Christian Community Center

Strategic Plan 2014-2017
Our Mission is to raise up leaders for our community from the West End of Bowling Green through education, sports, and spiritual development.

Our Vision is for the Foundry Christian Community Center to build redemptive partnerships around the children and families of the West End of Bowling Green to bring about the revitalization and transformation of our community.
Guiding Principles:

**Community Development:** We seek to empower individuals and groups of people by providing them with the skills they need to effect change in their own communities with the goal of long-term transformation in people and systems. *(See Appendix A for Principles of Christian Community Development)*

**Faith Based:** We stand in a theological tradition that affirms a life-giving faith and strong social engagement. We believe our relationship to God calls us to seek the good of our neighbor in humble service.

**Asset Based Strategic Partnerships:** As a matter of faith we affirm that God is already at work in agencies, groups, schools, churches and people of the West End. Many of the gifts, talents, and resources already exist for a thriving community. We seek to avoid duplication of services or energies, striving instead to support and utilize existing efforts.

**Children and Poverty Focus:** We seek to help children escape the damaging effects of poverty. This happens best through education and mentor relationships. Around these two areas, we will strengthen holistic efforts of individuals and groups to meet community needs and aspirations. Efforts will focus on enriching quality of life for children, families, and neighborhoods.

**Education Focus:** We will continue to forge strong partnerships with schools and preschool programs in order to support their work with young people. Our efforts and activities will emphasize early childhood education as well as education enrichment.

**Relationship Focus:** We seek to join with others as equal partners for mutual benefit. We recognize that diversity is a strength and will seek to involve all people as active participants in their community. Thriving communities cultivate mutual respect and human dignity, sharing both its responsibilities and celebrations. We recognize this takes a long-term commitment.

**Impact Focus:** We will strive for excellence in the delivery of our services and activities and in the cultivation of relationships. We believe that success is measured by outcomes, and will seek to deliver results that benefit both individuals and the community.
Executive Summary

This plan arises from four years of research, community development, relational and program development and visioning through the Foundry Board of Directors. Groups and individuals have consulted various constituents, practitioners, and leaders in the community as well as neighborhood residents through asset-based methods. The result is a clear sense of focus around four key areas: resourcing the mission, relational and partnership development, education and mentor development, and health and fitness.

The Foundry’s mission is to develop leaders among the children and young people of a specific neighborhood—the West End of Bowling Green. The focus is intended to be targeted with a desire to maximize impact and concentrate resources. This concentration includes a focus on children, especially preschool-aged children. Even more specifically, it is designed to identify high potential children and families who might otherwise go unidentified and under-resourced. The goal is to build strong relationships with these children and families and enhance opportunities. Success is defined in children who might otherwise do “ok” instead thriving, succeeding, and leading in positive ways in our community. As one would imagine, this vision requires comprehensive and long-term efforts.

Of all areas of focus, education becomes the primary tool for escaping the negative effects of poverty. Other initiatives, including sports teams, community gardens, health-based initiatives, and neighborhood groups enhance and enrich life in the community. Undergirding all of this is a faith-based approach that is not merely focused on propositional evangelism without relationship. Instead, the faith aspects of this plan fuel a desire to commit to long-term development, increasing human dignity on both sides of “the tracks” and raising hope that God can and does change people and systems.

Section 1 offers a short description of how we have arrived at this point in development—including a statement of the West End community’s need. Due to the central role of education in the plan, many stated needs highlight the challenges related to education and early childhood development.

Section 2 offers an assessment of the current reality in a SWOT analysis format (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat). This section highlights four years of partnership and program development that shows why this plan is so critical. It is time for plans to be formally compiled, organized, and implemented. Strengths include strategic partnerships already developed among more than 70 churches, Dishman McGinnis Elementary School, the Gatton Academy of Western Kentucky University, Barren River Health Department, and other groups and organizations. Challenges include establishing consistent communication and funding for staffing and programming, as well as servicing the current debt on the facility. Opportunities
include the growing possibility of the City of Bowling Green establishing a long-term lease with the Foundry to construct a $350,000 soccer complex on site.

Section 3 outlines a four-part strategy to drive the Foundry’s Development in the next three years:

Strategy #1: Resourcing the Foundry’s Mission and Vision.

1. Develop a paid and volunteer staffing strategy.
2. Develop, staff for, and implement a comprehensive communications strategy for Foundry initiatives.
3. Develop funding strategies.

Strategy #2: Relational and Partnership Development

1. Continue to build relationship networks among the people of the West End through events and activities.
2. Maintain and expand existing partnerships and develop new ones.

Strategy #3: Education and Mentor Relationships

Due to its importance, this strategy section includes a detailed summary and statement of need related to education. The four areas of focus in this section include:

1. Expand School Mentoring Program with Dishman McGinnis Elementary School.
3. Expand Summer Enrichment Camps.
4. Establish Early Childhood Education initiative—with potential for on-site Early Learning Center.

Strategy #4: Health and Fitness

1. Expand current sports ministries and facilities.
2. Expand current health and community garden initiatives.

In conclusion, it bears repeating how this plan seeks to focus efforts around education and relationship. Dr. Ruby Payne, an expert on the mindsets of economic classes and overcoming the hurdles of poverty and author of The Framework of Understanding Poverty, emphasizes that children get out of poverty primarily through education and redemptive relationships. It is natural then that these two areas become the focus of the work that will be done in the next five years and beyond.
Section 1—Statement of Community Need

In 2009, the Bowling Green District of the United Methodist Church began seeking opportunities to address poverty in the West End of Bowling Green. That same year, the Bowling Green district purchased the former Boys and Girls Club, instituted a Board of Directors, and established the Foundry Christian Community Center in the heart of the West End. Demographic information confirms that the vast majority of the people in this area live below the poverty level—with a per capita income of $17,761. As is true of generational poverty, lack of financial resources represents only one of the challenges facing the people there.

• 41% of the residents are Hispanic with limited ability to speak English.
• Preschool children are unprepared for Kindergarten
• Young people are ill equipped to access educational and social opportunities that mitigate the negative effects of poverty.
• Nearly a quarter of the residents do not have a high school diploma and only 10% have a college education.

Educational Challenges in the West End

Educational challenges arise from the child’s earliest exposure to education. At Dishman McGuinness Elementary School, a school in the heart of the West End, 96% of student qualify for free and reduced lunch. 63% of kindergarten-age students were deemed “not ready” by the "Brigance Kindergarten Screener” administered the first few weeks of school. At a time when Kindergarten standards are more rigorous than ever, these children begin their school experience with an 18-month disadvantage. (See Appendix B for School Readiness Skills in Kentucky)

The key to leveling the playing field for these children is access to quality early childhood education. Research shows that not having that access creates long-term effects on children, families and on society: Children living in poverty without access to quality early childhood education are:

• 50 percent more likely to be placed in special education;
• 25 percent more likely to drop out of school;
• 60 percent more likely to never attend college;
• 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime;
• 40 percent more likely to become a teen parent.

Access to high quality early childhood education is limited or expensive. Public schools provide preschool education to 3-year-old children based on intervention needs and to 4-year-old children based on financial need. Younger and average/above average-ability children have more limited access. In other words, the children with some of the greatest potential can fall through the cracks.
Section 2—Assessment of Current Reality

Strengths:
Ongoing initiatives already in place are laying the foundation for future development in both education and redemptive relationships. These include:

• A leadership structure is in place: the Foundry Board and a part-time Executive Director, provided by Broadway United Methodist Church, share the responsibility for guiding the development of the Foundry.

• Church partnerships: The Bowling Green United Methodist District Office has located at the Foundry providing access to the leadership and resources of 72 churches, District Superintendent, and District Secretary. Corazones Cristianos, a Spanish-speaking worshipping congregation is located at the Foundry. Seventh Street Baptist Church gathers just a block from the Foundry and provides leadership on the Foundry Board.

• A thriving partnership exists with Dishman McGinnis Elementary School (DMES) in which area churches provide mentors for DMES students as well as school supplies and assistance.

• The Gatton Academy partners with the Foundry to offer an after-school enrichment program at DMES staffed by these gifted high school students in educational and mentor relationships.

• Summer enrichment camps were offered at the Foundry for four weeks in June/July 2013.

• Community partners, such as the health department, sports teams, and community gardens offer programs and relationship building opportunities on site. (See Appendix E for List of Community Partners)

• A 2013 partnership with Barren River Health Department resulted in $10,000 Healthy Communities Grant for Community gardens, signage, and health-based activities.

• The Foundry facility, including almost 5 acres, provides sufficient space to accommodate the development of the four key initiatives for the next 3-5 years. (See Appendix F for Foundry Plat Plan)

Weaknesses:

• In the 4½ years since the purchase of the center, only interest has been paid on the debt held by the Bowling Green District, leaving the entire principal balance of approximately $260,000 coming due June of 2015.

• Up to this point there has been no comprehensive plan, resulting in slow and sometimes stalled progress in the development of the Foundry Christian Community Center.

• Communications with other churches and community organizations about the successes, needs and potential of the Foundry has been insufficient.

• Inadequate funding exists for a full-time director and programming expenses.
Opportunities:

• The receptivity of Dishman-McGinnis Elementary School (DMES) officials to partnering with the Foundry in enrichment and educational initiatives led by the Foundry is cementing a partnership that will provide an open door for Foundry initiatives.
• A new facility is being built for DMES that will position the school within a few blocks of the Foundry in the fall of 2014, opening up many opportunities including moving the after-school programming to the Foundry.
• Events such as summer camps and school mentoring, as well as the receptivity and endorsement of DMES have established the relational foundation for future initiatives with the residents of the West End.
• Community partnerships have taken shape and present the opportunity of multiplying the potential of development in the West End.
• Parents, especially single mothers in the neighborhood, are motivated to provide the best opportunities for their children.
• The City of Bowling Green is assessing the feasibility of constructing a high quality soccer facility on the Foundry site including fields, irrigation, lighting, and parking improvements.
• Western Kentucky University offers great potential for partnership—especially in the area of early childhood education.

Threats:

• Lack of mutual understanding of poverty and failure to form relationships with people of diverse economic and sociological backgrounds could result in ineffectiveness and/or failure of the development plans.

Section 3—Strategies, Goals and Objectives 2014-2017

Strategy #1 Focus on Resourcing the Foundry’s Mission and Vision (Executive Director and Foundry Board)

Area: Staffing

Goal—Develop paid and volunteer staff to carry out the operation and initiatives of the Foundry in collaboration with the Foundry Board.

1. Maximize the role of Executive Director—seeking opportunities for expansion of position to full-time over the next two years.
2. Identify the key paid or unpaid staff positions (with the exception of the preschool staff) that are needed for the operation and coordination of the Foundry facility and implementation of the Foundry strategic plan.
3. Develop job descriptions, salary recommendations and a recruiting/hiring timeline.
Area: Communications
Goal—Staff for, develop and implement a comprehensive communications strategy for the Foundry initiatives.

1. Hire a communications staff position, expand an existing staff position, or recruit a volunteer or team of volunteers to develop, implement and coordinate a communications strategy that encompasses the following:
   a. Development of a list of supporters (individuals, churches, non-profit organizations, city officials, media personnel, etc.) that will receive regular updates on the Foundry.
   b. Develop a plan quarterly designed to reach multiple target audiences for use of multiple communication tools (newsletters, letters, website, Facebook, news releases, etc.) and includes frequency of communication, preferred communication tool, and items to communicate.

2. Organize and plan a vision evening to share the vision of the Foundry and the unveiling of the strategic initiatives that will be implemented in the next three years.

Area: Finance/Funding
Goal—Develop a funding strategy to service the current debt, operational costs and the financing of the expansion of the ministry of the Foundry.

1. Explore options for refinancing of the current mortgage on the Foundry and/or a plan for retirement of the debt in the next 5-7 years.
2. Complete an assessment of the Foundry facility repair needs and insurance audit in light of the developmental initiatives that will be implemented in 2014.
3. Develop a detailed budget for operational costs for 2014.
5. Develop a donor strategy that will include estimates for specific initiatives for next two years.

Strategy #2 Focus on Relational and Partnership Development (Executive Director)

Area: Neighborhood and Community Partnership Relationships
Goal—Reach out to the people of the West End to establish lasting relationships.

1. Plan and implement three relationship-building events targeted for families of the West End and the volunteers, staff and Board of the Foundry, and to include partnership with Bowling Green City “Safe Communities” event(s).

Goal—Maintain and expand existing relationships and develop new relationships with community partners.

1. Maintain relationships with existing community partners by contacting each every 6-8 weeks.
2. Maintain and expand relationship with Corazones Cristianos pastor and
congregation.
3. Create a list of 5-7 community non-profit organizations that might become strategic partners in the Foundry’s community development initiatives and make initial contacts to determine receptivity.
4. Provide regular updates to city officials on needs, ongoing initiatives, and future plans for the Foundry and the residents of the West End.

Strategy # 3 Focus on Education and Mentor Relationships (Executive Director)

Area: School Mentoring
Goal: Enlist one of the key Bowling Green United Methodist churches to lead this initiative in collaboration with the Executive Director and the Foundry Board.

Goal—Expand the mentoring program at DMES
  1. Recruit a high-capacity volunteer leader to oversee and expand the mentoring initiative at DMES.
     a. Develop job description and reporting structure.
  2. Develop at strategy to increase by 25% the number of school mentors serving DMES in the 2014-2015 school year.

Area: After-School Program
Goal—Transition and Expand After-School Program with DMES
  1. Recruit a high-capacity volunteer leader to oversee and expand the after-school initiative with DMES.
     a. Develop ministry leader job description and reporting structure.
  2. Work with DMES to transition the WKU Gatton Academy After-School Program to the Foundry Center by fall 2014.
  3. Increase the number of After-School Program days of from 2-4 days per week by end of 2014.
     a. Enlist Gatton Academy volunteers for expansion from 2-4 days per week.
     b. Or seek other organizations (such as Light of Chance) to partner with for after school programming for 2 days per week.
     c. Prepare space at the Foundry to best accommodate after-school activities.
  4. Set up a mobile computer lab with designated donation given for this use by spring of 2014.

Area: Summer Enrichment Camps
Goal—Enlist one of the key Bowling Green United Methodist churches to lead this initiative in collaboration with the Executive Director and the Foundry Board.
Goal—Transition the summer camps to specialized enrichment Camps

1. Work with volunteer team to do the following:
   a. Research possibilities for Summer Camps to include specialized enrichment offerings, such as science or sports camps, to attract the interest of neighborhood children.
   b. Develop a budget and plan for financing the camps.
   c. Develop a communication/marketing strategy that will ensure increased participation in the camps.
   d. Recruit volunteers to serve in the camps.

Area: Early Childhood Education

Goal: Establish Broadway United Methodist Church as initiative leader in collaboration with the Executive Director and the Foundry Board to develop a comprehensive plan for Early Childhood Education Emphasis.

(Note—due to the primacy of early childhood education, this section includes a more extensive summary, statement of need, and statement of impact)

Summary: Broadway UMC has 16 years of experience in early childhood education through its Early Learning Center. The Foundry will partner with Broadway to capitalize on this experience and the financial and human resources to carry out its commitment to children to the West End. Close communication with DMES and Community Action’s Little Scholars Preschool will allow for creative partnerships and will avoid duplication of services. Key distinctives for Foundry early childhood education include offering a faith-based environment as well as the opportunity for mentoring from teachers and volunteers across socioeconomic groups.

To support a sustainable education model, the program will emphasize increasing early childhood education knowledge and skills among paraprofessionals and practitioners in the community. This will come about by convening early childhood expertise among our public schools and Western Kentucky University. Attention will also given to providing parents and preschool children opportunities to connect with teachers and faculty before the first day of preschool or Kindergarten. Focus will also be placed on reading and literacy.

Parental and family engagement are essential aspects of the initiative. High quality preschool education opens the door for resources and relationships to facilitate holistic and family development—all geared toward long-term success of the child. Initiatives will address typical obstacles inherent to poverty including lack of skills in parenting, unemployment, lack of soft job skills as well as specific training for parents, housing/transience, lack of emotional support, lack of resources and lack of “development” mindset.
Need:
The following factors impact the need as it impacts the children of the West End:

1. By age 3, a child’s brain is already 80 percent developed; 90 percent by age 5.
2. Four-year-olds from low-income families are often 18 months behind other 4-year-olds developmentally.
3. Linguistic development is stunted in poverty by what is known as the “1-million-word deficit.” Children in poverty do not receive the same interaction at home impacting cognitive and linguistic development.
4. More than 60 percent of low-income families have no books in their homes for children.
5. 63 percent of DMES students were deemed not ready for Kindergarten.
6. 96 percent of DMES students qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch.

The Impact of Early Childhood Education

Cost Savings
Investing in quality early childhood education offers substantial benefits for both students and communities. Experts say that every dollar spent on preschool and early childhood education programs carries a return on investment ranging from $2 to $17. The PEW Center on the States found that the positive effect of high-quality preschool “generates significant savings” because children need fewer higher-priced interventions such as special education or staff-intensive enrichments.

Overall Impact
High-quality early childhood education increases the likelihood of graduating from high school. One study found that dropout rates were reduced by 25 percent. According to the Prichard Committee, children who attend high-quality preschool are more likely to be employed and have higher earnings as adults. In addition, the Committee for Economic Development (CED), a national nonprofit, nonpartisan business-led public policy organization, found that participants in one long-term preschool study performed better on other indicators of economic stability such as: owning a home, owning a car, maintaining a savings account, and being financially stable.

Goal: Establish a high quality pre-school at the Foundry built on Christian principles that provides a nurturing environment and effective early childhood education strategies that prepare children and their parents for a successful transition to school.

1. Form an Early Childhood Education Development/Implementation Team that will study the feasibility of launching a preschool pilot program in the fall of 2015. Areas to be considered by the Team are the following:
   a. Vision and mission development
   b. Facilities assessment
   c. Identification of target group
d. Number and ages of classes  
e. Legal: State guidelines; liability issues  
f. Transportation  
g. Recruitment plan for students/parents  
h. Staffing  
   i. Staff positions, skills and education, job descriptions  
   ii. Training plan  
i. Goals for pilot  
j. Curriculum/developmental goals for students  
   i. Tracking system for student progress  
k. Plan for developmental opportunities for parents  
l. Communication strategy for parents, donors, church and community partners, staff  
m. Finances: Development of 2015-2016 budget and financing strategy  
n. Development of a 24-month strategic plan  

**Strategy #4 Focus on Health and Fitness**

**Area: Sports Ministry and Facilities**

**Goal:** Enlist one of the key Bowling Green United Methodist churches to lead this initiative in collaboration with the Executive Director and the Foundry Board.

**Goal:** Develop and implement a plan for a Sports Ministry at the Foundry centered on soccer leagues.

1. Recruit a ministry leader and a team of volunteers with experience in organized sports to spearhead the development of a sports ministry beginning with the formation of a soccer league at the Foundry.  
   a. Consult with the City Commission on the status of the possibility of the City constructing a soccer field at the Foundry.  
   b. Conduct extensive research of initiatives in other communities that have been successful.  
   c. Explore options to tie sports ministry to educational achievement by supplying soccer equipment and apparel to students for academic achievements.  
   d. Develop a detailed plan to implement the sports ministry in 2015.  
   e. Continue partnership with Bowling Green Panthers organization for youth football and basketball teams.  
   f. Consider partnership with Corazones Cristianos for youth and adult soccer leagues.

**Area: Community Gardens**

**Goal**—Continue and expand Community Garden initiatives with community partners.
1. Continue work with community garden leaders (Charlene Walker and Carol Douglas) to further health and gardening initiatives at the Foundry.
   a. Continue our partnership with Barren River Health Department (BRHD) for classes and health related activities—including pursuing the Healthy Communities grant through the BRHD for 2014.
   b. Continue partnership with Bowling Green Parks and Rec for community garden plots.
   c. Continue partnership with West End Garden club for gardens, classes, and activities.
   d. Establish secure location of community gardens.
   e. Begin partnership with Community Farmers’ Market to establish regular site for Mobile Farmers’ Market and the “Double Your Dollars” program to provide neighborhood access to high quality, healthy, fresh food (Spring 2014)
Appendix

PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Relief—respond to disaster/crisis, meet immediate and acute needs (Hurricane/tornado relief, food pantry)

Rehabilitation—respond after crisis to bring about health, dignity, and restoration (Rebuilding houses after disaster.)

Development—long term transformation in people and systems.

The Biblical word is “transformation.” People are equipped to partner with God, the church, their neighbors to meet their own needs and help in community transformation. Solutions are asset based and participatory. People steward their own lives and influence in relationship with God. Justice and holiness move us toward the Kingdom.

8 Principles of Christian Community Development

1. Relocation (move into the neighborhood-incarnational ministry)
2. Reconciliation (unite people who are divided)
3. Redistribution (Create opportunities and systems that empower people)
4. Leadership Development (Starts with children. 15 year process)
5. Listening to the community (What is the REAL need?)
6. Empowerment (Focus on people and tools)
7. Holistic (Spiritual and practical—education and relationships)
8. Church-based (Centers around church’s mission—connecting people to God, making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world)

Proverb:
Go to the people
Live among them
Learn from them
Love them
Start with what they know
Build on what they have:
But of the best leaders
When their task is done
The people will remark
"We have done it ourselves."