

The image is a full-page background photograph. It shows a wide expanse of water in the foreground. On the left side, a bridge with multiple arches extends from the bottom left towards the center. In the distance, across the water, there is a line of trees and some buildings, including a tall, dark skyscraper on the right. The sky is filled with soft, grey clouds. The text 'Take A Look Inside...' is centered in the upper half of the image, and 'Our Community' is centered in the lower half.

Take A Look Inside...

Our Community



LIFE IN OUR COMMUNITY

It is a documented fact that metropolitan areas in the United States have undergone a process of economic and social restructuring since the 1950s: increased centralization in many areas of government, devolution of decision making (federal and local), out-migration of the middle class to suburbs, the segregation of low-income populations into inner-city neighborhoods, globalization, the insinuation of market-thinking into many areas of social life, and severe poverty. (Gottdiener and Hutchinson 2000; Jargowsky 1996) All of these factors are evident both in the decay of the inner-city infrastructure and the lack of opportunities for inner-city residents to improve their living conditions. (Wilson 1987, Fraser and Kick 2003) These findings are also evident in our community, an inner-city neighborhood with a population that is over 90 percent African American.

Social System - A community is a social system that is expected to produce goods, services and/or situations. There are a very limited number of service and retail establishments in our community; over 35 percent of the parcels of land are vacant land in both residential and commercial zoned areas; public services are inadequate; there is a great deal of blight; and over 60 percent of the population lives in poverty -- **no production!**

Public Power - There is little interaction between neighbors which impedes a sense of cohesiveness to make change. A profile of our community, *Assets and Opportunities of Detroit's Near Eastside*, prepared for the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan by Urban Ventures Group states "We were struck, in many of our community conversations, with the limited capacity present in some neighborhoods to organize residents to work more effectively together to draw attention to critical service failings and negotiate for improvements. We were also struck by the relatively low level of organized volunteer neighborhood improvement efforts in some communities" - **powerlessness!**

Health Care - There are no urgent care or wellness center facilities within or nearby our community. Nearly 50 percent of community are children and seniors. This can be a problem as children and seniors are heavy users of urgent care.

The prevalent issue for our community is that of a healthy lifestyle and access to healthy food choices. There is an imbalance in choices: two grocery stores compared to nearly 20 gas stations, party stores and fast food restaurants. A recent study, *Examining the Impact of Food Deserts on Public Health in Detroit*, discovered that “over a half a million Detroit residents live in areas that have an imbalance of healthy food options. They are statistically more likely to suffer or die prematurely from diet-related disease” -- **sick, dying and perishing for lack of knowledge!**

Basic Life Necessities - Many adults and children residing in our community are impoverished. Empirical studies find that poverty has become more spatially concentrated, especially for poor African Americans. (Jargowsky 1996) In 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 62.5 percent of the households in our community live in poverty and 91 percent are African American. GenesisHOPE believes the poverty level (62.5 percent) has escalated and is beyond epidemic proportion in light of the current economic downturn in the State of Michigan and City of Detroit -- **poverty!**

Housing & Physical Environment - Many in our community reside in unsafe and inhumane living conditions. In 2000, 60 percent of the houses were valued at less than \$20,000 compared to a median city value of \$63,600 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. As of September 2008, “Metro Detroit now stands as the only major metropolitan area in the country where average home prices have fallen below their 2000 levels,” according to the Detroit News, *MI, U.S. home prices plunge*. Federal government, HUD and city

indicators designated our community as an “area of greatest need” based on factors such as: 82 percent to 96 percent of the population earned 120 percent of the Area Median Income or less; 17 percent to 20 percent of mortgages are predicted to foreclose in 18 months; 73 percent to 92 percent have high-risk loans; and the vacancy rate is 20 percent to 29 percent -- **poor quality, unsafe and inhuman living conditions.**

THEORY OF CHANGE


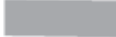


Positive people- and place-based improvements to eradicate poverty and powerlessness in our community can be achieved via a community development social change system that engages a holistic approach and encompasses the following:

- Community organizing to build the community’s capacity and leadership training to empower people.



A more recent study illustrates that the vacancy rate is continuing to climb:

Legend

-  Vacant Structures
-  Vacant Lots
-  School
-  Park

399

Total number of vacant structures in the community

7% of Total Parcels

2385

Total number of vacant lots in the community

42% of Total Parcels





...And So Is Blight!



What We Saw...





What We Heard...

There is no conflict between what we saw and what we heard. The qualitative information further substantiates the quantitative data collected. There are numerous issues that plague the community. But, an overwhelming majority of residents expressed a **concern for the safety of children and activities for children** as the reasons for the stated concerns. **Housing** (34%) was the number one concern followed by **vacant lots** (14%), **police presence** (12%) and **drugs** (10%). The vast majority appeared hopeless as they were unable to identify improvement opportunities. Some felt **housing** (8%), **parks** (8%), a **community center** (7%) and **strong block clubs** (6%) were all ways to improve the quality of life in the community. Following are just a few of the comments the 90 residents made during our walk through the community when we asked:

“What are your issues or concerns regarding this community?”

“What would you like to see done to improve the community?”

“Assist neighbors with home repair & improving neighborhood. Give kids back their play ground and get them off streets. Get rid of crack houses.” —Martha Pratt

“Need activities for kids.” —Alexandria

“Garbage cans in front of house. Cars knock over, dogs scatter trash, rodents eat. Dogs living in abandon homes & threatening kids & adults.” —Ronnie Frazier

“New homes and all abandon property torn down.” —Larry Carter

“Police disregard for kids safety when raiding. Don't talk to people.” —Louisa Pool

“Ways to keep community informed. Keep elected officials accountable.” —Neil Swanson

“Close dope house on Helen. Home improvement assistance & infill housing. Dope house stealing electricity.” —Anonymous

“Home improvement assistance -- need roof & windows.” —Leonard & Idata Gurley

“AFC home/mental care facility -- need activities for adults/seniors” —LaShema Thomas

“Parks should be cleaned up for the kids.” —Keisha & Lisa Biglow

“Trees need cutting. Touching power lines & when the wind blows it knocks out power. Debris, rats & un-kept halfway house.” —Hattie Kirk

“Drug raid kids coming home. Drug house back up same day. Not safe for children. Need info about community activities.” —Robin Reynolds

“Safety is a great concern. More houses to be occupied. Community pride, more homeowners.” —Cheryl Williams

“Loud music, saggy pants, safety in hood, too many vacant buildings. Abandoned homes to be renovated, house next door in very poor shape.” —Alicia Terrell

“Vacant lots. Bulk trash pickup, keep streets clean, see more houses.” —Ann Logan

“Seniors need help maintaining property.” —Ms. McDonald

What Must We Do...

For "The Least of These?"

 **GenesisHOPE** Community Development Corporation
bridging relationships... building community

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