

Opinion: Committing to vibrancy in our communities

Ben Baker, Community Recorder guest columnist 8:41 p.m. EDT April 7, 2016

Beyond the Curb will spotlight our communities and show how our urban area is a special one, with a wide variety of residential properties and amenities to accommodate all lifestyles



(Photo: Provided)

Vibrancy is a core and essential feature of our Northern Kentucky River Cities – it's a chief reason why so many choose to live, work and play here. Each city has an iconic character and special charm, stemming from unique histories and assets that many residents proudly embrace and call their own.

I join my Dayton neighbors in this pride and support efforts that promote and showcase this vibrancy. We're excited to invite people from across the region to Dayton and Bellevue for the April 24 Beyond the Curb Urban Living Tour so they can see our cities shine.

A vibrant, walkable community was what drew me here six years ago. Dayton and Bellevue feature historic main streets with a variety of restaurants, stores and parks within a short walking distance. Victorian houses line the streets in their preserved architectural beauty, front yards bloom with tulips and host Little Libraries, volunteers tend community gardens, public art adorns building walls, and church bells ring from century-old towers.

And the view of Downtown Cincinnati is striking. The Reds, Bengals, CVG, universities and hospitals, Music Hall and museums are only a short ride away on Red Bike or TANK/Metro. It's a fantastic place to live.

Beyond the Curb will spotlight our communities and show how our urban area is a special one, with a wide variety of residential properties and amenities to accommodate all lifestyles. With a diverse tenant mix, lively small business districts, more green space plans in development, and new construction along the riverfront, Dayton and Bellevue offer exciting opportunities right now for residents, visitors and businesses.

Dayton's economic incentive program is encouraging new stores and restaurants to open their doors here, and special events like Shop Bellevue First Fridays and Dayton's Memorial Day parade and Kite Festival bring hundreds out to celebrate.

These efforts align with the Vibrancy Goal asserted last year as a regional priority when Skyward's myNKY plan was created, a goal to create an "intentionally inclusive, creative and connected community." Part of the myNKY plan's five-year, \$5 million goal for a Northern Kentucky Vibrancy Fund is the plan to build a \$2 million urban pre-development fund.

Northern Kentucky's current urban renaissance has been accelerated by the Catalytic Fund through its targeted investments in redevelopment projects. The growth and change we are seeing in our communities illustrate the importance of pre-development funds. Beyond the Curb, a project of the Catalytic Fund, will highlight on the tour some homes and buildings currently in redevelopment – showing the great potential and possibilities that investment and a fresh focus bring.

Thanks to the work of many, we're watching our River Cities transform and thrive. How great to see this progress and to be a part of it. An ongoing commitment to the vibrancy of our communities is required of all of us, in and beyond the borders of Dayton and Bellevue. I hope you'll join us in supporting it. For tickets and to learn about Beyond the Curb, go to www.beyondthecurb.org (<http://www.beyondthecurb.org>).

Ben Baker is vice mayor of the city of Dayton, Kentucky.

Read or Share this story: <http://cin.ci/1MXbdNi>