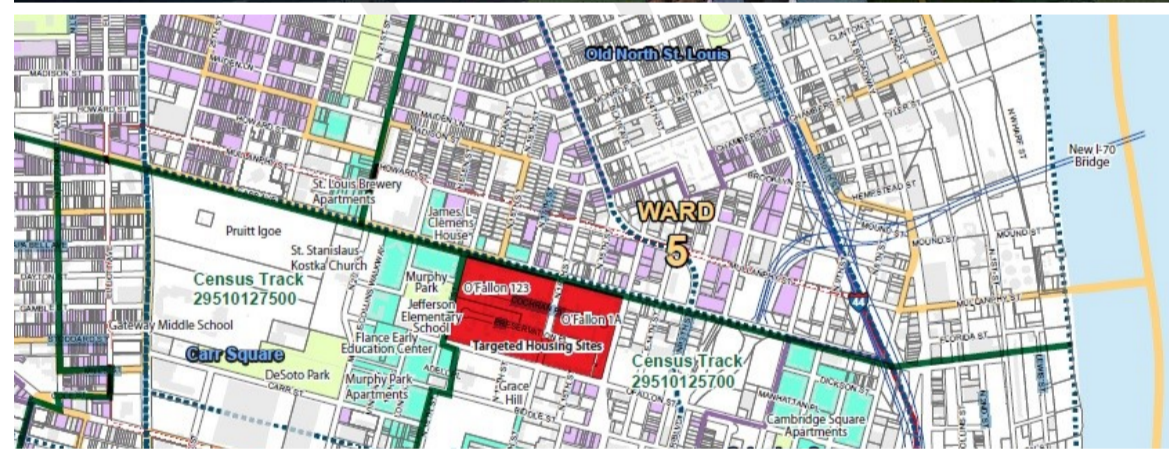


## NEAR NORTH SIDE | Transformation Plan



Our Community.  
Our Choice .



## Acknowledgements

Implementation Partners

Elected Officials

City Staff

Near North Side Key Resident Contributors

Partners—People, Neighborhood, Housing

NEAR NORTH SIDE CHOICE | Transformation Plan

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## A NEW NEAR NORTH SIDE | Choice Neighborhood Planning

In January 2015, the Near North Side community and the City of St. Louis celebrated the news that Urban Strategies' application to secure a Choice Neighborhood Planning (CNP) Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was successful.

Since the announcement in 2015, the residents, business owners and institutional leaders of the Near North Side (NNS) and Urban Strategies, in partnership with the City of St. Louis, the St. Louis Community Development Administration, and McCormack Baron Salazar, have collaborated to undertake a community-based process to develop a Transformation Plan that will revitalize the Near North Side neighborhood.

The CNP Program aims to transform distressed neighborhoods and public and assisted housing projects into viable and sustainable mixed-income neighborhoods. This is achieved by linking residents of housing projects with appropriate services, excellent schools, public assets, transportation, and access to jobs.

CNP Grants build upon the successes of public housing transformation efforts undertaken under HOPE VI to provide support for the preservation of the neighborhood housing stock, where feasible, and rehabilitation of public and HUD-assisted housing. In addition to public housing authorities, the initiative involves local governments, non-profits, and for-profit developers in undertaking comprehensive local planning with residents and community stakeholders. CNP programs place great emphasis on local community planning for access to



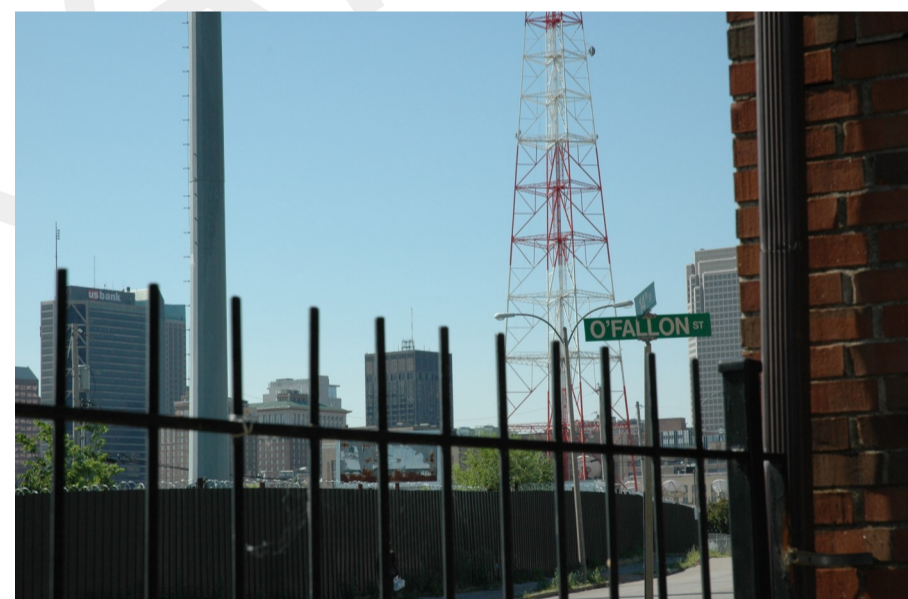
Alderwoman Tammika Hubbard, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Lourdes Castro Ramirez and Mayor Francis Slay at the announcement of the Near North Side Choice Planning Grant Award.

high-quality educational opportunities, including early childhood education.

CNP Programs are built on the premise that healthy neighborhoods need far more than good housing. They emphasize access to high-quality neighborhood assets such as education, medical services, recreation, culture, healthy foods and green space. Local community planning is essential to creating opportunities for healthy homes within viable, sustainable neighborhoods.

This Choice Neighborhood Grant has given the Near North Side community the valuable opportunity to develop a comprehensive neighborhood Transformation Plan. Representatives from the local governments, the targeted neighborhood, community organizations, educational institutions, medical facilities, professional planners, developers, architects, and others collaborated, through an extensive planning and visioning process, to plan for a new Near North Side. This Plan will guide the redevelopment of the Preservation Square housing site and the transformation of the surrounding neighborhood to significantly improve the quality of life for residents and create the NNS as a neighborhood of Choice.

This community-guided Transformation Plan address the physical housing, supportive services and neighborhood revitalization needs of all Near North Side neighborhood residents. It is also intended to serve as a catalyst for a number of future projects.



NEAR NORTH SIDE CHOICE | Transformation Plan

## ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK

The residents and community stakeholders are central to any planning effort, and the planning for NNS was no different. The following organizational framework was developed to maximize participation from all segments of the NNS community and appropriate professionals in the formation the Plan. The following groups shaped and guided the development of the Transformation Plan:

- Urban Strategies (Urban) served as the CN Grantee and Lead Grant Planner.
- The City of St. Louis served as the Lead Neighborhood Planner and McCormack Baron Salazar (MBS) served as the Lead Housing Planner, with Urban as the Lead for People.
- The Choice Leadership Council, comprised of resident leaders, anchor institutions, and critical community stakeholders and funders, was created to guide the development of the Transformation Plan, advocate for policy changes and develop a resource strategy to support the successful implementation of the Plan.

Working Groups composed of residents, community stakeholders, anchor institutions and service organizations focused on the three major goals under CNP:



- **Housing Working Group** - focused on how to transform distressed public and assisted housing into energy efficient, mixed-income housing that is physically and financially viable over the long-term;
- **People Working Group** - focused on how to support positive outcomes for families who live in the target development and the surrounding neighborhood, particularly outcomes related to residents' health, safety, employment, mobility, and education; and,
- **Neighborhood Working Group** - focused on how to transform Near North Side into a viable, mixed-income neighborhood with access to well-functioning services, high quality public schools and education programs, effective early learning programs and services, public assets, public transportation, and improved access to jobs.

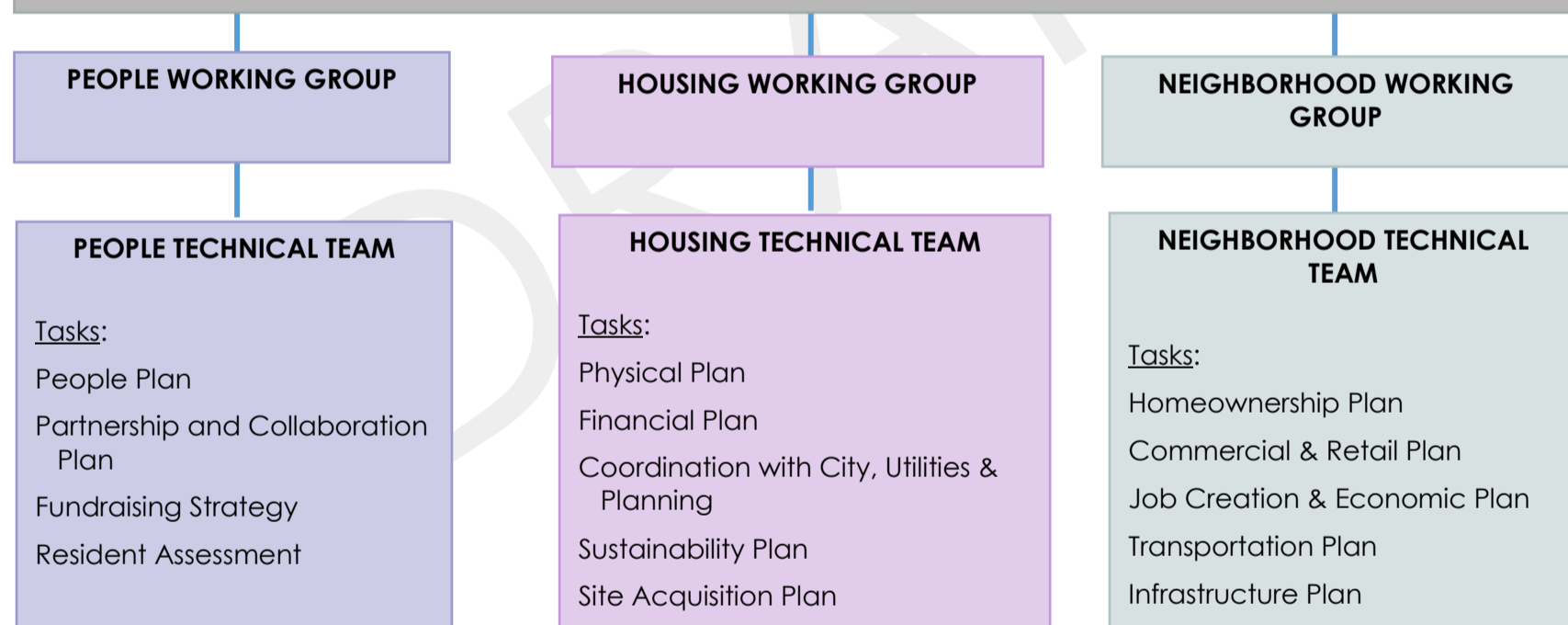
NEAR NORTH SIDE CHOICE | Transformation Plan

**NEAR NORTH SIDE CHOICE PLANNING WORKING GROUPS**

**Function:** Develop comprehensive and inclusive plans for the three core goals. The Working groups will be responsible for engaging relevant stakeholders; defining priorities; deploying study teams with charge, and; ensuring integration of all three core team planning results. Working Groups will include Preservation Square and Near North Side residents as well as deputy level staff of CLC member organizations and other identified organizations.

**Primary Partners:** Urban Strategies; McCormack Baron Salazar; and the City of St. Louis

**Staffed by:** Urban Strategies



## PLANNING PROCESS

Urban selected the Results Based Accountability (RBA)™ process to develop the Transformation Plan. RBA is a disciplined way of thinking and taking action that communities can use to improve the lives of children, youth, families, adults and the community as a whole. RBA is also used by organizations to improve the performance of their programs or services. This process was developed by Mark Friedman and described in his book *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough*. RBA is being used throughout the United States, and in countries around the world, to produce measurable change in people's lives.

Urban Strategies selected the RBA framework for the Near North Side Plan because it uses a data-driven decision making process that encourages communities to not just talk about problems, but to also develop action plans that will solve them. RBA also allows communities to look at best practices and to bring necessary partners to the table to support plan implementation. This process helps groups challenge the traditional assumptions that can be barriers to innovation. The RBA process is intended to build collaboration and consensus around strategy development. This collaboration of all stakeholders, community members and leaders is crucial as the community moves forward.

In order to familiarize residents with RBA and its principles, Urban Strategies conducted three training sessions for residents and stakeholders to become comfortable with its framework, terms and process. Urban Strategies presented the RBA terminology and its seven critical questions in simpler terms, based on resident feedback, to increase participation.



Urban asked the following critical RBA questions of the community and explained how they would be applied to this planning process:

1. What is the end result you are seeking to achieve? The RBA starting point involves asking residents and stakeholders to identify the desired end. The questions was framed as, "What would you like your neighborhood to be like in ten years?"
2. How will we know we have succeeded? Urban asked for indicators that could be used to measure progress as the team worked toward achieving the desired results.
3. How are we currently doing? Participants were asked for the baseline, or starting data, which would be recorded to measure all results against.
4. What is the story behind the data? Participants were asked to identify the key factors underlying the historical data and for a forecast for the indicator or performance measure. In other words, the process would include identifying: 1) contributing factors that can support progress; and, 2) restricting factors that could hinder progress.
5. What partners are expected to have a role to play in achieving the results? Participants were asked to identify potential partners who may have a role to play in improving progress.
6. What will turn the curve? Urban and others will conduct research to identify local and national evidence based practices that have turned the curve for other communities.
7. What strategies are proposed for the community? Participants were asked to determine the strategies, when implanted, should yield the desired community results.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

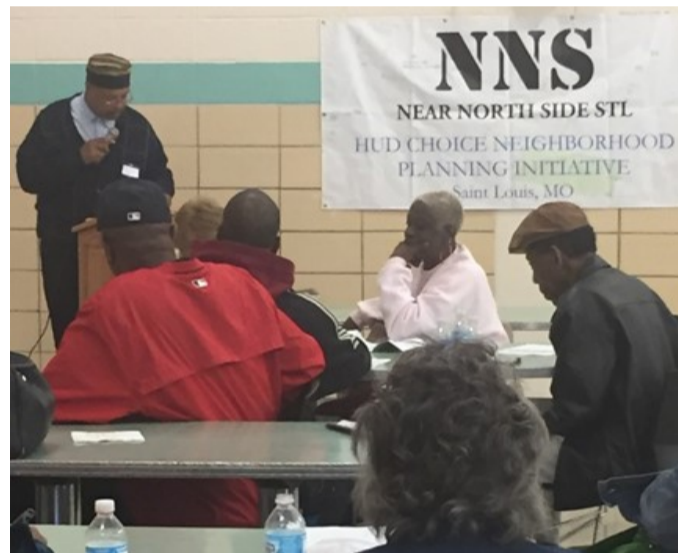
To maximize the benefit of the RBA process, Urban and its partners went to great length to invite and encourage various segments of the community to play an active role in the development of this Transformation Plan. The planning process was designed to be inclusive and transparent, and to build upon the community's existing assets and strong resident networks.

### Getting Community Input

The community used the RBA framework to develop the three core elements for the Transformation Plan: Housing, Neighborhood and People. The three working groups established around these core elements met bi-monthly the first two weeks of the planning process. Between May 2015 and March 2016 working groups met once a month. These working group sessions focused on visioning; baseline data and local and national best practices; strategy development; and partnership identification.

In order to engage as many community stakeholders as possible, two town hall meetings were held each month as opposed to the required one. One meeting was held in the early morning to engage stakeholders on





their way to work and one in the evenings to engage others after work. The town hall meetings provided an opportunity for working group report outs, planning updates and engagement exercises. Engagement exercises included exploring residents' viewpoints on meaningful partnerships, public safety education and Community Monopoly ©, an activity designed by Urban Strategies to teach residents about the importance of resource prioritization.

A successful planning strategy was employed to meet residents "where they are." Urban staff attended monthly meetings at the senior buildings, for example, to inform and gain the input of shut in seniors unwilling to come to evening meetings off-site. Urban staff also engaged the various neighborhood associations in the target community: 1) Carr Square Tenant Management Association; 2) Old North St. Louis Restoration Group; 3) Columbus Square Home Owners Association; 4) Cahill House and Cambridge Senior Buildings; and 5) the Carr Square O'Fallon Vaughn and Murphy Park Community Development Corporation. Urban staff attended the meetings for these various neighborhood associations and shared invitations to the Near North Side community and working group meetings.



## Capacity Building

Urban chose its own Resident Capacity Building Program to complement the RBA planning process to target emerging resident leaders and NNS residents in general. The goal of Resident Capacity Building is to strengthen residents in their capacity to organize and lead, and to help them operate as inclusive and prolific resident organizations while changing neighborhoods. The mixed-finance and mixed-income model that is applied to all of Urban's transformation plans, through the support of its development and housing management partners and extensive resident engagement, sets the conditions for quality property management, social and economic inclusion, and sustained investment in the neighborhood. Furthermore, through human capital development activities and social service supports in these communities, Urban Strategies launches families on pathways to be healthy, strong, and upwardly mobile. In the long-run, such broad-scale community transformation may not be sustainable if there are no continued resident-driven efforts to further protect and nurture the families' community's interests and vision, and in the process, drive forward the social integration conceptualized through the mixed-income development model.

The design process of the Program is reflective of Urban's approach and commitment to engaging and empowering strong resident leaders. The curriculum was developed in close collaboration with former and current resident leaders from around the country who are grounded in the knowledge of what makes neighborhoods tick; case managers and life skills trainers with the strategic insights into how to stabilize low-income families; and other social work professionals committed to evidence-based refinements.





Through the utilization of the Resident Capacity Building Program residents and stakeholders anticipated realizing the following outcomes:

- Increase in participants at the resident/stakeholder organized meetings
- Increase in events led and coordinated by resident leadership body
- Increase in participation at social and community organizing events
- Increase in residents serving on neighborhood task forces, committees
- Increase in partnerships between resident organizations with local agencies

Capacity Building workshops were facilitated by a mixture of Urban Strategies and partner staff. Sessions focused on the following topics:

- Results Based Accountability: What is it and why are we using this framework?
- What is Mixed-Income Housing?
- Preparing for the Design Charrette
- Leadership 101
- Improving Your Community
- Growing Your Leadership Capacity and Establishing Desired Outcomes
- Community Organizing 101
- How to Successfully Access Government Services/Programs

## Capacity Building

Local partners are as important to a comprehensive planning process as are neighborhood residents. Thus, strengthening and building the capacity of local partners was a key element in building this Transformation Plan.

Urban Strategies has a formal Nonprofit Capacity Building Program which is designed to increase capacity of local nonprofits in such a way that they can better deliver high-quality, effective programs that help families. The Program has three main components: (1) Capacity Assessments, (2) Competitive Financial Assistance and Technical Assistance, and (3) Group Trainings. The Program's design is intended to dramatically enhance the capacity of local nonprofits currently serving or planning to serve residents.

Urban selected the third component, group trainings, as the tool for building nonprofit capacity during the Near Northside Choice Planning effort. They anticipate using components one and two during the implementation phase. As the Transformation Plan unfolds, utilization of the Nonprofit Capacity Building Program will ensure that nonprofits gain added capacity to address broad economic development issues like the need for education and training.

Capacity Building workshops on the following topics were facilitated by a mixture of Urban Strategies and partner staff:

- Results Based Accountability: What is it and why are we using this framework?
  - Effective board recruitment, development and retention
  - Identifying/Refining programs and services that you will pursue
  - Resource Identification/Fundraising/Grant Writing
  - Effective communication/ marketing, community engagement/outreach and public relations
  - Identifying trends in your industry
  - Establishing/refining internal controls (programmatic and financial)
  - Developing and managing your budget (private and public funding)
- Planning for the future/succession planning in leadership

Partners were also surveyed to get an understanding of specific capacity needs not addressed in the workshops.



## Resident Engagement

In order to ensure widespread resident and community stakeholder participation in meetings and planning activities, Urban Strategies and its partners maximized traditional and non-traditional engagement methods. Traditional methods included door-to-door flyers, direct mailings, direct phone calls, sandwich signs, having partnering neighborhood associations and service organizations assist with engagement, and hiring residents to go door-to-door as planning ambassadors. Other traditional methods included recruiting management companies representing the neighborhood's housing to assist with information dissemination, and attending neighborhood association meetings and other existing community activities to obtain input and share planning information.

Recognizing that many residents would not attend NNS meetings or association meetings for a variety of reasons that included lack of time and lack of interest, we organized community activities and events around "Doing, While Planning." These activities included resource sharing, educational opportunities and community service projects. Highlights of these



Preservation Square residents at the Survey Blitz event.

activities include the following: 1) A Men's Group organized in partnership with the Carr Square Tenant Management Association where men in the community shared their ideas and concerns and planned activities that would further encourage their participation; 2) A Women's Group organized to invite women in the community to share their ideas and concerns and plan activities such as maternal wellness classes for expectant mothers; 3) the NNS Youth Council organized to invite youth and young adults between the ages of 13 and 25 to share their ideas and concerns and to implement a community service project based on their collective vision; and, 4) the COVAM Concerns Citizens group organized around public safety and have been meeting for over a year to implement strategies aimed at reducing nuisance and violent crime.

The work of engaging and informing residents was shared by resident volunteers and hired resident assistants. These team members assisted with door-to-door flyer distribution providing information about the planning process and activities, Resident Survey Assistants assisted Urban staff with conducting door-to-door surveys, resident volunteers assisted with event and activity setup and coordination, and participated in outreach strategy meetings. In total 18 residents volunteered their time with the outreach and engagement effort.

Many of these engagement activities emerged out of community meetings at the suggestion of residents and other community members. Urban Strategies understood that residents know their community best, and supported implementing their engagement ideas to encourage wide participation.

\*\*TIMELINE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

## VISION | The Desired Outcomes

"What do you want your community to look like in ten years?" That question has driven the vision for the NNS Transformation Plan. It was posed to residents and stakeholders in the first working group meeting of the RBA process.

Near North Side residents and stakeholders envision NNS as a neighborhood complete with high quality and safe mixed-income housing, good access to well-functioning services, high quality public schools and educational programs, high quality early learning programs and services, public assets, public transportation, a safe environment, and improved access to jobs.

The neighborhood is also envisioned to be a model for other revitalization efforts, demonstrating how public and private neighborhood initiatives and investments can complement and reinforce one another to not only to develop the kinds of assets and amenities that make a neighborhood whole, but to also provide greater access to downtown.



Planning participants have indicated that the following results should be achieved by the Transformation Plan to experience this vision:

**Neighborhood:**

- Diverse in income, demographics and housing type
- Residents are civically responsible and engaged
- NNS is integrated into the St. Louis region
- NNS is aesthetically pleasing and beautiful
- Residents have access to healthy foods
- A walkable community
- Residents are safe in their homes and neighborhood
- NNS is economically stable
- Residents have access to quality transportation
- Residents have access to cultural institutions
- Neighborhood has healthy balance of residential and non-residential uses (mixed-use)

**Housing:**

- Increased owner-occupied housing
- Safe Housing
- Sustainable and environmentally friendly housing
- Housing diverse in income and demographics
- Housing stability for all

**People:**

- Engaged Youth
- Able bodied adults are working
- Children are succeeding in school
- Children are ready for school
- Residents are connected through technology
- Residents are mentally and physically healthy
- Seniors are supported
- Residents have access to economic opportunities
- Residents are financially stable
- Community without homelessness
- Residents engaging positively

## NEAR NORTH SIDE | History

The Near North Side neighborhood of St. Louis is located in what was the Village of North St. Louis, founded in 1816. The city of St. Louis absorbed the Village in 1841 when its city limits expanded. Around the same time, an influx of European immigrants began settling in the neighborhood. The area remained primarily white European until post-civil war reconstruction, when its population more than doubled due to African-Americans migrating from the South.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the NNS was hit hard by decades of out-migration, industrial decline, slum clearance, and urban renewal. In the 1950s, the area was declared a slum and became subject to large land clearance and urban-renewal efforts. During the 1950s-60s entire city blocks were razed and divided into large parcels.

This area has a long history of public housing, including arguably the most infamous public housing project ever built in the United



States, Pruitt-Igoe in 1954. Along with Pruitt Igoe, several large-scale high-rise public housing projects were built, including Vaughn Towers and Cochran Gardens. The projects eventually declined into a hub of dilapidated buildings, crime, and destitution. A large patch of overgrown unused land remains on the site of the Pruitt-Igoe development, which was demolished in the 1970s.

The area experienced stark disinvestment over the 20th century despite several revitalization attempts. Failed public and private projects as well as racial barriers largely led to the decline of this once-prosperous neighborhood.



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## NEAR NORTH SIDE | Today

The Near North Side of St. Louis is bordered to the East by the Mississippi River, to the west by Elliot Ave, to the North by St. Louis Ave. and to the South by St. Charles St. in the severely distressed 63106 zip code . The Near North Side borders St. Louis's Downtown and bustling Washington Avenue, a major downtown thoroughfare that is a hub for businesses, shops, restaurants and nightlife.

Other than active warehouses, trucking lots, out-of-place industrial activity, and a few fast food restaurants, commercial development is lagging in the NNS to this day and development from Downtown has not spread North. The neighborhood is strewn with abandoned lots, and properties, contributing to the blighted landscape.

There are 1,949 people in the Near North Side of St. Louis (Census Tracts 1257 and 1275 BG1). The Near North is composed of 65% female residents (compared to the 51.7% of female residents in the City of St. Louis). The ratio of teenagers and young

adults in the Near North Side is similar to that of the City. However, only 5.6% of the population are seniors (compared to 10.9% in the City) and 32.7 % of the population are under 12 years of age (compared to the 15.2 in the City. In Preservation Square, 38.4% of the population are under the age of 12. The neighborhood has little racial diversity, with 96.1 % of the population being Black/African American. This is in sharp contrast to St. Louis where 48.6% of the population is black. With less than 4% of the Near North Side belonging to any other race, there is without a doubt room for greater racial diversity.

Just over half of the households in the Near North Side are headed by a single woman with children (55.1%) and 64.9% of all residents are female. There is a low marriage rate in the community as well, with 70.9% of residents being single. In Preservation Square, the percentage of singles escalates to 93.8%. The lack of family unity and marriage has been cited as an issue by residents.

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The newer mixed-income communities of Murphy Park and Cambridge Heights, in the neighborhoods have a pleasant, walkable character due to large and well-maintained street trees, continuous sidewalks, and building entrances facing the public right-of-way. Generally the area is well-kept and exhibits good maintenance of public spaces. There is moderate connectivity through the neighborhood for pedestrians and cyclists but access for vehicles is highly constrained due to several closed streets and cul-de-sacs, particularly in Preservation Square.

An eclectic mix of mostly traditional architectural styles characterizes the surrounding neighborhood. The predominant building material is brick with wood porches and some clapboard siding.

The neighborhood's housing is largely rental and substandard. It is also mostly historic, which is a financial burden on its low-income residents. Much of the housing stock is owned by absentee landlords, who often fail to properly maintain their properties. While considerable efforts have been made by community leaders and the public and private



NEAR NORTH SIDE CHOICE | Transformation Plan

## NEAR NORTH SIDE | Today

sectors in recent years to reinvest and revitalize much of North St. Louis, rents in the area remain among the lowest in the city.

A recent survey of competitive market rate properties indicates that existing rental units are well-occupied, with average occupancy rates of 95 percent for affordable units and 93 percent for market rate units. Rents for affordable one-bedroom units average \$646, while two-bedroom and three-bedroom rents average \$798 and \$904, respectively. These rents reflect a modest discount from market rate rents in the area, which average \$699 for one-bedroom units, \$830 for two-bedroom units, and \$1,040 for three-bedroom units.

The neighborhood had a Part 1 Personal Crime rate, which includes homicide, rape, robbery and aggravated assault, of 26.8 per 1,000 residents. This is more than a third higher than the City's rate.



### PRESERVATION SQUARE

The distressed housing targeted for the Choice Neighborhood Planning Initiative is Preservation Square (Formerly O'Fallon Place). Preservation Square consists of two project-based Housing Choice Voucher Section 8 housing complexes with 675 rental units in need of significant repair. The

NEAR NORTH SIDE CHOICE | Transformation Plan

development was completed in several phases between 1981 and 1984 and was renovated significantly in 2002.

A total of 382 Preservation Square residents were surveyed. An astonishing 69.4%, or 147 residents, reported that they were satisfied with their current housing. Their satisfaction, however, was not related to the condition of the housing. A total of 42.4% reported being satisfied because the housing was affordable and 27.5% of them were satisfied because they were close to public transit. A total of 28% of the residents surveyed were dissatisfied with the housing, with 23.6% attributing their dissatisfaction to poor management, 15.2% to poor appearance and design and 15.7% to an undesirable neighborhood.

Of the families surveyed, 77.8% reported feeling safe in their homes. The 20.2% who did not feel safe attributed it to crime, maintenance issues in the housing complex, loitering and harassment in the complex, such as knocking and kicking on doors, loitering at night, unexpected visits, lack of security

and strangers in the neighborhood. The remaining 1.9% reported feeling unsafe at times.

An encouraging 84.3% of the residents responded that they would move into a revitalized Preservation Square community. 13.7% reported that they would not move into the community. Their reasons for this included that it might not be revitalized in time; that it would depend on the other tenants, design, upgrades, affordability, green space and management; others were leaving due to poor management and feeling unsafe in the area; and others were just moving to another location.

The majority of the residents (55%) have no access to a computing device with internet connectivity at home.

The neighborhood has access to public transportation, with 58% of the residents relying on the bus system to travel to school, work, the clinic and other places. 14.2% residents indicated that they use the MetroLink though access to service is limited.

16.9% indicated that they walk, while 25.6% rely on someone else to drive them to work, school and other places.

The neighborhood benefits from having a number of schools in close proximity to the residential areas. These include the KIPP Charter school in the former Pruitt Middle School, Jefferson Elementary School, and the Early Learning Center. It also includes several parks that meet the needs of a range of ages, from play structures for young children to soccer fields for older children and young adults, but very little exists currently for indoor recreation or structured activities for teens or seniors.

According to feedback from the community meetings and resident surveys responses compiled by Urban Strategies, crime and safety are the largest challenges facing the neighborhood, and prevent residents from participating in community efforts. The Near North Side is severely lacking in retail, services, and jobs within the neighborhood footprint. This leads to the leakage from the local economy to surrounding areas where necessary

goods and services are located, out of walking or biking distance.

While there are existing revitalization efforts in and around Near North Side that show potential for transformation, change has been slow. Plans such as the North Side Regeneration Plan for new housing and commercial activities; a new MetroLink or Streetcar through the community and region the Byrne Innovation Grant for improved safety; the Great Rivers Greenway for greater connectivity, and others will be reinforced by the Near North Side Transformation Plan.

## STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Today, the Near North Side has suffered a similar fate as much of North St. Louis, with decades of disinvestment and population loss. Despite its challenges, the NNS is not without strengths and assets. Eager for transformation, Near North Side stakeholders will rely on the neighborhood's strengths to provide the framework, momentum and inspiration to address its weaknesses and use them to create opportunities for improvement.

### STRENGTHS to EMBRACE

- The neighborhood is in close proximity a downtown that is rich in community assets and opportunities.
- Parts of the Near North Side have walkable character and tree-lined streets.
- The neighborhood is enhanced by a number of green spaces on which to capitalize, including Desoto Park, Murphy Park and Loretta Hall Park.
- The neighborhood benefits from having a number of schools and state of the art educational facilities in close proximity to the residential areas. These include the KIPP Charter School in the former Pruitt Middle School, Jefferson Elementary School, and the Flance Early Learning Center.
- The Near North Side area is enriched with new developments and renovations. The Carr Square Tenants Association has built new townhomes and single family homes in the neighborhood. The neighboring Murphy Park housing complex, which was recently renovated, provides a stable presence of mixed income housing in the community.
- The Near North Side has a large amount of vacant land that allows for future development and a wide array of reinvestment options.
- The neighborhood is served by Metro Transit's bus system, the primary option for much of the shared-use mobility.

### OPPORTUNITIES for IMPROVEMENT

- There is a lack of access to healthy food in the neighborhood. The nearest grocery store is located downtown. The Near North Side is close in proximity to downtown, but the selections geared toward commuting workers and prohibitive pricing are barriers that keep residents from shopping in the downtown grocery store. Within the neighborhood there are small corner stores and shops, neither of which provide sufficient healthy food options.
- There is a lack of quality recreational assets in the neighborhood. There are parks and playgrounds in the area, but several are either unsafe, in disrepair, or are frequently used as a hangout for adults in the community. Overall, the community lacks a quality neighborhood center and space to gather and recreate indoors. The largest park, DeSoto Park, does not have any stimulating play facilities for children. Very little exists for indoor recreation or structured activities for young adults and seniors.
- An abundance of opportunities exists to improve safety in the neighborhood. There is not enough lighting in the evening, making the neighborhood particularly unsafe at night. Particularly in Preservation Square car traffic and speeding make the streets dangerous to traverse, especially for children.
- Residents are dissatisfied by the large number of liquor stores in the area.
- Preservation Square lacks diversity in its buildings and is isolated, causing residents to compare it to a prison. There is one entrance into Preservation Square and one exit out. Pedestrian travel is also limited to a few entrance and exit points in the security gate that surrounds the complex. Many gate doors have been sealed shut, further limiting the pedestrian traffic and reinforcing the jail-like atmosphere within the complex.
- Overall connectivity remains an issue as access for vehicles is highly constrained due to several closed streets and cul-de-sacs, particularly in Preservation Square.
- There are a large number of abandoned buildings and empty lots in the community, contributing to

the neighborhood ills of blight and abandonment.

- There is a lack of retail and commercial amenities. NNS is severely lacking in retail establishments, essential services, and access to jobs within the neighborhood footprint, leading to leakage from the local economy to surrounding areas out of walking or biking distance where necessary goods and services are located.
- There are no safe high schools within walking distance in the neighborhood.
- There are not enough spaces to fill the early childhood needs in the community given the large population of very young children.
- There is not enough information available to residents about community resources and resources sharing is lacking.
- Health centers in the area have long waits and poor service.
- Seniors and persons with disabilities are not sufficiently supported with activities and amenities, or access to them.
- There are not many single family homes in the Near North Side neighborhood. Homeownership was

viewed by many in the community as necessary for the long-term sustainability of the NNS. With homeownership, families literally and figuratively buy into the community.

- Although the NNS is close in proximity to the downtown area, there are physical, visual and perceived barriers that keep residents from fully accessing the amenities available there. The route to downtown is marked by unpleasant encounters with loitering and harassment, open vacant lots, abandoned properties that induce squatting, and poor street lighting. In addition to the physical barrier, there is also a social and economic barrier that keeps residents of the Near North Side from fully engaging with downtown.

## THE ASSESSMENT

Over 500 households in the Near North Side were surveyed in an attempt to understand the level of satisfaction and needs of the residents. Of those surveyed, 382 were residents of Preservation Square. Most assessments were collected over a period of months by a dedicated group of resident volunteers, who surveyed their neighbors door-to-door and in the management office. Urban Strategies held a survey raffle blitz in order to get more feedback from the Preservation Square tenants. Urban also looked at formal data to gather a more complete assessment of Near North Side.

| Respondents (Heads of Household)    |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Count</b>                        | Households: 382 (56.6% of 675 Units)<br>Individuals in analyzed households: 768 (446 adults; 322 children)             |
| <b>Gender</b>                       | Male: 19.8% (75)<br>Female: 80.2% (303)<br>(Respondents: 378)  |
| <b>Ages</b>                         | 18 to 24: 16.7% (63)<br>25 to 44: 44.0% (166)<br>45 to 64: 30.2% (114)<br>65 or older: 9.0% (34)<br>(Respondents: 377) |
| <b>Ages (all household members)</b> | Children only: 42.8% (322)<br>Working Age only: 50.4% (388)<br>Seniors only: 5.3% (40)<br>(Respondents: 377)           |

### ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY:

The median income in the Near North Side is \$11,969. Over a quarter of residents are unemployed (26.2%), compared to 14.2% in the City. In Preservation Square alone, nearly 59.8% of residents are unemployed. Of these individuals who are unemployed, 25.3% have a medical condition that keeps them from working. Nearly two thirds of those surveyed (63%) receive Food Stamps. 89.6% of Near North Side residents reported that they don't have

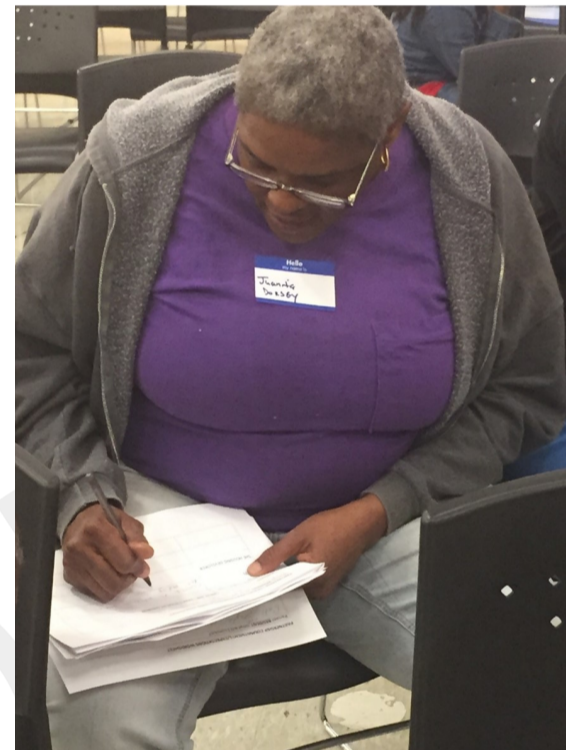
savings accounts and 78.7% have no checking account. Not one household surveyed was enrolled in an Individual Development Account (IDA) or match savings program. 87% of households did not receive an Earned Income Tax Credit in the last year. When asked about financial goals the majority (69%) of residents indicated the desire for less financial stress, 15% indicated secure retirement and 13% indicated homeownership. 90% of residents surveyed indicated that they needed assistance with

personal financial management.

**PUBLIC SAFETY:**

Residents widely identify crime as a major concern and cause for dissatisfaction. An overwhelming 76% of the residents reported crime as a reason why they didn't feel safe in their homes and 67% of the residents indicated it as a reason that they did not feel safe in their neighborhood.

Crime is mentioned repeatedly in the qualitative survey information – crime as defined by drugs, guns, drug activity, shooting, guns, robberies, fights and violence. At least 20.2% of the residents surveyed don't feel safe in their homes, and 47.9% don't feel safe in their neighborhoods. The neighborhood is clearly viewed as a bigger threat.



Maintenance issues are viewed as a threat to safety by many residents. Residents reported delays in receiving housing repairs and a lack of responsibility on the part of property managers.

A total of 59% of the residents suggested that an increase in police presence would improve safety in the neighborhood.

**EMPLOYMENT:**

In the Near North Side, 59.7% of working age adults are unemployed. Of those who are employed, 34% work less than 35 hours a week and are thus, underemployed. It should be noted that 35.3% of the unemployed have a medical condition that prevents them from working. Despite the high unemployment in the Near North Side and Preservation Square, only 1.6% of those surveyed indicated that there were adults in the home participating in job training, educational, vocational or other workforce development programs.

When asked to identify the greatest barriers to employment in the neighborhood, the most common responses included criminal records, lack of education and training, and transportation.

**EDUCATION:**

Children in the Near North Side attend a variety of schools – over 40 different schools are attended by children in Preservation Square. The variety of schools children attend may reflect that parents are exercising choice. The low enrollment in neighborhood schools may also reflect the high mobility of residents in the neighborhood. A total of 71% of

parents are satisfied with their children's schooling and 75.7% of parents report that they are involved in Parent Teacher Associations and other school support organizations. 40% of those surveyed indicated that their children were involved in enrichment activities, including after school and summer programs. This leaves nearly two-thirds of the neighborhood youth disengaged and left with little to do. Further study is necessary to determine the quality of all schools represented to ensure that parents are making informed school decisions

**HEALTH:**

A reported 37.4% of residents use Medicaid and 16% are enrolled in Medicare. 63% of those surveyed get medical care at clinics, 40% use doctors offices and 16 % use the emergency room (participants were allowed to select more than one option ). 79 % of residents surveyed had seen a doctor in the past year.

A reported 27.8% of adults have a chronic health condition - 20.3% reported having high blood pressure, 12.3% have Type II Diabetes, 11.1% have arthritis, 10.7% suffer from asthma, 8.8% are overweight and 5% have high cholesterol. 47% indicated that they did not always have enough food in the house to eat. Around half of residents surveyed indicated that they experience excellent physical (48%) and mental (55%) health conditions.

| Education                                  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Educational Attainment - All Adults</b> | Less than High School: 3.8% (15)<br>Some High School or GED training: 9.5% (39)<br>High School Diploma or GED: 66.6% (265)<br>Some College: 15.8% (63)<br>Associate's Degree: 2.5% (10)<br>Bachelor's Degree: 1.3% (5)<br>Master's or Professional Degree: 0.5% (2)<br>(Adult count: 398) |

## PARALLEL PLANS

The City of St. Louis has been working with the Near North Side community and local stakeholders for decades to revitalize an area that was once home to Pruitt-Igoe and other failed housing projects. Private developers and other public entities have also created plans to alter the neighborhood's uses and adjacencies. The result is a series of complementary plans developed to guide community investment and neighborhood transformation.

The Choice Near North Side planning process used these existing plans as a departure point to create a community-based vision that integrates the mixed-income redevelopment of the Preservation Place site with a host of

complimentary investments in the broader neighborhood.

The Near North Side is located, within the St. Louis **Promise Zone**. This zone stretches from North St. Louis City into North St. Louis County. This City-County collaboration will align public and private resources and catalyze initiatives in the NNS Choice neighborhood.

In 2015, the Near North Side of St. Louis was designated as an **EcoDistrict** site. In light of this designation, Urban Design Associates (UDA) met with EcoDistrict to ensure that their objectives/principles for sustainable development would be incorporated into the plan for the Near North Side. EcoDistrict's Priority Areas promote neighborhoods that

are Livable, Prosperous, Healthy, Connected, Ecological, and Climate Responsive and Resource Efficient, all of which are also Choice priorities.

In October 2015, the Near North Side was awarded technical assistance from **Global Green USA** sustainability experts to identify and discuss opportunities for growth in the region, especially in regard to LEED ND (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Neighborhood Development).

The **Great Rivers Greenway Plan** creates miles of greenway space through the St. Louis area. The regional parks and trails district, created by a vote of the people to connect St. Louis City, St. Louis County and St. Charles County, will

extend a network of greenways along 14<sup>th</sup> Street, a major corridor in the Near North Side. This project will enhance pedestrian and bicycle traffic in the area and connectivity with the rest of the city. The project will also enhance safety by creating more "eyes on the street." Along with practical transportation uses, the greenway will improve the visual aesthetic and economic impact of 14<sup>th</sup> street.

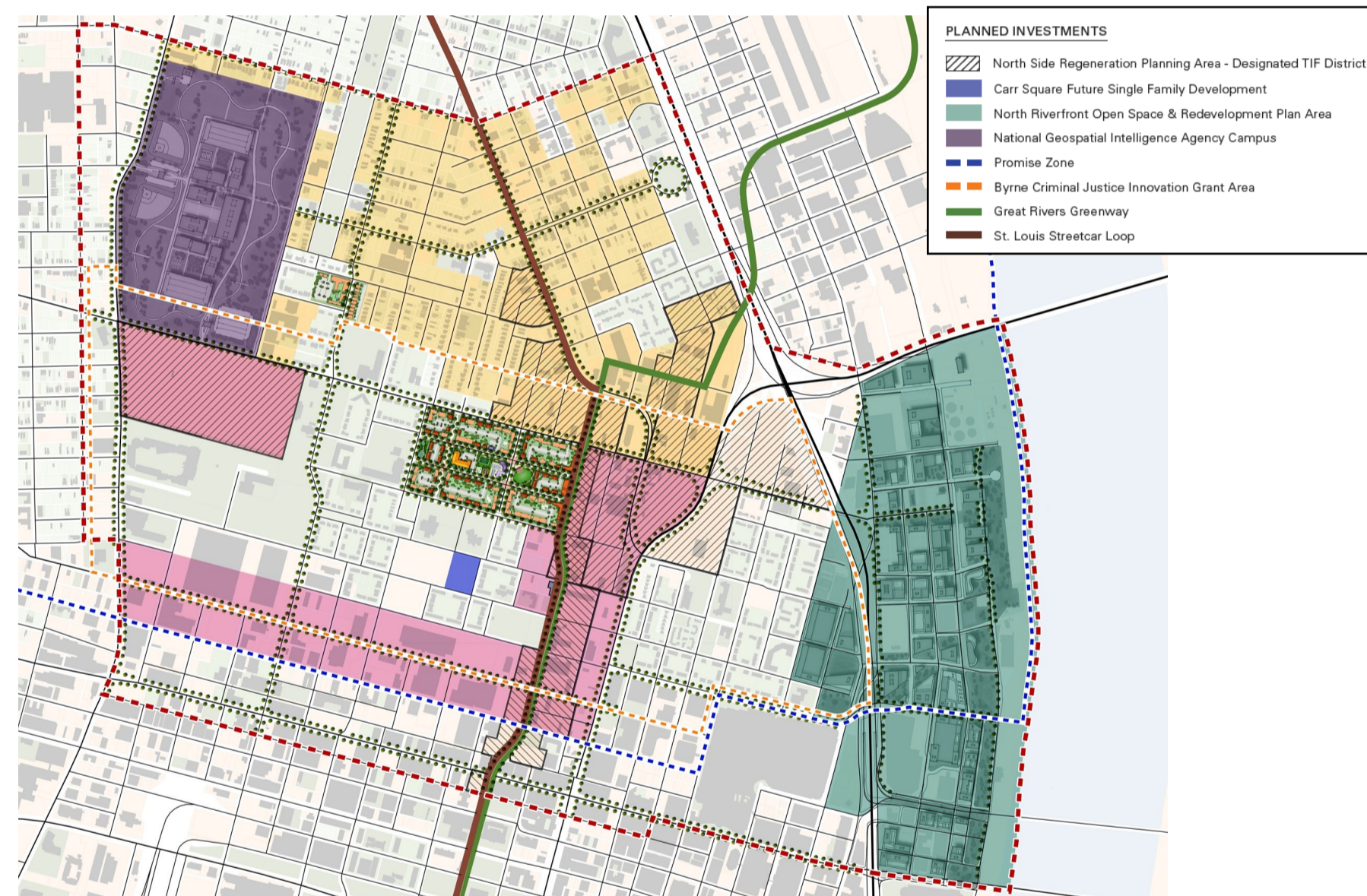
The **Public Transportation Expansion** plan includes a number of transportation linkages to the North side in the coming years, including two plans for light transit. A streetcar trolley has been proposed for 14<sup>th</sup> Street and as well as a North/South Connector Metrolink expansion that will run from downtown along 14<sup>th</sup> street



and N. Florissant. This will connect downtown, the Near North Side and North County. The plan for this world-class asset proposes a stop at the corner of Biddle and N 14<sup>th</sup> Streets. While Metro Transit's bus service is already extensive within the Near North Side, these new light rail and streetcar systems will increase access to North St. Louis County, where many jobs are located. The

agency will study route modifications that will best leverage the new rail line.

The **North Riverfront Open Space and Redevelopment Plan** will promote economic revitalization of the North Riverfront by transforming vacant property along the Mississippi River into public parks and recreation amenities as well as enhancing private enterprise. The plan's



NEAR NORTH SIDE CHOICE | Transformation Plan

goals include creating a strong link between the riverfront, the Gateway Arch and all the other greenways in the River Ring, providing active recreational and park space; and providing safe, accessible and secure access to the river and riverfront amenities.

Consistent with the Transformation Plan, the Planning Commission's **Plan**

**for the Neighborhoods of the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward**, and other private developments plan to integrate new ground floor retail space along the N. 14<sup>th</sup>/ Tucker Corridor where industrial and blighted buildings now stand.

In 2015, the City of St. Louis was awarded the **Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Grant** to address public

safety in the north side of St. Louis. This grant will strengthen the neighborhood's partnership with SLATE (St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment) and other agencies, resulting in improved workforce development, re-entry support for the previously incarcerated and crime prevention through environmental design.



The **National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency** will build its new \$1.75 billion western headquarters within the NNS. This project, to be developed on 136 acres directly north of the Pruitt-Igoe site, could lure \$8.1 billion of public and private investment to the struggling area while giving a major boost to nearby Washington Avenue. The project will also retain 3,100 jobs and provide \$2.4 million in annual taxes to the City.

NEAR NORTH SIDE CHOICE | Transformation Plan

A St. Louis north riverfront site has been chosen by a group of prominent local business and sports leaders as a potential location for a **Major League Soccer Expansion Franchise**. While the group, dubbed MLS2STL, is considering other city locations, they are enthusiastic about the North St. Louis site along the Mississippi River riverfront. They cite that its proximity to downtown and current revitalization efforts mirror an urban trend in modern soccer stadiums.

An \$8.1 billion 15-year **NorthSide Regeneration Plan**, covering some 1,500 acres of the city, including Near North Side, has been planned to include the development of four commercial centers totaling over 3,000,000 square feet of new retail and office space, 1,000,000 square

feet of light industrial space, new homes, parks, and a trolley line. The commercial space would play host to 22,000 new jobs, in addition to the 43,000 construction jobs created in building the development. As of late-2015 more than \$100 million had been invested in the project, and approximately \$430 million in public subsidies, including a \$390 million Tax Increment Financing (TIF) deal, were approved. Part of this plan includes a new GreenLeaf grocery with produce sourced from a local farm, and a Zoom convenience store with gas station.

The **Carr Square Tenant Association** and others are already doing successful infill housing work in the NNS. Carr Square opened the Loretta Scott Town homes in the

spring of 2016 and has more housing initiatives planned, including a senior living facility.

While these projects have significant redevelopment potential for North St. Louis and Near North Side, visible progress in the area remains modest.

## PEOPLE | Overview

There are 11,806 people living in the Near North Side. 966 of these individuals live in the Preservation Square development. Of the adults in the Near North Side ----- ages. 31.6 percent are children. 42% of the adults in the neighborhood are men and 58 % are women.

### HOUSEHOLDS

There are 5,804 households in the Near North Side. 2,416 (41.6%) are considered family households which is defined as related people who are sharing a house. This is comparable to the 46.7% family households in the City of St. Louis. Of those families, 70.9% have children under the age of 18. Among families with children, 12.9 % are headed by married couples. This leaves the vast majority of families with children headed by a single parent and 83.2% of them headed by a single woman.

### RACE and ETHNICITY

82.2% of Near North Side residents are black, 15.4% are white and 2.4% are of other races or are multi-racial. Many of the white residents in the neighborhood live in the northeastern corner of the boundary where Old North St. Louis has developed over the past decade, and along the Washington Avenue loft corridor. In 1954, when Pruitt Igoe was built, it was intended to be segregated, with designations for white and black families within the development. The Supreme Court banned segregation of Federal housing projects the following year. Pruitt Igoe was occupied with predominantly black families.

### EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Of adults in the neighborhood, 3.8 % have achieved less than a High School diploma, 9.5% have some high school or GED training. 66.6% of the adults have attained a high school diploma or GED as their highest level of education. 4.3% of those surveyed have an Associates, Bachelor's or Master's degree.

### HOUSEHOLD ECONOMICS

The 63106 zip code is the poorest zip code in the City of St. Louis. Likely due to the concentration of public and low-income housing in the area. Since the days of Pruitt Igoe, this neighborhood has been the home of many of the city's public housing residents. The median income in the Near North Side is \$19,795 and 41.6% of households in the area live under the poverty line for their respective family size. The median income of the City of St. Louis is \$34,800. 41.3% of Near North Side residents are on food stamps, compared to the 25.5% in the rest of the city.

### EDUCATION

There are a number of schools in the Near North Side, including Jefferson Elementary, Gateway Elementary, Patrick Henry Elementary, KIPP Inspire Academy, Carr Lane Middle, Gateway Middle and Innovative Concepts Academy. There are no high schools within the boundary. High School students in the neighborhood who attend public schools attend Vashon. Vashon has a 53.9% 4-year graduation rate compared to 72.1% in St. Louis City. The drop-out rate is 63.7%, compared to 18.2% in the city. The Composite ACT score of Vashon students is 14.2, compared to 16.6 for all St. Louis City students.

|  | NNS Elementary Schools Combined | NNS Middle School Combined | Vashon High | St. Louis City (all grades) | Missouri (all grades) |
|--|---------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Enrollment                                 | 1283                            | 1116                       | 645         | 26,134                      | 918,318               |
| Proportional Attendance                    | 84.1%                           | 86.1%                      | 50.4%       | 83.5%                       | 88.7%                 |
| Suspensions of 10 or More Consecutive Days | 3.8%                            | 2.8%                       | 26.4%       | 3.0%                        | 1.2%                  |

## PEOPLE | Goals

Throughout the planning process the People Working Group, composed of residents and stakeholders, used the Results Based Accountability (RBA) Method to identify the following desired outcomes for the residents and neighbors in Preservation Square.

- Engaged Youth
- Able bodied adults are employed
- Children are succeeding in school
- Children are ready for school
- Residents are mentally and physically healthy
- Seniors are supported
- Residents have access to economic opportunities
- Residents are financially stable
- **Community without homelessness**
- Residents engaging positively



The strategies that make up the People Plan focus on creating ladders of opportunity for upward mobility and real economic change for Preservation Square families, and builds upon strong partnerships developed and strengthened during the planning process.

## PEOPLE | Strategies

### ENGAGED YOUTH

- A common theme that surfaced during the planning process was the need for a state-of-the-art community center that would house family-centered programs and offer an array of activities. The neighborhood's existing community center operated by the Carr Square Tenant Management Corporation (TMC), Jonas Hubbard Jr. Family Center (Center), is outdated and too small to house the many programs residents desire. Carr School will be rehabilitated and on the surrounding land a new state of the art Center will be built. The Carr School sits on the 14<sup>th</sup> Street corridor that is slated for massive transit oriented developments and would serve as a gateway into the

neighborhood. Many of the programs described in the People Plan are expected to operate out of the new center.

- The Downtown Y has served Preservation Square residents for over 10 years and is committed to providing the following enrichment activities for children, youth and families: the Y Recess Program in partnership with SLPS, Girls Mentoring Program, swim lessons, youth leadership, Summer Day Camp, youth wellness, Youth In Government, and subsidized YMCA memberships.

- College Bound, a national leader in college access programs will serve 30 Near North Side youth per year.

- Wyman will offer their nationally

recognized Teen Outreach Program (TOP) to NNS youth.

- Lift for Life Gym will continue to provide free fitness, nutrition, educational and recreational services to people ages 8-18.

- SLATE is currently delivering a Youth Build program in the NNS for disconnected youth who have been involved in the criminal justice system. The program has successfully graduated 50 youth and will be expanded at the new Community Center.

### ABLE BODIED ADULTS ARE EMPLOYED

- Employment program that includes the following components: skills training, job readiness, mentorship, placement and barrier removal.

- United 4 Children – helps residents get GED and early childhood

certification. This will address employment, particularly for young women along with improving childcare in the neighborhood.

- STL Youth Jobs programming to help employ and coach the young adults in the neighborhood.

- Job readiness training provided by Employment Connections, focused on "world of work" skills.

- Hard skills training provided by Harris Stowe State University, local community colleges, and SLATE (the local Workforce Investment Authority) in child care, health care, and manufacturing; and job placement assistance through SLATE.

- Flance Early Learning Center will expand their Childcare Development Associate training program to NNS residents. The goal is to recruit and train NNS residents

for this program to ultimately place trained individuals in jobs at neighborhood-based childcare centers. St. Louis Community College will provide educational programming to support the development of 30 additional early learning professionals living in the NNS

### CHILDREN ARE SUCCEEDING IN SCHOOL

- Urban Strategies will bring together the KIPP Schools and St. Louis Public Schools to create a teacher professional development program that will train teachers through KIPP to be highly effective and deploy them in all of the schools in the Near North Side neighborhood. This professional development program will improve educational outcomes at all neighborhood schools by training,

supporting, and retaining teachers.

To ensure that all students and their families are served, as children and youth attend more than 40 schools across St. Louis, Urban Strategies will hire an educational specialist to connect students to high quality schools and ensure that they are successful in those schools. This professional will also connect children to high quality early childhood programs and youth to high quality youth development programs. The educational specialist will also address dropout and truancy issues of neighborhood youth.

- St. Louis Community College (SLCC) will provide tuition financial aid assistance in the form of scholarships and grant awards to 250 students in the NNS.

### CHILDREN ARE READY FOR SCHOOL

- There are not enough spots at quality early child care centers for the children in the neighborhood. Currently, 65.3 percent of pre-school children are not enrolled in early childhood development services. Professional development for child care providers will be made available through Flance. Flance has trained over 1,000 early learning providers. Flance will enhance the quality of 5 centers over the next five years through technical assistance and shared professional development opportunities to increase their capacity. This will create an additional 100 child care slots that will serve Preservation Square families.
- The first center where the Flance Center will build capacity is Elmer Hammond Child Development Center, an early childhood center located in the Murphy Park Leasing Office, which serves 25 children.
- Urban Strategies, with Choice Neighborhoods resources, will support the operations of the Flance Early Childhood Center to ensure that it will successfully serve significantly more children at affordable rates from the Near North Side.
- Child Care Aware (CCA) of Eastern Missouri will implement their Virtual Child Care Business Center at Elmer Hammond and the four other targeted centers. CCA will support and strengthen the business and organizational capacity of these centers.
- United 4 Children, a nonprofit specializing in child development, will provide training to the NNS centers to help develop social and emotional well-being in children.
- Parents as Teachers will hire a full-time parent educator housed at the Flance Center who will work with all Preservation Square families with young children. This parent educator will teach families about healthy childhood development and monitor the healthy development of children. 4 times per year the parent educator will visit the homes of families and give the

- Ages and Stages ASQ-3 and Social/Emotional (S/E) developmental screening. The Ages and Stages ASQ-3 and Social/Emotional (S/E) is a nationally normed and validated instrument designed to measure child development from birth through age 6. The parent educator will refer children to appropriate programs and services to address developmental delays when needed. The parent educator, will also lead specially tailored groups for PS families, teaching about healthy development, fatherhood, and successful teen parenting.
- In partnership with SSM, connect residents with Access to Care through Care Coordinators to provided door-to-door health outreach and promote SSM's health services, which including preventative health screenings, partnership with Alive and Well STL. In these sessions, residents are brought together for discussions of their experiences with volunteer facilitators. These discussions teach resilience, address and identify needs of residents, including those needs related to toxic stress and trauma, and support the emotional well-being and stability of children and families. Residents who may need further mental health guidance are assisted in finding the support they need.
- ACA enrollment assistance, case management for patients likely to be readmitted to the hospital within 30 days of discharge, geriatric screenings, and expansion of biometric screenings .
- Training local teachers and early childcare provider staff on mental health and social and emotional well-being in partnership with Flance Early Learning Center, Resilience Coalition and Alive and Well STL.
- Local churches can receive mental health training in partnership with SSM to circumvent and break the stigma around mental health treatment.
- Health Impact Assessment analyzing service access, depth of available services, usage

**RESIDENTS ARE MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY HEALTHY**

- Launch listening sessions in

patterns, neighborhood-wide health issues and needs, and level of resident knowledge regarding available services and health education. This will help identify the prevailing health challenges faced by children, adults and seniors living in the community in order to improve access to appropriate services.

- Health Services Marketing and Communication strategy to inform residents of existing health education and direct services. Through the survey, residents stated that the community has a wealth of high quality health services that are available, but residents are not inclined to use them due to lack of knowledge about the programs

**SENIORS ARE SUPPORTED**

- Provide a Senior Activity Center housed in the new planned Jonas Hubbard Jr. Family Center that will provide social activities for neighborhood seniors. Social activities will be coordinated between the three existing senior housing developments in the neighborhood, and transportation to health services will be provided.

**RESIDENTS HAVE ACCESS TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

- Increase Preservation Square participation in the Grace Hill Women's Business Center. Grace Hill holds a 16-week, intensive mini-MBA course with one on one counseling.
- The Small Business Empowerment Center's (SBEC) North City Community & Business Center

will provide access to capital and business coaching, starting-a-business workshops, business planning services, growth strategies and mentoring

- Justine Petersen's micro-lending program will provide micro-loans and technical assistance to existing neighborhood businesses and new entrepreneurs entering the neighborhood. Justine Peterson will also offer business training and business plan development workshops for new and expanding businesses.

**RESIDENTS ARE FINANCIALLY STABLE**

- Bolster a central Financial Empowerment Center at the Prosperity Connection Excel Center location at 14<sup>th</sup> street and St. Louis Ave. with

counseling to assist with debt reduction and build savings in tangible and measurable ways, including: erasing erroneous debts and correcting credit histories; advocating with creditors directly to lower old fees and penalties; negotiating with creditors for more favorable payment plans, total debts owed, and ongoing interest rates; identifying new sources of income such as unclaimed benefits like the childcare tax credit, the earned income tax credit, and others; and creating budgets and payment plans that facilitate realistic savings plans. The Excel Center is available for partners, students and volunteers to hold meetings, classes and workshops related to Financial Empowerment.

**RESIDENTS ENGAGING POSITIVELY**

- Launch a Neighbor Network for Preservation Square. Based on a Trusted Space Partners Model, this network involves regular intentional gatherings where residents get to socialize and build relationships with each other. These meetings build social cohesion. Through this network residents will be able to apply for small grant opportunities for resident initiatives that are approved on by the rest of the network. This provides residents with the capital to improve their community in small ways, as they see need.
- Parent education/Coaching/Support through programming with the LUME Parent Café held at the Flance Early Learning Center.

- Neighborhood College courses offered by Grace Hill, advertised and targeted to Preservation Square residents.

## NEIGHBORHOOD | Vision

With a clear picture of today's Near North Side before them, residents, stakeholders, and experts began a robust community engagement process that informed the detailed vision for NNS. A Sustainable Neighborhood Assessment was also conducted to identify issues and places where focused policing efforts or planning changes could promote sustainable urban development over the short and long term.

The group saw a neighborhood with a poor economy, insufficient access to retail, commerce, recreation, transportation, high quality educational and cultural opportunities, and no access to affordable, healthy foods. They also saw before them a neighborhood abundant in assets such as good proximity to jobs, downtown and regional resources; safe and environmentally friendly parks and recreational facilities; greater community engagement that would result in neighborhood stability and long term health; housing mixed in type, income and demographics, and more.

The Neighborhood Working Group reported that high-level neighborhood aspirations include a strong desire for better education and job training; expanded local job opportunities; improved public transit; improved housing conditions; improved safety and security; more community amenities; and access to fresh food.

This neighborhood plan component of the Transformation Plan thus envisions an aesthetically pleasing and walkable community complete with diverse, sustainable and high quality housing; safe homes and a safe neighborhood; expanded access to educational and employment opportunities parks, green space and recreation; improved access to cultural institutions, healthy foods, and transportation; economic stability; and solid resident engagement.



## NEIGHBORHOOD | Goals

A neighborhood vision is nothing more than a concept, a dream or an object or thing formed by the imagination. Visions for a community or neighborhood become reality over time as movement and change occurs to align the existing neighborhood with its vision. The Neighborhood Working Group, having the advantage of being able to draw from the Sustainable Neighborhood Assessment and other evidence-based data, developed the following goals, or action statements, that need to be achieved to make the NNS vision a reality.

- Diversify the community in income, demographics and housing.
- Get residents civically responsible and engaged.
- Create a sustainable, resilient and aesthetically pleasing neighborhood.
- Create a walkable community.
- Create a safe neighborhood and community.
- Integrate the community into the region.
- Provide residents greater access to quality transportation.
- Provide residents greater access to cultural institutions and quality parks and recreation.
- Provide residents access to healthy foods.
- Create an economically stable neighborhood.
- Provide residents greater access to employment.
- Provide residents with greater access to retail and commercial assets.
- Create a mixed—use neighborhood.



## NEIGHBORHOOD | Strategies

Goals represent the end results, or outcomes, that need to be achieved in order to realize a vision. They can only be realized or achieved through the implementation of a series of strategic actions. The Neighborhood Working Group fiercely approached a process to identify specific, quantifiable, time-sensitive strategies, and milestones that would be achieved in order to accomplish its neighborhood goals. The group considered the recommendations from the Sustainable Neighborhood Assessment that integrated data from regional and city planning documents, city staff and stakeholder interviews, evidence-based best practices in selecting its strategies.

Activities for each strategy will be leveraged with financial resources and/or community initiatives to create assets that align with the HUD Livability Principals, namely to provide more transportation choices; promote equitable, affordable housing; enhance economic competitiveness; support existing communities; coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment; and value communities and neighborhoods.

### **DIVERSE HOUSING/ DIVERSE INCOME/DIVERSE DEMOGRAPHICS**

- Replace below market apartment units with a selection of modern mixed-income apartments targeted at current market preferences and demographic profiles to create diversity in the housing types within the neighborhood and

attract a population with a greater mix in income and other demographics.

- Develop housing on vacant and blighted lots targeted to home owners, particularly first-time homebuyers, to balance the mix of rental and owner-occupied units.
- Support the housing components of the NorthSide

Regeneration Plan.

- Support Ranken Technical College's plan to design and construct 10 for-sale homes in the neighborhood.
- Develop sustainable, energy-efficient and high quality housing to improve marketability to a diverse population.
- Coordinate with Washington

University's plan to offer down payment assistance to qualifying employees buying homes in the NNS.

- Create a Homeownership Assistance Program (HAP) coordinated by Rise Community Development and Community Renewal and Development to provide down payment assistance and home improvement loans to low and moderate income home buyers and owners.

### **CIVICALLY RESPONSIBLE AND ENGAGED RESIDENTS**

- Have residents attend the Sustainable Neighborhood Academy sponsored by the St. Louis Association of Community Organizations. This is a resident based program combining social, economic and

environmental ideas to create diverse, balanced and integrated neighborhoods.

- Continue routine meetings of the People, Neighborhood and Housing Working Groups to implement and sustain the Choice Transformation Plan to promote residents' accountability and engagement for years to come.

### **INTEGRATION OF NNS INTO THE REGION**

- Extend Preservation Street and Cochran Place. Cul-de-sacs at both ends of these streets will be replaced with connections to the neighborhood grid to enhance vehicle connectivity to downtown and other areas.
- Support the Great Rivers Greenway Trail to link residents to downtown, the riverfront, and

adjacent neighborhoods via a 12-foot wide pedestrian path and a parallel 12-foot wide bike path (cycle track). This 6-mile long amenity will run along 14<sup>th</sup> Street at the eastern edge of preservation square. An interconnected network of pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and bike lanes will link all open space and recreational amenities, further improving the quality of life.

- Support Public Transportation Expansion plans, which include a number of transportation linkages connecting the Near North Side to downtown and to North St. Louis County, where many jobs are located.
- Support the Old North St. Louis Restoration Group revitalizing the St. Louis Avenue commercial

corridor, a follow-up to their transformative redevelopment of the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Mall.

#### **CREATE A GREEN, SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT NEIGHBORHOOD**

- Collaborate with the Missouri Sewer District for funding support for rain garden projects that will enhance the environmental sustainability of the neighborhood.
- Support the Great Rivers Greenway project's efforts to extend a network of greenways along 14<sup>th</sup> Street, providing active transportation options to the neighborhood.
- Promote environmental conservation measures that follow LEED ND and Enterprise Green Communities criteria. These standards include pragmatic site strategies to

conserve water, manage surface runoff, and encourage native species. St. Louis is located in IECC Zone 4, a relatively moderate climate. The planning area is also under a consent decree that requires private developments to detain stormwater runoff on site as they are revitalized. The design will incorporate rain gardens, bioswales, and underground storage facilities to clean and detain the abundant precipitation. Native trees and vegetation will be used throughout the plan to prevent erosion and create a beautiful environment that requires little to no irrigation. The use of shading and cooling devices, such as deciduous street trees, trellis structures and reflective surfaces, will help restore the native

microclimate, conserving energy and promoting livability by enabling residents to comfortably enjoy the outdoors.

#### **AESTHETICALLY PLEASING**

- Balance attractive urban, mixed-use designs with green spaces that include native trees and vegetation for a beautiful environment.
- Design building types that are prevalent in the existing neighborhood—townhouses, garden apartments, and mixed-use buildings for neighborhood compatibility.
- Arrange structures so that all residential front doors face streets and off-street parking is screened from public view. Bridge the neighborhood's past and its future by mixing some updated elements with

traditional architectural styles.

- Add street trees in the parking lanes and park strips and create greener streetscapes.
- Design cross sections for all streets to follow the typical neighborhood pattern of balancing pedestrian and vehicle needs.

#### **ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS**

- Metro Market, a mobile grocery store stocked with locally grown produce, meat and staple goods, will provide regular service to NNS.
- Green Leaf Market (Northside Grocery), planned at the intersection of 13<sup>th</sup> St. and Tucker Blvd., with New Market Tax Credit equity from U.S Bancorp CDC, will offer Good Natured Family Farms produce for sale to the neighborhood as of the summer

of 2017

- HOSCO Farms, a local non-profit, will provide job training based on rebuilding the local food system to individuals that have been unemployed or on public assistance.

#### **WALKABLE COMMUNITY**

- Incorporate pedestrian friendly features in the master plan such as: a) designing cross sections for all streets in the new housing communities to follow the typical neighborhood pattern of balancing pedestrian and vehicle needs; adding a new north/south lane, parallel to Hogan Street to further subdivide long blocks; and removing concrete barricades at the south end of 16<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Upgrade existing streets within the development footprint to formalize on-street parking and

add street trees in the parking lane and park strip. The new lane will incorporate parallel parking and pedestrian-friendly sidewalks on both sides. Together these improvements will promote walking, biking, and other healthy lifestyles.

- Support projects like Great Rivers Greenway to develop an interconnected network of pedestrian-friendly sidewalks.

#### **SAFER NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY**

- Utilize Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles in the Master Plan to ensure greater safety in both the home and neighborhood. The master plan design will include security lighting, security cameras, and windows overlooking

sidewalks, parking lots, and parks, all promoting “eyes on the street”. It will also include natural access control elements such as limited entrances to buildings/parking, see-through fences between buildings, and street/sidewalk design that physically guides people where to go. These features will help define the street side of buildings as public and the interior block area as private.

- Collaborate with the \$1 million Byrne Innovation Grant to address safety and crime in the Near North Side. Grant activities will focus on street and lot improvement projects to increase visibility and lighting and to encourage use of space.
- Increase active police presence by the St. Louis Missouri Police Department to satisfy the more

than 52% of the residents who felt that this solution would improve neighborhood services.

- Create a Neighborhood Watch project as nearly 68% of the residents reported that they would participate in such a program.

**ACCESS TO RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL ASSETS / ECONOMICALLY STABLE NEIGHBORHOOD**

- Replace industrial and blighted buildings in the 14<sup>th</sup>/Tucker corridor with “gateway” commercial development to attract new investment in NNS and boost the neighborhood economy.
- Support the parallel plans designed to attract private enterprises into the area, such as the NorthSide Regeneration Plan

to provide greater access to retail and commerce while stabilizing NNS.

- Support the location of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and the Major League Soccer Expansion Franchise in NNS to bring new economic opportunity to the neighborhood.

**ACCESS TO QUALITY TRANSPORTATION**

- Improve bus shelters in the neighborhood through the efforts of Choice and the City of St. Louis for greater access to public transportation within the City.
- Support the proposed North/South Connector, a new MetroLink or Streetcar rail line for greater access to transportation through the community and the region. The designs of this world-

class asset propose a stop at the corner of Biddle and N 14<sup>th</sup> Streets.

- Design cross sections for all streets to follow the typical neighborhood pattern of balancing pedestrian and vehicle needs.
- Consider a variety of other transportation options that can be used by customers to get between the station and their final destination (first and last mile). Small-scale share-use options include: taxis, jitneys, shuttles, bikesharing, carsharing, ridesourcing and ridesharing.

**ACCESS TO CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS, PARKS AND RECREATION**

- Support the Great Rivers Greenway North Riverfront Open Space and Redevelopment Plan

to transform vacant property along the Mississippi River into public parks and recreation amenities for greater access to these neighborhood assets. Other specific goals of this plan include creating a strong link between the riverfront, the Gateway Arch and all the other greenways in the River Ring, providing active recreational and park space; and safe, accessible and secure access to the river and riverfront amenities.

- Complement the existing baseball diamonds, play areas, and courts in Loretta Hall and Murphy Square Parks (south and west of Preservation Square respectively) with new neighborhood park space, play structures, and garden plots.
- Develop a new community

center at the intersection of Biddle and N. 14<sup>th</sup> Streets to support health and wellness with community and exercise facilities. This facility, to be known as the Jonas Hubbard Family Center, is sited along the main 14th street thoroughfare so that it may serve residents from the Carr Square and Columbus Square neighborhoods as well as downtown residents and commuters.

**ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT/ DIVERSE INCOME AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

- Collaborate with the Byrne grant to eliminate barriers to work by addressing workforce development challenges, specifically for the previously incarcerated who are re-entering the community.
- Offer priority consideration for all

jobs created by Choice to residents of NNS. This includes case management positions, construction, landscaping, maintenance, etc.

- Support Great Rivers Greenway and Streetcar Initiatives to provide greater access to transportation to jobs.
- Encourage new and expanded retail and commercial establishments and parallel initiatives to give priority consideration to training and hiring NNS residents.
- Develop units for home buyers to decrease resident turnover rates and encourage families with diverse income and demographics to plant roots and invest in the NNS.

**MIXED USE NEIGHBORHOOD**

- The master plan restores the

area's traditional block pattern to create a development framework that supports compact development, pedestrian connections, and a mix of land uses. Consistent with the surrounding neighborhood, urban densities are planned that better balance living and open space.

- The on-site density will be reduced by approximately 15 percent. A variety of compact building types will be mixed to create resource-efficient development, reduce project costs, and conserve energy. This approach also supports demand for other needed infrastructure such as public transportation and commercial development.

- Integrate new ground floor retail space along N. 14<sup>th</sup> Street. This

new "Front Porch" will help establish the main street character that the community desperately desires.

## HOUSING | VISION

The overarching housing vision of the Housing Working Group is to develop mixed income housing that is diverse in design and housing type; safe, green and sustainable; and supports the needs of a population diverse in income and demographics. This is in stark contrast to an existing neighborhood where 75% of its housing is substandard, 75% of the units are rentals, 55% of the households are headed by females and more than 96% of the housing is occupied by African Americans.

While the housing vision for this initiative imagines a neighborhood with new and diverse housing options, including homeownership, it is focused on a renewed and healthy Preservation Square, the 675-unit mixed-income rental community situated across several city blocks in the northern portion of the neighborhood.

The survey results and other studies and evaluations led to the conclusion that Preservation Square is in need of total redevelopment in order to provide the safe, sustainable, mixed income, affordable, and high quality housing that is envisioned for all of the Near North Side.

The renovated/replacement housing is considered as a catalyst for reinvestment in surrounding blocks and along main commercial corridors.

The Plan will include a one to one replacement of all 675 existing units of Preservation Square. Details include the renovation of 342 existing units, and the new construction of 249 family units and 26 universal design units along with 67 replacement units on-site and off-site. The Housing Plan consists of six phases: four phases of on-site mixed-income, multi-family housing, an on-site 54-unit universal design building, and a family phase in an existing building in the NNS neighborhood, known as "The Brewery," will be renovated.

As part of the Choice initiative, the project will not only yield high quality affordable housing, but will restore the street grid connecting the community to surrounding thoroughfares, upgrade existing community spaces, and increase security throughout the property. The offsite units will complement the

North Side Regeneration and Carr Square neighborhood housing efforts.

Upon completion, Preservation Square will consist entirely of newly-renovated or newly-constructed units with in-unit and community amenities that are competitive with other properties across North St. Louis. This will offer the housing stability and long term affordability needed to ensure that housing will complement people and neighborhood activities that contribute to neighborhood reinvestment.



NEAR NORTH SIDE CHOICE | Transformation Plan

## HOUSING | GOALS

Near North Side residents and partners addressed housing along with the other core Choice goals of people and neighborhood in order to create a plan for the holistic revitalization of the neighborhood. Housing is critical in the NNS Plan due to the need to address substandard and inefficient housing in the neighborhood and the severely distressed Preservation Square Apartments.

The Housing Working Group established the following goals to develop housing that aligns with its vision and is physically and financially viable over the long-term.

- Ensure one-for-one replacement of Preservation Square housing units.
- Increase homeownership.
- Develop safe housing.
- Develop sustainable and environmentally friendly housing.
- Diversify housing type, income and demographics.
- Develop stable housing for all.
- Create a "Beating Heart".



NEAR NORTH SIDE CHOICE | Transformation Plan

# HOUSING | Strategies

The Housing Working Group considered strategic action items that needed to be implemented to achieve the housing goals identified. With the information gained from the planning process, resident survey, evidence-based research, available resources and Choice guidance, the group developed strategies to address each housing goal.

**ONE TO ONE REPLACEMENT**

- Replace the 675-unit Preservation Square with the renovation of 282 existing units, the new construction of 219 family units, a 54-unit universal design building and renovation of replacement units at "The Brewery."

**SAFE HOUSING**

- Reduce the community's current housing density at Preservation Square through the demolition of a number of outdated buildings, the significant renovation of remaining units, and the new construction of a senior-targeted apartment building and several family-oriented apartment buildings and townhomes.
- Incorporate Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles into the housing designs to alleviate crime in the Preservation Square housing complex. The main goal of CPTED is to deter criminal activity through natural surveillance, natural access control, and clearly defining public versus private spaces, among other strategies. Examples

- of proposed natural surveillance include security lighting, security cameras, and windows overlooking sidewalks, parking lots, and parks, all promoting "eyes on the street".
- Include natural access control elements in the housing design, such as limited entrances to buildings/parking, see-through fences between buildings, and street/sidewalk design that physically guides people where to go to enhance safety. These features will help define the street side of buildings as public and the interior block area as private.
- Plant low level landscaping to further delineate the private realm and reinforce a sense of ownership and thus deter unwanted visitors from

- approaching housing units.
- Arrange structures so that all residential front doors face streets and off-street parking is screened from public view to create greater safety for ingress and egress to housing.
- Improve the livability of existing units that remain. Although square footages are generous and layouts workable, many entrances feature dark passageways that are unsafe. These locations will be enclosed and better lit to eliminate unclaimed space. Porches, bay windows, and other architectural features will also be added to further differentiate individual buildings and provide "a gift to the street"—creating a more neighborly place and deterring strangers from the premises.

- Increase points of entry and exit at Preservation Square as there is currently one entrance and exit at 16<sup>th</sup> and Cass Ave. Originally intended to deter crime, the blocked streets have only succeeded in barricading and separating Preservation Square from the surrounding neighborhood. 16<sup>th</sup> street will be opened at the south end of the complex at O'Fallon.
  - Create pedestrian entrances on 14<sup>th</sup> street, connecting residents with what will be a bustling city block of amenities.
- SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY HOUSING**
- Promote environmental conservation measures in the housing design that follow LEED ND and Enterprise Green Communities

- criteria to ensure green and sustainable homes. These standards include pragmatic site strategies to conserve water, manage surface runoff, and encourage native species. St. Louis is located in IECC Zone 4, a relatively moderate climate. The planning area is also under a consent decree that requires private developments to detain stormwater runoff on site as they are revitalized.
- Collaborate with the Metropolitan Sewer District to provide funding for sustainable stormwater management (bioswales, rain gardens, permeable paving) in the neighborhood to promote environmental health benefits to the community
- Incorporate rain gardens,

bioswales, and underground storage facilities in the design to clean and detain the abundant precipitation. Native trees and vegetation will be used throughout the plan to prevent erosion and create a beautiful environment that requires little to no irrigation.

- Incorporate shading and cooling devices into the design. Deciduous street trees, trellis structures and reflective surfaces will help restore the native microclimate, conserve energy and promote livability by enabling residents to comfortably enjoy the outdoors.

**DIVERSE HOUSING IN TYPE, INCOME AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

- Replace below market apartment units with a selection of modern mixed-income



apartments targeted at current market preferences and demographic profiles. Plan provides for a mix of market rate (25%), affordable (26%), and deeply affordable (49%) housing for households from a broad range of income levels, including very-low-income, low- and moderate-income and

households with unrestricted income.

- Eliminate non street facing units and allow for construction of supporting building types through limited demolition.
- Design all new and renovated units to a market rate standard, including basic amenities such as a full Energy Star appliance

package, washer and dryer, generous rooms, large closets, and energy-efficient mechanical systems. These units will be combined in building types that are prevalent in the existing neighborhood—townhouses, garden apartments, and mixed-use buildings.

- Develop accessible housing for disabled and vision and hearing impaired families.

**STABLE HOUSING**

- Budget appropriately to ensure that the rental income that can be generated from the project (including rental subsidy) can meet debt payments and meet or exceed industry standards for quality management and maintenance of the property.
- Ensure that Preservation Square

receives high quality maintenance over time, and scheduled upgrades and replacements when required.

- Offer affordable rents in the mid-to-upper range of comparable communities in the neighborhood and offer a discount of ten to 15 percent from market rents depending on unit type.

**A "BEATING HEART"**

- Remodel and expand the Preservation Square Management Office to create a clubhouse with a modern reception area, a community room, computer kiosks, updated laundry facilities, and a fitness room.
- Develop The Commons, a new 2.3 acre park at the center of Preservation Square. This hub will include a pool (existing to be

retained), splash pad, sports field, sports court, play area, community gardens, and shade areas with seating. Design tot lots for younger children .

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## Implementing the Plan

The neighborhood, housing and people initiatives for this Transformation Plan will be implemented in a fully integrated manner through partnerships of community residents, stakeholders, local public, private, and agencies and Choice entities. The goals and strategies of the core components of neighborhood, housing and people will complement each other to fully transform Near North Side into a neighborhood of Choice that will be sustained over time.

People

Neighborhood

Housing

The proposed scope of work will include a one to one replacement of all 675 existing units of Preservation Square. Details include the renovation of 342 existing units, and the new construction of 249 family units and 26 universal design units along with 67 replacement units on-site and off-site. The Housing Plan consists of six phases: four phases of on-site mixed-income, multi-family housing, an on-site 54-unit universal design building, and a family phase in The Brewery.

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## Budget and Budget Narrative

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Thank You for reading the outlined plan for the Near North Side Neighborhood of St. Louis. We hope that the information presented inspires action on behalf of this community.

DRAFT