

# University Park-East Choice Neighborhoods Blueprint for Change

## Annotated Outline

Submitted to HUD – January 15, 2016

### **I. Executive Summary**

#### **University Park-East**

- **Target Neighborhood**

- Located in the southern part of the City of Gary. Is a subset of the larger Glen Park neighborhood and the University Park neighborhood within Glen Park.
- University Park is so named because of the two institutions of higher education located within its boundaries, Indiana University Northwest and Ivy Tech Community College – Gary. University Park, generally bounded by I-80/94 to the north, I-65 to the east, Ridge Road to the south and Grant Street to the west. Was the focus of two planning efforts in 2003 and 2013. Broadway, which bisects University Park, is a major commercial corridor that runs north-south through the City from Lake Michigan and the steel mills to Merrillville south of the City.
- CNI planning effort targets the eastern portion of the University Park neighborhood located to the east of Broadway. University Park East (UP-East) experiences a higher level of vacancy and distress as well as potential opportunity compared to the west side. These opportunities include the vacant Benjamin Franklin Elementary School, the soon to be demolished Colonial Gardens 1 and 2, and the construction of the new 126,300 square-foot Arts & Sciences Building by IUN that will be jointly used by IUN and Ivy Tech on the east side of Broadway at 35th.

- **Target Housing**

- Colonial Gardens 1 and 2 – 78 units of scattered site family public housing units – constructed in the 1950s, the units are severely distressed. Only 18 of the units were occupied at the time of application to HUD for a CNI planning grant. Due to their level of distress, the Gary Housing Authority (GHA) applied for and received approval to demolish all of the units in April 2015. Relocation of remaining families will be complete by first quarter 2016, and GHA expects to demolish the units some time in 2016 pending funding availability.

- **Why UP-East?**

- University Park is one of two target areas for investment by the City under the Strong Cities Strong Communities (SC2) initiative because of its assets and potential.
- With nearly 10,000 employees and students passing through University Park on a daily basis, the Blueprint for Change for UP-East seeks to realize the potential of this neighborhood to attract new residents as well as improve the lives of existing residents through concentrated investment.
- With planned implementation of rapid bus transit service on Broadway in 2017, the neighborhood will be well connected to employment centers north and south – further enhancing the area’s already strong connectivity to I-80/94 and I-65.
- Redevelopment of UP-East is informed by the two-year long CNI planning effort and the resulting Blueprint for Change.

### **Vision**

- Currently under development – key words: safe, clean, thriving, vibrant, good schools, new homes, businesses, students, parks, healthy, diverse, walkable, connected.

### **Planning Structure and Process**

- In January 2015, the City of Gary in partnership with the Legacy Foundation and the Gary Economic Development Corporation (GEDC) was awarded a HUD 2015 Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) Planning Grant for UP-East. The Blueprint for Change for UP-East funded through CNI grant along with supporting financial commitments from the City, Legacy, and GEDC. In-kind support is being provided by the Gary Police Department, Indiana Association of Community and Economic Development (IACED), Gary Public Transportation Corporation (GPTC), Gary Redevelopment Commission, and non-profit service providers (ARISE Gary and the Foodbank of Northwest Indiana).
- The project is being managed by the City of Gary and its partners with technical assistance on the CNI program provided by EJP Consulting Group.
- Overseeing the development of the Blueprint is a Steering Committee comprised of major stakeholders in the community, including neighborhood residents, IUN, Ivy Tech, Gary Community Schools Corporation (GCSC), various City departments, numerous community-based and service-based organizations that serve and are invested in the neighborhood.
- Resulting Blueprint is the outcome of over XX meetings over the course of 24 months that ranged from community-wide public meetings and smaller community conversations, to topic-specific working groups.

## **II. Neighborhood Context**

### **City of Gary**

- **History of the City**
  - Founded in 1906 by U.S. Steel Corporation and named after founding Chairman, Elbert Henry Gary. Steel industry influenced Gary's growth and development with the lakeshore dominated by industry to capitalize on freight shipping.
  - Population boom between 1920-30 when the population doubled from 52,000 to 101,000. Steel production demanded by World War I spurred migration of Blacks to Gary to work in the steel mills. This in-migration also brought on segregation in housing, education, and recreation. Population peaked in 1960 at 178,000.
  - Decline of the City began in the 1960s as the steel industry faced stiffer competition from abroad and the economy declined in the City. Economic distress, increasing crime and the election of the first black Mayor spurred white flight into the surrounding suburbs.
- **Gary Today**
  - City faces many of the same challenges as other rust belt cities including unemployment, aging infrastructure, low educational attainment, and crime.

- In recent years, City has been working to reinvigorate its economy through strategic investments in its airport, addressing vacant/abandoned properties, targeted interventions to stabilize neighborhoods, and building upon its existing assets.
- Selected to participate in the Strong Cities Strong Communities program in January 2014, and greater involvement by the Legacy Foundation, the community foundation for Lake County.
- **Demographic Profile**
  - Population is less than half of its peak of 178,000, and was 80,000 in 2010, experienced a 22% population loss between 2000 and 2010.
  - Population is predominately black (85%).
  - Based upon migration patterns at the County level, higher income and smaller households are moving out of the City into the surrounding counties (Cook and Porter).
  - Forecasts regarding population change over next 20 years.
- **Regional Economic Profile**
  - Major economic / employment sectors – State government, County/City government, etc.
  - Sectors expected to see increase / decrease.
  - Specific business clusters.
- **Housing – current and anticipated needs**
  - Estimate that 1/3 of all homes in the city are vacant or abandoned.
  - Projected future housing needs & priorities based on current studies.

### **University Park East Target Neighborhood**

- **History of the Target Neighborhood**
  - Glen Park, which includes UP-East, was established prior to the City of Gary and was annexed soon after the City was founded. Area was strictly segregated until the 1960s, with blacks not allowed to go north of the Little Calumet River except to work.
  - Primarily residential community dominated by single-family homes. Most of the housing stock was built before 1970.
  - The northern portion of Glen Park (north of Ridge Road) was renamed University Park in 2003 when the City and the two universities – IUN and Ivy Tech – came together to strategically plan for revitalization of the area, hoping to leverage the universities’ presence and investment in the community.
  - Eastern portion of University Park targeted for CNI effort due to level of distress and development opportunities available in comparison to the west side of University Park.
- **Target Neighborhood Today**
  - Over the last decade, IUN and Ivy Tech have expanded their investment into the neighborhood surrounding their campuses.
    - Both IUN and Ivy Tech have acquired and demolished distressed properties adjacent to their campuses. Currently, IUN is constructing a new 126,300 square-foot Arts & Sciences Building by that will be jointly used by IUN and Ivy Tech on the east side of Broadway at 35<sup>th</sup>. This facility replaces an IUN building that was severely damaged by flooding from the Little Calumet River in September 2008.

- IUN Police have expanded their patrol area to support the work of the Gary Police Department and reduce the incident of crime in the community. Most recently violent crime statistics demonstrate that this expanded effort has been very effective.
- Broadway remains a primary north-south commercial and transit corridor for the City running from the lakefront and downtown to Merrillville south of the City.
  - Broadway targeted by the Gary Public Transportation Corporation (GPTC) through its Livable Broadway Initiative with a focus on improving transit connections.
  - Corner of 35<sup>th</sup> and Broadway experiences the highest number of on-boardings and off-boardings.
  - Plans are underway to implement rapid bus service along Broadway in 2017 – two stops in UP-East (35<sup>th</sup> and Ridge).
- **Current Neighborhood Conditions**
  - Land use
    - Residential – 50% of land use
      - Most of the housing stock is over 50 years old (constructed prior to 1970).
      - Majority of the housing units are single family detached; there are very few multi-family structures.
      - Decline in neighborhood population – 31% between 2000 and 2010 – has resulted in a sizable number of vacant and abandoned homes throughout UP-East. According to the Census, in 2010, 28% of the existing structures were vacant.
      - 51% home-ownership rate – on par with the City.
      - Public Housing
        - Colonial Gardens 1 and 2 – 78 unit scattered site public housing development.
        - Due to severe distress, approved for demolition by HUD in April 2015.
        - Only 18 units occupied at time of CNI application – all residents expected to be relocated by early 2016.
        - Units expected to be demolished in 2016 pending funding availability.
    - Commercial – 5% of land use
      - Most of the commercial uses are concentrated along Broadway.
      - Offers neighborhood retail including banks, a bakery, convenience stores, check cashing and tax preparation services – there is no grocery store in UP-East.
      - Several abandoned structures, vacant land, and surface parking lots hold the area back from having a prominent, well-developed shopping district.
      - Wide roadway and traffic speeds detract from walkability of retail corridor.
    - Institutional/Exempt – 33%
      - Comprised of churches and schools (Ivy Tech campus, new IUN building, Gary Area Career Center, and vacant Benjamin Franklin Elementary School).
    - Parks – 10%
      - Although 10% of the land is marked as Park district property, it is comprised of undeveloped land located in the flood plain, wetlands, or swamp located south of the Little Calumet River.

- Building Conditions – nearly 25% of all structures, both commercial and residential, are in poor or dangerous condition.
- Flood Hazards
  - Most of UP-East located north of 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue is in a 100-year flood plain associated with the Little Calumet River.
  - Last major flooding event in UP-East occurred in September 2008, which caused major damage to an IUN building, caused flood damage further south of 33<sup>rd</sup> Ave into the neighborhood. This included damaging a City fire station that has since been closed and many homes.
  - Current efforts to prevent damage from future floods include creating a permanent funding source to operate and maintain the levees along the Little Calumet River, and implementing the Vacant to Vibrant initiative in UP-East that uses green infrastructure to reduce the impact of stormwater entering the sanitary sewer system.
  - Flooding is a significant concern for the neighborhood – there are reports of standing water after rainstorms on roadways – potential for flooding is impacted by a combination of sewers, high water table, Little Calumet River, and levees east and west of Gary – presence of river, wetlands and swamps also breeds mosquitos during the warmer months.
- Demographic Profile
  - 2,171 residents live in UP-East (2010 Census) – overall, racial and ethnic composition mirrors that of the City as a whole, experienced a higher rate of population loss than the City over the last decade (31% v. 22%).
  - Distinctions between target neighborhood and City averages
    - UP-East’s population is younger than the City and County (average median age 31.3 compared to 36.7 and 37.4, respectively).
    - Neighborhood average household size (2.93) is larger than the City (2.54) average.
    - Greater percentage of family households in target neighborhood (68.4%) than the City (62.8%) – of the family households, 64% are single-parent family households.
    - Median household income in the neighborhood (\$23,836) is lower than the City (\$26,885) and less than half that of the County (\$49,035).
    - The poverty rate is on par with the City (32.9%), but much higher than the County (13.8%).
- Crime and safety
  - 2012-2014 average Part 1 violent crime rate – 11.0 v. 10.0 per 1,000 for target neighborhood vs. City.
  - 2012-2014 average Part 1 property crime rate – to be obtained from Police Department.
  - Violent crime has been steadily decreasing in UP-East since 2012. Decrease may be attributed to expansion of IUN Police Department patrol area further east to Georgia Street in UP-East. Additionally, Gary Police Department’s Special Operations unit conducts its morning and evening debriefing sessions in the Ivy Tech parking lot, adding visibility of police officers in the neighborhood.
- Public transportation

- Service provided by the Gary Public Transportation Corporation (GPTC) that operates several regular bus routes that serve UP-East.
- UP-East is well served by public transit - of Gary's 10 bus routes, six run through UP-East – corner of 35<sup>th</sup> and Broadway serves as a major transit hub, second only to the Metro Center Station in downtown Gary.
- Regular bus service operated Monday through Saturday – no service on Sundays or major holidays. Also offer on-call paratransit service during regular hours of operation.
- Because of the number of bus routes traversing UP-East, residents can generally access where they need to go including grocery stores and center-based child care centers. Only area in which transportation was cited as a barrier was access to health care, although this may change with the recent opening of Marram Health Center, a FQHC, on Broadway.
- Addition of rapid bus service on Broadway will only further enhance the connectivity of the neighborhood to employment and shopping centers to the north and south.
- Connectivity (streets, bicycle paths, sidewalks)
  - Streets
    - Neighborhood is accessed regionally via I-80/94 (Broadway) and I-65 (Ridge Road).
    - The ease of accessing the area via the interstates was identified as the number one asset of the neighborhood.
  - Bicycle paths
    - There are no designated bike lanes or sharrows in UP-East. A 2012 Regional Greenways and Blueways map by the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission identified two roads in UP-East as candidates for bike lanes based upon their width, traffic speed, and volume – Georgia Street (excellent) and 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue (medium).
    - The Little Calumet River Trail, on top of the levee, provides an unpaved trail for recreational use. However, concerns about the condition of the trail were raised by stakeholders, indicating that due to erosion, portions of the trail are currently impassable.
  - Sidewalks
    - Based upon a walk audit, almost 22% of the sidewalks in UP-East are unusable because they are overgrown or in very poor condition. This includes a span along 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue between IUN and Ivy Tech. Pedestrians are frequently observed walking in the streets due to lack of continuity in passable sidewalks.
    - Broadway, as the main commercial corridor, lacks pedestrian-friendly amenities – there are virtually no street trees, driveway curb cuts are wider than needed, and no buffer between pedestrians and parking lots.
    - Walkscore for the neighborhood is 42 (Georgia and 35<sup>th</sup>) indicating that the further away from Broadway one is, the more car-dependent you become (Walkscore for Broadway and 35<sup>th</sup> is 62).
- Parks and Open Space – There are no neighborhood parks in UP-East.

- Gleason Park on the other side of Broadway is the closest facility – a regional park offering a golf course, tennis courts, baseball and football fields, playground and clubhouse – several of the facilities were damaged in the 2008 flood and have not yet been repaired.
- Two other closest neighborhood parks are East Side Park and Howe Park
  - Both, located south of Ridge Road, are difficult to access as a result of non-continuous north-south streets due to railroad tracks.
  - Both are in very poor physical condition with most of the equipment in need of repair or replacement, and grounds in need of maintenance.
  - Closest park in good condition is Pittman Square, which is not walkable from UP-East (approximately 2 miles).
- Educational Profile
  - Early Childhood Education
    - Majority of UP-East children appear to be enrolled in an early learning program.
    - Lack of participation does not appear to be related to capacity – 8 licensed or registered childcares are located within UP-East, and 13 more are located within ¼ miles of a bus stop on a bus route serving UP-East.
    - Quality ratings of child care providers in and around UP-East that participate in Paths to QUALITY program are relatively high, but nearly half of the providers do not participate in the program.
  - Elementary, Middle and High School -
    - UP-East students attend many different schools throughout the City including public, charter, and private schools. Gary is a “Choice District”, which means that students can opt to attend any public/charter school of their choice provided there is space for them.
    - There is no public elementary school in UP-East – Benjamin Franklin Elementary School closed in 2008. The Gary Area Career Center that houses New Tech High School is the only Gary Community Schools Corporation (GCSC) operated school in UP-East. Based upon data from GCSC, students travel between 1-3 miles to attend school.
    - Between 50-65% of school age students in UP-East most likely attend a charter school.
    - Quality of the GCSC schools attended by UP-East students varies widely – 54% attend an average school, while 39% attend a low-performing one.
    - Participation in out-of-school time programs is limited – 41% of parents say that their children are not enrolled in any youth program. Youth programming was cited as the number one immediate service need by residents. No youth programs are currently offered in UP-East, posing transportation and access issues for neighborhood youths.
  - Higher Education Institutions
    - Ivy Tech Community College – Gary – major asset and stakeholder in UP-East
      - 3,800 students enrolled in 2014, offers programs in entrepreneurship, early childhood development, and urban agriculture.
    - Indiana University Northwest – major asset and stakeholder in University Park
      - 6,000 students enrolled in 2014, 10% were Gary residents.
    - In addition to education hubs, both are employment centers in the region.

- **Alignment with Previous Planning Efforts**

- Blueprint for UP-East builds upon 2003 University Park Plan and 2013 Update. The 2003 Plan, completed in partnership between the City, IUN and Ivy Tech, identified major redevelopment efforts in University Park that capitalized on the presence of the educational institutions. With many of the development goals complete, an update to the University Park Plan was completed in 2013 to update the 2003 recommendations to further grow the area.
- In April 2015, the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) and Federal Highway Administration completed a bicycle assessment of 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue between IUN and Ivy Tech. This assessment identified that 35<sup>th</sup> is wide enough to accommodate bicycle lanes, and specific conditions that should be addressed to enhance bicycle safety (stormwater grates and curb cuts).
- GPTC, INDOT and local municipalities collaborated on the Livable Broadway Regional Plan in 2015 to increase public transit efficiency and improve the transit experience along the corridor. GPTC is currently working on implementing the improvements proposed, which are being incorporated into the planning process for UP-East.

### **III. Community Engagement**

Organizational structure of planning process designed to give residents and neighborhood stakeholders the formal opportunity to be involved with the planning process and shape the final Plan.

- **CNI Executive Team** - comprised of three co-grantees for CNI – City, Legacy Foundation, and Gary Economic Development Corporation – provides overall guidance and direction to planning process.
- **Steering Committee**
  - Comprised of community residents and other neighborhood stakeholders including educational institutions, Gary Housing Authority, neighborhood residents, service providers, and non-profit organizations – provides input on all aspects of the Plan throughout the planning process.
- **Working Groups**
  - Chaired by Steering Committee members and covers all aspects of neighborhood, housing and people – other members include thought leaders within a topical area. Neighborhood residents are invited to participate in all of the working groups.
    - Youth Development and Education – chaired by Gary Community School Corporation and ARISE Gary – focus on early childhood, K-12 and youth programs
    - Workforce Development and Adult Education – chaired by Ivy Tech Community College and Calumet Township Workforce Development – focus on job readiness, skill development, employability and GED programs
    - Economic Development/Commercial Corridors – chaired by GEDC and Small Business Administration – focus on retail/commercial development as well as job creation
    - Family Well-Being – chaired by Methodist Hospitals and Indiana Parenting Institute – focus on healthcare access, wellness education/programs, and family supports such as parenting skills, senior services, and financial literacy

- Neighborhood Services and Amenities – chaired by GPTC and Parks Department – focus on transportation, infrastructure, parks and public services
  - Housing – chaired by Community Development Department and Redevelopment – focus on existing and abandoned housing, vacant lots, and the need for new housing
  - Public Safety – chaired by Police Department and neighborhood resident – focus on identifying community and public-based initiatives to enhance safety in the community
  - Engagement and Leadership Development – chaired by Legacy Foundation and neighborhood resident – focus on developing neighborhood leadership and empowering residents to be an active partner in improving the neighborhood
- **Community Involvement**
    - Multiple avenues for residents and others to learn about and participate in the planning process.
      - Working Groups – residents invited to attend and participate in areas of interest.
      - Community Conversations – smaller public meetings with focused discussions on specific topic areas – each working group with host Community Conversations as needed to test assumptions, and get additional feedback as goals and strategies are developed.
      - Public Meetings – utilization of multiple formats to facilitated public engagement and feedback at key stages in the planning process.
        - Kick-off meeting with HUD – March 2015 – overview of CNI planning effort for neighborhood residents.
        - Assets and Challenges Public Meeting – October 2015 – participants engaged in visioning work as well as shared in small groups the assets and challenges in UP-East.
      - Other
        - Neighborhood Survey – UP-East residents, including Colonial Gardens 1 and 2 residents, had the opportunity to provide their input on a number of topics to obtain up-to-date information on needs and neighborhood concerns. Also collected information from respondents who do not currently live in UP-East (e.g. go to school or work in the neighborhood) about how interested they are in moving to UP-East and what improvements they would like to see that would encourage them to live there.
        - Community engagement activities – from block parties and food giveaways to more targeted outreach efforts – goal of each activity varies and are led by community partners, but underlying goal is to get residents involved with the CNI effort.
          - Launch – July 2015 – kick-off event to inform residents about the planning effort happening in their neighborhood.
          - Foodbank Giveaway – October 2015 – led by the Foodbank of NWI – food giveaway for UP-East residents to encourage them to complete the neighborhood survey while receiving much needed fresh and pantry food for their household – 108 UP-East households participated in the event.
          - Imagine UPE – under development by ARISE Gary – targeted to 19 UP-East students attending the Gary Area Career Center to get their perspective on their

- neighborhood and what they hope for it to be through open mic nights, discussions with older residents, and mural painting.
- CNI Newsletter – published on a regular basis with updates on the planning process as well as services and employment opportunities of interest to neighborhood residents.
- Facebook – dedicated page announcing CNI events and activities, and sharing information of interest.

#### **IV. Overall Vision for University Park-East**

***Vision Statement*** – currently under development, incorporate words from their future neighborhood - safe, clean, thriving, vibrant, good schools, new homes, businesses, students, parks, healthy, diverse, walkable, connected.

#### **V. Blueprint Elements**

***Note: Below is a summary of the priority needs identified via the existing conditions report and neighborhood survey for University Park East that the Working Groups are using to start their discussions. Goals, strategies, actions steps, timeframe, measurable outcomes, and key implementation partners will be developed over the next several months.***

##### **Youth Development and Education**

The majority of UP-East children under age 5 (61%) are enrolled in a center-based early learning program. Given the benefits of quality early learning programs, particularly among low-income children, there is room to grow enrollment.

- With 21 childcare providers and over 400 slots in and around UP-East, there appears to be sufficient capacity to serve the remaining neighborhood children under age 5.
- While the quality of some local providers could be improved, overall more than half of the slots are offered by programs with high ratings.

UP-East students attend many different schools throughout the city including public, charter, and private institutions.

- Based upon Census data, estimate that 1 in 3 UP-East students attend a GCSC School.
- Precise enrollment figures at charter and private schools is still unknown but we continue to pursue local charter schools to get better information.
- Children of homeowners were more likely to attend a charter school than children of renters.

Performance of the GCSC schools that UP-East students attend is mixed.

- The vast majority attend either an average school (54%) or a low-performing school (39%) per the letter grade awarded in the Indiana Department of Education’s 2013-2014 school report cards.
- Despite the mixed school performance, the majority of parents (55%) rated the quality of education their child is receiving at school as excellent or good. However, 45% of households

with children thought better schools was one of the most needed improvements for the neighborhood.

- Private/faith-based schools and charter schools were rated more highly by parents than GCSC schools (83% and 71% excellent or good compared to 51%, respectively).

Many UP-East students travel significant distances to school, which can raise challenges related to out-of-school time programming and/or parental engagement.

- New Tech Innovative Institute at the Gary Area Career Center is the only school within the neighborhood boundary. Approximately, 4% of the neighborhood students attend this school. It received an F rating on the Indiana Department of Education's 2013-2014 school report card.
- The vast majority of the other neighborhood students appear to attend schools at least a mile from the neighborhood, and in many cases up to three miles away.

Out-of-school time programming for and participation among UP-East students is limited.

- While the Boys and Girls Club of Northwest Indiana and the City of Gary Youth Services Bureau offer programming elsewhere in the City, Ivy Tech offers the only known program in the neighborhood.
- Only 59% of school-age youth are enrolled in a youth program. The most common are College preparation programs; Sports/recreation programs; Tutoring programs; and Arts/music programs.
- Children of homeowners are enrolled in youth programs at a higher rate than children of renters; particularly college preparation programs and tutoring.
- When asked what service is needed at this time, the most frequent response among neighborhood survey respondents was youth programs.

### **Workforce Development and Adult Education**

- The median household income in UP-East of \$23,836 is lower than the City and County rates; approximately 1 in 3 households have an income below poverty.
- Although the median household income of UP-East households is lower than the City, the percentage of UP-East households with earnings is higher, indicating that while many UP-East residents are working, they are most likely working in low-wage jobs.
- Educational Attainment is mixed. More than one in four UP-East residents has less than a high school diploma, which is higher than the City and more than double the rate in Lake County. Yet the rate of UP-East residents with an Associate's degrees actually exceeds that of the City and County.
- According to WorkOne, the Northwest Indiana Workforce Investment Board, regional employers are increasingly seeking postsecondary certification. Ivy Tech and the Gary Area Career Center, both located in the UP-East neighborhood, are invaluable assets that offer Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that offer these postsecondary certifications. However, it is critical to ensure that students enrolled in CTE programs successfully complete and achieve their certification. WorkOne notes that of the nearly 30,000 CTE enrollments in Northwest Indiana in 2014 only 13.1% had completed at least six credits in a single CTE pathway.

- The unemployment rate in UP-East of 29.6% is higher than the rate for the City, and nearly three times that of Lake County.
- More than half of residents 16 years and older are not in the labor force. This rate, which is higher than the City and the County, is likely due, at least in part, to the higher rates of SSI recipients/persons with disabilities but may also reflect higher rates of full-time student given the proximity to IUN and Ivy Tech, and the presence of seniors who are retired.
- Among those UP-East neighborhood survey respondents who are working or actively looking for work, approximately 1 in 3 said they have no trouble finding or keeping a job. However, for the remainder, the top five challenges to employment include: disability/health restriction (16%), affordable childcare (15%), caring for a family member who is sick or disabled (14%), no job experience (11%) and no job opportunities available (11%).
- Given the proximity to Ivy Tech and IUN, it is not surprising that many UP-East residents work in education.
- Aside from IUN and Ivy Tech, the largest employment centers are found in the northern part of the City concentrated around US Steel/Gary Works, Methodist Hospitals-Northlake, the City of Gary offices, and the casinos along the lakefront. Accessing these employment centers outside of UP-East is relatively easy via public transportation on Broadway, and will only become easier with the implementation of the rapid bus system.
- Commute times for UP-East workers are relatively short. However, far more UP-East workers are reliant upon carpooling and public transit than other workers in the City and County; perhaps due to the lower rate of car ownership in the neighborhood compared to the City and County.

### **Economic Development/Commercial Corridors**

- More retail/shopping options and more entertainment/cultural options cited among the top five changes in UP-East to encourage non-resident to move there.
- Easy access to the expressway and location near IUN and Ivy Tech are important assets to build on and promote.
- Business most desired by both residents and non-residents include clothing stores, grocery stores, sit-down restaurants, movie theatre/entertainment options, doctor's offices, coffee shops, and fitness centers.
- Depending upon redevelopment opportunities, zoning may need to be changed to support new commercial and/or mixed-use development.
- Potential economic development opportunity areas include Broadway, and 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- S.B. Friedman retained to assess the commercial/retail and mixed-use potential in the community.

### **Family Well-Being**

Access to health care is a challenge for many University Park East residents.

- Rates of medical insurance among neighborhood residents are relatively low compared to the City and County.

- Nearly half of University Park East residents report that they go to one of the local hospitals when in need of health advice rather than a primary care doctor.
- Access to Healthcare Services was also cited as a top community health concern in the 2012 PRC Community Health Needs Assessments for Community Hospital and Methodist Hospitals-Northlake which both cover service areas that include University Park East.
- Dental services and eye care are the top two unmet medical needs.
- However, there are new opportunities with the recent openings of the Oak Street Health Center and Marram Health Center in the neighborhood.

Many University Park East residents suffer from poor physical and mental health.

- Only 2 out of 3 heads of household who participated in the neighborhood survey rate their health as good or excellent. This rate is slightly lower for other adults in the household and slightly higher for children (3 out of 4).
- The rates of chronic disease among University Park East residents is very high: asthma (29%), hypertension (26%), and diabetes (21%). Asthma rates are particularly high among families and renters in the neighborhood indicating that this may be an issue among children and could be correlated with poor rental housing conditions.
- Per the Community Health Needs Assessments, there is reason to believe that University Park East residents like other low-income residents in the local service areas are less likely to eat the recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables or participate in leisure-time physical activity than the general population.
- There is an unmet need for substance abuse treatment services including smoking cessation.
- According to the neighborhood survey, University Park households suffer from depression or extreme stress/anxiety at higher rates than the general population.

Other than medical needs, the most common unmet needs include: Youth programs (21%); Computer training (20%); Emergency food bank (19%) and Small business training (15%). When asked “Why don’t you access the services you need?” the most common responses include: 27% - I don’t know about the services available; 25% - I have no trouble accessing services needed; 20% - Not sure.

### **Neighborhood Services and Amenities**

- Good transportation access via automobile, rail, and bus to local and regional destinations
- Quality of transportation infrastructure in UP-East inhibits access.
  - Nearly 22% of the sidewalks are unusable because they are overgrown or in poor condition – of particular note is a stretch on 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue between IUN and Ivy Tech – northern portion of the neighborhood lacks sidewalks altogether.
  - Bus stops lack route information and shelters.
- Poor local access to shopping and neighborhood amenities – there are no grocery stores or neighborhood parks in UP-East – Walkscore decreases the further away in the neighborhood you live from Broadway.
- Neighborhood is considered “dark” in many areas – there are several blocks where there are only street lights present at the corner and no mid-block lighting.

- Significant amount of vacant and underutilized parcels that could be assembled to support new development.
- Challenge to deliver quality public services with declining population and significant vacancy – only two received very good or good ratings by over 50% of the residents (fire department and ambulance/EMS response) – rest received lower ratings with the lowest given to street cleaning and snow removal.
- Flooding is a larger issue that goes beyond the neighborhood and impacts the neighborhood disproportionately.

### **Housing**

- Three opportunity areas for new development – Colonial Gardens 2 across from Ivy Tech, vacant Franklin Elementary school site, Broadway and 35<sup>th</sup>.
  - Need to replace a portion of or all 78 public housing units at CG 1 and 2 – all units have been approved for demolition and relocation of remaining residents is currently underway.
  - S.B. Friedman retained to assess the housing market potential.
- There is interest in moving to UP-East if improved – there was interest in homeownership among those who work at Ivy Tech or IUN, and student housing among those who go to school at Ivy Tech or IUN.
- There are a significant number of vacant structures and poor building conditions (both occupied and unoccupied) – 28% of all structures are currently vacant and 24% of existing structures are in poor or dangerous condition.
- Issue with quality of occupied units and negative impacts on resident health – renters and families are more likely to suffer from asthma – points to possible issue with rental housing quality and children are more susceptible to air quality issues leading to asthma.
- Need for concurrent improvements to support growth of the area (e.g. public amenities, retail, neighborhood perceptions).

### **Public Safety**

- Despite the decrease in violent crime over the last year, safety remains among the top concerns of neighborhood residents.
- In addition with more retail/shopping options, improved safety was identified as the top issue that would make a non-resident move to UP-East.
- More than half of residents felt very or somewhat safe in the neighborhood at varying times and places, but are more likely to feel safer during the day than at night – potential to shift those who felt somewhat unsafe to feeling somewhat safe.
- While police/law enforcement response, fire department response, and ambulance/EMS response received the highest ratings by neighborhood residents, the ratings were still overall low (49%, 55%, and 53% rated as very good or good, respectively).

### **Engagement and Leadership Development**

- More than half of the residents in UP-East have lived there for more than 10 years – residents were either born here or moved to the neighborhood because it was affordable – these are the same reasons why people have stayed.
- Residents are generally optimistic about the future outlook for UP-East with the majority thinking that the neighborhood will get a lot or somewhat better over the next five years.
- There is a pretty strong sense of community among residents in UP-East – nearly three-quarters know their neighbors and are working to improve their neighborhood, over 50% believe the same of their neighbors, and nearly two-thirds believe their neighbors are willing to help each other out.
- There are a number of differences between homeowners and renters with respect to how they engage with the community.
  - Homeowners are more likely to send their children to non-GCSC schools and be more satisfied with the education their children are receiving.
  - Children of homeowners are more likely to be enrolled in youth programs.
  - With respect to asthma, fewer homeowners report that a household member suffers from this health condition.

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## **VI. Implementation**

### **Leadership & Key Partners**

- Implementation structure for Blueprint to be determined.
- Key partners for implementation to be determined – anticipated partners aside from the City and its various departments include:
  - Master Developer(s) – to be procured in mid- to late 2016.
  - Social Service Providers – utilization of existing high-capacity and quality service-delivery social service agencies, determination of who and how people-oriented strategies will be managed and coordination of services to be determined.
  - UP-East residents – capacity building and training to permit ongoing involvement throughout Blueprint implementation.

### **Financing Plan**

- To be determined.

### **Timeframe for Implementation**

- To be developed - include short- (1-2 years), mid- (3-5 years), and long-term (6+ years) activities.

### **Program Evaluation**

- Data collection and evaluation partner to be identified.
- Include time points for data collection and strategy evaluation and modification.

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## **VII. Appendix**

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- University Park-East Existing Conditions Assessment – DRAFT January 2016