

NORTH END MATTERS

ISSUE ONE JANUARY 2025

Building a Legacy

Famico Williams Revitalizes North End Building



As we relaunch this publication, our goal is to keep you informed about the people, projects, and progress shaping our community. The North End is full of hardworking individuals making a lasting impact, and we couldn't think of a better way to kick off this new chapter than by highlighting someone who embodies that spirit—Famico Williams.

Famico's project centers on renovating the historic building at 175 North Mulberry Street, located at the corner of North Mulberry and Fifth Streets. Recently, Famico received a grant from the Richland County Foundation to transform the upper portion of the building into housing.

Famico's roots in the North End run deep. As the youngest of five siblings, he grew up in the neighborhood, attended Mansfield City Schools, and has fond childhood memories of visiting this building—then Webb's Grocery Store—for candy and snacks.

His late brother, Marvin, a licensed plumber, inspired Famico to explore the building trades, ultimately sparking his entrepreneurial spirit. Famico completed micro-business training through the North End Community Improvement Collaborative and founded Twenty/20 Property Development and Construction, where he's focused on long-term development rather than flipping properties.

During a recent phone interview, Famico reflected on the deeper meaning behind his current project. "It truly is a legacy project, which is what I like to call it," he shared. "I want my kids to have a space that is always in the family. It's important to have something to call your own, especially with the residual income." Famico's plans for the building include creating five apartments in the upper portion, providing much-needed housing to the area. However, he remains open to future opportunities, emphasizing that this is just the beginning of what's possible.

Continued On Page 4

Letter from the Interim CEO

A New Chapter for NECIC, Rooted in Our Community

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

As we relaunch our newsletter for 2025, I want to take a moment to reflect on where we've been, where we are, and where we're headed together.

First, let me acknowledge the immense legacy of NECIC's founder, Deanna West-Torrence. For nearly two decades, Deanna led this organization with vision, determination, and an unwavering commitment to the people of Mansfield. It has been one of the greatest honors of my life to have learned from her since my time as NECIC's first intern in 2007. Her mentorship and leadership have shaped me both personally and professionally, and her influence will always be part of NECIC's DNA. While Deanna has stepped back to focus on her family and works remotely, her foundational work remains at the heart of all we do.

That said, I also want to acknowledge something important: I am not Deanna. Our leadership styles may differ, and there will inevitably be changes as we navigate this transition. But one thing that will never change is NECIC's commitment to serving this community. Everything we do is rooted in the principles that have guided us since day one—Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), equity, and the empowerment of Mansfield's North End neighborhoods.

The Community Economic Development Plan (CEDP) has always been our compass, shaped by your voices and aspirations. The current iteration, summarized in the Neighborhood Platform document, reflects the collective vision of our community. It is both our roadmap and a reminder that the heart of this work lies not in any one leader but in the people who call the North End home.

As NECIC steps into this new chapter, we remain firmly rooted in the philosophical underpinnings that have always driven our work. We will continue to adapt and evolve, but our purpose remains constant: to uplift and empower the North End through collaboration, innovation, and community-led solutions.

Thank you for being a part of this journey with us. Your voices, ideas, and energy are what keep NECIC moving forward. I look forward to connecting with many of you in the months ahead as we build on this legacy together.

Warm regards,



Tony Chinni
Interim CEO
North End Community Improvement Collaborative (NECIC)



Tony Chinni, Interim CEO



Interim CEO
Tony Chinni

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Deanna West-Torrence

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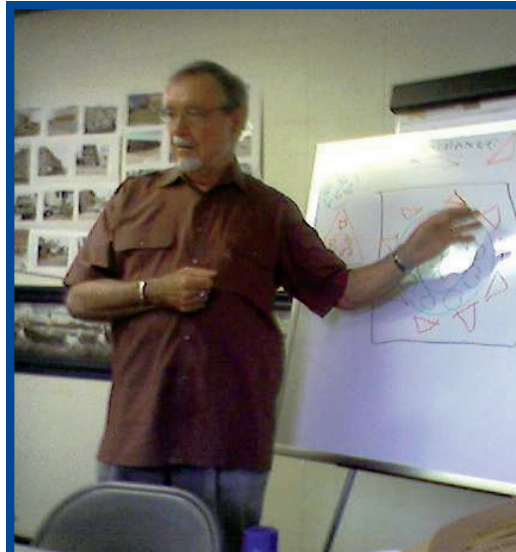
Remembering John McKnight

On Saturday, November 2, 2024, John L. McKnight passed away at 93 years of age. McKnight's philosophy and work was foundational to the creation of NECIC and guides all NECIC's Community Development and planning activities. So, who was John McKnight and what does he have to do with a small neighborhood non-profit in Mansfield, Ohio?

John McKnight was a prominent figure in community development, best known for co-founding the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute. Born in Ohio, he attended Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, and later served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War. Upon returning, McKnight worked with various activist organizations, including the Chicago Commission for Human Relations and the Illinois American Civil Liberties Union. In 1969, he joined Northwestern University to help establish the Center for Urban Affairs, focusing on research to support urban change agents and progressive urban policy.

McKnight's significant contribution to community development is the creation of the ABCD approach, which emphasizes leveraging a community's existing assets and strengths rather than focusing on its deficiencies. Alongside his colleague John P. Kretzmann, he co-authored *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, a foundational text outlining this methodology. Their work has influenced community development strategies worldwide, promoting sustainable development by empowering communities to utilize their inherent resources.

McKnight is also the author of *The Careless Society: Community and its Counterfeits*, a classic critique of professionalized social services and a celebration of communities' ability to heal themselves from within; *The Abundant Community*:



John McKnight visiting NECIC in 2008

Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods with Peter Block, an exploration of the riches in neighborhoods and small towns; and *An Other Kingdom: Departing the Consumer Culture* with Peter Block and Walter Brueggemann, an exploration of the nature of community life outside the consumer society.

In the early 2000s, NECIC Founder Deanna West-Torrence picked up a book in Joe Mudra's office at the Ocie Hill

Neighborhood Center. Although she didn't know it at the time, the book, *The Careless Society...*, by John McKnight, would be fundamental to the start of NECIC. At that time, Deanna and Jim Kulig were on a committee together at the Richland Area Chamber of Commerce. When Deanna shared with Jim how much she enjoyed *The Careless Society...*, Jim indicated that John McKnight's niece, Julie Myers, worked at the Richland County Juvenile Court with him.

Meanwhile, the Mansfield News Journal ran a series of articles titled "Who Killed Corey Jones?", and Tom Brennan and the News Journal hosted a series of community leader convenings. It was decided at these convenings that the community needed to explore a different approach to Community Development. Deanna suggested John McKnight and the ABCD model.

They decided to explore ABCD, and a group of local leaders were sent to Chicago for training. In addition to Deanna, who was the Director of the Community Health Access Project (CHAP) and Fifth Ward City Councilwoman at that time, she was joined by Kevin Nestor, Chamber of Commerce President, Karen Moody-Bierly, Founder

Continued On Page 4

Remembering John McKnight

(Continued From Page 3)

and Executive Director of CACY, Greg Frankenfield, Richland County Children Services, and the late Joan Day, Director of the Ocie Hill Neighborhood Center and Neighborhood Youth Corps.

Upon returning to Mansfield, Deanna was convinced that ABCD was the way forward in Community Development. She was determined to make ABCD a foundational element of what was at that time, merely an idea. An organization that would comprehensively address quality of life issues by working with North End residents to plan, convene, and develop leaders. That organization is NECIC, and our dedication to ABCD principles continues to this very day.

Building a Legacy

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Famico credits his father for instilling a strong work ethic and teaching him the value of perseverance—qualities he now channels into this ambitious project. Beyond this renovation, Famico hopes to continue scaling his business by focusing on commercial property development. His approach is rooted in true development success, creating spaces that contribute to the community and stand the test of time. His work is a shining example of the transformative power of investing in our neighborhoods, and we look forward to seeing how this project will continue to shape the North End for years to come.

North End Elder Program Updates

Starting February 12th, The North Elder Program will now meet every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the Month at The United Steelworkers Hall located at 376 West Longview Avenue.



ELDER PROGRAM CATERERS NEEDED

For inquiries and proposal submissions, reach out to Tionna Perdue, Operations Manager, at tionna@necic-ohio.org or 419-522-1611 ext 102.