

# 2009

University at Buffalo -  
Center for Urban Studies

## UB'S PRESENCE IN DOWNTOWN BUFFALO IS GROWING....

THIS WILL TRIGGER \$400 MILLION IN FRUIT BELT/EAST SIDE DEVELOPMENT!!!



## DEFINE UB'S CONNECTION TO OUR COMMUNITY!!!

Tell us how the community should benefit from UB's growing downtown presence.

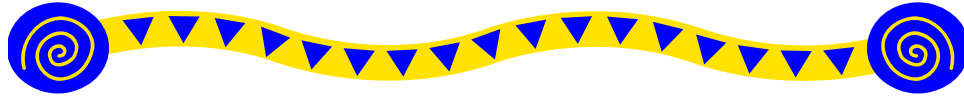
**Help Shape the Fruit Belt/East Side's Future!**

Minister Michael Chapman is making a clarion call to all Fruit Belt/East Side residents - We need your ideas! Help develop a Community Benefit Agreement with UB

# FEB 21

**The Event: Meeting and Workshop on Developing a Community Benefit Agreement with UB**  
Date: Saturday, February 21, 2009 - 1:00-4:00 pm  
Place: Rev. Dr. Bennett W. Smith, Sr. Family Life Center, 833 Michigan Ave. Buffalo, NY 14203

COMMUNITY OUTREACH FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMUNITY  
VISION TO INFORM A COMMUNITY BENEFIT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE  
UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO AND THE BUFFALO NIAGARA MEDICAL CAMPUS:  
FINAL REPORT



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## The Executive Summary

The University at Buffalo (UB) Center for Urban Studies initiated a community outreach strategy to assist the St. John Baptist Church Fruit Belt Community Development Corporation develop a community vision to guide the church's effort to formulate a community benefit agreement to guide the Fruit Belt's relationship with the University at Buffalo and the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC).

The strategic goal was to determine the specific ways that the Fruit Belt community could benefit from the growing downtown presence of UB and the continued development of the BNMC. The potential sale of the McCarley Gardens apartments to UB was the event that triggered this process. The idea was to get an agreement between UB and the Fruit Belt community prior to the sale of the apartments.

Data to inform the development of a set of specific recommendations to guide the development of a community benefit agreement came from three sources:

1. A community visioning session held at Dr. Bennett W. Smith Family Life Center.
2. A community survey conducted by the UB Center for Urban Studies.
3. An analysis of four neighborhood plans on the Fruit Belt community.

Based on an analysis of these sources of information and the recommendations which came from them, a set of recommendations to guide the development of a community benefit agreement between the University at Buffalo and the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus was fashioned.

### 1.0 Recommendations to Guide the Formulation of a Community Benefit Agreement

- **UB and BNMC should work with St. John Baptist Church and the CAO/UB Wellness and Neighborhood Development Center to establish a comprehensive job training program that will link residents to employment opportunities at UB and in the BNMC.** The training program should also have a component that prepares people for employment in the construction industry.
- **UB and the BNMC should establish a funding pool and system that will (1) assist low-income owners maintain their properties (2) support a vacant lot/anti-blight management program (3) maintain public spaces.** Within this framework, UB and the BNMC will develop and implement a program of extensive streetscaping and landscaping, including public art programs, throughout the Fruit Belt.
- **UB and the BNMC will assist in the development of a wellness program in the Fruit Belt, which is anchored by a health literacy and education program.** Additionally, it will create a decentralized system of preventive screening, which will be focused on early diagnosis and treatment. A multifaceted neighborhood health clinic should be

established, which focuses on a range of services, including pregnancy prevention, mental health, substance abuse, and the like.

- **UB and the BNMC should develop an urban education program that focuses on Futures Academy.** The program should greatly expand UB's current efforts in the school to include after-school, summer, and a range of service-learning programs involving UB students.
- **UB and BNMC should underwrite the cost of a community newsletter, which is published monthly and distributed door-to-door to Fruit Belt households.** Such a newsletter will focus on jobs and opportunities available in the Fruit Belt, medical campus and across the city. It will also contain other useful information related to accessing services, as well as health and nutrition tips.
- **UB and the BNMC should formulate a plan that enables them to extend their security patrols to incorporate the historic Fruit Belt community.**
- **Develop a WiFi free environment in the Fruit Belt and develop a computer literacy program in the community.**
- **UB and the BNMC should develop a strategy for connecting minority business development to the growth and development of the medical campus.**
- **UB should development a program to assist businesses take advantage of opportunities in the BNMC.** The program should consist of (1) entrepreneurial training (2) micro-financing (3) seminars and workshops on establishing businesses, and (4) technical assistance program for small businesses. UB should also work with the neighborhood in developing a commercial development plan for High Street, which would make that corridor the commercial center of the Fruit Belt/BNMC community.
- **UB and the BNMC should establish an employee-assisted housing program to encourage UB and BNMC employees to purchase homes in the Fruit Belt.** Resources should be made available for buyers to acquire the resources necessary to rehabilitate existing structures. In addition, the housing program should include rent-to-own housing units, which will be available to both students and employees.
- **UB and the BNMC should work with the CAO/UB Wellness and Neighborhood Development Center to develop a sustainable community building strategy, which will strengthen the community's institutional structure and enhance the capacity of its residents.**
- **UB should work with St. John Baptist Church and the CAO/UB Wellness and Neighborhood Development Center to establish a *Fruit Belt Partnership* to guide the development of the Fruit Belt community.** St. John Baptist Church should lead the partnership, and it should be used to create interactive linkages among physical, social and economic development in the Fruit Belt, as broader umbrella organization is needed to build the collaborative necessary for the community to reach its full potential.



Neighborhood stabilization and revitalization is not achieved through a single effort, but through an ongoing process that requires collaboration from a variety of parties, as well as continuous dialogue with residents, community organizations, and stakeholders. The strategies and recommendations of the Fruit Belt Neighborhood Strategy are products of a collaborative planning process that should persist well into the future with a more unified neighborhood voice.

- **UB and the BNMC should work with St. John Fruit Belt Development Corporation to enhance its capacity.**
- **UB and the BNMC should join Roswell in working with the CAO/UB Wellness and Neighborhood Development Center in the construction of a new building, which will function as the Fruit Belt's prime community building, outreach, and coordinating institution.**
- **UB and the BNMC should assist in the establishment of a community land bank and land trust, which will facilitate the orderly growth and development of the Fruit Belt.**

## **1.1 Comprehensive Recommendations from the Three Data Sources**

### **Housing**

#### *Developmental issues*

- The community should develop a mechanism that allows them to control land use and property development in the community.
- The neighborhood should be redeveloped so that housing prices appreciate.
- Property owners should be compensated when their houses are damaged during a construction project.
- Builders should work closely with residents to ensure that environment issues, such as excessive dust and mud, are minimized during a construction project.
- Efforts should be made so that the elderly are not pushed out of the neighborhood.
- Job creation should be linked to the construction of new housing units and the rehabilitation of existing structures.

#### *Property Maintenance and Rehabilitation*

- Need to develop a funding pool and system that will assist residents in keeping up their property (houses and apartments), including repairs and modernization.

- Existing structures, whenever possible, should be rehabilitated. Demolitions should be a last resort. When it is used, the goal should be the use of a green strategy based on deconstruction and material reuse, rather than demolition.

#### *New Builds*

- The community should be anchored by affordable, owner-occupied housing units.
- New construction should mirror the existing architectural styles in the community. This conformity is necessary to keep housing values from depreciating.
- Housing units should be made handicap accessible.
- Student housing is accepted, but it should be scattered throughout the community, rather than clustered in a single area. The goal should be to convert some of the existing dwelling units to student rental housing, rather than focus primarily on new builds.
- Row houses, or any other units that have a “public housing” appearance, should be banned.
- Habitat for Humanity should be allowed to play a bigger role in the Fruit Belt’s Development

### **Transportation, Neighborhood Development and Infrastructure**

#### *Community Building*

- UB should develop a sustainable strategy for community building, which will strengthen the institutional structure of the community and enhance community capacity.
- UB and BNMC facilities should be open to residents of the Fruit Belt.
- A recycling program that includes household bins and a center.
- Develop a strong system of internal communication to keep residents informed.
- Postal annex
- Improve and organize existing neighborhood services and opportunities before creating new ones.

#### *Neighborhood Development*

- Develop a system for controlling the land inside the Fruit Belt. A community land trust strategy should be pursued.

- Use Michigan Avenue to create a commons that connects the Fruit Belt to the Medical Campus. Events should be developed to reinforce this connection and to promote a *“two neighborhoods, one community”* concept.
- Develop a WiFi environment for the Fruit Belt neighborhood. Repair and maintain the neighborhood infrastructure: streets, sidewalks, sewers, street lighting, and waterlines.
- Develop an institutional structure for maintain the physical environment, including trees, public spaces, unbuilt lots, and vacant buildings.
- Create and maintain green spaces, including parks and playgrounds.
- Need for more parking facilities.
- Develop a community center, or open up Futures Academy recreational space, for the Fruit Belt community.
- Develop parks and playgrounds.
- Construct bike and jogging lanes.
- Enhance access to J.B. Wiley Complex.
- Construct tennis courts.
- Develop Community gardens for growing vegetables.
- Hold free community concerts.

#### *Transportation*

- More efficient public transportation and shuttle services, especially for the elderly.
- Enhance bus transportation in the Fruit Belt and equip them with bike racks and special needs requirements.
- Bus routes need to be more frequent (esp. route #29).
- Explore other connections to the area (bus and rail).
- Improved bus stop maintenance and upkeep .

#### **Employment and Training**

- Develop a transportation program that links residents to jobs in the city and county.

- Develop a system for notifying residents of job training programs and how to access them.
- Training for those with disability and special needs.
- Develop apprentice programs in the construction industry. Should link residents to construction projects in the Fruit Belt and Medical Campus. The hiring of residents on these jobs should be a top priority.
- Job training should also be available for training in the medical field, as well as in use of the computer. Should develop an employment program with institutions in the BNMC that will lead to employment at Roswell, Buffalo General and other BNMC institutions.
- A transparent system, with a monitoring and strong enforcement, should be set up to ensure that residents obtain a fair share of the jobs in the Fruit Belt and BNMC.
- Work with Buffalo ReUse on the development of a job training project in deconstruction.
- Develop a training program for those without a high school diploma. Such a program might incorporate obtaining a GED as part of the training program.
- Develop a training program that targets ex-offenders.

#### *High School Students*

- A high school job readiness program should be developed through paid internships and part-time job placement.
- Introduce high school students to careers in the trades.
- Establish mentoring programs to promote academic achievement for elementary and junior high school students (i.e., Upward Bound, STEP).
- Develop after school programs to strengthen the skills of students and enhance their interest in learning.

### **Neighborhood Businesses**

- Develop new businesses that are linked to the growth and development of the BNMC. Educational programs should be established to show residents how they can get into business, especially home-based businesses.
- Businesses that provide goods and services to neighborhood residents: hardware stores, restaurants, grocery store, gas station, wellness center, healthy/organic food store, laundromat, deli, shoe repair shop, bakery, auto mechanic, major grocery store, consignment shop, garden supply store, copy/fax center, record store, furniture store like IKEA (stylish, affordable furniture), dog walking service.
- Establish micro-financing program to residents start home businesses, especially cottage industries.
- Establish a program of financial and technical assistance for small business development (business plans and SBA loans).
- Establish a program that provides neighborhood based businesses with tax breaks

### **Health Care Services**

- Transportation for the handicapped.
- Develop a health information system that provides residents information on where, and how, to access health services.
- Create a health literacy and education program.
- Develop greater access to health services for Fruit Belt residents, especially those that deal with early diagnosis and treatment.
- Provide an outlet to healthy foods and products and activities that promote wellness.
- Develop a neighborhood health clinic that offers a range of services, including pregnancy prevention, vaccinations, mental health, substance abuse, and the like.
- Develop a full range of services for seniors, including adult daycare.

### **McCarley Garden Resident Focus Group**

- Access to employment opportunities in the BNMC.
- Access to health care services offered in the medical corridor.
- Relocation Issues:

- Want input into the design of the housing units.
- Handicap accessibility, but only want a percentage of dwellings with wheelchair accessibility.
- Energy efficient, with good doors and windows.
- Good maintenance services, especially regarding grass cutting and snow removal.
- Security
- Want to live close to their former neighbors.

### **Recommendations from Neighborhood Plans**

- Establish a Fruit Belt Partnership to guide the development of the Fruit Belt community. St. John Baptist Church will lead the physical development of the Fruit Belt neighborhood, but create interactive linkages among physical, social and economic development in the Fruit Belt, as broader umbrella organization is needed to build the collaborative necessary for the community to reach its full potential.
- Neighborhood stabilization and revitalization is not achieved through a single effort, but through an ongoing process that requires collaboration from a variety of parties, as well as continuous dialogue with residents, community organizations and stakeholders. The strategies and recommendations of the Fruit Belt Neighborhood Strategy are products of a collaborative planning process that should persist well into the future with a more unified neighborhood voice.
- The CAO/UB for Wellness and Neighborhood Development Center is a service, planning, and community management center, which possesses the capacity to facilitate and organize numerous activities and events on behalf of the Fruit Belt community. This institution, combined with the St. John Baptist Church, provides the neighborhood with a powerful organizing and development foundation.
- Establish a land bank or community land trust to gain greater control over land in the Fruit Belt. Land control is essential for being able to construct a systematic and orderly process of neighborhood development.
- A neighborhood master plan should be developed guide the community development process. The plan should be ratified by residents and stakeholders. Housing and residential development should take place within the context of this master plan.
- Build on neighborhood strengths. The Fruit Belt neighborhood contains many assets, including historic buildings, active community organizations, proximity to downtown Buffalo, and opportunities for partnerships with the nearby medical campus.
- To transform the Fruit Belt into a strong housing market, considerable public and private investments are needed to improve the physical, visual, environmental, and social conditions of the neighborhood. Public investment will also leverage private

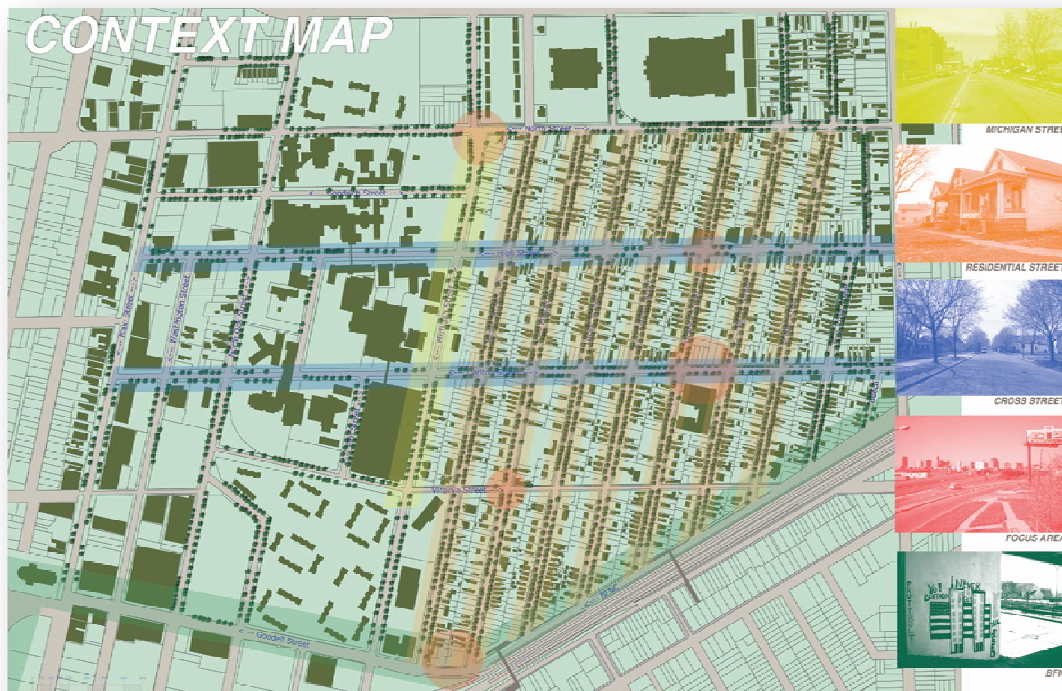
sector investment in new dwellings and commerce, which in turn will raise property values.

- Extensive landscaping and streetscaping, combined with extensive infrastructure redevelopment—streets, sidewalks, and curbs—to make the neighborhood a desirable community.
- New housing construction should conform to the existing design of the neighborhood. The idea is to reproduce the existing urban design and not recreate a suburban model of housing in the neighborhood.
- New housing units should be constructed to attract a range of income groups and household types. Three (3) distinct clusters should be developed: \$70,000 to \$90,000; \$91,000 to \$120,000; \$121,000 to 150,000. As much as possible, efforts should be made to build these houses in homogenous clusters.
- The intersection of Mulberry Street and High Street is as an opportunity area, which can be transformed into the cultural/service anchor of the community.
- Michigan Avenue is a seam between the two areas and should be developed as a commons that connects the two (2) neighborhoods and turns them into a single community.
- The Fruit Belt master Plan should be synchronized with BNMC and City plans. The synchronization creates the opportunity to align recommendations and strategies in a comprehensive and consistent manner.
- Develop neighborhood support services, which are anchored by community orientated retail shops and an urban agricultural program.
- The Fruit Belt neighborhood should be marketed to younger workers from the Medical Campus and downtown businesses that currently commute from the suburbs. To develop the community into a vibrant neighborhood, it is necessary to retain residents and attract a significant number of newcomers.

## Introduction

The UB Center for Urban Studies initiated community outreach strategy to assist the St. John Baptist Church Fruit Belt Community Development Corporation develop a community vision to guide the church's effort to formulate a community benefit agreement to guide the Fruit Belt's relationship with the UB and the BNMC.

The strategic goal was to determine the specific ways that the Fruit Belt community could benefit from the growing downtown presence of the University at Buffalo and the continued development of the Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus. The potential sale of the McCarley Gardens apartments to the University at Buffalo was the triggering event. The idea was to get an agreement between UB and the Fruit Belt community prior to the sale of the apartments.



Toward this end, the UB Center for Urban Studies organized two (2) major events. The purpose of the first meeting was to inform the residents about the potential sale of the McCarley Gardens and the second was to hold a visioning session to determine ways in which the residents wanted to benefit from the growing downtown presence of the University at Buffalo and the continued development of the Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus. The result of the second session was to hold a visioning session to obtain resident input to guide the development of a community benefit agreement.

In addition to these efforts, the UB Center for Urban Studies also conducted a random survey of fifty (50) residents to gain more insight into the type of neighborhood desired in the Fruit Belt.



The CENTER also studied various *neighborhood plans* that had been developed for the Fruit Belt, and integrated them into a final set of recommendations. Community outreach has driven plan development in the Fruit Belt. Therefore, it seemed reasonable to exam these documents as part of an overall strategy to gain deeper insight into crafting the recommendations that would drive the development of a community benefit agreement.

*Community benefit agreements* (CBAs) are deals between businesses and/or institutions, which are engaged in development, and the communities in which these activities are located. The purpose of the CBA is to ensure that neighborhood residents benefit from the developments taking place in their community. Toward this end, community groups forge a *legally binding agreement* with the businesses/institutions, which spells out in detail the specific benefits that are to be derived from the developments taking place in their neighborhood.

## Method

To develop a set of recommendations to guide the formulation of a community benefit agreement between the Fruit Belt community and the University at Buffalo and the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, the recommendations from the community visioning session, the community survey, and the four neighborhood plans on the Fruit Belt were carefully studied. Based on an interpretation of the *intent* of these recommendations, a set of recommendations were drawn up, which were designed to reflect the goals and objectives expressed in the set of comprehensive recommendations. The goal was to put the recommendations in a form that outlined the *specific roles* that UB and the BNMC were expected to play in their implementation.

Between January and February 2009, two (2) meetings were held as part of the strategy of preparing for the development of a community benefit agreement. A different methodology was utilized for each of these events because the purpose of each meeting differed. At the end of the report, there is an appendix of the minutes of both meetings, along with a listing of the people who attended both sessions. This material is included as reference documents, which can be used for a deeper study and analysis of the community meetings.

### Community Meeting # 1: Information Session

Professor Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. served as facilitator at Community Meeting # 1, and the Center for Urban Studies took detailed notes of the events. Attendees were given a detailed overview of the opportunities afforded by UB's growing presence downtown and the continued development of the BNMC. The names of those attending the meeting were recorded and their residential location mapped. This was done to determine how well represented the community was at the event. Here, the success of the meeting is not determined by the number of people who attended it, but rather how the attendees were distributed throughout the Fruit Belt community. The reason is that where one lives in the Fruit Belt shapes their experiences and their concerns.

### Community Meeting # 2— Visioning Session

Professor Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. facilitated Community Meeting # 2 and members of St. John Church were trained to facilitate the small groups sessions. Students from the University at

Buffalo took notes and assisted the facilitators in the small group sessions. The visioning session was divided into three segments. The first segment reviewed the issues covered at Community Meeting # 1 and clarified issues at the first meeting. In the second segment, the attendees broke down into small groups, for the visioning session, and in the final segment, the group reconvened, and each group shared their discussions with the entire audience. Finally, the names of the attendees were taken and their residential location was mapped.

### **The Community Survey**

The methodology employed in the community is spelled out in detail in the appendix.



## Themes

During the first community meeting, four (4) major themes emerged from the discussion: the redevelopment of the Fruit Belt will not happen automatically; the growth of UB's downtown presence and the ongoing development of the BNMC are driving the quest to sell the McCarley Gardens; and how will the Fruit Belt benefit from the development of the BNMC. A discussion of the community benefit agreement was laced throughout the meeting. Therefore, we did not identify it as a separate theme.

### 1. *The redevelopment of the Fruit Belt will not happen automatically*

Reverend Chapman stressed that redevelopment of the Fruit Belt neighborhood is being driven by the broader development plan "*Four Neighborhoods –One Community*". The four targeted communities are Downtown Buffalo, BNMC, Allentown and the Fruit Belt. Within this context, Reverend Chapman indicated that development of the Fruit Belt would not happen spontaneously and that the community must take steps to ensure that it benefits from the developments that are taking place around it. The goal is to create jobs, provide economic development opportunities, and the generate health and educational programs beneficial to the residents. Concurrently, care must be taken to make sure that gentrification and other forms of development do not displace and drive out current residents.



### 2. *The growth of UB's downtown presence and ongoing development the BNMC is spawning the Sale of McCarley Gardens*

The growth and development of the BNMC is driving the potential sale of McCarley Gardens to the University at Buffalo. The BNMC is the heart of the Buffalo metropolitan region's biotechnology and life sciences industry, and one of the main engines of economic growth in the region. The development of the campus will be greatly intensified by the growing presence of UB in the area. Assemblymember Crystal D. Peoples indicated that the millions will be invested in the campus over the next 12 years

and that the UB 2020 plan incorporates continued investment in the BNMC. For UB to move forward with its plan, it must secure the passage of the UB 2020 Flexibility and Economic Growth Act, and Assemblymember Peoples said she would support the Act only if assured that it will lead to benefits for the Fruit Belt community.

Within this context, Assemblymember Peoples and Rev. Chapman said that UB needs McCarley Gardens for the expansion of its activities in the BNMC. The sale of McCarley Gardens would positively affect the community, Chapman said. The reason is twofold. First, it would lead to improved living conditions among the residents. Each resident will have the opportunity to move into new townhouses, once their unit is built. He stressed that no residents would be relocated in temporary housing. Residents will stay in their current units until their townhouse is completed. Mrs. Ware, manager of the McCarley Garden stressed that the rents will remain the same and that residents will have a unit that is compatible to the one they currently rent. That is, if a person is currently renting a two bedroom apartment, they will have the opportunity to move into a new two bedroom townhouse. Also, St. John will pay the moving expenses. Second, in coming years, St. John will not have the resources to maintain properly the McCarley Gardens. This is the result of increased age and cost of maintenance. For this reason, alone, the sale of the apartments would be a good idea.

3. *How will the Fruit Belt benefit from the growing downtown presence of UB and the ongoing development of the BNMC?*

The goal of the community benefit agreement is to ensure that the Fruit Belt residents gain access to jobs, business opportunities, along with housing and improved neighborhood conditions. It was repeatedly stressed that the purpose of the visioning session was to determine how the residents wanted to take advantage of the development of the BNMC. Within this framework, jobs and job training will be important components of any benefit agreement. Reverend Chapman indicated that the development of the BNMC will create new jobs and that residents would need to be trained to take full advantage of the new positions. He indicated that UB, the Urban League, and the Buffalo Employment Training Center would all be involved in the development of such programs. Professor Taylor also indicated that the CAO/UB Community Wellness and Neighborhood Development Center already has a small program with Kaleida Health and Roswell and that this program needs to be strengthened and further developed.

The visioning session and the development of a community benefit agreement are essential ingredients for making sure that residents receive economic benefits from the development of the BNMC. There was a brief discussion of the advantage of CBAs and a discussion of the CBA developed by residents in Brooklyn, NY. It was again stressed that the CBA is a legally enforceable document that outlines the benefits that must accrue to the community as a result of the development taking place in its midst. Lastly, it was emphasized that the CBA is a negotiated agreement that all parties must sign-off on.



#### 4. *The Overall Concern of Residents*

The residents were concerned that UB and the BNMC could not be trusted to keep their words and that the community would not really benefit from its development. In particular, they were concerned that they would not really get any jobs or opportunities and that nothing would move beyond the talk level. Residents of McCarley Gardens were fearful that they would be displaced and some indicated that they did not know about the proposed sale of the apartments. The residents were repeatedly told that the community benefit agreement was essential to making sure that the Fruit Belt would be an integral part of the development of the BNMC. Moreover, they were also told that the visioning session would be used to incorporate their views into any agreement reached between UB and St. John. The one caveat is that a strategy would be put into place to ensure that the community benefits from the development of the BNMC, even if the community benefit agreement is never signed.



### **Community Visioning Session**

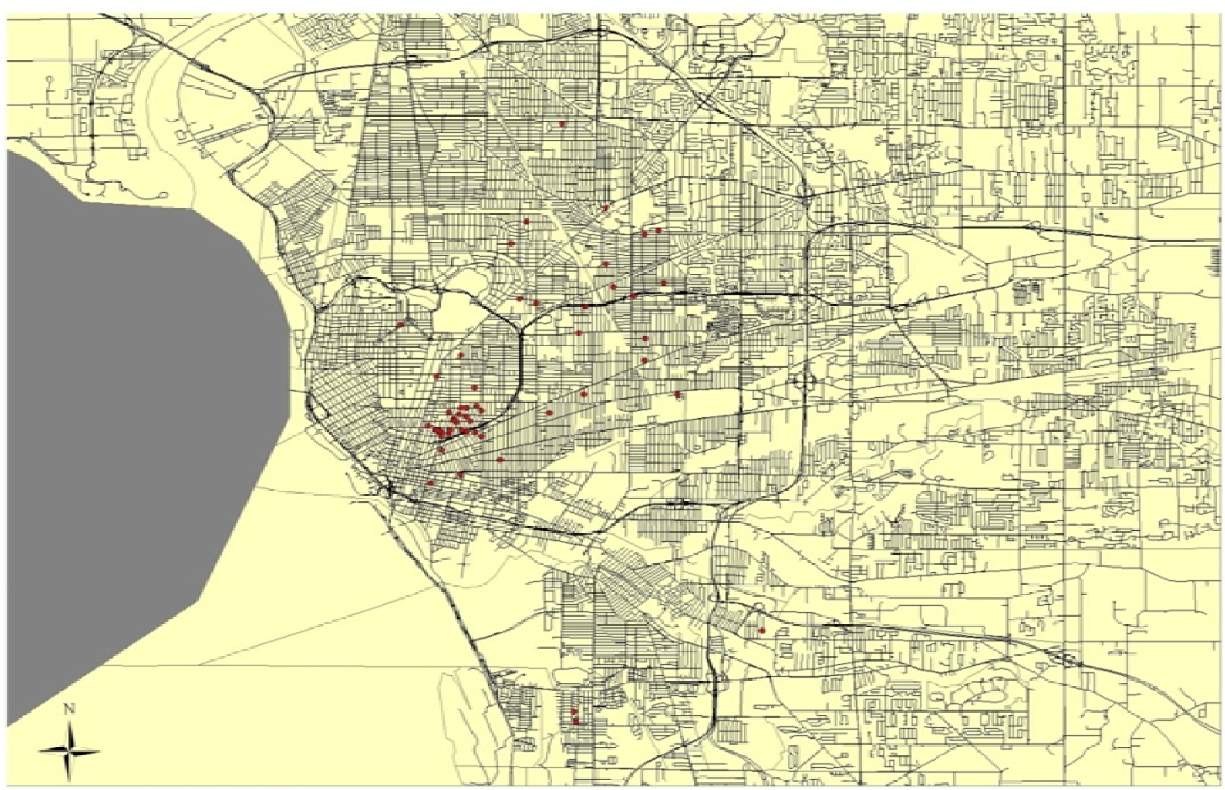
The goal of the Community Meeting #2 was to fashion a detailed set of recommendations on how the Fruit Belt could benefit from UB's growing downtown presence and the ongoing development of the BNMC. The number of residents attending this meeting more than doubled the number of those who came to the January meeting. Eighty-two (82) residents attended the visioning session, along with 28 students and staff members from the Center for Urban Studies. In total, the meeting was attended by 110 people, including about 70% of those who attended Community Meeting # 1. The Mayor of Buffalo, Byron Brown, also attended this session (below).

He wanted to let residents know that the City supported their efforts and that the growth and development of the Fruit Belt must be made an integral part of the building of the BNMC.



The names of the attendees were taken and their residential location mapped. The mapping project showed that the Fruit Belt community was well-represented at the visioning session. Residents from every part of the Fruit Belt attended the meeting. Moreover, a small number of attendees came from other parts of the city and region. This is good. It shows that people from across the region are concerned about the regeneration of the Fruit Belt (Figure 1.1 & 1.2).

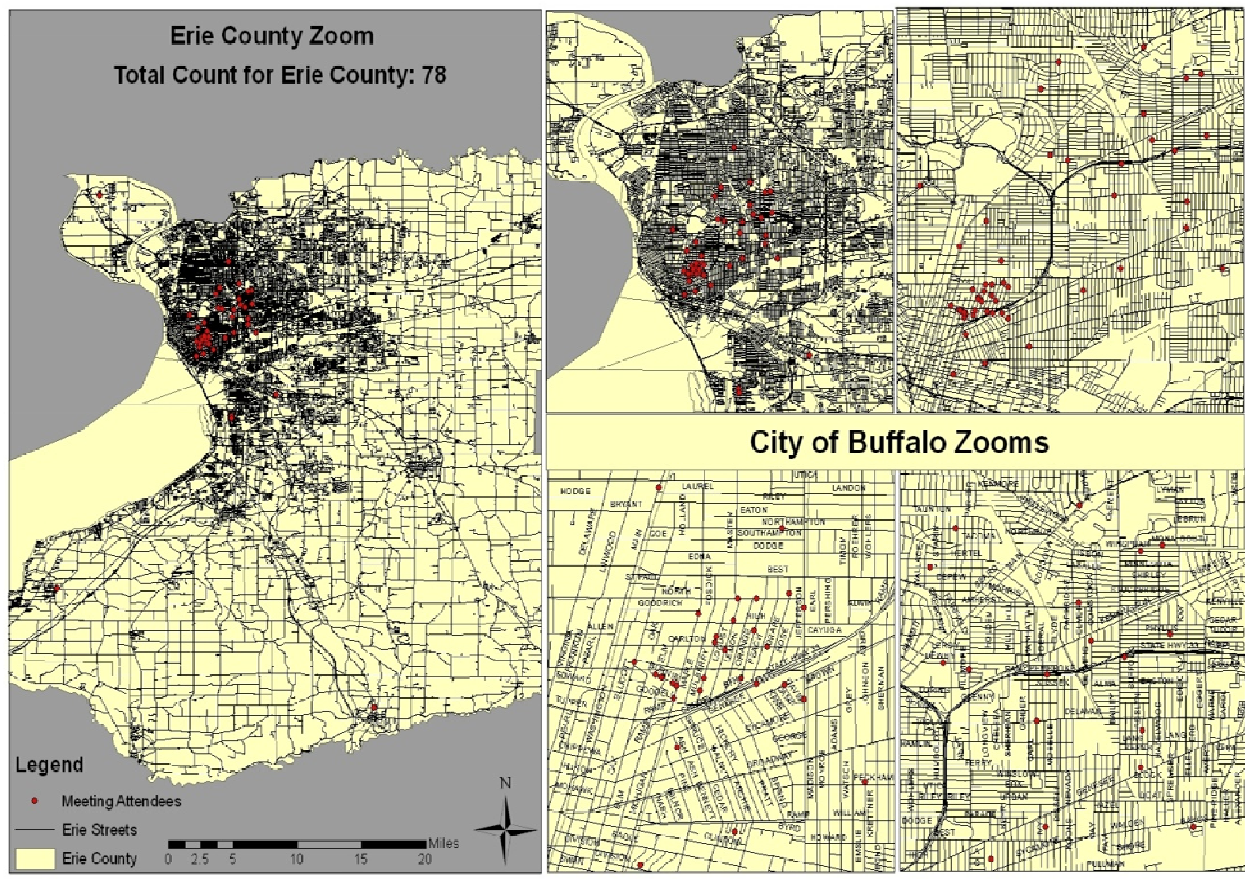
**Figure 1.1 Distribution of Attendees at Community Meeting # 2**





The meeting was divided into three segments. In the first segment, because many people did not attend Community Meeting # 1, the basic themes that evolved out of that meeting were discussed. In the second phase, the audience broke down into smaller groups, which were facilitated by members of St. John Church. Students from the UB Center for Urban Studies assisted the facilitators. In the third segment, the various break-out groups shared the results of their discussions with the entire audience.

#### 01 Distribution of Attendees of Community Meeting # 2



Within this framework, the residents expressed doubt about the extent to which their ideas would really be used to drive the neighborhood development process. They wanted to know if this effort at public participation was authentic or a charade. Taylor stated that the purpose of this meeting was for them to share their ideas about how to develop the Fruit Belt and these ideas would inform the template used to guide the community's development. In this regard, Taylor said that "no ideas were too big or small."





### The Break-Out Session

Following the general discussion, the break-out sessions were started. There were five focus groups, including one group that consisted of only residents of the McCarley Gardens. Because their situation differed from other residents, we believed that residents from those apartments should form their own focus group. The outcome of the focus group discussions were organized around seven themes: housing, employment and training, neighborhood business development, health care services, recreational opportunities, transportation, green space, infrastructure, and general comments.



## Housing

### 1.0 - *Developmental issues*

- The community should develop a mechanism that allows them to control land use and property development in the community.
- The neighborhood should be redeveloped so that housing prices appreciate.
- Property owners should be compensated when their houses are damaged during a construction project.
- Builders should work closely with residents to ensure that environment issues, such as excessive dust and mud, are minimized during a construction project.
- Efforts should be made so that the elderly are not pushed out of the neighborhood.
- Job creation should be linked to the construction of new housing units and the rehabilitation of existing structures.

### 1.1 - *Property Maintenance and Rehabilitation*

- Need to develop a funding pool and system that will assist residents in keeping up their property (houses and apartments), including repairs and modernization.
- Existing structures, whenever possible, should be rehabilitated. Demolitions should be a last resort. When it is used, the goal should be the use of a green strategy based on deconstruction and material reuse, rather than demolition.

### 1.2 - *New Builds*

- The community should be anchored by affordable, owner-occupied housing units.
- New construction should mirror the existing architectural styles in the community. This conformity is necessary to keep housing values from depreciating.
- Housing units should be made handicap accessible.
- Student housing is accepted, but it should be scattered throughout the community, rather than clustered in a single area. The goal should be to convert some of the existing dwelling units to student rental housing, rather than focus primarily on new builds.
- Row houses or any other units that has a “public housing” appearance should be banned.

- Habitat for Humanity should be allowed to play a bigger role in Fruit Belt Development



## **Transportation, Neighborhood Development and Infrastructure**

### **1.0 - Community *Building***

- UB should develop a sustainable strategy for community building, which will strengthen the institutional structure of the community and enhance community capacity.
- UB and BNMC facilities should be open to residents of the Fruit Belt.
- Recycling program that includes household bins and a center.
- Develop a strong system of internal communication to keep residents informed.
- Postal annex
- Improve and organize existing neighborhood services and opportunities before creating new ones.

### **1.1 - Neighborhood *Development***

- Develop a system for controlling the land inside the Fruit Belt. A community land trust strategy should be pursued.

- Use Michigan Avenue to create a commons that connects the Fruit Belt to the Medical Campus. Events should be develop to reinforce this connection and to promote a *“two neighborhoods, one community”* concept.
- Develop a WiFi environment for the Fruit Belt neighborhood. Repair and maintain the neighborhood infrastructure: streets, sidewalks, sewer, street lighting, and waterlines.
- Develop an institutional structure for maintain the physical environment, including trees, public spaces, unbuilt lots, and vacant buildings.
- Create and maintain green spaces, including parks and playgrounds.
- Need for more parking facilities.
- Develop a community center, or open up the Future Academy recreational space, for the Fruit Belt community.
- Develop parks and playgrounds.
- Construct bike and jogging lanes.
- Enhance access to J.B. Wiley Complex
- Construct tennis courts.
- Develop Community gardens for growing vegetables.
- Hold free community concerts.

### 1.2 - Transportation

- More efficient public transportation and shuttle services, especially for the elderly.
- Enhance bus transportation in the Fruit Belt and equip them with bike racks and special needs requirements.
- Bus routes need to be more frequent (esp. route #29).
- Explore other connections to the area (bus and rail).
- Improved bus stop maintenance and upkeep

### Employment and Training

- Develop a transportation program that links residents to jobs in the city and county.

- Develop a system for notifying residents of job training programs and how to access them.
- Training for those with disability and special needs.
- Develop apprentice programs in the construction industry. Should link residents to construction projects in the Fruit Belt and Medical Campus. The hiring of residents on these jobs should be a top priority.
- Job training should also be available for training in the medical field, as well as in use of the computer. Should develop an employment program with institutions in the BNMC that will lead to employment at Roswell, Buffalo General, and other BNMC institutions.
- A transparent system, with a monitoring and strong enforcement, should be set up to ensure that residents obtain a fair share of the jobs in the Fruit Belt and BNMC.
- Work with Buffalo ReUse on the development of a job training project in deconstruction.
- Develop a training program for those without a high school diploma. Such a program might incorporate obtaining a GED as part of the training program.
- Develop a training program that targets ex-offenders.

#### *1.0 - High School Students*

- A high school job readiness program should be developed for paid internship and part-time job placement.
- Introduce high school students to careers in the trades.
- Establish mentoring programs to promote academic achievement for elementary and junior high school students (i.e., Upward Bound, STEP).
- Develop after school programs to strengthen the skills of students and enhance their interest in learning.

### **Neighborhood Businesses**

- Develop new businesses that are linked to the growth and development of the BNMC. Educational programs should be established to show residents how they can get into business, especially home-based businesses.
- Businesses that provide goods and services to neighborhood residents: hardware stores, restaurants, grocery store, gas station, wellness center, healthy/organic food store, Laundromat, deli, shoe repair shop, bakery, auto mechanic, major grocery store, consignment shop, garden supply store, copy/fax center, record store, furniture store like IKEA (stylish, affordable furniture), dog walking service.
- Establish micro-financing program to residents start home businesses, especially cottage industries.
- Establish a program of financial and technical assistance for small business development (business plans and SBA loans).
- Establish a program that provide neighborhood based businesses with tax breaks.

### **Health Care Services**

- Provide transportation services for the handicapped.
- Develop a health information system that provides residents with information on where and how to access health services.
- Create a health literacy and education program.
- Develop greater access to health services for Fruit Belt residents, especially those that deal with early diagnosis and treatment.
- Provide an outlet to healthy foods and products and activities that promote wellness.
- Develop a neighborhood health clinic that offers a range of services, including pregnancy prevention, vaccinations, mental health, substance abuse, and the like.
- Develop a full range of services for seniors, including adult daycare.





## McCarley Gardens Resident Focus Group

### 1.0 - Concerns

- Resident participation is low. McCarley Gardens Tenants Association: Meetings are on the first Thursday of every month at 6:00 pm in the Tower. However, no more than two people have showed up for a meeting in the past year.
- There is a lack of trust among residents. Some tenants table expressed concerns that individuals had been hand-picked to find out about community meetings regarding McCarley Gardens – some at the table believed that the people distributing fliers deliberately avoided giving them to certain people.
- Residents expressed annoyance and anger that they were being asked what they wanted at a relatively late stage in the planning process.
- Some residents felt they would be displaced before new dwelling units were constructed.
- Residents said they loved their homes in McCarley Gardens and expressed sadness at having to move.
- Residents expressed concern that they would not get to live near all of their former neighbors after the relocation.

- Residents expressed dissatisfaction with moving in next to people they did not know.
- Residents expressed concern that the UB2020 plan would ultimately be designed in such a way that would negatively affect the neighborhood.

### 1.1 - *Desires for the Fruit Belt*

- Access to employment opportunities in the BNMC.
- Access to health care services offered in the medical corridor.
- Relocation Issues:
  - Residents want input into the design of the housing units.
  - Handicap accessibility, but only want a percentage of dwellings with wheelchair accessibility.
  - Energy efficient, with good doors and windows.
  - Good maintenance services, especially regarding grass cutting and snow removal.
  - Security
  - Want to live close to their former neighbors.

### Survey of Community Residents

Forty-two (42) residents were surveyed during this project. Most participants were long time residents and were positive about life in the Fruit Belt. However, many felt that the community lacked services and were desirous of having a grocery store with fresh food, a laundromat, and a pharmacy. Concurrently, the surveys demonstrated that the importance of community building. Those residents who belonged to churches and block clubs were the most involved in the community. This observation shows the importance of building institutions and getting residents involved in them. The development of strong block clubs is critical to building a strong social infrastructure in communities.

### Review of Previous Neighborhood Plans

During this decade, there have been three (3) neighborhood plans on the Fruit Belt by the UB Center for Urban Studies and one by the BNMC: UB Center for Urban Studies, *The Turning Point: a Strategic Plan and Action Plan for the Fruit Belt/Medical Corridor*, March 27, 2001; *Transforming the Fruit Belt: Neighborhood Development of a Model Fronting-Block*, March 2002; *Fruit Belt/Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Tax Increment Financing District*, January 2003, and BNMC, *Fruit Belt Neighborhood Strategy*, January 2009. To compliment the data gained from



the visioning session and the community survey, we consulted these plans and recorded their most important recommendations.



### Recommendations from Neighborhood Plans

- Establish a Fruit Belt Partnership to guide the development of the Fruit Belt community. St. John Baptist Church leads the physical development of the Fruit Belt neighborhood, but to create interactive linkages among physical, social and economic development in the Fruit Belt, as broader umbrella organization is needed to build the collaborative necessary for the community to reach its full potential.

Neighborhood stabilization and revitalization is not achieved through a single effort, but through an ongoing process that requires collaboration from a variety of parties, as well as continuous dialogue with residents, community organizations and stakeholders. The strategies and recommendations of the Fruit Belt Neighborhood Strategy are products of a collaborative planning process that should persist well into the future with a more unified neighborhood voice.

- The CAO/UB Center for Wellness and Neighborhood development is a service, planning, and community management organization, which possesses the capacity to facilitate and organize numerous activities and events on behalf of the Fruit Belt community. This

institution, combined with the St. John Baptist Church, provides the neighborhood with a powerful organizing and development foundation.

- Establish a land bank, or community land trust, to gain greater control over land in the Fruit Belt. Land control is essential for being able to construct a systematic and orderly process of neighborhood development.
- A neighborhood master plan should be developed guide the community development process. The plan should be ratified by residents and stakeholders. Housing and residential development should take place within the context of this master plan.
- Build on neighborhood strengths. The Fruit Belt neighborhood contains many assets, including historic buildings, active community organizations, proximity to downtown Buffalo, and opportunities for partnerships with the nearby medical campus.
- To transform the Fruit Belt into a strong housing market, considerable public and private investments are needed to improve the physical, visual, environmental, and social conditions of the neighborhood. Public investment will also leverage private sector investment in new dwellings and commerce, which in turn will raise property values.
- Extensive landscaping and streetscaping, combined with extensive infrastructure redevelopment—streets, sidewalks, and curbs—to make the neighborhood a desirable community.
- New housing construction should conform to the existing design of the neighborhood. The idea is to reproduce the existing urban design and not recreate a suburban model of housing in the neighborhood.
- New housing units should be constructed to attract a range of income groups and household types. Three distinct clusters should be developed: \$70,000 to \$90,000; \$91,000 to \$120,000; \$121,000 to 150,000. As much as possible, efforts should be made to build these houses in homogenous clusters.
- The intersection of Mulberry Street and High Street is as an opportunity area, which can be transformed into the cultural/service anchor of the community.
- Michigan Avenue is a seam between the two areas and should be developed as a commons that connects the two neighborhoods and turns them into a single community.
- The Fruit Belt Master Plan should be synchronized with BNMC and City plans. The synchronization creates the opportunity to align recommendations and strategies in a comprehensive and consistent manner.
- Develop neighborhood support services, which are anchored by community orientated retail shops and an urban agricultural program.

- The Fruit Belt neighborhood should be marketed to younger workers from the Medical Campus and downtown businesses that currently commute from the suburbs. To develop the community into a vibrant neighborhood, it is necessary to retain residents and attract a significant number of newcomers.

**Must Coordinate the BNMC Plan with the Fruit Belt Neighborhood Plan**



## **Recommendations to Guide the Formulation of a Community Benefit Agreement**

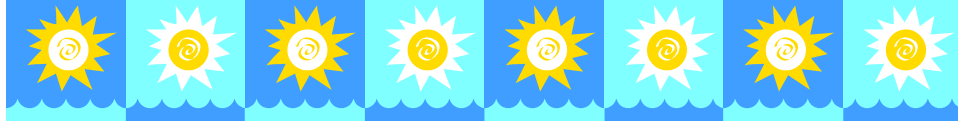
- **UB and BNMC should work with St. John and the CAO/UB Wellness and Neighborhood Development Center to establish a comprehensive job training program that will link residents to employment opportunities at UB and in the BNMC.** The training program should also have a component that prepares people for employment in the construction industry.
- **UB and the BNMC should establish a funding pool and system that will (1) assist low-income owners maintain their properties (2) support a vacant lot/anti-bligh management program (3) maintain public spaces.** Within this framework, UB and the BNMC will develop and implement a program of extensive streetscaping and landscaping, including public art programs, throughout the Fruit Belt.
- **UB and the BNMC will assist in the development of a wellness program in the Fruit Belt, which is anchored by a health literacy and education program.** Additionally, it will create a decentralized system of preventive screening, which will be focused on early diagnosis and treatment. A multifaceted neighborhood health clinic should be established, which focuses on a range of services, including pregnancy prevention, mental health, substance abuse, and the like.
- **UB and the BNMC should develop an urban education program that focuses on Futures Academy.** The program should greatly expand UB's current efforts in the school to include after-school, summer, and a range of service-learning programs involving UB students.
- **UB and BNMC should underwrite the cost of a community newsletter, which is published monthly and distributed door-to-door to Fruit Belt households.** Such a newsletter will focus on jobs and opportunities available in the Fruit Belt, the medical campus, and across the city. It will also contain other useful information related to accessing services and health and nutrition tips.
- **UB and the BNMC should formulate a plan that enables them to extend their security patrols to incorporate the historic Fruit Belt community.**
- **Develop a WiFi free environment in the Fruit Belt and develop a computer literacy program in the community.**
- **UB and the BNMC should develop a strategy for connecting minority business development to the growth and development of the medical campus.**
- **UB should development a program to assist businesses take advantage of opportunities in the BNMC.** The program should consist of (1) entrepreneurial training (2) micro-financing (3) seminars and workshops on establishing businesses, and (4) technical assistance program for small businesses. UB should also work with the neighborhood in developing a

commercial development plan for High Street, which would make that corridor the commercial center of the Fruit Belt/BNMC community.

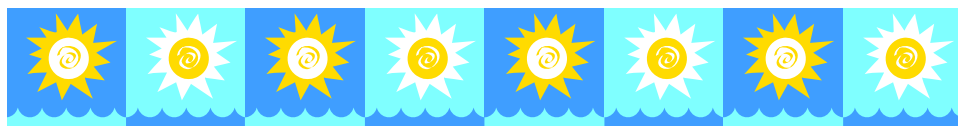
- **UB and the BNMC should establish an employee-assisted housing program to encourage UB and BNMC employees to purchase homes in the Fruit Belt.** Resources should be made available for buyers to acquire the resources necessary to rehabilitate existing structures. Also, they should develop rent-to-own housing units, which are available for both students and employees.
- **UB and the BNMC should work with the CAO/UB Wellness and Neighborhood Development Center to develop a sustainable community building strategy, which will strengthen the community's institutional structure and enhance the capacity of its residents.**
- **UB should work with St. John and the CAO/UB Wellness and Neighborhood Development Center to establish a *Fruit Belt Partnership* to guide the development of the Fruit Belt community.** St. John Baptist Church should lead the partnership, and it should be used to create interactive linkages among physical, social, and economic development in the Fruit Belt, as a broader umbrella organization is needed to build the collaborative necessary for the community to reach its full potential.

Neighborhood stabilization and revitalization is not achieved through a single effort, but through an ongoing process that requires collaboration from a variety of parties, as well as continuous dialogue with residents, community organizations and stakeholders. The strategies and recommendations of the Fruit Belt Neighborhood Strategy are products of a collaborative planning process that should persist well into the future with a more unified neighborhood voice.

- **UB and the BNMC should work with St. John Fruit Belt Development Corporation to enhance its capacity.**
- **UB and the BNMC should joined Roswell in working with the CAO/UB Wellness and Neighborhood Development Center in the construction of a new building, which will function as the Fruit Belt's prime community building, outreach and coordinating institution.**
- **UB and the BNMC should assist in the establishment of a community land bank and land trust, which will facilitate the orderly growth and development of the Fruit Belt.**



# Appendix





## Appendix A

### St. John Meeting Notes from January 24, 2009

**HT – Dr. Henry Taylor**

**RC – Rev. Michael Chapman**

**CP – Hon. Crystal Peoples**

#### Historical Overview...

After a prayer from RC, HT provided the meeting attendees with an overview of the history of the Center for Urban Studies involvement in the Fruit Belt neighborhood.

The CENTER began its work in the Fruit Belt neighborhood when it was invited by the Fruit Belt Task Force to assist with the development of the neighborhood. This led to a series of plans for the area at the same time the Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC) was emerging.

- St. John Baptist Church used the CENTER's work to anchor a construction project that is still on-going today.

#### Today's Meeting...

The work through this project – why we are here today – is to assure that the Fruit Belt community benefits from the development that is, and will take place in the future, in the BNMC.

- This includes business opportunities, jobs, etc.
- The overarching goal is that the Fruit Belt becomes a world class community that coexists with a world class medical campus.

**RC** – the Fruit Belt needs to benefit from the development that is occurring around it.

- The goal is to create jobs, and to create health and educational initiatives, in addition to providing economic development opportunities.
- Another key goal of the project is to make sure that the neighborhood is preserved and that its residents aren't driven out as a result of the expansion of UB and the BNMC.

**RC** - emphasized that the Fruit Belt and the anticipated development is part of a bigger project – a plan for “Four Neighborhoods – One Community”. The four (4) neighborhoods that make up this project are 1) Fruit Belt, 2) BNMC, 3) Allentown, and 4) Downtown Buffalo.

- The \$54M project that has allowed for the building of the townhouses in the neighborhood has the potential to turn into a \$600M project/plan to develop the East Side.

**RC** – UB has been a catalyst to develop a Community Benefit Agreement (CBA) for the Fruit Belt and its residents.

**RC** – An important component of the project will involve a job training program to connect residents in the Fruit Belt to the jobs that will be created by UB and in the BNMC. A job training program will involve UB, Brenda McDuffie’s organization, and St. John’s.

- It is expected that there will be 12K more jobs in the area over the next 10-15 years.

**RC** – The goal of the CBA is to integrate resident/community thoughts into the CBA so that the community’s wishes are met. This needs to be done on the front end of the future development of the BNMC and UB’s future investment in the area.

- The CENTER will meet with residents and identify what needs to be included in the CBA to benefit the Fruit Belt community.
- All of the eight (8) Jeremiah pastors are on board and have agreed to participate (Bishop Sanders, Rev. Steinhouse, Rev. Gillison, Rev. Pridgen, Rev. E. Brown, Rev. Dw. Brown, Bishop Badge)
  - The plan is to start at the BNMC, then move east throughout the city
    - They are looking at \$6-7M in investments in the next 12 years

**Question** – Will there be a job training program – bigger and better? The last time I heard this, I didn’t see the employment?

- **RC** – Yes – we are ready. McDuffie’s group, Cummings group (Buffalo Employment Training), and Mr. Scott (UB President John Simpson’s office) all will be participating
- **HT** – There is a job training program at the UB/CAO Community Wellness Center in conjunction with Buffalo General and Roswell Park. A major priority of this program is to connect residents of the neighborhood to jobs in the BNMC.
- **RC** – Kaleida will have 3,000 job opportunities in the near future. There are two (2) construction companies and a construction manager already on board. This is not an experiment. There is a need for people who can do the work and are ready to go.

**CP** –

- I support the UB 2020 plan and think it can be good for the City and everyone involved.
- However, the legislation for UB 2020 will not happen unless there is a CBA for the Fruit Belt attached to UB 2020
  - I will do everything to stop it if it is not benefiting the Fruit Belt. It must benefit the community that is impacted by the project.
- UB 2020 is Phase 2 to the BNMC – and it is only the tip of the iceberg for the investment and development that will take place.

- In order to get where we need to be, there needs to be a committee's made up of community members to study all of the issues involved in the CBA.
  - The committee's will come up with the ideas that are in everyone's best interest – not just in an individual's interest.
- If you own property in the Fruit Belt, hold on to it. It will appreciate and become valuable at some point – it may take 10 or 20 years, but it will happen.
- The land between Genesee and Jefferson has been all bought up in anticipation of the expansion.

**Adia Jordan (Communications Associate for the Hon. Crystal Peoples)** – gave examples from a CBA in Brooklyn, NY to give the meeting participants an idea of the kind of things that can be included in a CBA. Some of the points were:

- 35-45% of the jobs went back to the community
- Land space was an issue – park space, parking, etc.
- Set percentages of W/MBE targets for all contracts as a result of development.

**HT** – there are two (2) really important things that a CBA can/will do:

1. The agreement outlines the benefit that will come to the community.
2. It is legally enforceable.

**HT** – what is finally included in the agreement will be negotiated with UB.

**Question/Comment – resident DeWayne Harrison**

Mr. Harrison returned to Buffalo 1.5 years ago after spending time in NYC. He has experience in housing programs. He pointed out that City Hall said that no Fruit Belt projects occur until it goes through St. John's.

- **RC** – St. John 'locked down' the Fruit Belt to prevent developers from buying everything.
- **DW** – He worked in Harlem and there wasn't a CBA, but black families that had been in Harlem for generations and have pushed families out. This is a result of the investments by former President Clinton, etc.
  - It's very important to get involved in this process.

**Comment** – it was suggested that infrastructure improvements be targeted – cables, broad band, etc. – looking for wireless connections and other advanced technology that is being installed in other, and/or newer neighborhoods.

- Parking is also another issue to be looked at.

**Question from Tessolonia Ware** – What are the benefits to residents of McCarley Gardens? She has lived at McCarley Gardens since 1979 and would like to remain there.

- **RC** – Six (6) years ago the revenue from the project was in a surplus – now the profit margin is getting tighter. In the next 5-7 years it won't be able to be maintained.
  - The plan is to move the 150 families who live there into new townhouses. No one will be left out, and it will be replaced on a 1 for 1 basis.
  - **(Ms. Ware – Manager of McCarley Garden)** – If you are in a 2 bedroom apartment, you will have a new 2 bedroom townhouse. If you pay 30% rent, you will continue to pay 30% rent. Square footage will be the same as well.
    - Those who are to be relocated will be given a year or more advance notification.
    - There will be a certificate of occupancy at the new residence before you are moved.
    - There will also be assistance for things such as having to move children from a school to a new school.
    - The cost of moving will be paid for.
- **RC** – The phase out will take place over a 5-7 year basis.
- **Ms. Ware** – What will the land become?
  - **CP** – UB will use the land to expand the campus – which will offer business and jobs opportunities to resident of the Fruit Belt
  - **RC** – There will be a \$300M investment on High Street
  - **HT** – The CBA will be extremely important. Want to insure that commercial development occurs on the Fruit Belt side of the neighborhood.

With respect to land acquisition – homesteading, properties within the fruit Belt, Housing, etc. – all of it flows through St. John.

**Comment from Molly Bethel** – Molly feels that there is a need for a survey of the existing skills of the people in the community in order to connect to early job opportunities.

- **CP** – That is a great idea

**Comment from Mrs. Davis** – We should have been told about the McCarley Gardens deal earlier. There has been too much confusion in what people know and don't know.

- **HT** – Opportunity is knocking. The Fruit Belt is the gateway to Buffalo's East Side. In order to realize the potential of the CBA, broad based input from everyone in the community is needed.

**Comment from the audience** – All of the development will create jobs, and there will be jobs that will be available immediately (ex: bed panning).

**Question** – Is there any literature for people to study the CBA process?

**Question** – How can I acquire a property that is next door to me, but may have a structure on it?

- **RC** – Work with St. John to have the property put on the demolition list – then once the land is cleared, acquire it through the homesteading program.

**Comment from the audience** – She is very thrilled and anticipating the project.

#### **Notes on the Dry Board:**

Potential Topics to be Included in a CBA:

1. Housing – long term plan/timetable
2. Jobs – 3 or 4 levels of skills
3. Land Space
4. Green Space
5. Parking
6. Business Incubator

Not all commercial development, but there needs to be a M/WBE percentage within the agreement as commercial opportunities.

Training – Hospitals – Medical Skills

UB Education (School of?) can be built into the CBA

- Futures – Bio/Medical Science education

## **Appendix B**

### **February 21, 2009 - Fruit Belt Community Meeting – NOTES**

#### Introduction - Dr Taylor:

The purpose of meeting is to gain input of community as to how residents want to see further development by UB affect the Fruit Belt. What are the concerns, fears, and hopes of the community? What are the economic opportunities in the community? Discuss community benefit agreement.

#### Hon. Crystal Peoples:

- BNMC has attracted businesses and jobs to the community
- UB development will have an immediate impact on the community and its residents
- must make sure that residents have a say in what happens to the neighborhood
- plan must happen in conjunction with community
- this is an opportunity for community to be engaged in the process
- part of an on-going process which will take years, not days or weeks

#### Dr. Taylor: follow-up

- use ideas and beliefs to guide actions of officials
- residents have been pushed out of the neighborhood in the past; the same may be happening again
- residents and elected officials must make their ideas known and heard
- no idea is too big or too small
- what do residents want to see happen?

#### Reverend Michael Chapman:

Thank you and welcome

#### Open discussion with residents in attendance:

##### **- Several serious concerns about the intended use of current McCarley Gardens public housing development**

- questions about the viability and implementation of UB's plan – will it actually happen and what will the final product look like?
- how far removed are residents from the decisions being made? (concerns about the authenticity of public participation)
- effects of UB investment downtown in general and on the Fruit Belt neighborhood in particular



## FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS – ALL GROUPS COMBINED

### **Housing:**

- Single family housing is preferred (2)
- Owner-occupied (not transient housing) (2)
- No row housing (thought to be ugly, lack of maintenance) (2)
- Not opposed to student housing if decentralized and integrated rather than a centralized development (more of renting out from existing housing)
- Being able to find out how one might be able to upgrade and fix current conditions of one's house/apartment
- Making accessible apartments and homes, and upgrading existing homes for specific handicaps (2)
- McCarley Gardens ex-resident: houses bought at 50% auction
- Fair market appraisal of homes
- Good-quality homes at an affordable price
- Funding to maintain/rehabilitate existing housing
- Assessment of what/who is already in neighborhood
- Preference of repair/reuse of structures, especially housing, as opposed to demolition (i.e., Buffalo ReUse) (3)
- Increased educational opportunities for youth by way of reuse (2)
- Availability of grants and loans
- Utilize more widely the model employed by Habitat for Humanity
- Residents are going to follow the instructions of neighborhood leaders to hold on to their land
- Don't want to be victims like McCarley Gardens (no repeat)
- Troubled by the possibility of not being able to maintain new property if residents get new housing
- Financial support (i.e., grants)
- Residents want conformity with existing housing stock to prevent land values from decreasing (2)
- Larger homes with consistent architectural styles (2)
- Job creation in conjunction with new construction
- Identity and coordination with development
- The ability to dictate the distribution of land and money
- Assistance with property maintenance (2)
- Compensate damaged property - respect homeowners' properties while construction is going on
- Environmental concerns after construction (i.e., dust and mud)
- Pushing out of the elderly
- Ensuring that all housing is universally accessible
- Ensuring that current residents can keep and maintain their homes

### **Employment and Job Training:**

- Availability of jobs for the handicapped in the area
- Transportation to and from job
- Enforcement of regulations
- Training for employers to handle and deal with special needs
- Locality (from the neighborhood, for the neighborhood)
- Local people should be first priority for construction jobs
- Local contractors are also prioritized or can work in conjunction with others
- Buffalo Reuse - possible partner in job training and can help with any demolitions to recycle material
- Urban League training program; help individuals with a record; assist with reconstruction jobs; help introduce a higher job placement
- Introduce more programs for students without diploma/GED
- Focus more on trades
- More part-time jobs for students in high school
- Jobs at Roswell and Buffalo General not only for incoming population but existing population as well
- More minorities participating in job market (i.e. construction, education, medicine)
- Have churches participate in job training programs (2)
- Accountability of hiring for construction jobs
- More advertising/marketing of job training for minorities, possibly through direct mailing (2)
- Lack of residential parking; BNMC employees should not be able to park on residential streets because they displace residents (2)
- Specialized training for medical, education, and construction jobs, possibly offered by UB (2)
- Hire more minority workers for construction jobs
- Accountability of firms hiring minorities—proof that minorities are being hired (transparency and accountability in who gets hired) (2)
- Computer training
- Training in medical fields
- Mentoring programs to promote academic achievement for elementary and junior high school students (i.e., Upward Bound, STEP)
- Programs for “out of work, out of school” 18-24 year old residents. Program should help individuals obtain their GED and gain practical job skills. Program should help prepare people for “green collar” jobs.
- Apprenticeship programs
- Program for re-introducing incarcerated residents back into the neighborhood
- Art and music education
- After-school tutoring/mentoring programs, possibly in conjunction with UB students (2)
- Funding CBO’s to provide after-school programs
- More recreational opportunities
  - Community recreation facility built in neighborhood
- Utilize “Project Aspire” model
- Better marketing of services already available
  - Centralization of information about existing opportunities
- Increase number of apprenticeship opportunities for skilled labor within community
- Training for both skilled and unskilled labor
- Begin teaching skills/trades at an early age

- More parenting centers
- UB Centers in the community (teaching centers)
- UB to make an effort to create awareness in the community about educational opportunities; better marketing of all of UB's efforts
- More interaction with UB in general
- Connect existing services
- Apprenticeships/internships in technical fields
- Residents want a percentage of all new jobs to be for people who live in the immediate community

#### **New Neighborhood Business:**

- More youth programs open to the public
- Deal with drugs, gangs, etc.
- Decentralized medical campus: mixed feelings within group - lack of security or a guarantee (i.e., Kaleida Health)
- Avoiding distinct separation between the community and the medical campus; creating a partnership
- Increase local business next to these new developments
- Types of businesses lacking or needed: hardware store (2), restaurant, drug store, grocery store, gas station, wellness center, healthy/organic food store, Laundromat (2), deli, shoe repair shop, bakery, auto mechanic, major grocery store, consignment shop, garden supply store, copy/fax center, record store, furniture store like IKEA (stylish, affordable furniture), dog walking service
- Assistance developing cottage industries (seamstress, clothing design)
- Micro-financing program to help residents start home businesses, space and financial support for a business incubator,
- Priority for businesses within neighborhoods; first priority should be designated for people to work within their own neighborhoods.
- Leveraging of tax breaks for small businesses
- Financial and technical assistance for small businesses and entrepreneurs (i.e. business plan, SBA loans) (2)
  - Training for writing proposals (technical assistance)
- Prepare people to own businesses in BNMC area and adjacent areas
- Minority ownership of businesses
  - Residents who live in the neighborhood to own the business instead of an outsider coming in and taking the local residents' money out of the community
- Balance with assistance in job opportunity and entrepreneurship (how to own a business)
- Prepare people to own a business
- Want people to be able to find jobs and be able to pay rent
- Young minority interns

**Health Care Services:**

- Transportation for the handicapped
- Assistance service, where and how to get it
- Special needs equipment not only for elderly but handicapped
- Local doctors
- How, where and who is discarding medical waste
  - How is it being monitored and regulated to ensure no effect on community and environment?
  - Updates on these issues should be distributed to community
- Wellness center
  - Open to public and can be used for conventions and private interests
- Educate on health issues
- Provide an outlet to healthy foods and products
- Assistance to community from the medical campus
- Services at a lower rate; access to services from research (i.e., dental department on south campus)
- People desire more nutritional information and alternatives to prescription drugs (2)
- More community outreach regarding preventive remedies and good health practices
- Creation of an institution that will train and educate people about good preventive health practices and ways to stay healthy (2)
- Encourage people to participate in more trials and PSA's
- Develop more trust of medical field. Many people are untrusting and frightened. More education is needed.
- Walk around Wednesday for health awareness
- HIV prevention and education
- Physical/occupational therapy clinic
- Substance abuse
- Pregnancy prevention program for males and females alike
- Parenting classes
- Vaccination/mental health clinic
- Dental health clinic; bring UB Dental clinic to neighborhood
- Nutritionist
- Co-op with nutritious food
- Adult daycare
- Free clinics for uninsured
- More walk-in services (i.e., Planned Parenthood)
- Initiate health care center operated by UB that the community can utilize
- Counseling and preventive services
- More youth services

**Recreational Opportunities:**

- Museum highlighting medical advancement in black community
- Community center (Fruit Belt is the only community in Buffalo without one)
  - Multi-use (possibly including a gym)
  - Easy access to public (adults and children alike)
- More recreational facilities/space needed which can also be linked to health care (2)
- Park-like setting (i.e., playgrounds)
- Team sports

- Recreation center
- Bike paths/lanes/racks
- Swimming pool
- Parks and green spaces
- Better access to JB Wiley Center
- Tennis courts
- Community gardens for growing vegetables
- Free concerts

**Transportation, Green Space, and Infrastructure:**

- Repair existing infrastructure and create new infrastructure
- Street/sidewalk repair (2)
- Fix water lines
- Increased safety: lighting on both sides of street; sidewalks
- Overgrown/aged infrastructure (i.e., sewers)
- More and better green spaces (2)
- Cut back trees from lighting structures (2)
- Removal of dead trees
- Create a safe walking area
- Maintain and update existing planters and gardens
- Upgrade bus transportation in and out of medical campus with special needs requirements
- Improve and organize existing services and opportunities before creating new ones
- More trees are needed
- Sewage smells bad
- Need for more park-like settings
- Insufficient traffic lights- improvement of timing
- Access to all campuses (shuttles that will take you from north campus to south campus and to the downtown medical campus)
- More efficient public transportation and shuttle services (2)
- Need for more parking facilities
- Clean up of streets, curbs and sewage
- Recycling program that includes household bins and a center
- Street paving/resurfacing (2)
- Buses with bike racks
- Postal annex
- Improved bus stop maintenance and upkeep (2)
  - Bus routes need to be more frequent (esp. route #29)
  - Explore other connections to the area (bus and rail)
  - Shuttles for the elderly

**Miscellaneous:**

- Concerns about use of eminent domain being unfair
- Land banking (opportunity for the community to invest in land)
- Gentrification
- Communication (an elective community member should be placed on the planning/zoning boards)
- Utilize black press to distribute information (i.e., better advertising, make sure to cover all areas of the community affected)
- Adequate community representation outside of St. John Baptist Church is needed
- Need for stronger outreach towards churches outside of the Jeremiah Partnership
- Relocation plan for McCarley Gardens
- There shouldn't be a boundary for development; the entire East side of Buffalo should be included
- Making sure that UB stays invested in the community for the long-term and continues to interact with the community
- UB should have a community-building attitude and be focused on the community. Community building should continue for the long-term.
- Concerns about out pricing of the neighborhood for current residents and their children who might want to eventually come back to the neighborhood
- Structures in place to protect the neighborhood – should we have a housing association to help maintain the community?
- Maintaining community pride
- The medical campus should not be an island in the community. Programs should be initiated to promote interactions between employees and residents. For example, hold after-hour events for both employees and neighborhood residents
- Open UB facilities to neighborhood residents
- New UB facilities should be accessible and affordable for neighborhood residents

**McCarley Gardens Resident Focus Group**

McCarley Gardens Tenants Association: Meetings are on the first Thursday of every month at 6:00 pm in the Tower. However, no more than two people have showed up for a meeting in the past year.

- The next meeting of the tenants association will be on March 5, 2009
- The tenants at the table expressed concerns that individuals had been hand-picked to find out about community meetings regarding McCarley Gardens – some at the table believed that the people distributing fliers deliberately avoided giving them to certain people. One individual stated that she got a flier about the meeting on February 20<sup>th</sup>, but a neighbor who lived around the corner did not.
- In response, Crystal Peoples volunteered her office to be responsible for distributing fliers for the March 5th meeting.



**Concerns that were expressed by residents regarding the sale of McCarley Gardens:**

- Residents expressed annoyance and anger that they were being asked what they wanted at a relatively late stage in the planning process.
- Residents expressed confusion at what would happen to the physical structures where they lived – if all of them would be leveled or if some would be refurbished and incorporated into the UB2020 design.
  - Crystal Peoples explained that the properties would be leveled.
  - Crystal Peoples stated that retail sections would be incorporated in the bottom floors of the building designs in the UB2020 plan. Further, these retail stores would provide employment and business opportunities for local residents.
- Residents expressed a love of their homes in McCarley Gardens, and sadness at the idea of those homes being leveled to make way for new construction.
- Residents expressed concern that they would not get to live near all of their former neighbors after the relocation.
- Residents expressed dissatisfaction with moving in next to people they did not know.
- Residents expressed concern that the UB2020 plan would ultimately be designed in such a way that would negatively affect the neighborhood.

**Statements made by residents regarding what kinds of things they would like to see happen as part of a community benefit agreement with McCarley Gardens:**

- Residents want more access to local employment opportunities; it was noted that local job fairs did not advertise in ways that residents would find out about them.
- Residents want better access to health care services offered in the medical corridor; in particular, residents want organizations in the corridor to be more flexible in terms of accepting different kinds of health insurance.
- Regarding the new housing that residents would be relocated to:
  - Residents want to have a say about the specific dimensions of the housing that they would move in to; in particular, they want the dwellings to be well-suited to the people living in them in terms of size and height of countertops and other household fixtures
  - Handicap accessibility was important – residents wanted to have accessible dwellings; however, they did not want all dwellings to be designed to suit people in wheelchairs. One lady in our group was

exceptionally tall with knee problems: she mentioned that the low height of everything in her home aggravated her knee problems.

- Residents want energy efficient dwellings: preferably with central heat and air. Good windows and doors are important.
- Desire for one or two car garages to be included in the housing design (residents wanted a choice of what the garage would look like, or if there would be a garage for their dwelling.
- Residents want maintenance services of the new housing: particularly in regard to grass cutting and snow removal.
- Residents want the developers of the new housing projects to be African American.
- Residents want better security on the East side in the areas where the new housing will be built.
- Residents want better public transportation on the East Side.
- Residents want to be as near to their old neighbors in McCarley Gardens as possible in the new developments.
- Residents want better infrastructure on the East Side.
- Underground power lines in new developments – similar in design of power lines in McCarley Gardens.
- Better and more streetlights in neighborhoods.

## Appendix C

### Community Survey

<b>TO:</b>	Dr. Robert Silverman, Senior Research Associate, Center for Urban Studies
<b>Cc:</b>	Jeff Kujawa, Assistant Director, Center for Urban Studies
<b>FROM:</b>	Charisse A. Cameron, Graduate Fellow Taylor Hawes, Graduate Fellow Tamara S. Wright, Graduate Fellow
<b>DATE:</b>	May 7, 2009
<b>TITLE:</b>	Results and Conclusions from Fruit Belt Community Survey 2009

#### Introduction:

This memorandum is in regards the Fruit Belt Community Survey that was undertaken by students within the Center for Urban Studies during the 2008-2009 academic year. Developed in conjunction with students with from the School of Social Work, the survey was designed to cull pertinent information from residents regarding the quality of life, perception of city-based services, and desired economic activity within their neighborhood. In noting that the last quantitative measure of the neighborhood is from the 2000 United Census, it was important to survey the neighborhood now, as undoubtedly, conditions have changed within the last decade. The intended results of the survey would be used for future guided planning activity within the neighborhood.

#### Methodology:

In deciding to go ahead with the survey in the winter of last year, we concluded that both a quantitative and qualitative approach should be taken. The goal of the qualitative portion of the survey was to establish better relationships with the residents and build trust, rather than just sending a survey through the mail. We also learned from our Garden Survey experience that many individuals were willing to speak, but became more willing when we would write their words down for them. This qualitative portion is called the interview portion, where residents were asked questions about housing and neighborhood conditions and individual perceptions of the neighborhood. The second portion is the quantitative portion and asked more questions about individual circumstances, such as annual income, sources of income, number of children at home, homeownership status, transportation, age of residents in the dwelling, and other individual aspects of residents. We felt these questions were better answered anonymously through a survey that we left behind after our interview. We told residents that we would come and collect the survey within 15 minutes, or they had the option of dropping off the survey at

CAO-UB Community Neighborhood Development Center on 326 High St., which is located within the Fruit Belt neighborhood.

During the last few weeks of February, fliers began to be distributed to the residents of the Fruit Belt to alert them that we were going to come around and start interviewing them in regards to the Center's mission. In approaching this survey, we tried a rolling survey, where we sent fliers to one area and then went back to that area and surveyed before we carried on to another area. Our interns went out at various times during the day, some in the morning and some in the afternoon, to interview people, gain feedback, and leave surveys behind for residents to fill out.

During the months of March and April, the interns regularly went out to interview residents and gather insights from them. We learned that some times of the day were better than others for speaking to people and that once the weather started warming up, the response rate of residents increased. The weather was a large indicator of how well individuals responded to strangers knocking on their door and asking for information.

Interns documented their interviews in two ways. First, they recorded all the interviews into a Microsoft Word file. They were able to transpose almost of the residents' answers to questions into the document. This document captures answers and responses that residents gave that did not precisely fit within the questions asked in the interview. Then, as some of the questions within the interview were quantifiable (such as, "On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the quality of life in the neighborhood?"), interns recorded numeric answers to these questions in SPSS software for statistical analysis. And, as surveys that were left with residents were returned, they were then entered in SPSS, also for future statistical analysis.

#### **Problems with SPSS:**

As we were finishing up the data collection and students were entering the data, there was a problem with the licensing of the program. SPSS would not allow the students to access the data that they already had entered. After working with the Digital Media Group (DMG), they told us the problem was resolved, but after trying to get it to open up again, it still wasn't working. As a result of this program error, not all of the surveys were entered into the computer. We decided, due to time constraints at the end of the semester and with all of the various final exam schedules and fast approaching deadlines, that it would be better for us to turn in a report of the qualitative information that they had collected up until this point. Accordingly, we included some interesting points from what we learned based upon the quantitative information gathered from our students.

#### **Insights from Community:**

Despite the fact that the community is contained, interviewed residents had varied views on their perception of their neighborhood. On one end of the spectrum, residents are dissatisfied with the condition of the neighborhood and lack of services provided. However, there are residents who enjoy the Fruit Belt and do not feel that there is a need for improvement. Also, on average, many of the residents' responses showed that many of them lived in the Fruit Belt for many years. For instance, some residents have lived in the community for over 30 years and can actually identify points in time when the community actually had more services available and a greater population.

## Neighborhood Quality

Many residents felt that the neighborhood quality ranged from good to excellent, while others felt that the neighborhood was in bad shape. This depends on many factors which include: how long the resident has lived in the neighborhood, what kind of history they have in the neighborhood, has anything bad happened to them since they've lived in the neighborhood, and their individual networks within the neighborhood.

A lot of participants that rated the neighborhood to have good or excellent quality belonged to a church, block club, or have family around, which creates a sense of community for them despite the circumstances of blight and vacancy in some areas. It also depends on which block they live on within the community. Some residents are closer to the Roswell Park Campus and feel it would be a real asset to the community.

Depending on the resident's involvement determined what they felt the community needed, how they received their information, and their perception of the neighborhood as a whole. Residents that reside around predominately elderly citizens did not feel the need to develop daycare centers, locating facilities such as pharmacies, Laundromats, and grocery stores with fresh food, in a central location for seniors to have access to because they lack personal cars. Residents that were more involved in the community usually received their information through fliers at church, newsletters, and sometimes word of mouth while other residents were not in the know. Overall residents had different opinions depending on their perception of their surroundings.

## Recommendations

In conducting a survey within the neighborhood, there were certain observations gathered that can possibly help in future community surveys. One of the most important lessons learned during this process is that the undertaking of a survey within a community takes planning, thoroughness and sensitivity to the targeted populations. Below, there are recommendations for enhancing future survey undertakings.

- Possibly look for a better way to obtain residents' opinions, rather than conducting a survey. Residents grow TIRED of being surveyed and not seeing--from their point of view--anything done. Based upon our procedure, a combination of survey and interview was effective. Perhaps a more effective instrument would be having the survey and interview at an event, like a town hall meeting or a charette to encourage people to come out, and then pull them aside one at a time and ask them to fill out some questions and talk to someone. It honestly seems that a multi-faceted approach is going to work the best.
- Residents need to be informed about the actual benefits of a community survey, in terms as to how the information will be gathered, analyzed and utilized for further use. Many times, residents, especially within distressed neighborhoods, grow tired of participating in surveys, only to see little or scant improvements. Highlighting the usefulness of the information may encourage more residents to participate. Additionally, many residents asked questions as to how the information would be utilized, so having tangible goals in mind will ease the flow of communication.

Having a specific purpose for the data we are collecting, rather than just collecting data to "understand what conditions existed in the neighborhood" did not lend itself to high participation rates. Individuals of this community need to feel a sense of progress when they are sharing their opinions.

- If there are a series of community meetings (i.e. St. Johns'), integrate the information from participants more actively in the surveying process. There were a few residents that attended the meeting and felt overlooked or underappreciated because we knocked on their doors to survey them. An additional suggestion is to while people are gathered, the Center should survey them if their addresses are within the area that is being surveyed. Better record keeping of vacant houses and no responses will show how the limited the sample is and will also show the condition of the street.
- During the surveying, a couple of residents found it a little strange that some of the questions from the drop-off survey correlated closely with the interview survey. Also, there is a need for better communication between the local residents and the CAO office. On several occasions, interns went to the CAO office to pick up surveys and the employees had no knowledge of the survey or the fact that the Center was conducting such a survey within the neighborhood. This discovery leads us to believe that if residents were asked to drop off surveys at the local CAO office and the CAO staff had no knowledge of what they were referring to, many surveys were completed, yet never left due to uncertainty of drop-off location. Undoubtedly, residents did not want to leave such sensitive information without knowing if it would reach the right people.
- Much care must be taken to conduct surveys during peak activity times, such as after 5 p.m. on weeknights and on weekends. Oft times, the response rate was low during normal working hours (i.e. 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.). Reaching out to the residents during the evenings and weekends, for data collection, in good weather conditions helped tremendously. Morning times and subfreezing temperatures yield low participation.
- Regularly meet with the graduate assistants to clarify expectations and to check progress throughout the duration of the project. A better model of leadership from the top would help us from the bottom. Additionally, have a specific point of contact for the graduate assistants to reach for any questions and to regularly check up on. There needs to be a better feedback model in place for students.

### **Conclusion:**

The survey instrument used for the project was a good tool to gain insight into the inner workings on the Fruit Belt, yet it was difficult to reach a great level of participation due to time and weather constraints. The overarching conclusion that could be drawn from this survey is that there is no single opinion of the condition of the state of the Fruit Belt; rather there is wide range of opinions that speak a myriad of viewpoints regarding the quality of life. From an outsider's perspective, it speaks to the need not to pigeonhole the neighborhood as distressed as they know, akin to declaring a neighborhood dead without looking to see if there is any life left. A blanket approach to addressing the revitalization of the Fruit Belt neighborhood will not work, as there will be a need to accurately identify and address the concerns of the residents. More comprehensive information, via community meetings, block clubs and community-based organizations, will help to form a more complete picture of the state of the Fruit Belt.



## Appendix D

### Recommendations from Neighborhood Plans on the Fruit Belt

#### The Turning Point: A Strategic Plan and Action Plan for the Fruit Belt/Medical Corridor

The Center for Urban Studies, March 27, 2001.

#### Recommendations:

##### Housing and Residential Development:

- **A comprehensive site plan should be developed to guide the housing and residential development.** This plan should show where the various housing clusters by type and cost should be located, along with the location of parks, playgrounds, benches and the like. The site plan should be used as a blueprint for the redevelopment of the neighborhood.

- **Extensive landscaping and streetscaping,** combined with extensive infrastructure redevelopment—streets, sidewalks, and curbs—should precede housing construction and rehabilitation.

- The Fruitbelt neighborhood should be **developed historical community**, which becomes part of cultural tourism on the Niagara Frontier. The Fruitbelt resident community contains one of the largest concentrations of 100-year-old houses in Buffalo. By developing the community as part of the City's cultural heritage movement, a premium should be placed on the **restoration of as many of the older homes as possible.**

- **New housing units should be constructed** to attract a range of income groups and household types. Three distinct clusters should be developed: \$70,000 to \$90,000; \$91,000 to \$120,000; \$121,000 to 150,000. As much as possible, efforts should be made to build these houses **in homogenous clusters.**

- **New housing construction should conform to the existing design of the neighborhood.** The idea is to reproduce the existing urban design and not recreate a suburban model of housing in the neighborhood.

- **The rental housing market should be targeted** in the construction of new dwellings. A segment of the community should be developed for townhouses and doubles that are developed as upscale rental units. These units should be targeted **for the upwardly mobile and middle classes.**

- **The low-to-moderate income rental market should also be developed.** Numerous housing units fall into this category. Efforts should be made to attract developer interest in developing products for this market. Given the complexity of this task, **an action plan for rental housing needs to be developed.**

- **An action plan for providing grants to low income homeowners for repairing and landscaping their premises should be developed.**

- **Residents who are displaced should be re-housed in the community**, if they are desirous of staying there. The goal should be to re-house any displaced resident in a dwelling unit superior to the one from which he/she was displaced.

#### **Commercial Development:**

- **A medium-size neighborhood-shopping plaza should be developed** on Michigan Avenue, between High Street and Carlton.
- **A medium-size supermarket should anchor the shopping plaza.**
- The shopping plaza should have a retail mix that appeals to (a) Fruitbelt residents (b) West Side and Eastside residents, who live near the Corridor (c) Medical Corridor workers and visitors, and (d) downtown workers.
- **Extensive streetscaping and landscaping** must be done on the western side of Michigan Avenue to soften the harshness of the building façade and to make the area look inviting. Also, both vehicular and pedestrian traffic in the Medical Corridor will have to be orientated toward Michigan Avenue.
- **A Workforce training program should be initiated** and a strategy formed to link the training of residents to jobs and opportunities created by the restoration process.
- **A minority business development program should be initiated** as part of the workforce development strategy, so that minority businesses will be able to capture a share of the wealth produced by the restoration process.

#### **Developing the Fruit Belt/Medical Corridor as a Single Place:**

- **A name should be selected that unites the community and builds a singular identity and image.** One possibility is to refer to the community as The Medical Park: Home of the Historic Fruit Belt Neighborhood.
- **The “park” should be used as a community-wide guide to the redevelopment process theme.** Within this framework, public art and landscaping should be used to tie the community together.

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#### **Fruit Belt/Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Tax Increment Financing District**

Cole, Sam. Taylor, Henry Louis Jr. Milgrom, Richard. Raja, Samina. January 2003.

→ This proposal seeks to establish a TIF (Tax Increment Finance) district for the Fruit Belt and the adjacent Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus.

### Goal of the Project:

The goal of the Fruit Belt/Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus project is to **create a multicultural and cross-class neighborhood, retaining the existing population base and encouraging the immigration of new residents**. The new residents would primarily be **young, upwardly mobile workers** from the Medical Campus and other downtown businesses who currently commute from the suburbs. A major study, the 1998 Downtown Employee Survey, showed that there is substantial demand for affordable accommodation close to the Downtown from most socio-economic categories, but especially by young middle-income professionals. Of these prospective residents, about one half currently commutes from the suburbs. By retaining the current residents and by attracting a significant number of new residents into the community, the development envisaged in this proposal can be realized.

The combined income of daytime workers and the enlarged residential population would create demand sufficient to support a **mid-sized community shopping and social service district**. The **development of the commercial corridor** will not only provide a range of high quality goods and services for neighborhood residents, hospital workers, and nearby neighborhood residents, but it will also **create a physical, social, and economic bridge that links the Medical Campus with the Fruit Belt**.

The revitalization of the Fruit Belt neighborhood would also **bolster the development of the Medical Campus** by providing more attractive local accommodation for employees and by reducing the cost of operation. To realize this potential, **considerable public and private investments are needed to improve the physical, visual, environmental, and social conditions of the neighborhood**. Public investment will also leverage private sector investment in new dwellings and commerce, which in turn will raise property values.

Importantly, to avoid gentrification of the neighborhood, **currently owner-occupied dwellings as far as possible would be refurbished at public cost, as would the demolition of irreparable homes, the re-housing of displaced residents, the repair of most streets, and the landscaping of public space**. Additionally, since improvements in property values over time will cause assessments to rise, existing property owners should be protected from excessive costs through **full or partial abatement of taxes on the appreciation**. These taxes may be applied retroactively upon sale of the property.

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### Transforming the Fruit Belt Neighborhood Development of a Model Fronting-Block (Fruit Belt Site Plan)

The Center for Urban Studies, Richard Milgrom, March 2002.

The Center for Urban Studies has developed a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the Fruit Belt/Medical Campus residential neighborhood. The goal is to **create a mixed-race, mixed-class neighborhood with clusters of new townhouses, condominiums, and rehabilitated single-family homes within a setting of landscaped streets and open space, commercial development, and other amenities** that will make the neighborhood a great place to live and work. The idea is to **retain the existing population, while simultaneously attracting new residents to the neighborhood**.

The new residents would primarily be younger workers from the Medical Campus and downtown businesses who currently commute from the suburbs. By retaining the current residents and by attracting a significant number of newcomers, the ideas envisaged in this proposal can be realized.

A key to making the project successful is to get existing and potential residents and developers to imagine what the neighborhood can be. This will not be an easy task. The neighborhood's dilapidated appearance combined with years of failed revitalization efforts discourage people and keep them from seeing the neighborhood's potential.

To get residents, developers, and potential residents excited about the Fruit Belt/Medical Campus neighborhood, **a model fronting block needs to be developed** to demonstrate the neighborhood's potential for residential development.

The plan calls for **extensive streetscaping and landscaping on both sides of the street**. The landscape will be designed to beautify the area and give existing and potential residents, as well as potential investors a positive impression of the neighborhood's potential.

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#### Fruit Belt Neighborhood Capacity Study - Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government Study of Urban Neighborhoods and Community Capacity Building

McLean, Beverly M. Ph.D. March 15, 2001

**Lack of Comprehensive Master Plan for neighborhood.** The Fruit Belt has been targeted for numerous development activities—new housing, rehabilitation, the medical district initiative, and demolition of housing. These efforts have proceeded forward in a piecemeal approach. The churches, the city, civic organizations, and block clubs work on their specific projects while residents feel that there needs to be greater efforts to work together under the guidance of a neighborhood Master Plan.

**Lack of community voices in neighborhood planning initiatives.** Several city/regional proposals have emerged on the Buffalo Medical Corridor. Beginning in January 1994, Buffalo General Hospital (BGH) undertook the Buffalo 2020 – A Community Wellness Campaign to focus on stimulating a partnership between the hospital and its surrounding community. At the time, BGH asked the question why should the hospital have a goal of improving the Fruit Belt's health and overall quality of life? This initiative like those that followed brings up the need for the medical institutions to forge a partnership with its surrounding community, but most of these initiatives fall short. Task forces are formed to include one or two members from the community.

Ironically, the Fruit Belt has an incredible mix of dedicated leaders from neighborhood CBOs, block club leaders, faith-based leaders, and concerned citizens. But given the pressure of each of these organizations to deliver their services with limited resources, efforts move forward on a programmatic basis instead of collaboratively. There is a growing consensus in the Fruit Belt, among residents and neighborhood CBOs to start working together more in order to stabilize and turnaround themselves and their neighborhood.

**Aging housing stock.** The age of the housing stock makes the housing units expensive to maintain for low to moderate-income households.

**Demolition.** Since 1997, 35 homes in the Fruit Belt have been razed. The City's demolition strategy was initiated as part of a strategy to rid the neighborhood of its dilapidated houses. Solid 100-year old brick houses were torn down prior to assessing the feasibility of rehabilitation. Related to the lack of a master plan is the lack of a strategic plan to address whether to demolish a structure or not. Currently, residents view abandoned houses as places that attract criminal behavior. What some residents feel more attention needs to be paid to how questions are posed to neighborhood residents? In other words, the residents need to feel that a range of alternatives are possible – rehabilitation or demolition. And, then you can get to the question of what makes the best sense. And, this would involve overcoming the city's policy of moving too slow, so that by the time something needs to be done, the housing unit is beyond the point of rehabilitation.

**Land Speculation.** The major negative impact comes from the uncertainty of future redevelopment of the medical corridor, infill housing redevelopment, the redevelopment of the Masten Youth Facility, the overwhelming presence of the Masten Armory on the neighborhood, the effects of Kensington Expressway on the neighborhood, and the perception of crime. Although Michigan Avenue acts as an invisible barrier, vacant properties are being acquired by hospital-related groups and the City of Buffalo for future development projects. The major land speculators include General Health Care, High Street Professionals, Buffalo Medical Group, Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency, and City of Buffalo. Church groups are also acquiring property. A few private individuals still own some of the vacant lots.

**Lack of neighborhood support services.** The neighborhood lacks access to full-service grocery shopping. The corner stores do not provide a wide variety of fresh fruit, meat and vegetables.

**Masten Youth Facility.** The Masten Youth facility located at has been vacant since 1994. At the present time, an alternative use proposal has not been submitted. The building is an older stone, concrete structure built in 1900. It still shows signs of being a correctional institute with its barbed wire fencing. Building ownership remains with New York State.

**Masten Armory.** This facility has a mixed effect on the neighborhood. The property and landscape is maintained okay, but it is not inviting. The state military vehicles are parked in the parking lot surrounding the facility. The grass and grounds are mowed, but the overall landscaping is average.

**Parking.** The expansion of the medical corridor is impacting the availability of parking along the neighborhood streets near the medical corridor (i.e., Mulberry, Maple, Michigan, High streets).

**Trees, streets, sidewalk conditions in neighborhood.** The neighborhood streets and sidewalks are not well-maintained. Buffalo's harsh winter weather impacts the sidewalks and streets. The roots of the older trees are also damaging the sidewalks. The cracks and holes in the sidewalk make it difficult for older residents to walk in the neighborhood. Deep pot holes make driving more difficult.

**Main Street.** The deteriorating condition in general of Main Street reinforces property abandonment and disinvestment in near east side neighborhoods. For sale signs, boarded-up and broken windows, and vacant lots are readily visible along Main street between Goodell and Delavan Streets. This just reinforces a racial divide between East and West Buffalo.

**Location.** Being located on the edge of downtown, the area is highly accessible to all major public transportation routes in the city, to Downtown, to the Theatre District.

**Faith-based institution.** The churches have a positive impact on the neighborhood. Gethsemane Baptist church, 55 Grape Street and a developer (James Anderson) entered a partnership with HSBC Bank to provide a \$9,000 per-unit of subsidy to rehabilitate 10 vacant city-owned houses. There is a problem in that too often the churches work on their individual agenda and not enough on a collective neighborhood agenda.

**Expanding Homeownership opportunities.** Twenty-eight single-family homes have been built in the Fruit Belt since 1997. These homes, according to neighborhood residents have added a sense of optimism for a neighborhood turnaround.

**Medical District Initiative.** A major initiative in Spring 2000 under consideration is the implementation of a Medical District Initiative. This initiative is intended to establish a Buffalo Medical Campus of World Class standing and to support improvements of the neighborhoods around High and Carlton streets. This initiative has strong commitments from the State University of Buffalo (UB), Kaleida Health Systems (KHS), Roswell Park Cancer Institute (RPCI), Hauptman-Woodward (HWI), Buffalo Medical Group (BMG) and other area entities. The ultimate goal of this initiative is to create a world-class center for educational, medical and scientific research, medical care, entrepreneurship and social equity. In January 2001, the city-funded initiated task force on the medical district initiative announced that Oshei Foundation will fund \$100,000 to assist a new medical initiative partnership that would work together to revive the dream of turning the medical corridor into a “world class” medical center. The major players will be the Kaleida system (consisting of Buffalo General, Millard Fillmore, De Graff, and Children’s Hospital), Roswell Park Cancer Institute, Buffalo Medical Group, Hauptman-Woodward Institute, and University of Buffalo. The board for this partnership will have representatives in addition from the city, county, and the nearby Allentown and Fruit Belt neighborhoods. University of Buffalo currently does not have a physical facility in the neighborhood, but is considering jointly developing a research building with Roswell Park Cancer Institute on Virginia Street.

The city task force is proposing a new name for this initiative—Buffalo Niagara Medical Center. The new reflects the desire of the medical corridor stakeholders to focus attention on the cluster of medical industries physically located in the medical corridor itself and the regional cluster of medical-related facilities in the Buffalo Niagara frontier region (which encompasses the region stretching from Buffalo to Toronto). The naming of the area has been a major point of contention.

Neighborhood residents point out this initiative will benefit them directly only if the medical stakeholders involve residents in the Master Planning process. Residents feel strongly the Fruit Belt is in need of a comprehensive, strategic Master Plan that will guide neighborhood revitalization, but the plan needs to be neighborhood-driven not expert driven.



**Childrens Hospital Relocation.** The Childrens' Hospital Relocation has the potential to spur complementary business development in the Fruit Belt. However, residents feel the development will have a positive effect on the Fruit Belt neighborhood, only if neighborhood residents are included in the planning, design, and implementation stages of the relocation.

**Aging housing stock.** The Fruit Belt has one of the greatest concentrations of older housing units in the City of Buffalo. This housing is a historical heritage that provides a unique opportunity for creative neighborhood rehabilitation strategies

**Neighborhood, civic and human service organizations.** The Fruit Belt has an abundance of civic and neighborhood organizations. These organizations have reputation for commitment to the Fruit Belt neighborhood. It should be noted, however, that the degree of interaction between the organizations and the residents could be more.

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## **Fruit Belt Neighborhood Strategy" (BNMC report – January 2009)**

### **PLANNING PRINCIPLES**

The following principles were established to best address neighborhood issues and to make the Fruit Belt Neighborhood Strategy actionable:

#### **Build on Neighborhood Strengths**

The Fruit Belt neighborhood contains many assets, including historic buildings, active community organizations, proximity to downtown Buffalo, and opportunities for partnerships with the nearby medical campus. The Fruit Belt Neighborhood Strategy recognizes that the first step toward community change relies upon these strengths and harnesses their capacity for change.

#### **Link Strategies to Neighborhood Priorities**

The recommended strategies should directly respond to the issues identified by the residents and community stakeholders. The strategies should clearly define the leaders and the role of public, private, and non-profit entities and their priorities to achieve immediate and sustained action.

#### **Develop a More Unified Neighborhood Voice**

The Fruit Belt Neighborhood Strategy recognizes that neighborhood stabilization and revitalization is not achieved through a single effort, but through an ongoing process that requires collaboration from a variety of parties, as well as continuous dialogue with residents, community organizations and stakeholders. The strategies and recommendations of the Fruit Belt Neighborhood Strategy are products of a collaborative planning process that should persist well into the future with a more unified neighborhood voice.

#### **Synchronize Neighborhood Plans with BNMC and City Plans**

The Fruit Belt Neighborhood Strategy and BNMC Campus Master Plan Update are being prepared concurrently, along with the HSH/Walker Transportation and Parking study. This

synchronization creates the opportunity to align recommendations and strategies in a comprehensive and consistent manner. For the Fruit Belt, this becomes increasingly important when looking at the treatment along Michigan Avenue, the seam between the two areas. Similar alignment should be achieved with City planning initiatives, such as the current zoning update and any future amendments to the Urban Renewal Plan.

**Recommended Goals:**

**-Increase and improve access** to appropriate retail and commercial outlets, transit, and jobs, among others.

**-Develop a unified neighborhood voice** in order to focus efforts.

**-Establish an easily identifiable center**, either historically or in the present.

-The community identified the **intersection of Mulberry Street and High Street as an opportunity area for a new center of investment and activity** that complements other centers in the neighborhood

-Heights, density, and land use in the neighborhood should relate to the character and function of the streets.

-Improvements in the Fruit Belt will require a unified focus and coordinated effort from the private, public and non-profit sectors, as well as residents of the Fruit Belt community.

-The key regulatory actions that are recommended to promote reinvestment in the Fruit Belt are **formal approval of an Area Plan, amendments as necessary to the Urban Renewal Plan, and rezoning** as part of a larger city-wide effort.

-The **creation of a comprehensive and collaborative workforce development strategy** will match the needs of the neighborhood's employers with the skills of its residents through education, training and strategic placement opportunities.

**-Establish a land bank program.**

**-Create a Fruit Belt community development corporation (CDC)** will provide a strong vehicle for a unified voice in the Fruit Belt, bringing a specific focus on affordable housing, business and workforce development to complement the existing service organizations.

-With facilitation by the City, LISC, BNMC, and/or UB, **identify the representative Board members for a Fruit Belt Partnership. Clarify shared goals and define the mission and capacity of each of the member organizations.**

**-Refine the agenda** for the next 12 months, building on recommendations in this report as appropriate.

**-Identify potential sources of funding** for staff support.

- Community review of the Fruit Belt Neighborhood Plan.
- City review of the Plan, with identification of additional Area Plan requirements.
- City approval of a Fruit Belt Area Plan.
- Review of the status of Urban Renewal and amendment as necessary.
- Update of the Fruit Belt zoning as part of the city-wide effort.
- A strategy for the Fruit Belt needs to consider the city-wide strategies as well as other actions that can begin as quickly as possible at the local level and that respond to community input from residents. Within the framework of this Neighborhood Strategy, a land bank program for the Fruit Belt could focus on the action items, but additional staff resources would be required. Identify potential funding sources that support property acquisition and land banking, including government programs as well as private foundations.
- Assemble and maintain an inventory of vacant property and property ownership in the Fruit Belt.
- Identify actions required to facilitate sales of individual properties, such as title clearance or environmental remediation.
- Work with the City to clear titles and to anticipate sale of tax foreclosed properties.
- Assign potential functions for vacant properties, which could include:
  - Side lots for undevelopable vacant lots that could be sold to adjacent property owners
  - Parcel assembly for lots that could be combined with adjacent properties to create buildable lots
  - Buildable lots for properties that is sufficiently large to accommodate new construction
  - Parking for commercial or civic uses
- Set priorities for the use of property in accordance with the Neighborhood Strategy Plan, such as housing, commercial or civic use.
- Establish partnerships with and seek funding from the City of Buffalo, the BNMC, LISC and other intermediaries.
- Establish a board of directors and appoint an executive director.
- Determine where and how the Fruit Belt CDC should focus its initial efforts.

-Continue to focus fundraising efforts at the local, state, and national levels, making sure that these efforts align with the CDC's specific areas of interest and that this seed money contributes to a more self-sustaining project-base for the future CDC.

-Develop a physical presence in the Fruit Belt neighborhood. The site of the proposed Fruit Belt Center at Mulberry and High Streets is an ideal location for the CDC.