

**Opening Statement of Dan Barton  
President of the Grafton Hill Association  
and Renaissance Alliance Coordinator;  
Appearing Before the Sub-Committee on Information Policy,  
Census, and National Archives  
October 29, 2007**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Representative Turner, and members of the subcommittee. My name is Dan Barton. I am the President of the Grafton Hill Neighborhood and a Coordinator with the Renaissance Alliance Project.

Thank you for the opportunity of coming before your subcommittee today to discuss the importance of Census information to the Renaissance Alliance Project.

This project was conceived to address the ongoing effects of population shifts recorded in the US-Census and demographic data, away from the older established population centers. We use the census data to affirm our subjective observations on the 'population-churn' and changes occurring within our five Renaissance Alliance (RA) neighborhoods (Historic Grafton Hill, Jane Reece, Historic Dayton View, Five Oaks, and Riverdale).

Our neighborhoods were originally built between 1870 and 1920, with occasional additional high-density construction occurring when the Dayton population peaked in the early seventies. These neighborhoods originally contained a representative cross section of the US population of those times. Using Census data from the fifties on, we could track ongoing changes that became an exodus of certain population segments. This exodus occurred for many reasons we are all familiar with, and also occurred nationwide, confirmed by national Census and demographic data.

This population shift away from the established urban core impacted our neighborhoods in significant and negative ways. The population shift left many buildings in Grafton Hill without a viable market. Lacking competitive amenities, buildings with high density could not be kept fully occupied, and consequently profitable enough to be adequately maintained. Lack of maintenance meant remaining populations became discouraged at the spreading deterioration and left. This 'population churn' occurred within neighborhoods, and spread to surrounding original single-family homes, as homeowners began to lose confidence in the neighborhood conditions and housing values. Census data from the 70's and 80's indicated continuing trends towards a declining, older, and poorer cumulative population.

In inflation-adjusted constant dollars, our original neighborhood structures lost almost 75% of their value between 1955 and 1980. This collapse of value discouraged many potential residents from choosing our neighborhoods instead of surrounding suburban or new-rural construction. Popular trends visible in Census data indicated new families and younger working populations were opting for suburban contexts. The value decline has also discouraged owners of larger residential units from making the necessary improvements to maintain marketability.

As the neighborhoods declined, area institutions like Grandview Hospital and the Dayton Art Institute became concerned. Landlocked -- with infrastructure obstacles limiting their growth -- and a need for a stable and secure environment caused them to look for solutions to these immediate challenges. The neighborhoods themselves realized we had to attract a younger working age

population to manage the upkeep of 100-year-old historic neighborhoods. We realized that some trends visible in the census data had to be reversed. The same census trend information was prompting many large businesses and chains to not locate in our neighborhoods

To address this situation, and with the support of then Mayor, now Representative Mike Turner, and Doctor Roy Chew of Grandview Medical Center, and the St. Mary's Development Corporation, we initiated the Renaissance Alliance. This brought together the five neighborhoods, their businesses and institutions. We determined that our common interests and varied resources could produce a positive turnaround if we could work to deploy them with agreed-upon common goals.

We determined to leverage our collective assets -- historic neighborhoods, cultural attractions, strong institutions with a large employee base, central location -- and work to increase the size of, and restore economic strength to, our overall population.

**The goals we identified were as follows:**

1. Make significant streetscape changes to permit the expansion of a landlocked Grandview hospital campus to increase employment.
2. Remove urban blight negatively impacting all neighborhoods, businesses, and institutions.
3. Leverage planned developments of the neighborhood, business, and institutions to encourage and fund additional comprehensive development.
4. Develop a mechanism to extend and leverage blight removal as re-development takes place.
5. Utilize empty land for new housing construction-- the key to attract younger and working populations necessary for continued success of the neighborhoods and institutions.
6. Introduce new marketable housing types attractive and suitable to younger working age populations into the five neighborhoods.
7. Renovate abandoned structures to attract people back into our neighborhoods and strengthen our demographic profile and tax base.

**Progress:** Since our initiation of these activities in 2004, we have been leveraging every conceivable asset at our collective disposal. The RA partners have coordinated strategies and activities, and have been able to accomplish the following:

1. **Secured small HUD blight-removal Grants** which allowed St. Mary's to start removal of urban decay negatively impacting neighborhoods, businesses, and institutions.
2. **Grandview Hospital has acquired and removed blight** to facilitate their campus expansion, anticipated to exceed **\$65,000,000**. This expansion will bring many more potential working age residents into our neighborhoods.
3. **Leveraged Ohio Department of Transportation I-75 rebuild**, with a transportation grant, to facilitate street re-alignment to facilitate the Grandview campus expansion,

bringing \$7,366,000 of critical street-infrastructure improvements.

4. **Grandview Hospital and City of Dayton launched the Renaissance Incentive Home Ownership Project** to encourage their Grandview employees with a **\$9,000 (per household)** incentive to purchase homes in the Renaissance Alliance area.
5. **Launched “Victorian Row Historic Re-Creation Housing” unique new home construction:** St. Mary’s Development acquired control or access to ten single home lots suitable for the Grandview Hospital Workforce. Construction approved and pending. Total build value anticipated at **\$3,000,000.**
6. **Renovation: RA planning triggered** private investment renovation of two formerly abandoned apartments, rehabbing 148 units of market rate housing, with a private sector investment of over **\$4,200,000.** Additional renovations are planned.
7. **“Historically Inspired” Condo Complex planned:** RA developments have encouraged developers to plan a large “historically inspired” condo development on the Riverfront at Central Avenue. Plan calls for high-rise condominiums, valued at over **\$28,000,000.**
8. **Have coordinated with City of Dayton and Dayton City Schools** planned improvements in the area totaling **\$37,050,000.**
9. **Riverdale targeted** by The City of Dayton for blight-acquisition for **\$10,000,000.**
10. **Have identified and targeted** additional blighted and vacant parcels, totaling **400 build able lots** for future development.

**Summary:** Since our initiation of these activities, starting in 2004, RA influenced new development and planned development amounting to \$108,466,000. The City of Dayton and Dayton Schools are coordinating \$47 millions in previously approved development. We expect that this development will bring thousands of new residents to work, play and live, into our neighborhoods. We expect this RA plan to strengthen the viability of our urban core, and we look forward to the Census information to confirm our progress. We also plan to use this documented census data to encourage retail business investment in our area.

Mr. Chairman, Committee Members, thank you for time today and your interest in Renaissance Alliance urban development project.

Respectfully:

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