Northern Birmingham Revitalization Action Plan

Developed by the
Northern Birmingham Community Coalition

January 2015

This plan and the development of the Northern Birmingham Community Coalition was funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency including the Superfund Redevelopment Initiative, the Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center, the Technical Assistance Services for Communities Program and Region 4.

EPA
United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

U.S. EPA sponsored the formation of the Northern Birmingham Community Coalition (NBCC) to plan for the future of the communities of northern Birmingham (including the North Birmingham, Fairmont, Collegeville and Harriman Park neighborhoods). The communities of northern Birmingham face many economic, environmental and social challenges. The Coalition seeks to bring together residents, community representatives and government agencies to address issues of environmental cleanup, enforcement and community investment. The Coalition has engaged neighborhood representatives as well as business, faith, and community leaders and government agencies. Together, they have forged a shared vision and are working to create positive community change through implementation of this Action Plan.

Welcome!

On behalf of Collegeville, Fairmont, Harriman Park and North Birmingham, we are pleased to present the *Northern Birmingham Revitalization Action Plan* (the *Action Plan*). The process of developing this plan began in March 2013 when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency convened our communities at a public meeting to consider the formation of the Northern Birmingham Community Coalition (NBCC, Coalition). The idea received overwhelming support, and the Coalition formed in May 2013 to plan for the future of the communities of Northern Birmingham.

The *Action Plan* you are reading represents the enthusiastic and diligent work of the Coalition members and many community-based organizations and resource partners, including local and federal government representatives. We are grateful to all who have so generously given their time and talents to make both this *Action Plan* and the revitalization of the communities of Northern Birmingham possible.

The Northern Birmingham neighborhoods hold a special place in the history and culture of Birmingham. Historically, our thriving residential and commercial areas have been home to generations of Birmingham families and entrepreneurs. Our faith communities and schools have produced outstanding civic leaders, including Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and many of the young people who led the Civil Rights movement in Birmingham and elevated our city to its bellwether status as a symbol of America's growing pains and hard-earned progress on Civil Rights. Furthermore, Northern Birmingham has long been home to important industrial drivers for the local, regional and state economies.

The Coalition envisions a revitalized and beautiful community in Northern Birmingham with safe and affordable housing, thriving commercial areas, and active, healthy residents, school children, workforce employees and faith communities. While this work will not be accomplished overnight and will require the partnership and investment of many leaders and organizations from Birmingham and beyond, we are already seeing signs of hope and restoration.

We thank you for taking the time to read the *Northern Birmingham Revitalization Action Plan* and invite you to join with us in this work!

Sincerely,

Northern Birmingham Community Coalition

The Northern Birmingham Community Coalition. Back row (left to right): Ronald Mitchell, Dennis Mallory, Chester Wallace, Thurman Thomas, Rev. E.O. Jackson, Jones Monday, Robert Hill. Front row (left to right): Jimmy Smith, John Toyer, Joyce Ray, Alberta Weeden, Sandra Brown, Loraine Barker, Vivian Starks.

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Dedication

With gratitude and love, the Northern Birmingham Community Coalition dedicates the Northern Birmingham Revitalization Action Plan to the late Council President Maxine Parker. Her tireless advocacy for environmental investments and quality of life in Northern Birmingham and her faith in the power of community leadership left a firm foundation and a lasting legacy that we hope to carry forward for future generations.

The Coalition would also like to extend its deep gratitude and appreciation to the Office of the Mayor of Birmingham and to Councilor William Parker for their support.

Photo courtesy of the City of Birmingham

Introduction

The Collegeville, Fairmont, Harriman Park and North Birmingham neighborhoods have a strong, shared legacy of vibrant community life, leadership and economic significance to the City of Birmingham. However, over the past several decades, the neighborhoods of Northern Birmingham have experienced decline and disinvestment as well as a growing awareness of environmental and health conditions related to the industrial core.

Coalition Formation and Action Planning Efforts

In response to these conditions, neighborhood leaders have come together to form the Northern Birmingham Community Coalition (Coalition, NBCC) to plan and advocate for the future of Northern Birmingham. Over the past 18 months, the Coalition has met with numerous community-based organizations and resource partners to dig deeply into the community's existing challenges and develop strategies to spur revitalization. The Coalition has also built relationships with other environmental justice and community revitalization organizations tackling similar issues in the Southeast region of the United States.

Revitalization Priorities and Workgroups

Based on this work, the Coalition has developed a mission, principles and vision for revitalization. To achieve this vision, the Coalition has developed this Action Plan to guide revitalization around three priorities, which include:

- Housing: Rehab, Rebuild, Reclaim
- Commercial Revitalization: Food, Fuel, Retail
- Health: Health Care and Comprehensive Wellness

This *Action Plan* outlines specific goals and strategies for each of these priorities as a shared road map for the many partners that will join in making this vision a reality. The following Context section provides a snapshot of the significance of the community's past, the present conditions, and a framework for planning the future. Then the Action Plan includes a section on each priority that outlines current conditions, goals and strategies, signs of hope and successes in other communities for fostering revitalization in Housing, Commercial Revitalization and Health.

Mission

To improve the quality of life for the neighborhoods of Northern Birmingham (Collegeville, Fairmont, Harriman Park and North Birmingham) by encouraging a sense of cultural pride and investment in the communities and increasing access to comprehensive wellness amenities and health care services, neighborhood-oriented retail, job opportunities, healthy, safe and affordable housing and a clean environment.

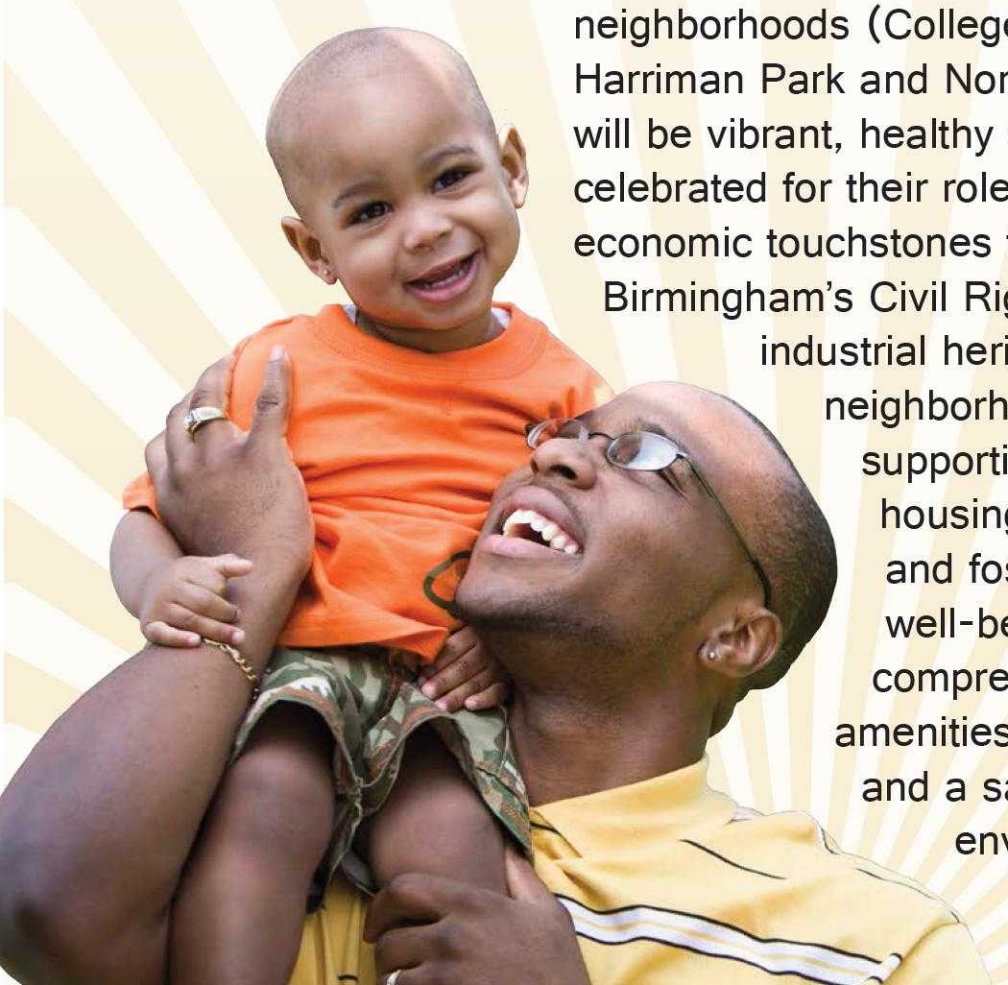
Principles

In striving to fulfill our mission, the NBCC is committed to:

- Increasing cooperation, communication and collaboration between the Collegeville, Fairmont, Harriman Park and North Birmingham neighborhoods to help ensure investments benefit all the neighborhoods of Northern Birmingham.
- Supporting equitable investments that respect and lift up our existing communities.
- Fostering a culture where residents, business and industry collaborate, innovate and receive mutual benefit from community revitalization efforts.
- Developing intergenerational community leadership.
- Using a consensus-based decision-making process to govern the Coalition's actions and ensure that the Coalition speaks with a unified voice.

Vision

The NBCC has developed the following vision statement to guide community revitalization:

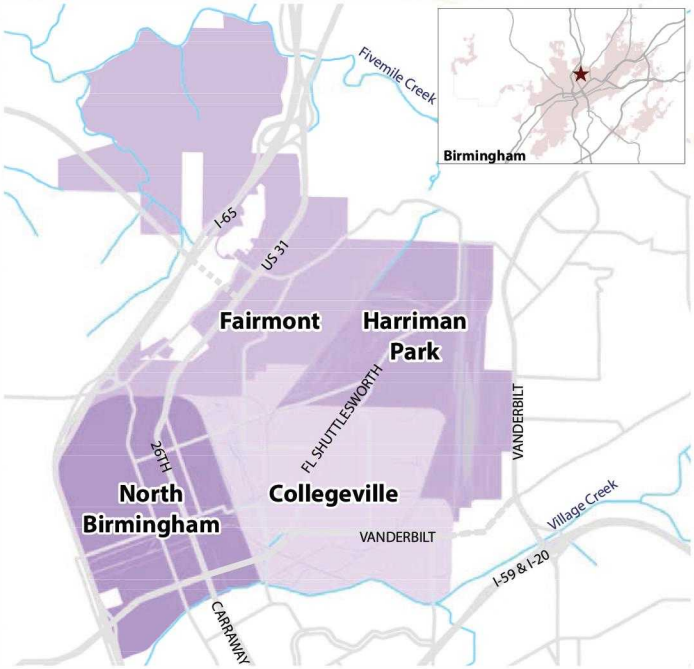


"It is our vision that Northern Birmingham neighborhoods (Collegeville, Fairmont, Harriman Park and North Birmingham) will be vibrant, healthy communities celebrated for their role as cultural and economic touchstones for the City of Birmingham's Civil Rights movement and industrial heritage. Together the neighborhoods prosper by supporting jobs, affordable housing and retail options and foster community well-being with access to comprehensive wellness amenities, health services, and a safe and clean environment."

Context

History

Northern Birmingham holds a central place in the history and culture of the City of Birmingham. Originally, the Collegeville, Fairmont, Harriman Park and North Birmingham neighborhoods were part of the City of North Birmingham, which incorporated in 1902. Later, the City of Birmingham annexed the community. Today, the neighborhoods are located just north of Birmingham's downtown.



Vital Industries

From its inception, Northern Birmingham has been a locus of significant manufacturing and industrial activity. The iron and steel industries, coal mining industry and railroads were key drivers of Birmingham's early growth and contributed to its reputation as the industrial center of the South. As the base of operations for many of these industries, Northern Birmingham has played an integral role in propelling Birmingham's economic vitality.

Once Thriving Community

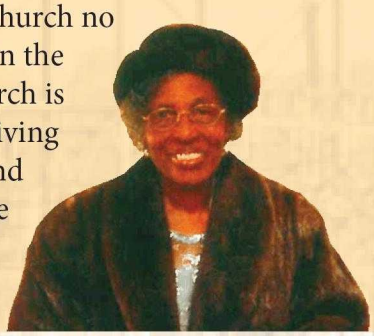
In part due to this industrial heritage, Northern Birmingham has been home to generations of hard-working Birmingham families and entrepreneurs. The African American plant workers and their families lived in neighborhoods directly around the industrial plants and developed a thriving community that included commercial areas, schools and places of worship that created a strong sense of family and place.

Our Community Then and Now

by Eura Garrison, Northern Birmingham resident

My family and I moved to the "Town of David" in the Fairmont Neighborhood in 1943. At that time the neighborhood was heavily populated with lots of houses. The houses were well kept and the neighbors were friendly. There were three churches in the community, a Methodist, a Baptist and an A.O.H. Church. There were several businesses in the area and along Thirty One Highway. There were two tourist courts that employed some of the residents, four small grocery stores, a cleaners and three service stations. Students went to Hooper City School by Jefferson County School buses. There was also bus service in the area, a bus passed through going to and from the North Birmingham District several times daily.

As the years passed, things began to change. The bus service was discontinued, businesses gradually closed and the community became less populated as homes became empty due to death or occupants moving for various reasons. Eventually the houses became uninhabitable and were demolished. Today very few houses are remaining, in certain areas they are completely gone. The Methodist Church no longer exist, the Baptist church is in the same location but the A.O.H. Church is in a new location. Those who are living in the neighborhood are hoping and praying that one day it will become a large neighborhood again.

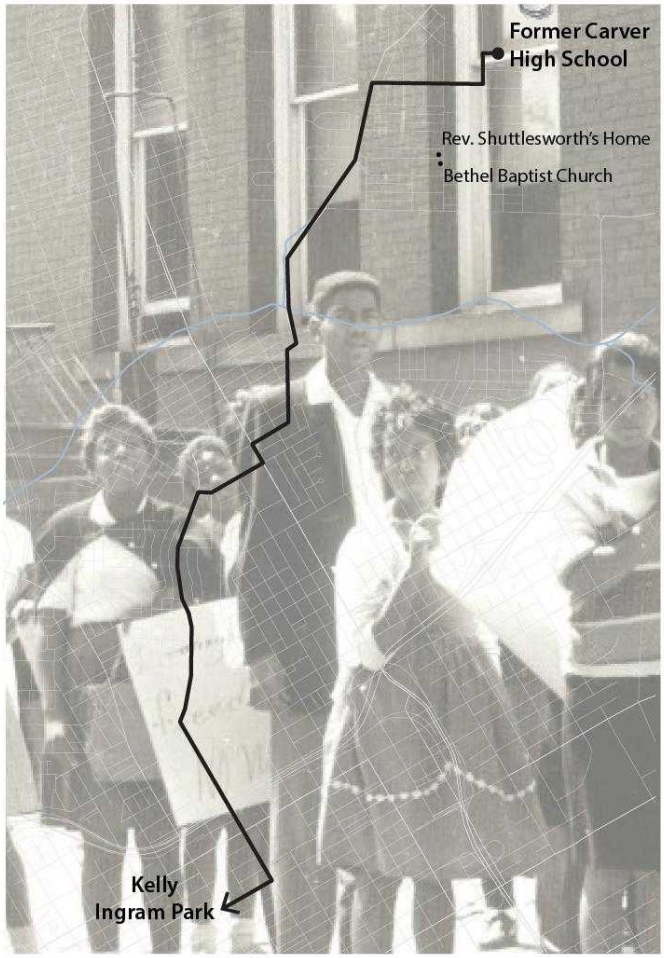


Northern Birmingham: Past

Our Civil Rights Legacy

Northern Birmingham has played a significant role in shaping the cultural and social identity of Birmingham. Its faith communities and schools have produced outstanding civic leaders, including Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and many of the young people who led the Civil Rights movement in Birmingham.

The legacy of the Civil Rights movement still resonates in Northern Birmingham today. Residents and Coalition members speak of steadfast and fearless moral leadership, widespread civic and youth participation, and continued hope that guides their efforts for equitable development and community revitalization today.



March Route from Carver High School

Thurman Thomas (center), present-day NBCC member, marches for civil rights in the Children's Marches of 1963.

Mr. Thomas remembers, "[We are] in line marching just before we were arrested in 1963. I was a senior in high school. We marched from the old Carver High School to downtown Birmingham."

Credit: Photo courtesy of Thurman Thomas. This image appeared in a 2008 edition of Birmingham Magazine.

Top: Bethel Baptist Church and the parsonage following a bombing during the Civil Rights movement. Photo courtesy of the Fred Shuttlesworth Foundation

> "Fred [Shuttlesworth] didn't invite us to come to Birmingham. He told us we had to come."
>
> Andrew Young,
> Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Top: Bethel Baptist Church and the parsonage following a bombing during the Civil Rights movement. Photo courtesy of the Fred Shuttlesworth Foundation

Existing Conditions

Despite a powerful and significant history, Northern Birmingham suffers from a legacy of disinvestment, discrimination, pollution and land use decisions that have resulted in isolated neighborhoods lacking adequate amenities and services. Strategic public and private investments in cleanup, housing, services, transportation and flood mitigation could reverse this trend and help restore vibrancy to this essential community of Birmingham that has contributed so significantly to the industrial and cultural heritage of the region.

Economic Disparities

The median income of Northern Birmingham is 25 percent lower than that of Birmingham as a whole.[1] This economic disparity underscores the need for public, private and non-profit investment to offset the significant lack of capital within Northern Birmingham and effect positive change.

Isolated Residential Areas

Residential neighborhoods are isolated from each other by large tracts of industrial activity. The rail network further divides neighborhoods and creates barriers for pedestrians, cyclists, drivers and emergency vehicles. Trains may sit on the tracks for indefinite periods of time, blocking traffic flow and creating a safety hazard.

Vacant Lands

Vacant properties in Northern Birmingham offer opportunities for development and reinvestment including space for new housing and commercial uses, parks and open space, and buffers from industry. Vacant parcels could be used to reduce flooding from Village Creek in residential areas through the addition of green infrastructure.

94%

African American
compared to 74% in the City

22%

Unemployment
compared to 14% in the City

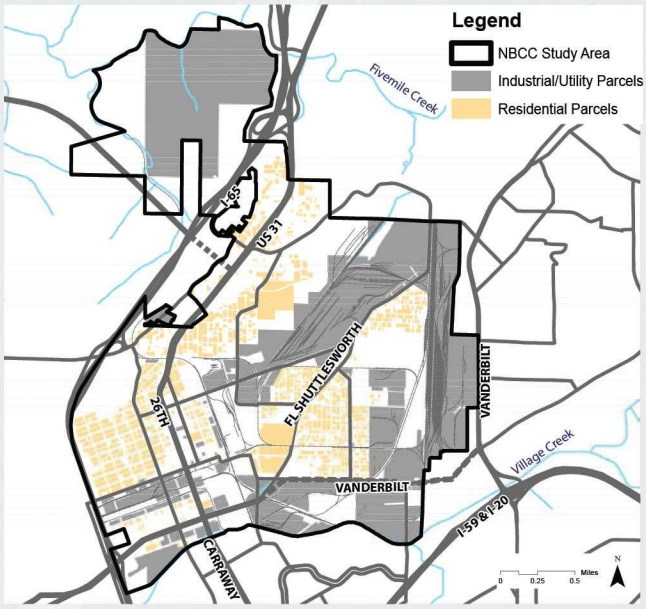
32%

Poverty
compared to 27% in the City

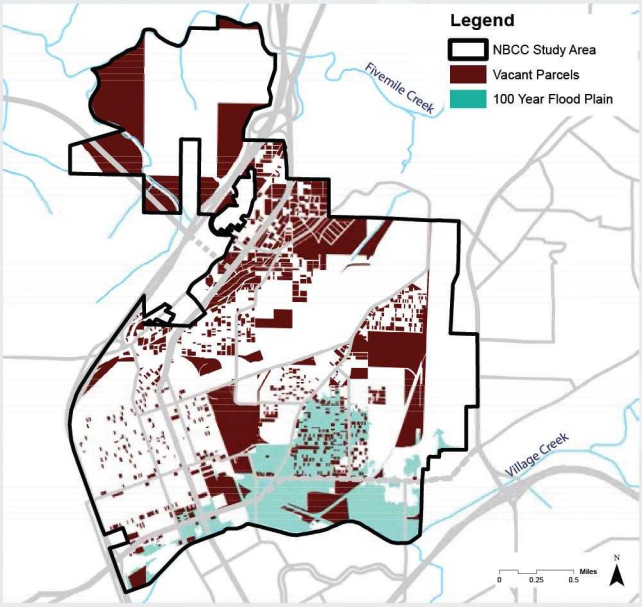
3,482 households
x $7,965 in income difference

$27.7 M

Economic Disparity



Land Use and Transportation

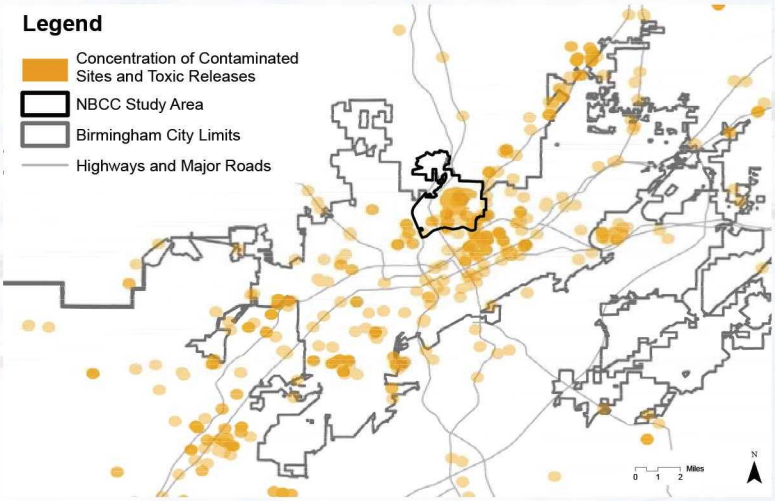


Vacant Land and Floodplain

[1] Data from the 2011 American Community Survey five year estimates. Census tracts 7, 8 and 55 approximate the Northern Birmingham community. The economic disparity figure represents the difference in median household income in these census tracts and the median household income in Birmingham.

Environmental Disparities

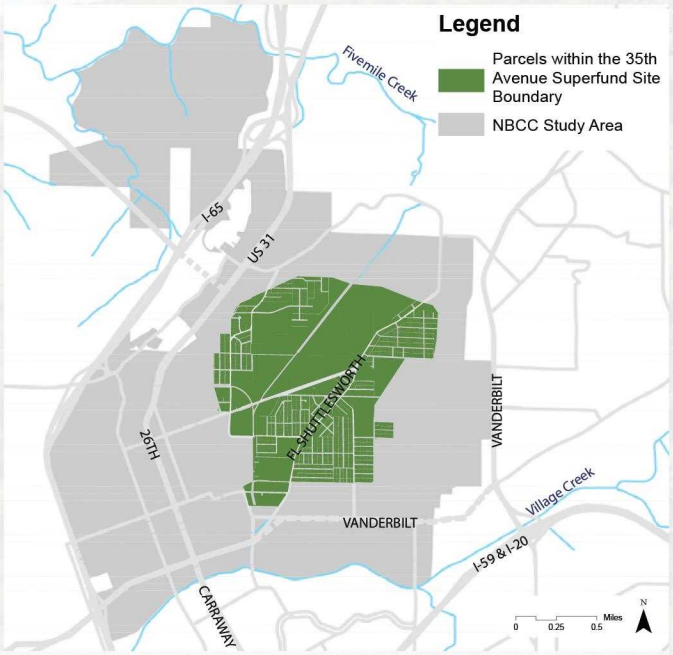
For years, industry in Northern Birmingham has served as the backbone of the local economy. Operating facilities in the area have produced jobs and wealth for families across Birmingham and Jefferson County. But industrial activity has also lead to contamination of water, air and soil in the neighboring communities, particularly in Northern Birmingham. As illustrated in the map at right, Northern Birmingham bears a higher environmental burden than other residential communities due to the concentration of contaminated sites and toxic releases.



Potential Cumulative Impact of Contaminated Sites and Toxic Releases

As described by EPA, Environmental Justice "will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work." [2]

Leading Federal Investments in Revitalization



35th Avenue Superfund Site Cleanup

The EPA Superfund Program is cleaning up properties within the 35th Avenue Superfund Site to ensure protection of human health and the environment. As cleanup is completed, EPA could provide information to assure investors that the area is ready for reinvestment.

For more information, see: http://www2.epa.gov/north-birmingham-project

Thanks to the efforts of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Superfund Program, cleanup of environmental hazards is underway. Under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), EPA is also working with local industries to ensure cleaner operations at active facilities. Other active EPA programs in Northern Birmingham include: Superfund, Air, Water, Environmental Justice and National Environmental Policy Act Programs.

As the contamination is addressed, Northern Birmingham is ripe for reinvestment to rebuild a vibrant sustainable community. EPA's cleanup efforts and the leadership of the Northern Birmingham Community Coalition have initiated interest across federal, local and philanthropic programs to leverage additional investments. For example, the Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice is currently working to identify federal programs that can support investment and implementation efforts in Northern Birmingham.

[2] U.S. EPA. 2014. What is Environmental Justice? Retrieved from: www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice.

> "Love is the willingness to understand that your "enemy" is just as much a part of the solution as the problem. They are just as much a victim of inequity as you are. You must have the power and the courage to turn enemies into friends."
>
> Nathaniel Smith, Partnership for Southern Equity

Why Foster Thriving Communities?

Some may ask, "Why invest in a community that is suffering the impacts from so many decades of disinvestment?" Thriving communities actively contribute to the social, cultural and economic prosperity of the surrounding region. Adapted from the ICLEI STAR Community Index, thriving communities contain:

- Clean air, water and limited exposure to toxins
- Meaningful and fair employment opportunities
- Fresh, healthy and affordable food
- Clean, safe affordable housing
- Access to affordable health care
- Access to a range of education opportunities
- Sufficient open space and recreation opportunities
- Arts, cultural, religious and social networks
- Cultural and social diversity
- Opportunities for social and civic engagement
- Minimal waste, carbon footprint and energy use

Common Equitable Development Challenges

In contrast, communities suffering from disproportionate environmental impacts and disinvestment face tremendous challenges in attracting the investment needed for sustainable revitalization. Often these communities suffer for years as though in isolation. But as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. suggests, the "inescapable network of mutuality" affirms that the ills that directly affect one community inevitably create a negative impact on the social, cultural and economic resilience of the surrounding region as well.

Creating Equitable Development

Traditional economic redevelopment approaches typically focus on economic factors and job growth that targets a single site or sector and contributes to a community's tax revenue. In contrast, equitable development places greater emphasis on identifying and meeting broader community needs through the redevelopment process. The concept of equitable development affirms that all community members should have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from development and land use decisions affecting their neighborhoods. This means that overall investments and resources are spent fairly and benefit everyone fairly, regardless of race, ethnicity or income level.

Coalition Building and Leadership

To ensure that community needs are met, equitable development coalitions rely on leadership from within the community as a compass for identifying revitalization priorities and guiding the implementation of projects. Equitable development may be more effectively achieved by combining the vision and priorities of local community members with the implementation skills, expertise and resources of a broad array of revitalization partners.

In this spirit, the Northern Birmingham Community Coalition has followed the advice of Nathaniel Smith of the Partnership for Southern Equity, "Most people think of a leader as someone who leads from the front, but the most effective leaders lead from the center. They serve as connectors and focus on bringing people with many different perspectives together under one common vision."

The following principles, deeply rooted in an equitable development approach and a commitment to "leading from the center," have guided the planning process used by the Coalition:

- Strengthen a coalition of neighborhoods
- Identify community-based quality of life priorities
- Develop neighborhood-based solutions
- Prioritize, coordinate and leverage resources based on community need
- Initiate revitalization efforts through partnerships between community leadership and key resource partners

Planning for Positive Neighborhood Change

In addition to building alliances across neighborhoods and the private, pubic and non-profit sectors, the Coalition has evaluated existing conditions, examined successful revitalization approaches in other communities and built relationships with local entities who can help with implementation of revitalization projects. Based on these efforts, the Coalition has developed the *Northern Birmingham Revitalization Action Plan* to address their three core revitalization priorities:

- Housing: Rehab, Rebuild, Reclaim
- Commercial Revitalization: Food, Fuel, Retail
- Health: Health Care and Comprehensive Wellness

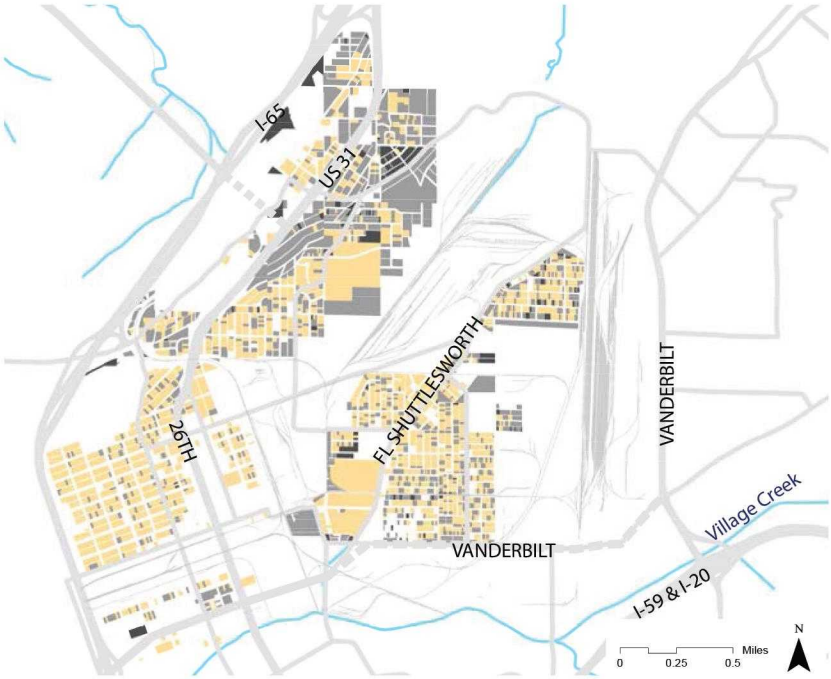
Plans for each of these priorities are outlined the sections that follow. The plans capture approaches the Coalition believes can build seamlessly on the neighborhoods' strengths and identity. While not intended to be exhaustive or exclusive, the *Northern Birmingham Revitalization Action Plan* provides a shared roadmap for starting Northern Birmingham down the road to revitalization.

> *"Innovative revitalization coalitions share a commitment to bring disparate parties together in ever expanding networks, raising expectations, keeping an eye on the big picture, but focusing on small attainable successes and relentlessly building on them."*
>
> Voices from Forgotten Cities, by Lorene Hoyt and Andre Leroux

Housing: Rehab, Rebuild, Reclaim

Northern Birmingham will provide affordable, safe and quality homes for current residents and future generations! We will be a residential community of choice!

Housing



Residential neighborhoods include Collegeville, Fairmont, Harriman Park and North Birmingham.

9%

of vacant residential properties are publicly owned.

91%

of vacant residential properties are privately owned.

Situation

Northern Birmingham has experienced a decline over the last several decades in quality housing stock. Housing values have been impacted in part by environmental conditions outside the control of property owners. The community is also impacted by vacant residential properties, of which approximately nine percent are publicly owned. Abandoned and dilapidated housing is a concern along US 31 and in the core residential areas. Community residents who have built their lives in Northern Birmingham are eager to see the housing stock restored and complemented with housing options for a range of family types.

Opportunity

Vacant properties present an opportunity to reinvest in affordable homes and increase residential density by attracting new residents. Priorities include increasing single family housing, complementing the existing housing, and encouraging intergenerational, mixed-income neighborhoods.

Early Housing Wins

Collaborating with Community Partners

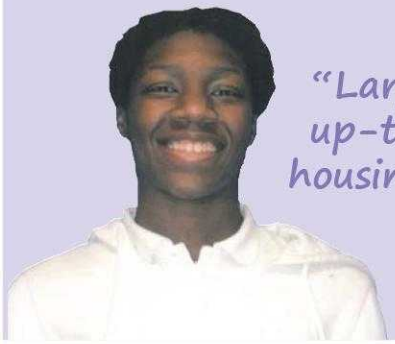
In May 2014, the Coalition collaborated with Greater Birmingham Habitat for Humanity to rehab five homes in the community. The Coalition identified candidate homes that would benefit from repairs. Habitat for Humanity provided the rehab materials and volunteers. Together, the Coalition and Habitat for Humanity coordinated a weekend for the volunteers to come and repair the homes. Rehab efforts included painting, yard work and replacing a roof that had fallen in. By working in partnership, the Coalition opened the door to effective, meaningful investments from an expert community partner.

"Habitat for Humanity of Greater Birmingham is committed to neighborhood revitalization and providing quality, affordable housing solutions to those needing assistance. Anytime we see such a motivated group of homeowners such as those in North Birmingham, we look for ways to partner in the revitalization of the community. [... We] are always willing to give a "hand-up" by working with committed neighborhood leaders."

Charles T. Moore, President and CEO,
Greater Birmingham Habitat for Humanity

Student Voices

If you had one wish for something that could be better in this neighborhood, what would it be?



"Larger and more up-to-date public housing." Ny'dreland, age 17

"Better housing and a better looking neighborhood!"
Deandrea, age 17

"I want the apartments to look better." Student from Hudson K-8

Housing Action Plan

Goals

Improve access to healthy, affordable housing through:

REHAB: Promote housing preservation and rehabilitation.

REBUILD: Increase affordable, workforce housing.

RECLAIM: Reclaim abandoned properties for residential use.

Strategies

The Coalition has prioritized the following strategies to build partnerships for implementation.

1. Assist residents in applying for City and County rehab and weatherization programs.
2. Facilitate conversations with the Birmingham Land Bank to evaluate options for reuse of vacant and abandoned properties at the neighborhood level.
3. Advocate for mixed income housing investments in the city's new housing plan.
4. Identify opportunities for non-profits and the faith community to lead rehab or new construction efforts.
5. Pursue local partnerships to bring U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Grant funding to Northern Birmingham.
6. Organize residents to participate in rehab programs offered by the Greater Birmingham Habitat for Humanity housing.
7. Work with Greater Birmingham Habitat for Humanity to construct new homes.

Preserving and Creating New Affordable Housing

Goshen, Indiana

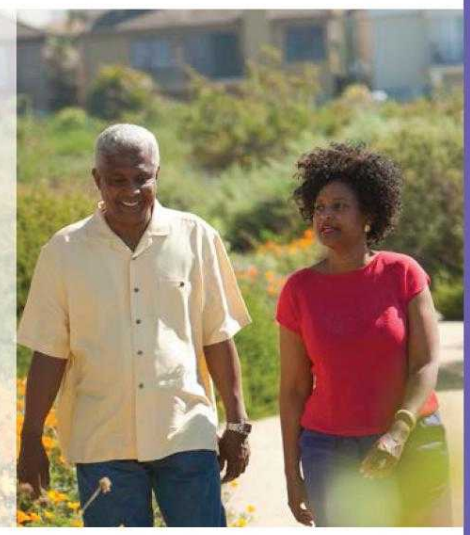
LaCasa partners with community groups and individuals to encourage homeownership, home rehabilitation and community development in northern Indiana. During 2012, LaCasa helped a dozen homeowners with major repairs, developed additional affordable homes, assisted 30 families in purchasing their first home, helped 68 families avoid foreclosure, and provided safe, affordable housing for 270 families. The organization also helps seniors make informed decisions regarding a variety of mortgage products.

For more information, visit: www.lacasagoshen.org
Photo courtesy of LaCasa, Inc.

Reclaiming Abandoned Housing | Indianapolis, IN

Reclaiming and remodeling vacant and abandoned housing can help stabilize neighborhoods while also providing new housing units. The City of Indianapolis established a detailed plan to reduce abandoned and vacant houses. The plan includes neighborhood stabilization through code enforcement, a land bank and other legal processes; identifying geographic priorities; and managing redevelopment efforts through a redevelopment council.

For more information, visit: www.indy.gov/eGov/City/DMD/Abandoned/Pages/home.aspx



Community Land Banks | Genesee County, Michigan

Land banks empower communities to restore neglected and abandoned properties by providing a vehicle for assembling abandoned property for a variety of redevelopment possibilities. The Genesee County Land Bank relies on the tax foreclosure process in Michigan. Acquiring roughly 2,000 pieces of property a year, the Land Bank cleans up properties and quickly puts them back into use as affordable housing, mixed-income housing, economic development projects or park space. Through its Brownfield Program, the Land Bank has demolished 700 blighted structures, cleared more than 100 property titles, and removed over 600 tons of debris dumped on vacant lots.

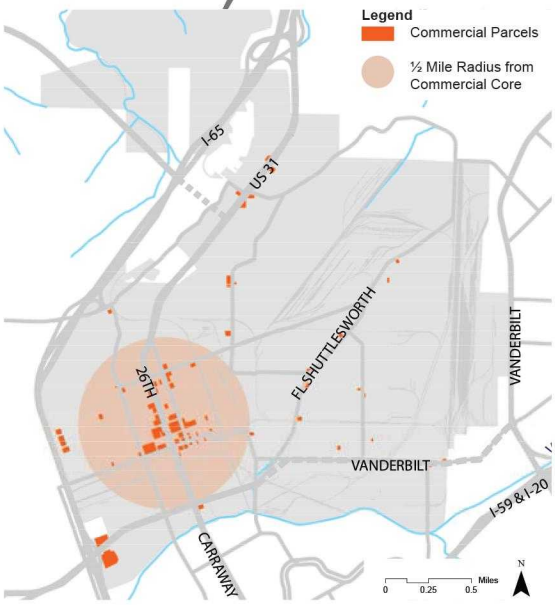
For more information, visit: www.thelandbank.org
Photo courtesy of Genesee County Land Bank.

Commercial Revitalization

Food, Fuel, Retail

Northern Birmingham will have vibrant commercial areas that provide for the daily needs of the community! We are open for business!

Food, Fuel and Retail



The existing commercial district in North Birmingham has the space and infrastructure to offer an expanded range of goods and services that meet the daily needs of the community.

Gas stations could be better distributed throughout the neighborhoods and could provide clean fuel alternatives for private and commercial vehicles to reduce air pollution.

Expanding healthy, affordable food options could be accomplished by working with existing store owners to expand their selection and by attracting a new full-service grocery.

Existing Conditions

Situation

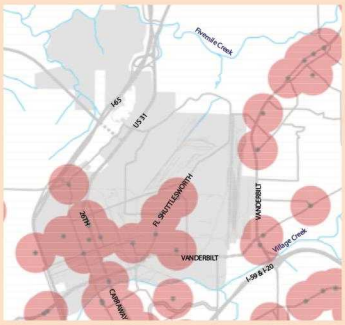
Northern Birmingham has a remnant commercial core located along 26th St. N. (US 31). Many storefronts are empty, and the area no longer offers the range of products and services used by the community. Other neighborhoods in the community lack a commercial center altogether and are served only by small convenience stores. Residents who are able often drive to Fultondale, which is about five miles away, to shop for daily needs such as household goods, groceries, medicine and clothing.

Opportunity

The existing commercial district and the community's rich cultural heritage offer a distinct opportunity to rebrand and revitalize the North Birmingham commercial core. Coalition members would like to see a near-term focus on strengthening the existing commercial core and eventually expanding more services into other neighborhoods.

Living in a Food Desert

Northern Birmingham residents do not have access to a grocery store with a full selection of fresh, healthy and affordable food. Instead, the neighborhood contains a small grocery store and numerous convenience stores that do not carry a selection of healthy foods. However, since the convenience stores are close, and also accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, they are a likely shopping option for low income and less mobile residents.



¼ Mile Radius from SNAP Retailers

Access to fast food and convenience stores is predictive of greater obesity odds.[1] Frequent consumption of fast food is associated with weight gain and an increased risk of Type 2 diabetes.[2]

[1]Bodor, et al. 2010. The Association between Obesity and Urban Food Environments. Journal of Urban Health. 87(5): 771–781.
[2]National Institutes of Health. 2004. Eating at Fast-food Restaurants More than Twice Per Week is Associated with More Weight Gain and Insulin Resistance in Otherwise Healthy Young Adults. Retrieved from: http://www.nih.gov/news/pr/dec2004/nhlbi-30.htm.

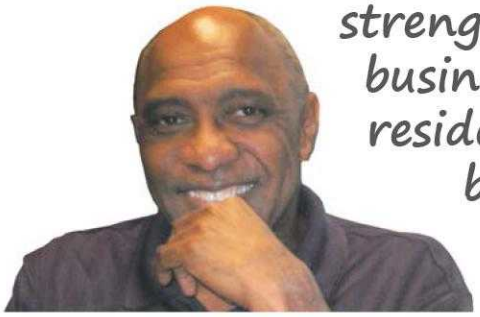
Early Commercial Wins

Pursuing Historic Designation

In March 2014, Coalition members took brownfield developers on a community tour. During the dialogue, the developers identified the following strengths that the community could use to attract private investment: (1) Environmental cleanup efforts by the federal government give investors a high degree of certainty that a property does not have environmental roadblocks to development. (2) Historic designation can give the community a distinct identity and brand that attracts investors. As a result of these conversations, the Coalition has decided to pursue historic designation based on Northern Birmingham's significant contributions to the Civil Rights Movement.

"We need to partner with the City of Birmingham and REV Birmingham to bring investors to this area!"

Jimmy Coleman, North Birmingham business owner



"[Investing in Northern Birmingham] helps strengthen the neighborhoods. Some of the businesses would probably hire neighborhood residents and boost the economy. More businesses equals more tax revenue."

Randolph Fowler, Community Relations and Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, ACIPCO

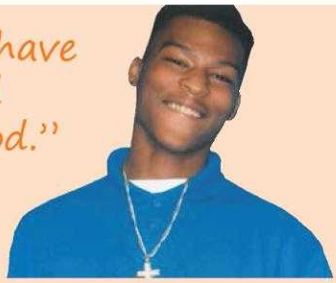
Student Voices

If you had one wish for something that could be better in this neighborhood, what would it be?

"I would wish for the economy to change." Student from Hudson K-8

"There could be better shops for people to go to." Hudson K-8 student

"I would wish to have a flamboyant and clean neighborhood."
Rodriquez, age 18



"Closer stores and indoor community centers."
Student from Hudson K-8

Commercial Action Plan

Goals

Improve access to neighborhood-oriented amenities and increase job opportunities for Northern Birmingham residents through:

FOOD: Increase access to grocery stores and healthy, affordable food.

FUEL: Increase access to green fuel service stations.

RETAIL: Increase access to neighborhood-oriented retail.

Strategies

The Coalition has prioritized the following strategies to build partnerships for implementation.

1. Support efforts to attract neighborhood-oriented retail to the existing commercial core.
2. Identify and support job training opportunities within the community.
3. Pursue historic designation to honor the community's national contribution to Civil Rights movement.
4. Expand the Civil Rights trails and signage into the neighborhoods to celebrate the community's unique cultural heritage.
5. Encourage existing corner stores or grocers to improve their healthy food selection.
6. Connect small business entrepreneurs with capacity building resources.
7. Encourage local business and industry fleets to adopt clean fuels.
8. Encourage local service stations to add clean fuel options and additional green amenities.
9. Support entrepreneurial opportunities related to local food production, processing and distribution.

Incentives for Healthy Food Outlets | San Francisco, CA

Grocery stores and markets are important partners in improving quality of life. These amenities can increase the economic and social vitality of a community. Literacy for Environmental Justice (LEJ), a nonprofit in the San Francisco area, created the Good Neighbor Program to attract grocery stores and markets that would supply healthy foods to low-income communities. Designated "good neighbor" stores have an inventory of at least 10 percent fresh produce and 10-20 percent of other healthy foods. They accept SNAP benefits and do not promote alcohol or tobacco consumption. LEJ then provides technical assistance to good neighbor stores, helping them become more sustainable and competitive in the local economy.

For more information, visit: www.lejyouth.org

Cultural Heritage Branding | Raleigh, NC

Cultural heritage branding offers an important opportunity to generate energy for revitalization through lifting up the unique identity and meaning of a place. The City of Raleigh Department of Parks and Recreation recently completed a revised master plan for John Chavis Memorial Park that builds on the park's identity as a beacon of African American culture during segregation. The plan retains all early park features that remain in their original locations, honors important former features of the park and memorializes significant events and people through public art and signage. In addition, the master plan recommends significant indoor and outdoor facility upgrades to serve the many people who use the park today. The park will also connect to the surrounding neighborhood via the South Park Heritage Walk, a walking trail featuring African American historic sites.

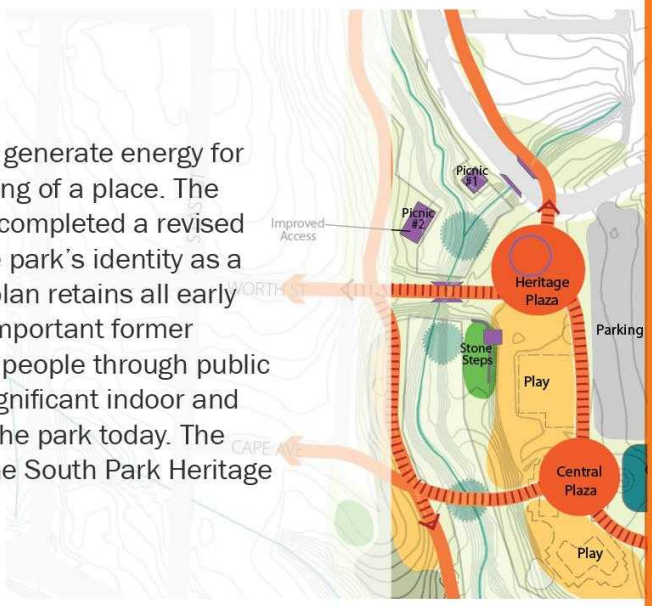


Image courtesy of the City of Raleigh, NC

Green Gas Stations | Dane County, WI

Green gas stations offer conventional gasoline as well as cleaner alternative fuels and services for cyclists and public transit users. They may also use technology to reduce volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions that escape from nozzles and underground storage tanks.

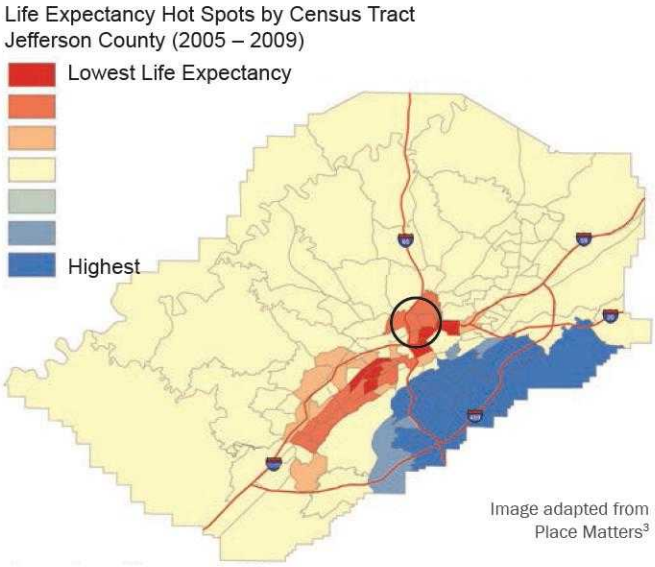
In 2006, EPA awarded a $50,000 Air Innovation grant to the Dane County Clean Air Coalition (DCCAC). With the grant, DCCAC reduced air emissions and energy consumption by installing pressure vent valves at 100 gas stations and vapor recovery systems at two stations. DCCAC also provided information on best practices and green products to station managers and owners. The pressure vent valves reduced VOC emissions by 7.98 tons per year. The two vapor recovery systems reduced VOCs by 6.75 tons per year.

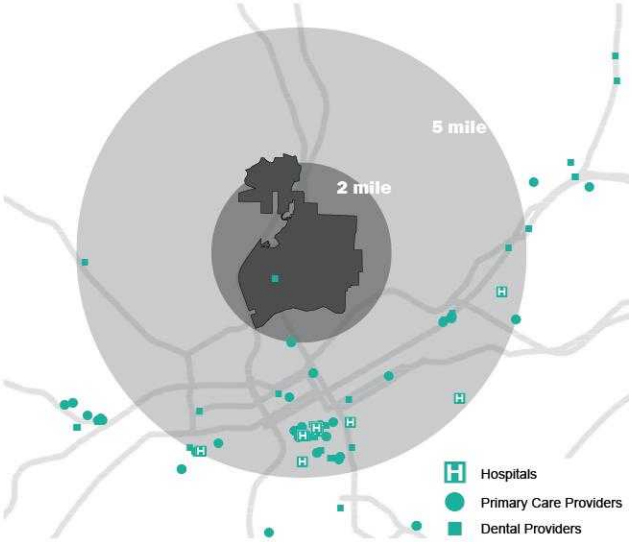
For more information, visit: www.healthyairdane.org/gasstationpractices.aspx
Photo courtesy of Propel Fuels

Health: Health Care and Comprehensive Wellness

Northern Birmingham will be an active, healthy place where residents, children, worshippers and workers thrive! We care for our people and natural resources!

Health and Health Care Access





COMMUNITY IS A HOT SPOT FOR SHORTER LIFE EXPECTANCY COMPARED TO REST OF COUNTY.

LACK OF ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE WITHIN COMMUNITY

Situation

Northern Birmingham residents experience a higher rate of premature death than most areas of Jefferson County.[3] In addition, many residents are concerned about the impact of environmental conditions on health outcomes. Despite these facts, Northern Birmingham has lost a number of vital medical facilities once located in the community. Transportation and financial barriers prevent access to primary health care, dental care and emergency services.

Opportunity

The Coalition has identified a range of strategies to promote better health outcomes. These strategies include increasing access to existing health care facilities, repurposing vacant community health care facilities, and improving access to comprehensive wellness resources and amenities within the community. The Coalition also sees an opportunity to work proactively with operating facilities to reduce pollution in Northern Birmingham.

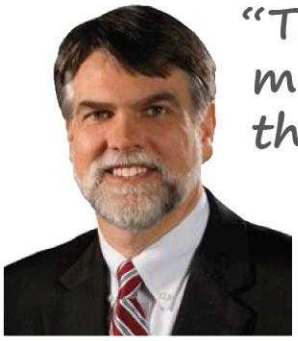
Closed health facilities in Northern Birmingham include Physicians Medical Center Carraway (top) and the Northern Health Clinic (bottom).

[3] Jefferson County Place Matters Team and the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. 2013. Place Matters for Health in Jefferson County, Alabama: The Status of Health Equity on the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Movement in Birmingham, Alabama. p. 25.

Early Health Wins

Rebuilding Relationships

The relationship between Northern Birmingham residents and the Jefferson County Department of Health (JCDH) has been strained in the past due to differing perspectives on environmental enforcement, accessibility of health services and the closure of the Northern Health Clinic. At an NBCC meeting in May 2014, Coalition members and the Chief Executive of JCDH found common ground in their joint interest to reuse the Northern Health Clinic building for wellness related programs. JCDH committed to collaborating with the Coalition and other community partners to seek a beneficial, health-related reuse for the facility.



"The Jefferson County Department of Health has maintained the Northern Health Center building with the hope that it could be owned and repurposed by the community for uses that promote the overall health and vibrancy of the area."

Mark E. Wilson, MD, Health Officer and Chief Executive,
Jefferson County Department of Health

Student Voices

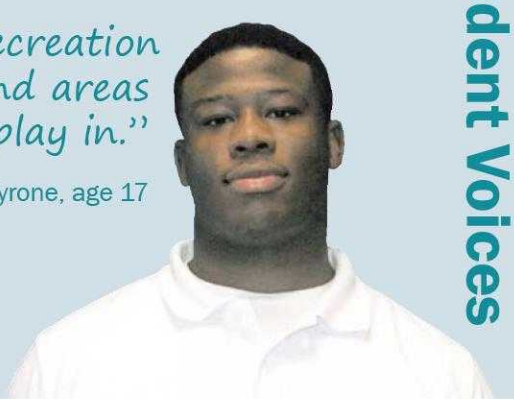
If you had one wish for something that could be better in this neighborhood, what would it be?

"I would like for the neighborhood park to be reconstructed...[so] it will be safer and more fun for kids to play." Student from Hudson K-8 student

"The amount of pollution in the area [would] drop and we as the people of the neighborhood could live healthy." Student from Hudson K-8 student

"Better recreation facilities and areas to play in."

Tyrone, age 17



Health Action Plan

Goals

Improve health outcomes through:

HEALTH CARE: Increase access to health care services.

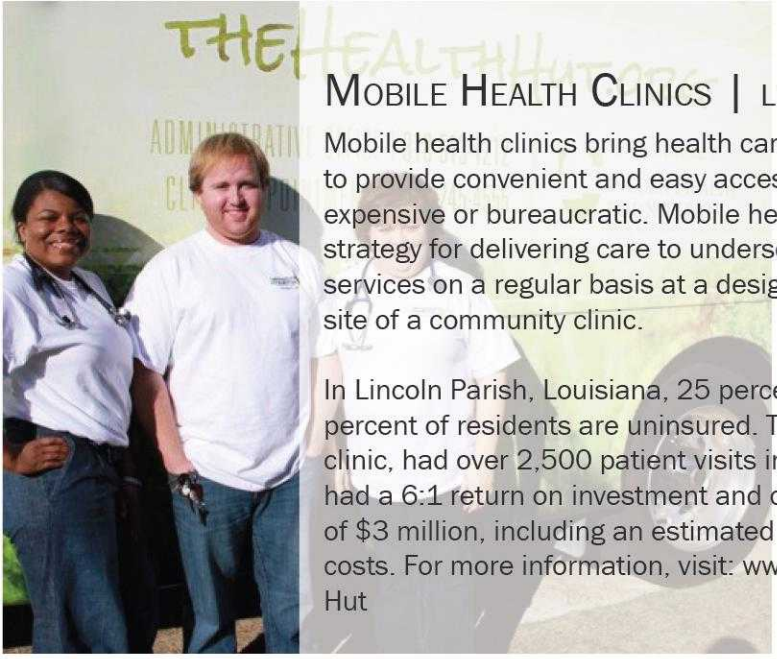
COMPREHENSIVE WELLNESS: Increase access to social amenities and services that support healthy living.

Strategies

The Coalition has prioritized the following strategies for partnership building and implementation.

1. Distribute culturally relevant healthy living and nutrition materials to the community.
2. Increase ride options to existing Federally Qualified Health Center facilities.
3. Make recommendations for additional mobile clinic locations and times.
4. Support development of a new Health and Wellness Center located in Northern Birmingham.
5. Develop a Walking Card to encourage walking to local amenities and cultural heritage sites.
6. Increase access to services at the Bethesda Life Center.
7. Partner with an existing health center to expand services to Northern Birmingham.
8. Start community gardens in each neighborhood in Northern Birmingham.

Success in Similar Communities



Mobile Health Clinics | Lincoln Parish, LA

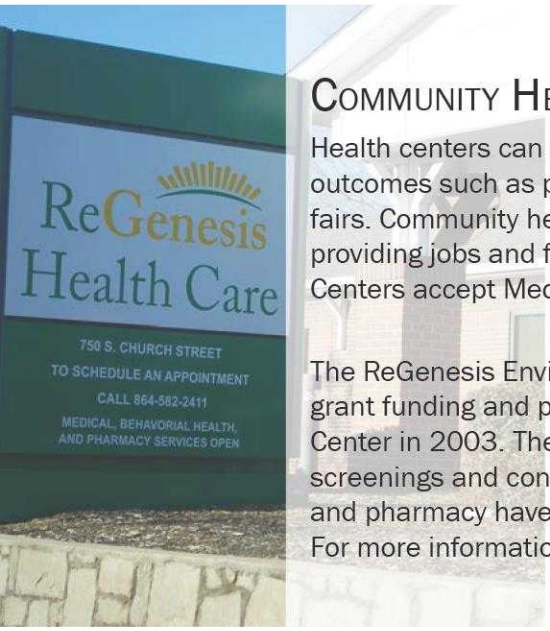
Mobile health clinics bring health care to a location frequented by community members to provide convenient and easy access to services that otherwise may be too far away, expensive or bureaucratic. Mobile health vans can be viewed as an intermediate strategy for delivering care to underserved communities. For example, a van might offer services on a regular basis at a designated location that could eventually become the site of a community clinic.

In Lincoln Parish, Louisiana, 25 percent of residents live below the poverty line and 22 percent of residents are uninsured. The Health Hut, the community's mobile health clinic, had over 2,500 patient visits in its first year of existence. In that year, Health Hut had a 6:1 return on investment and created a positive impact on the local economy of $3 million, including an estimated $444,180 savings in avoided emergency room costs. For more information, visit: www.thehealthhut.org. Photo courtesy of the Health Hut

Transportation Access Options | Boulder County, CO

Coordination between communities, health care providers and transportation agencies can provide many options to improve transportation access to healthcare, including: operating a clinic-provided van service, establishing new public transportation routes, coordinating volunteer escorted medical rides, and educating Medicaid patients about eligibility for Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) benefits.

In Boulder County, Colorado, CareConnect coordinates volunteers who use their personal vehicles to provide seniors with transportation to medical appointments and offers other assistance services to seniors. In 2010, CareConnect served more than 1,500 seniors through these programs, with an additional 350 seniors expected in 2011. For more information, visit: www.careconnectbc.org. Photo courtesy of the Jacksonville Transportation Authority.



Community Health Centers | Spartanburg, SC

Health centers can provide community-based wellness services that improve health outcomes such as preventative testing, vaccines, informational workshops and health fairs. Community health centers can also provide an important social anchor by providing jobs and fostering relationships around health. Federally Qualified Health Centers accept Medicaid and Medicare, enabling them to reach and treat more people.

The ReGenesis Environmental Justice Partnership attracted federal, state and local grant funding and private contributions, to open the ReGenesis Community Health Center in 2003. The center has since expanded to five locations, offering health screenings and conducting health fairs in addition to treating patients. A dental clinic and pharmacy have been added to increase the level of care available to local residents. For more information, visit: www.myrhc.org. Photo courtesy of ReGenesis Health Care.

Looking Forward

"Community leaders know the issues and desires of their community. They know what it will take to make their communities thrive. They know its past and see what it shall be in the future."

Cheryl Lee, New Rising Star Community Support Corporation

Looking Forward

Moving Forward as a Unified Coalition

Northern Birmingham is ripe for investments to rebuild a vibrant, sustainable community, and the Northern Birmingham Community Coalition will work in partnership to guide a process of equitable development that benefits everyone who has a stake in the community.

The formation of the Northern Birmingham Community Coalition and the development of the *Northern Birmingham Revitalization Action Plan* is a significant achievement for the Northern Birmingham community. It is no small feat to bring four neighborhoods together. The Coalition has worked hard to forge a strong bond between its members from the Collegeville, Fairmont, Harriman Park and North Birmingham neighborhoods and the community-based organizations and resource partners who have supported the Coalition along the way.

These budding partnerships illuminate the truth of Dr. King's "inescapable network mutuality." No neighborhood or community can flourish in isolation. The Coalition is committed to working together for the well-being of all the communities in Northern Birmingham and to contributing to a stronger City of Birmingham where all residents, school children, worshippers and workers can thrive.

Implementing a Shared Vision

The *Northern Birmingham Revitalization Action Plan* captures a shared vision of restored and flourishing neighborhoods. The action plans this document contains for housing, commercial revitalization and health represent a set of collective actions the Coalition believes can help make that vision a reality. Implementing positive community change is rarely straightforward. These action plans are not intended to be exhaustive. Instead, they provide a shared roadmap for starting Northern Birmingham down the path towards revitalization.

Shepherding a Community of Invitation and Welcome

The neighborhoods of Northern Birmingham are a broad community of many individuals, businesses, and organizations who contribute to and benefit from its well-being. Already, Northern Birmingham has seen significant environmental investments from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Northern Birmingham Community Coalition has been successful in attracting the attention, interest and investments of local and federal partners listed on the facing page. The Coalition is appreciative of the investments each of these partners has made so far, and looks forward to expanding the circle in the days to come.

Join Us!

The Coalition seeks to build a community of invitation and welcome – both within the Coalition and within Northern Birmingham – so that all benefit from its restoration. We invite you to join us in this work!

For more information or to find out how you can get involved, please contact the Coalition's spokespersons:

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[205.527.9474, E2900j@aol.com]

Vivian Starks
[205.601.9512]

Acknowledgments

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Jones Monday, Harriman Park
Joyce Ray, Harriman Park
Jimmy Smith, Collegeville
Vivian F. Starks, Collegeville
Thurman Thomas, Collegeville
John Toyer, Community Advisory Panel
Chester Wallace, Collegeville
Alberta Weeden, Harriman Park

Community-Based Organizations

Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition
Bethesda Life Center
Birmingham Health Care
Birmingham Place Matters Team
Eastside Environmental Council
Fresh Water Land Trust
GASP
Greater Birmingham Habitat for Humanity
Metro Pediatrics and New Start Covenant of Grace Church Main Street Alabama
Metro Pediatrics and New Start Covenant of Grace Church
New Rising Star Missionary Baptist Church Community Support Corporation
Partnership for Southern Equity

Resource Partners

Birmingham Land Bank Authority
City of Birmingham, Community Development Department
City of Birmingham, Mayor's Office
City of Birmingham, District 4 Councilor's Office
Jefferson County Department of Public Health
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham
REV Birmingham
University of Alabama at Birmingham, School of Public Health
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Special Thanks

The NBCC would like to extend special thanks to Councilor Parker and his staff for providing funding for NBCC's site visit to Spartanburg, for providing meals during Coalition working sessions and for their ongoing representation at Coalition meetings.

The NBCC would also like to extend special thanks to the Mayor's Office for their representation at Coalition meetings.

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