



Better Schools, Better Neighborhoods



An Innovative Model of Urban Revitalization and Sustainability
for Joint School Construction Sites



The Challenge

Economic, social and demographic shifts have reshaped the Buffalo urban landscape causing neighborhoods to become communities of decline, abandonment, and disinvestment. Buffalo cannot become a great city without redeveloping these distressed neighborhoods.

Like many major American metropolitan areas, the city is seeking to re-define itself by targeting key neighborhoods for redevelopment. The secret is to develop school-centered community building and neighborhood redevelopment projects, which utilize innovative approaches to combat decline and regenerate struggling neighborhoods. The strategy is based on developing a collaborative that unifies partners around a common vision and hallmark principles.

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The Goal

The goal of rebuilding neighborhoods around the Joint Schools Construction Board Sites (JSCB) is a great idea that has not happened. To date, the only action taken has consisted of community discussions and site inventories and assessments.

We need to resurrect this plan to rebuild neighborhoods around the Joint Schools Construction Board sites. The time is now.

The City of Buffalo and the Buffalo Public Schools believe the best way to move forward is to implement a comprehensive strategy to rebuild neighborhoods the Joint Schools Construction Board sites. The idea is too develop a model on how to rebuild neighborhoods around these sites and then to expand that model to other locations across the City.



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The Plan

The plan is to resurrect the idea of rebuilding neighborhoods around the Joint Schools Board Construction sites through a collaborative with the Board of Education, Buffalo Public Schools and the Office of Strategic Planning in partnership with CAO-UB Center for Wellness and Neighborhood Development and Olmsted Conservancy. To achieve this goal, we have developed a program called the *Better Schools, Better Neighborhoods* Initiative.

The idea is to initiate a school-centered community building and neighborhood development project around JSCB sites by developing a model for community regeneration. This comprehensive approach will focus on strengthening the local economy and involving residents and stakeholders in the redevelopment of their own community. It will be based on a strategy of building partnerships both inside and outside the neighborhood and uniting them around a common vision and a broad set of principles.

The initiative will be anchored around the *Neighborhood Challenge*, which calls on institutions, organizations and individuals to participate in the rebuilding of inner city neighborhoods. The guiding principle is that rebuilding distressed neighborhoods is everyone's responsibility.



Better Schools, Better Neighborhoods

The Vision and Mission

Vision

"To create distinctive, clean, safe and green neighborhoods that are anchored by strong schools."

Mission

"The mission of the Better Schools/Better Neighborhood initiative is to create a comprehensive school-centered model of community building and neighborhood development. We will create jobs and opportunities, turn the neighborhood into a learning laboratory, and build a community anchored by the principles of solidarity, participation, cooperation, reciprocity and cosmopolitanism."



Better Schools, Better Neighborhoods

12 Principles of the Better Schools Better Neighborhoods:

- ▣ Sustainability
- ▣ Adaptive Reuse of Structures
- ▣ Environmental Connectivity
- ▣ School Reform and Community involvement
- ▣ Commerce Opportunities/Jobs
- ▣ Housing
- ▣ Historic Preservation
- ▣ Connectivity and Innovation
- ▣ Safe, Clean, and Green
- ▣ Partnership
- ▣ Technology
- ▣ Diversity



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Moving From Theory to Practice

To realize this vision, the Office of Strategic Planning has identified several key neighborhoods that surround reconstructed schools. The goal is to regenerate highly visible face blocks in these communities. Within this framework, initiatives will be developed around commercial, residential, quality of life, and public space issues.



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Planning Process

The first step in this process was the selection of a demonstration project in the Martin Luther King, Jr. neighborhood, which will be centered on East High School. The other target neighborhoods are Hamlin Park and the Fruit Belt.

The Buffalo Public Schools and the Office of Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee used a Priority School Determination Matrix to select the schools. Among the factors used in this matrix were:

- BPS physical needs of the community
- Feasibility
- Priorities of neighborhood groups
- Priorities of BPS
- Priorities of the City
- Existing neighborhood plans, programs and activities

Recommendations for the regeneration of the neighborhood surrounding East High School was based on an analysis of neighborhood conditions, including parcel-specific structural conditions analysis, market studies of the Fillmore commercial corridor, studies of the community, and discussions with neighborhood residents.



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Planning Process

After completion of the East High School phase I demonstration site, Phase II will be instituted in the neighborhood surrounding P.S. #74 in Hamlin Park. Phase III will be located in the neighborhood surrounding Futures Academy P.S. #37.

The projects in these neighborhoods will be used to develop the Better Schools/Better Neighborhoods model of school-centered community building and neighborhood development. Once the model has been developed, it will be expanded into other neighborhoods in the city.



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The School-Centered Model

- 1. The Environment:** Utilizing the power and stability of the Olmsted Park system as a catalyst. The vast and extensive network of parks and parkways in which the city was designed and made famous can be the starting point for the city's salvation to turn the positive momentum of the parks outward into the struggling community. No other community in the nation today is proposing such a dynamic and unique collaborative between parks and urban regeneration.
- 2. Partnerships:** Buffalo is truly rich in the talent, resources, a vast network of supporting groups, agencies, and funders to transform the urban landscape that will result in a combination of unique and quality of old and new product. The Joint Schools Reconstruction effort is yet another key and catalyst already in place to make the Better Schools Better Neighborhoods a national model and reality. Buffalo can truly keep the best of the past and prepare for a new economy, future, and world block by block.
- 3. Innovation:** Many communities around the nation today are practicing outdated notions of revitalization. The BSNB will strive for innovation. Our approach will be based on best practices, pragmatism, creativity, flexibility, and the ability to learn from mistakes.



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Targets of Opportunity

Buffalo “Targets of Opportunity Priorities”-TOPS

The Better Schools/Better Neighborhoods initiative is based on the assumption that distressed neighborhoods are not problems, but targets of opportunities. This perspective will guide the development of the Martin Luther King, Jr. neighborhood initiative. By using MLK Park, an important component of the Olmsted park system, we will show how to use community assets to spawn the neighborhood regeneration process.

The goal is to base the initiative on the building of partnerships both inside and outside the neighborhood. The idea is to challenge organizations, institutions and individuals to join with residents and stakeholders in this quest to transform the community. In this way, neighborhood redevelopment becomes a community building strategy. By combining best practices from across the globe with our own innovative ideas, Buffalo will become a national model of innovation.



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The Martin Luther King, Jr. Neighborhood Regeneration Project

Buffalo "Targets of Opportunity Priorities" -TOPS

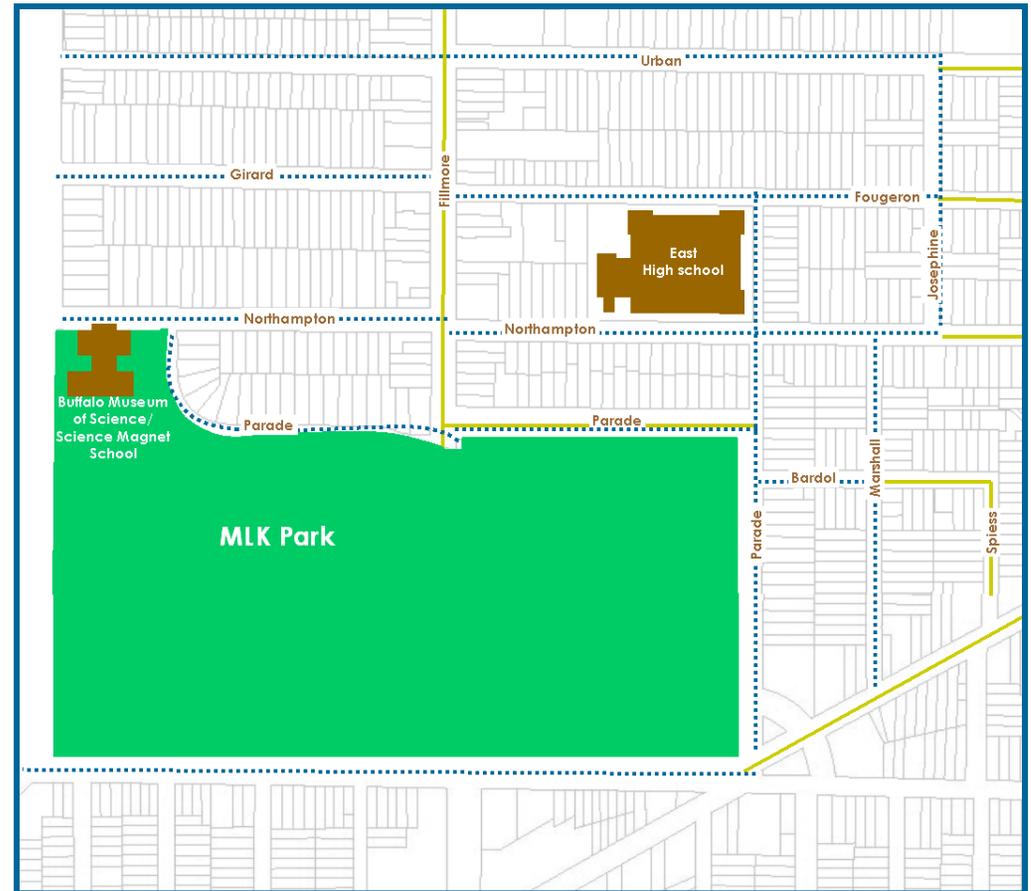
Martin Luther King Jr. "Residential"

Mission:

- To revitalize the housing stock around East High School and create affordable and historically accurate residential infill within a quarter-mile radius.

Goals:

- To identify City-owned property for development
- To institute the Indianapolis Housing Rehab Program known as "FLIP"
- develop historically relevant modern Victorian walk-ups on city-owned parcels
- To institute the Buffalo-Green initiative (modeled after Philly-Green)
- To establish a repository for donated supplies as well as services that businesses and homeowners can use to improve their property
- To provide existing residents with the skills and the capacity to make improvements to their domiciles



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Streets



Parks



Target Blocks



Schools

A Model for Urban Regeneration

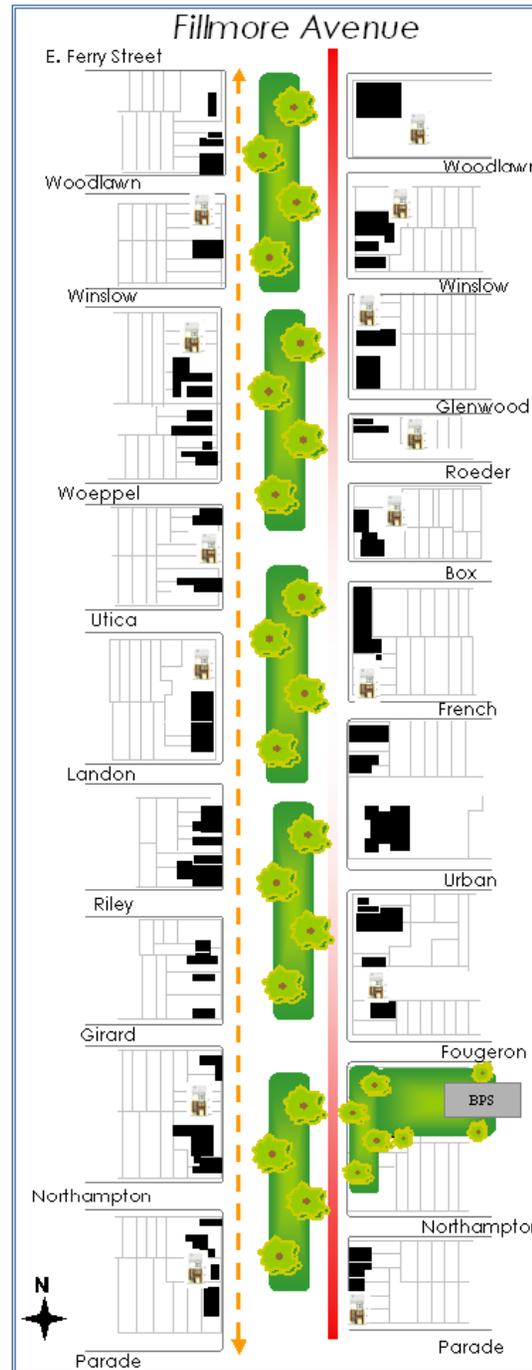
Buffalo "Targets of Opportunity Priorities" -TOPS
 Martin Luther King Jr. "Fillmore Commercial District"

Mission:

To revitalize the Fillmore Avenue commercial corridor into a vibrant, thriving passageway that serves as the *cultural commons* for the Martin Luther King, Jr. neighborhood and a Gateway to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. The Fillmore commercial corridor will be a symbol of the vibrancy of King's Dream and a place that brings people together from across the race and class divide to shop, play, and interact.

Goals:

- ▣ To establish a distinctive 21st century technology corridor with an intricate fiber-optic network that serves the schools, businesses and cultural organizations in the area
- ▣ To implement the Queen City in the 21st Century Plan by creating a grand boulevard that expands the Olmsted vision and re-establishes the Emerald Necklace along Fillmore Avenue
- ▣ To institute a Business Improvement District, coordinated by the Business Association, CAO/UB and Olmsted Parks Conservancy
- ▣ Secure grant funding and private contributions for technology-based programming to benefit the residents, business owners, business patrons and students of East High School
- ▣ To institute the Buffalo-Green initiative (modeled after Philly-Green)
- ▣ To establish a repository for donated supplies as well as services that businesses and homeowners can use to improve their property



Technology Corridor

City of Buffalo's

Better Schools, Better Neighborhoods
 Challenge Initiative



Monetary Contributions

- Hon. Congresswoman Louise Slaughter Infrastructure funding
- Councilman Derrone Smith/BERC Facade Grant
- HSBC Bank Facade Matching Grant Program
- Wendt Foundation Facade Grant
- Community Preservation Corporation Financing Assistance

In-Kind Service Contributions

- Verizon Installation of a High-tech Fiber-optic Network
- Expanding the Olmsted Vision-- Donated Corridor Design Concepts
- Stiever + Associates Donated Housing Designs and Construction Documents
- BPS Green space Expansion & Beautification
- BERC** BERC Grants Management
- Out Source** Outsource Construction Trades Training

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Key Partners

- ❑ City of Buffalo
- ❑ Buffalo Public Schools
- ❑ University of Buffalo-Community Action Organization
- ❑ Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy

Primary Contributors	Contributions
Congresswoman Slaughter	1.2 Million Infrastructure Improvements
Councilman Demone Smith BERC	Façade Grant Dollars Grant Monitoring
City of Buffalo/ Buffalo Public Schools	Coordination and Technical Support
Olmsted Park Conservancy	Challenge Program Coordination, Infrastructure Improvements Recommendations
CAO-UB	Challenge Program Coordination and Technical Assistance
HSBC	Façade Improvements Matching Fund
CPC	Financial Assistance to Developers
Wendt Foundation	Façade Grant Dollars
One Economy	Technology Integration Consultation
Verizon	Fiber-optic network to create a high tech corridor
OutSource	Job Training through New Construction

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The Way Forward

- ❑ Martin Luther King, Jr.
- ❑ Hamlin Park Neighborhood
- ❑ Fruit Belt Neighborhood
- ❑ *Policy Needs ---*
- ❑ Comprehensive Code Enforcement
- ❑ Build Technical Assistance Component
- ❑ Launch Neighborhood Challenge



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