

## **SPECIAL REPORT: Community Meeting on the Intersection of 71<sup>st</sup> and Binford**

April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2005 Skiles Test Elementary School

### **The Not-So-Good News:**

Many were hoping to hear plans for the intersection only to find out that there are currently NO new plans. The southeast corner is owned by a developer but he has had no success with convincing a grocery chain or other “anchor store” to locate there. The northwest corner has many owners whose plans are unknown at this time.

One of the city planners, Bob Wilch, who happens to live in Highgate east of Steinmeier, presented interesting information about the area which may be contributing to a lack of interest in the intersection:

*Retailers generally look for:*

- *Income Density* (highly concentrated housing with high income levels): Although income levels are higher in the area, housing is spread out so that income density is actually low.
- *Local Traffic Volume*: although there is a high volume of traffic on Binford, most of it is heading through the area to the north, not remaining in the general area.
- *New Housing*: the area was pretty much developed by 1985 and few new houses have been constructed since that time, so it is not a target that comes up easily on the retail radar.
- *Big Parcels of Land*: A new Marsh or Kroger requires approx. 60,000 sq ft. of building space surrounded by land for 400+ parking spaces. None of the four corners of the intersection fit that model well. In the case of the southeast corner, the existing property is long from north to south but not very deep. In the case of the northwest corner, there are over 30 property owners who each own small parcels of the land, so there is not one big parcel available.
- *Empty Land*: The cost per square foot to redevelop land that has existing structures and concrete is much greater than the cost to develop empty land.

### **The Good News:**

Turn out at the meeting left an impression on the city officials who attended. They were expecting 15-20 attendees and over 300 neighbors showed up, many from Steinmeier. The parking lot was overflowing and there was standing room only in the meeting. Steve Tally, the City-County Council President, and Gordon Hendry, head of the mayor's office of economic development both said that based on the level of concern demonstrated by attendance the issue would be brought to the attention of the mayor and others immediately.

A task force of representatives from each of the surrounding neighborhoods is being assembled to identify the problems and propose solutions. This task force will work with representatives from the city to try to attract businesses to the intersection. One mayor's office representative compared this situation to the Washington Square Mall/Eastgate Mall problem on the east side. The neighbors organized and brought their ideas to the mayor, resulting in the area being prioritized at the top of his economic development priorities. We too have the chance to draw attention to 71<sup>st</sup> and Binford if a few neighbors are willing to work with the task force.

### **What Can You Do?**

1. *One or two representatives from Steinmeier need to work on the task force.* Experience with city government, developers, or retailers would be a plus. Contact a Steinmeier board member immediately if you have an interest.
2. *Call the Mayor's Action Center 327-4MAC whenever you see problems in the neighborhood or the community.* Examples include vandalism, looting, abandoned trash or vehicles, problem animals, potholes, bad streets, and bad sidewalks. One mayor's representative showed a graph of the number of calls that had come from this area over the past six months and there were very few. He said this tends to draw attention away from the area because the assumption is things are going well. So don't hesitate to call if you see a problem in the neighborhood or the area. The squeaky wheels will get the grease (or as the mayor says “the Lord helps those who help themselves...and so does the city.”)!