etc.



## Addendum 4

**Central Neighborhood Network**  
216.339.0571  
[centralneighborhoodnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:centralneighborhoodnetwork@gmail.com)

August 6, 2021

Armond Budish  
Cuyahoga County Executive  
2079 East Ninth Street  
Cleveland, OH 44115

Dear County Executive Budish:

We are writing to you to request a gathering/meeting with you about the ***Cuyahoga County Neighborhood Surge program*** in Cleveland's Central neighborhood. We are a group of resident leaders from throughout the Central neighborhood, many of whom have lived in the neighborhood for decades, who want and need to be at the decision-making table of this effort in a serious way. We have a process and plan that we have developed that we want to work with you on to implement that includes residents at the center working with institutions to share power and make positive change. We believe that this plan will best serve the residents of Central and will ensure that resources are disbursed in the most effective way possible.

Based on what we have read, we are concerned that Cuyahoga County is working with some community-based institutions that do not truly represent us or speak for us and is following a pattern that hasn't worked for decades. We understand you have an August 18<sup>th</sup> meeting scheduled with the community. However, we are requesting a smaller gathering/meeting with key resident leaders prior to this date. Our plan brings together residents with community-based organizations and the county to ensure resources are distributed equitably and effectively. Neighborhood Connections, a close neighborhood partner, would facilitate this plan with us, with community-based organizations, and with the county.

Most times, efforts like the one you are proposing fail because the people most affected by the violent structures of racism and poverty are not in decision-making roles when these initiatives are planned and implemented.

Professionals have been driving community change efforts for decades. We have a progressive city and county government that has worked alongside many nonprofit institutions to address perceived community needs for decades – mostly to support direct service programs. Yet despite all this, vast inequities still exist in terms of wealth, health, and access to opportunities.

A few things are evident to us:

- Community professionals are often so eager to help others in need that they can actually reinforce low-income residents' identity as needy rather than highlighting their value as contributing members of the community;
- Community professionals often listen to only those currently engaged and develop an incomplete story of the challenges and opportunities;
- Community professionals get funded by large institutions and feel pressure for quick results and bring in solutions from another context;
- Community professionals who are largely focused on offering a good product can often miss their unique opportunity to build networks of mutual support and bring new voices to the community table;

**On your website, behind your photo you are quoted stating: " We have a responsibility to work together so that we can all thrive." *That includes us, the residents of the Central neighborhood.***

Please contact us to set up a time to meet.

Humbly Submitted,

Gwendolyn Garth, Artist  
Central Neighborhood Network  
centralneighborhoodnetwork@gmail.com  
216.339.0571

Dawn Glasco  
Central neighborhood Network

Jerome Baker  
Pres. Men & Women of Central

Charmaine Jordan-Payton  
VP. Men & Women of Central

Cc:

Pernel Jones, President, Cuyahoga County Council  
Delores Gray, Councilwoman, City of Cleveland, Ward 5  
Joy Johnson, Executive Director, Burton Bell Carr Development Inc.  
Susanna Krey, President & CEO, Sisters of Charity Foundation  
Richaun Bunton, Managing Director, Cleveland Central Promise Neighborhood  
Tom O'Brien, Director, Neighborhood Connections  
Lila Mills, Associate Director, Neighborhood Connections  
Erika Brown, Community Network Manager, Special Projects + Training, Neighborhood Connections