



Historic Northwest Rising

Florida Redevelopment Association
Roy F. Kenzie 2017 Awards
Creative Organizational Development



REINVENTING YOUR CITY

Sunset Cocktail Lounge

During segregation, Black entertainers toured a string of nightclubs known in the South as the “Chitlin Circuit.” One of the largest ballrooms was the Sunset Cocktail Lounge in West Palm Beach, built in 1923. The Sunset Lounge attracted big name acts such as Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington.



The Historic Sunset Lounge

The Sunset Rise Again

- After desegregation, the Sunset Lounge no longer attracted those same big-name acts. Many middle and upper class Black families moved to other neighborhoods once it was legal to do so.
- Over the past fifty years, the neighborhood has undergone widespread disinvestment and blight.
- Despite the iconic and historical significance of the Sunset Lounge, it is an underused venue.
- In 2016 the West Palm Beach CRA became a recipient of the **Knight Cities Challenge Grant**.
- With partners such as 880 Cities and Better Block, the West Palm Beach CRA began to engage the Historic Northwest community to kick-start the revitalization of the Sunset Lounge and the adjacent open space.

Sunset Lounge 2017



Open Space



Inside the Sunset Lounge

Historic Northwest Rising (HNWR)

- HISTORIC NORTHWEST RISING (HNWR) is a bold initiative shaping the revitalization of the Sunset Lounge and the surrounding community.
- Led by the West Palm Beach Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), the main activities include transforming the Sunset Lounge and the vacant lot into a resource for the community and spurring local economic development.



HNWR Team

- The Historic Northwest Rising project is led locally by the West Palm Beach Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA).
- The CRA enlisted consultants 880 Cities, Better Block, Dr. Alisha Phillips, Surale Phillips and Mosaic Group, to conduct the community engagement process.
- Through various engagement events by the HNWR Team the Historic Northwest residents were able to give feedback on what they would like to see in their neighborhood then build and interact with those “ideas”.



Phase I: Community Brainstorming

- Phase I focused on understanding the community's infrastructure, programming needs and preferences.
- HNWR hosted a community-wide engagement campaign to collect ideas for improving the Sunset Lounge and the open space.
- Campaign activities included, In-person interviews, Pop-Up Engagements and an Ideas Festival.
- The HNWR team set up visually-engaging large-format surveys where community members could vote for their favorite ideas using dots, suggest improvements for the neighborhood, or write a "postcard to the future" describing their vision for the future of the Historic Northwest. Ideas Festival events included a crab boil, soul food theme night, concerts at the Sunset, and a block party.



Phase II: Better Block Prototyping

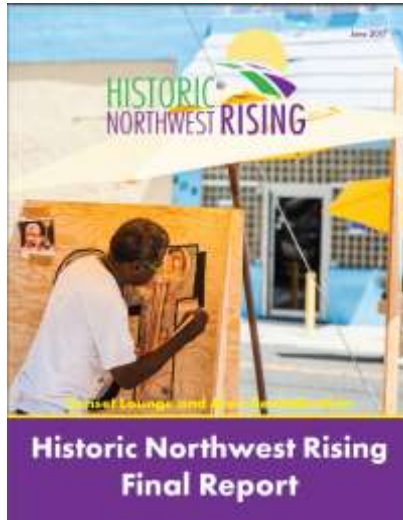
- In Phase II, the HNWR team tested out some of the community's ideas in the open space in real time at a Better Block Event in April 2017. Hundreds of people came out to experience the temporarily improved space and provided valuable feedback on which elements should be kept, improved, or done away with.
- Phase II also dug deeper into community members' values and how they would like to participate in the redevelopment of the Sunset Lounge on an ongoing basis



Better Block Event



Marketing Collateral



The Vision

The redevelopment of the Sunset Lounge and the open space adjacent to it will provide the Historic Northwest District with a new multi-purpose venue and public space focused on arts and entertainment for all ages. This project will bring together community partners to offer diverse programming that reflects the history, cultures, and needs of the Historic Northwest District, towards the development of a safe and economically thriving community.

