HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative

Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities

Cultivating Vital, High Opportunity Places



Flint, MI: Master Plan for a Sustainable Flint

Repositioning Flint for the Future

In 1960, Flint, MI, drafted a master plan that was in many ways ahead of its time. The plan outlined strategies for dealing with issues like overcrowded schools and traffic congestion, problems akin to those that most metropolitan areas face today. Reaping the benefits of being a company town, Flint enjoyed prosperity during the twentieth century. Now losing population and adapting to changes in the global economy, Flint needs another innovative plan that will negotiate a new identity for the twenty-first century.

The city's first master plan since 1960, the *Master Plan for a Sustainable Flint* is charged with repositioning Flint for the future. The city's industrial past has left an indelible legacy. With over 10,800 vacant housing units, Flint is second only to Detroit in number of empty homes. The city has over 365 acres of abandoned property related to automobile factories.

Global Economy, Local Solutions

With the right planning, Flint can harness its assets to meet these challenges head on. Building upon the work of the Genesee County Land Bank, Habitat for Humanity, and others, Flint's planning process is taking stock of the city's housing supply and developing strategies to decontaminate, stabilize and add value to Flint's neighborhoods. Flint's strategy relies on its best asset, its people. Through community engagement, the Flint team will find how best to "upcycle" the land, whether through community gardens, new schools, or similar projects. Innovative, local solutions like these are at the heart of the plan.

Flint Mayor Dayne Walling put it best. Reflecting upon the plan, he has stated:

"I believe that our community has a lot to offer and we can make major contributions to a changing 21st century economy. Nobody can deny the city's population is smaller than it used to be, but that doesn't mean that our community is less valuable to the region and the state.... The core of our challenge in 2012 is to find new value in our community that we can utilize for another round of prosperity."

Bolstered by its federal partners at HUD, Flint is meeting contemporary challenges to build an economy to last.

Description

Flint is using a HUD Community Challenge grant to replace its fifty-year-old master plan with an integrated plan for sustainable development. The city is holding neighborhood-level discussions that will serve as the guiding principles for a city-wide strategic planning framework. Planning teams will create area plans that include affordable housing, economic competitiveness, land recycling, and neighborhood revitalization, the building blocks of the *Master Plan for a Sustainable Flint*.

Funding

- 2010 HUD Community Challenge Grant: \$1,570,233
- Charles Stewart Mott Foundation: \$263,804
 - Center for Community Progress: \$25,000-\$50,000
- Genesee County Land Bank: \$164,988
- Genesee County Chamber of Commerce: \$56,890
- Ruth Mott Foundation: \$50,000

Partners

Genesee Regional Chamber of Commerce, The Land Bank, Flint Area Reinvestment Office, Flint Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, Local Initiative Support Corporation, Center for Community Progress, University of Michigan - Flint, the Community Foundation of Greater Flint, Ruth Mott Foundation, and C.S. Mott Foundation.

Achievements

- Developing a flexible set of land use regulations not beholden on expected population growth, Flint is rethinking planning norms, serving as a model for other "legacy cities."
- The Flint team is organizing an engaged populace, drawing up to 1,800 citizens to one event.

For more information visit:

hud.gov/sustainability

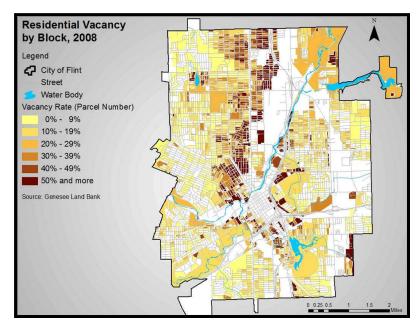


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A Bottom-Up Approach

The project's core partners are working to ensure that the Master Plan for a Sustainable Flint is a truly local endeavor. In an event series called Building Neighborhood Power, the Ruth Mott Foundation is galvanizing residents from all walks of life and instilling a planning tradition in the community. Their events cover topics like organizing community meetings and how to draft a neighborhood plan. The "box city" activity has proven to be the most popular. Allowing residents to use a model to lay out their ideal Flint, the activity often attracts up to 80 participants. Capitalizing on the success of Building Neighborhood Power, Flint's steering committee is broadening their outreach tactics to engage even more residents.

Flint's outreach series represents the first stage in their plan. After the Flint team has built capacity at the local level, neighborhoods will be charged with developing their own area plans, the building blocks of the *Master Plan*. To implement the document, the city will author a new, corresponding zoning code. Flint Community Schools and Mass Transit Authority will use this as the launching plan for their own capital improvement plans. Undoubtedly, Flint's future prosperity begins with its people.



Flint has a 21 percent residential vacancy rate, the highest concentration of vacant housing units in Genesee County. Flint's Sustainable Communities grant is assessing how best to recycle this land to meet community needs.

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE, THRIVING COMMUNITIES IN MICHIGAN

Grand Rapids is harnessing the economic power of two of the city's biggest resources—its educational and medical institutions, which represent 55 percent of the downtown workforce. This "eds and meds" approach is guiding the implementation of a \$459,224 HUD Community Challenge grant. The Grand Rapids team is working on the Michigan Street Corridor Plan, an effort to leverage the economic capacity of anchor institutions into larger growth for downtown Grand Rapids.

Inclusivity is a top priority of Grand Traverse County, recipient of a \$395,000 Community Challenge grant. A 2008 study revealed that just 37 of 231 homes listed on the local market cost less than \$125,000. Responding to the growing need for affordable housing, local collaborators are focusing on developing affordable housing corridors within Traverse City that will provide access to employment and recreation opportunities.

The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments is utilizing a \$2,850,000 Regional Planning grant to chart a new course for the Detroit Metropolitan Area. Their efforts will include a plan for green infrastructure that can mitigate stormwater runoff.

