

May 8, 2012

Frank Farrow, Director
Center for the Study of Social Policy
1575 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

RE: BUILDING NEIGHBORHOOD CAPACITY PROGRAM (BNCP) LETTER OF INTEREST

Dear Mr. Farrow,

Metro Community Development is pleased to submit this Letter of Interest on behalf of a cross-sector partnership representing Flint, Michigan. We have identified two neighborhoods in our city that face considerable barriers, and we are committed to improving these areas by building the capacity of people and organizations, creating comprehensive neighborhood revitalization plans, and leveraging new resources. If selected to participate, we are ready to partner with BNCP and other local stakeholders to ensure the success and sustainability of this capacity-building effort and transform these neighborhoods of concentrated poverty into neighborhoods of opportunity.

In the past 40 years, Flint has suffered tremendous economic blows and has been one of the hardest hit cities in one of the hardest hit states in the current recession. With the dramatic and consistent decrease in auto industry related jobs from 80,000 at its peak to less than 7,000 jobs today, Flint now has one of the highest rates of unemployment in the country at 13.7 percent for 2010¹. This rate exceeds Michigan's unemployment rate of 12.5% and the national rate of 9.6% for the same period.² With the loss of jobs, compounded by residents escaping blight, crime and violence, Flint has steadily lost population which plummeted to 102,434 in 2010, down 22,509 people (18%) since 2000 and the lowest it's been since the 1920s before masses of workers were hired in to fledgling General Motors factories. At its height in 1960, almost 200,000 people lived in Flint. Of those remaining today, more than one-third (34.4%) live below the poverty level compared to 13.2% in the nation.³

With such drastic job loss and population decline, the City of Flint has lost most of its tax base and currently faces a \$20 million deficit with an Emergency Manager appointed by the Governor to create a balanced budget. High rates of unemployment and poverty coupled with massive layoffs in the Department of Public Safety and the lack of jail space have contributed to increased Part 1 crimes such as homicides which hit a record 65 in 2010 – that's more than one person killed every week. Further, Flint has the highest aggravated assault rate in the nation and is identified as the most dangerous city in the U.S. with populations of 50,000 or greater. The FBI has labeled certain areas of the city, "Delta" zones, meaning the area is so violent that it

¹ http://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.mi_flint_msa.htm

² <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/metro.pdf>

³ <http://factfinder.census.gov>

is recommended that the police respond to the area only with assistance from other officers. Incidents of other Part 1 crimes in Flint in 2010 include Rape 90; Robbery 703; Larceny 1,934; and Arson 351.

With a vacancy rate of 21%⁴ in 2010, Flint's neighborhoods are blighted with empty and abandoned properties. The Genesee County Land Bank, which has received more than 7,000 properties since 2003 as an emergency measure, estimates that 32% of the residential parcels in Flint in 2009 were abandoned by owners. Moreover, families here experience high rates of out-of-home placements of children, home foreclosures, and a surge in first-time homelessness.⁵

Flint's challenges of poverty, violence, poor physical health and family instability are reflected in the poor educational attainment of our youth. For example, in 2009, the dropout rate for Flint Community Schools was 18.59% compared to 11.33% in the State and 12.1 % in the nation, and the graduation rate in Flint Schools was 49.35% compared to 75.23% for the State and 68.8% for the Nation.⁶ Of the Flint residents ages 18-24, 32.9% have less than a high school degree, 29.2% have only a high school diploma; 36.7% have some college, and 1.3% have a Bachelor's degree or higher.⁷

TARGET NEIGHBORHOODS

In Flint, there are nine (9) Council Wards which are comprised of smaller neighborhoods that are both formally and informally defined. The Flint BNCP Initiative targets two areas adjacent to each other, one in Ward 1, the other in Ward 3, neither of which has an official neighborhood name or designation. Located in the center of the northern edge of the city, the Ward 1 target area is made up of Census Tracts 2 and 4, and the Ward 3 target area encompasses Census Tracts 17 and 18. These target areas are bounded by Carpenter Road (the city line) on the north, the Flint River on the east, Pierson Road on the south and Dupont Street on the west. Saginaw Street, which runs the length of the city, is the dividing line between them.

With extreme challenges facing Flint city-wide, the needs are the greatest and most acute in these target neighborhoods. In the Ward 1 area, the poverty rate in Census Tract 2 was 44% for 2005/2009, up from 38% in 2000, and in CT 4 it was 34% in 2005/2009, down from 44% in 2000. The unemployment rate in those areas in 2005/09 was 39% for CT 2 and 31% for CT 4, up from 24% and 26% respectively in 2000. In the Ward 3 target area, residents of Census Tract 17 had a poverty rate of 51% in 2005/09, which was up from 30% in 2000, and in CT 18, 68% of residents lived in poverty in 2005/09, up from 49% in 2000.

Further, these have been persistent barriers over two decades as Census data from 1990 shows poverty rates from 41 – 53% in these areas and unemployment rates from 23 – 35%. One

⁴ <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/popmap/ipmtext.php?fl=26>

⁵ The State of Homelessness in Flint & Genesee Co., 2010 Continuum of Care and Metro Community Development

⁶ http://www.michigan.gov/documents/cepi/2009-2008_MI_Grad-Drop_Rate_

⁷ <http://factfinder.census.gov>

significant indicator of these trends is the percentage of residents without a Bachelor's Degree in these target areas of 94 – 99 % from 1990 to 2005/09.

The majority of the Part 1 Crimes committed in Flint occur in Wards 1 and 3, which are labeled "Delta" zones by the FBI, and these neighborhoods have the highest rates of foreclosure, vacant housing and demolition due to neglect. Further, according to the Genesee County Health Department, the infant mortality rate for African American babies in Flint is three times that of white babies, and of the African American infant deaths in Flint, 66% were in Wards 1 and 3.

Enrollment in Flint Community Schools has plunged from 40,000 at its peak to 9,000 today. In the target areas alone, 2 public elementary schools and one private K-8 school have closed. For the two public elementary schools that remain, both are rated low-performing, and one may be closed as the FCSD faces a \$19 million deficit. Once served by thriving businesses including large, locally owned grocery stores, clothing stores and other retailers, the neighborhood has seen a steady stream of businesses closing or moving, and there has been no public or private investment in the area in 30 years. The few open businesses scattered around the area are primarily liquor stores.

Barriers to Capacity Building

The greatest barrier to capacity building in the target neighborhoods is the lack of financial resources by individuals, state and local governments and businesses. Poverty, violence, and death are commonplace here and, while the needs grow, organizations created to meet them face shrinking revenue and lack data needed to take strategic action. Without a tax base to provide even basic services, the City government has been unable to stem the tide let alone revitalize economically devastated areas, particularly with significantly reduced police and fire departments. Further, without financial capacity among residents to attract businesses, there has been no private investment in the area.

The strong linkage between race and poverty has been and remains a barrier to capacity building here. The construction of Interstate 475 in the early 1970s both destroyed thriving African American neighborhoods and created access to suburban communities. As displaced black families moved into nearby areas, white families were leaving both because of scare tactics and the draw of newly constructed homes in less densely populated, outlying areas. Over the years, as GM plants were closed and moved, those who could afford to relocate left behind a higher concentration of poor, unemployed, and mostly black families, and the trend continued until declining private investment stopped altogether in the BNCP target areas while it has flourished just outside of the city.

The effects of racial discrimination that have led to limited social and economic opportunities for African Americans in Flint are reflected in the racial inequities here. The average home price in the outlying areas of the County (\$78,000) is 5 times that of homes in the City (\$15,372)⁸. While African Americans make up 57% of Flint's total population, they represent 90 – 96% of

⁸ Genesee County Land Bank

the people living in the poorest neighborhoods which are located in Flint's north side⁹. These disenfranchised areas have the highest concentration of unemployment, crime, poor schools, infant mortality, substandard housing and blight. There is no incentive for anyone to move in, and existing residents have few resources to improve the conditions or move out.

Neighborhood Assets

These statistics reflect the stark reality in the city of Flint and in the BNCP target areas, however, what they don't show is the tremendous courage and faith of the people here to change our circumstances. This proposal represents a culmination of efforts by city-wide stakeholders led by the C.S. Mott Foundation, the City of Flint, Flint Community Schools, area churches, human service providers and other community partners who have committed our collective resources to reclaim our neighborhoods.

The need is so great, and the problems can be so overwhelming, but hope persists. The lack of monetary support has forced us to get creative and use existing, non-financial resources to create change. Independent and collaborative efforts have sprouted all over the City, especially in the target neighborhoods, creating a foundation of individual and organizational capacity and the momentum to build a successful BNCP Initiative.

While there are no formal neighborhood associations in these areas, residents have organized informal block clubs made up of volunteers. The lack of staff, funding or an entity to network them together is a barrier to capacity building, yet, these groups provide a base for community organizing. Simultaneously, there are three prominent churches in the target areas that have established trust and credibility with residents through their programming and service to the neighborhoods that surround them.

In the Ward 1 target area, **Church Without Walls** (the WOW Outreach), created in 2005, is an established community resource with programs such as the **Community Action Neighborhood Coalition (CAN-C)**, started by individuals who have lost loved ones to violence, which marshals existing resources to take direct action toward violence prevention among youth and support for families. Further, WOW's Friday Night Live offers weekly activities for youth and their parents; Service Outreach Action Resources (SOAR) provides individual counseling and support groups; the Parent Empowerment Project supports area mothers who meet in each others' homes; and Dare to Dream empowers students between the ages of 11 – 14 years old who have been deemed "frequent flyers", i.e. they are repeatedly expelled from school. In small groups led by adult mentor facilitators, these youth participate in thought-provoking dialogue and creative assignments which generate positive thinking and solution-driven outcomes.

Established over 50 years ago, the **Foss Avenue Baptist Church** is located in the Ward 3 target area and has built credibility and relationships with surrounding residents by providing community programs including Brothers Battling Bloodshed to prevent and combat violence and deter gang membership; a Single Mothers Ministry; and weekly Youth Growth Nights / Real

⁹ <http://2010.census.gov>

Talk Sessions. Further, the church has established subsidiary organizations, all located in the Ward 3 target area, to serve the community including the **Foss Avenue Federal Credit Union** and **Eagle's Nest Childcare Center**. The church also started **Northridge Academy** which is now a charter school for grades K-8. Another Foss Avenue Baptist Church enterprise is **North Flint Reinvestment Corporation** which is developing Ujima Village, a project to build new homes, renovate existing homes, relocate the credit union and day care center and bring in a health clinic and arts center.

Our Savior Lutheran Church (OSLC) is located on North Saginaw Street, the boundary line between the two target areas, and operates "Reaching Our Children with Kindness" (ROCK), an after-school tutoring and meal program for children in grades 1-6 and a summer program of tutoring, art, and recreation. Community outreach programs also include an annual health fair, a year round and mobile food pantry, adopting families at Christmas for food and gift donations, and a Halloween party. Currently, OSLC is partnering with Hurley Hospital to provide free blood pressure screenings at the church and is looking for a development partner to renovate a donated house nearby. Over the years, as the opportunity to leave the city has arisen, the congregation has voted, on three separate occasions, not to relocate, but rather to commit to the neighborhood and the people they serve there.

The Flint Department of Public Safety has begun a new approach to addressing public safety concerns in the community through its Lifeline initiative, a coordinated, community strategy to aggressively address crime and criminals which relies on strong partnerships among law enforcement agencies, social service providers, government, faith leaders, and the community at large for its success. Employing a strategy of focused deterrence and strong enforcement with coordinated opportunities for some offenders, the goal is to offer a lifeline through positive intervention services coordinated by many agencies networking together. As part of this initiative, the department has assigned a community policing officer to work with neighborhood groups, conduct a public safety training for volunteers called the Blue Badge Patrol, work with Crime Stoppers and staff the anonymous tip line for residents to report crime.

Flint Community Schools (FCS) operates an elementary school, Bryant Elementary, in the Ward 1 target area, and another, Carpenter Road Elementary, in the Ward 3 target area, although it may be closed. Located just one block outside of the target area, Brownell Elementary, Holmes Foundation Academy, and Northwestern High School enroll students from the target neighborhoods in grades K-12 and serve students and families with parent groups, after school activities, and an on-site office of the Michigan Department of Human Services' Family Resource Center (FRC). Unfortunately, Holmes is in danger of being closed, and if so, there would be no middle school in the vicinity for families in the target areas.

The City of Flint has recently received a \$1.57 million Community Challenge grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as part of its \$2.9 million initiative to complete a comprehensive, 20-year Master Plan that promotes equity, livability, economic vitality, and sustainable development within the city. Spearheaded by Flint's Mayor, the master planning process started in March 2011 and has widespread support from community

stakeholder organizations, who have pledged \$1.3 million in cash and in-kind support, as well as from the City's recently appointed Emergency Manager. The City has not had an approved Master Plan in place since 1960, and this endeavor creates a critical opportunity for neighborhoods to develop strategic plans that are integration into the overall Master Plan.

Since 1995, **Genesee County Habitat for Humanity** has been focusing on a 15 block area located within the BNCP Ward 3 target area. As part of this initiative, Habitat has built 12 new homes, rehabilitated 3 existing homes and contributed to 10 owner occupied façade improvement projects as well as conducted annual neighborhood clean up events that engage residents and city-wide volunteers. Having established a partnership with Foss Avenue Baptist Church and the North Flint Reinvestment Corporation to develop Ujima Village, Habitat is investing in that project as well as home renovation and infrastructure improvements in the target area. Further, Habitat has recently completed a neighborhood survey through the national organization, NeighborWorks' Success Measures evaluation program. The survey collects data regarding neighborhood conditions, residents' reliance on neighbors, perceptions of safety and other quality of life indicators. The results of the survey and Habitat's ongoing work with Success Measures will inform the BNCP Neighborhood Revitalization Plan for the Ward 3 target area.

The **Genesee County Land Bank** was established to manage and return tax foreclosed property to productive use. From 2007 to 2009, 301 properties in the Ward 1 target area were foreclosed due to unpaid taxes. Of these, one-third (101) have been demolished. In the same time frame, 195 properties in the Ward 3 target area were tax foreclosures, and one-fourth (47) have been demolished. On the positive side, the Land Bank has sold 24 lots from demolished houses for \$1 - \$25 to adjacent property owners, thereby expanding their yards, and 34 of the now-empty lots have been adopted through the Land Bank's Adopt-a-Lot program to those who commit to keeping them clean for one year. Next, the Land Bank is offering a 5 year commitment Lease-a-Lot program for more long term use like gardens both for private use and for entrepreneurs who then sell their produce at the Flint Farmers Market.

Resident Engagement

Residents of the target neighborhoods have engaged around the key community priority of public safety by addressing violence prevention and intervention in a variety of ways. Fed up with losing so many loved ones to gang and drug violence, residents began meeting to support each other and find ways to affect change. Now as a formal organization, the **Community Action Neighborhood Coalition (CAN-C)**, sponsored by **Church Without Walls**, has brought 30-40 people together once a month for the past 6 months to work in small, direct-action groups that meet to brain storm ways to use their existing assets, commit to action for the next month, and return to report out results and commit to further action. So far, the group has improved communication across neighborhoods, advocated for the reopening of the City Jail (all but the worst offenders are currently released due to overcrowding of the County Jail), and engaged neighborhood business owners to participate in violence prevention.

Residents in the Ward 3 target area came together to form the Northeast Village Citizens District Council and created a comprehensive **Neighborhood Master Plan** for land use and development which was completed in 2006. The goals that resulted reflected residents' desire for community priorities of 1) a safe and inviting neighborhood, 2) a sustainable and vital commercial environment, 3) single-family home development and homeownership, 4) buffers from intense commercial and industrial developments, and 5) a solid neighborhood identity. Since then, the recession and housing market failure deterred the intended development, however, the plan provides a foundation for a current neighborhood revitalization plan.

In 2009, each of Flint's Wards conducted a **Neighborhood Action Session** with the Mayor to identify strategic priorities and discuss assets and challenges. As a result, participants in Ward 1 envisioned a neighborhood with trusted neighbors, thriving businesses and fewer beer and wine stores where everyone feels safe and residents feel proud of their community. The assets in the Ward are the schools, both open and closed, a public safety mini-station, churches and block clubs. The priorities that came out of the session are: public safety, human services, especially for youth, new and improved housing options, infrastructure, economic development, building / property code enforcement, and parks and recreation space. The results of this session provide a good start for BNCP Initiative to help this area which has struggled to create viable neighborhood plans.

The BNCP Cross-Sector Partnership

In addition to initiatives of resident engagement, the Flint community has a strong history of collaboration among service providers including the Genesee County Continuum of Care and the Genesee County Community Collaborative. For the past three years, a cross sector partnership of organizations met to develop Flint's Promise Neighborhoods Initiative. While our recent Promise Neighborhoods application was not selected, despite scoring highly, the structure and approach we put in place during the application process remains, and the cross sector partnership has continued to meet and work together as "Neighborhoods Without Borders", a network of networks that draws on the existing resources of each participant to accomplish shared goals.

The lead entity and fiscal agent for Flint's BNCP Initiative is Metro Community Development (MCD), a non-profit community development organization founded in 1992 by the C.S. Mott Foundation and a consortium of lending organizations, businesses, universities, the City of Flint and Genesee County. True to its mission to develop partnerships that create stable and vibrant neighborhoods and communities, MCD has engaged 24 community organizations as a cross-sector partnership to channel their individual and collective resources to change this specific geographic area of Flint. The cross-sector partnership is intentionally inclusive of partners across the spectrum of local government, cradle-to-career education, direct service agencies, housing, philanthropy, business organizations, workforce development and employment services, criminal justice, and human services systems.

Following is a list of the local stakeholders included in the cross-sector partnership that are committed to participate in the BNCP Steering Committee. These organizations are familiar

colleagues with a shared commitment to our most distressed neighborhoods who have a history of working with each other to achieve common goals, are very motivated to go to the next level and, with their skills and knowledge, are the most qualified to work with BNCP in the target neighborhoods.

1. **Metro Community Development (MCD)** – MCD led Flint’s Promise Neighborhoods effort, helped start and now manages the Genesee County Community Collaborative (GCCC) of the county’s human service organizations, serves as a founding member and lead agency of the Genesee County Homeless Continuum of Care (GCCoC), and initiated Neighborhoods Without Borders. MCD will be the lead entity and fiscal agent for the BNCP Initiative.
2. **Flint Community Schools (FCS)** – FCS operates two elementary schools in the target area and, nearby, an elementary, middle and high school that serve the target neighborhoods. The BNCP Initiative will work with the Parent Groups at these schools to engage residents and build individual and collective capacity. We will also recruit parents from these groups to participate as community liaisons to the project which will further build their leadership capacity.
3. **Flint Department of Public Safety/Lifelines partners** – Despite recent and pending layoffs, Flint’s police department has developed strong partnerships through its Lifelines initiative to address public safety concerns around the city and in the target areas. Working in collaboration with the BNCP Initiative, the Department will focus its community policing and LifeLines activity in this target area.
4. **The City of Flint** has received funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to conduct its first Master Plan in 60 years. Already underway, the Master Plan will focus on solutions for land use, housing, economic development, transportation and sustainability given Flint’s shrinking population and strategies to attract new investment. A City representative will participate in the BNCP to ensure coordination between the Neighborhood Revitalization Plans and the Master Plan.
5. **Flint Housing Commission** – Flint’s public housing authority owns and manages two rental properties in the target area that are subsidized for very low-income families. Both are located in the Ward 3 area. Built in 1969, River Park has 179 townhouse style rental units for 487 residents, and Aldridge Place, developed in 1985, has 93 townhouse rentals where 248 people currently live. For the BNCP, we will engage residents through existing tenant groups at these complexes.
6. **C.S. Mott Foundation** – Started by one of the pioneers of General Motors, Charles Stewart Mott, the Foundation’s philanthropy extends around the world and funds most of the charitable endeavors in Flint including many of the service organizations participating in the cross-sector partnership. For the BNCP initiative, Flint’s three major funders, the C.S. Mott Foundation, the Ruth Mott Foundation and the Community Foundation will continue their practice of collaborating to maximize their individual and combined resources and help to secure matching funds.
7. **Ruth Mott Foundation** – Named for its founder, Ruth Mott, who was married to Charles Stewart Mott, this family foundation funds organizations and programs serving residents in Flint and Genesee County, including many of the service organizations working in the target neighborhoods and focuses on Arts and Culture, Beautification and Health Promotion.

8. **Community Foundation of Greater Flint** – Flint’s community foundation makes grants and scholarships to organizations and individuals in Flint and Genesee County, supported the recent Neighborhood Action Sessions, and provides funding to many of the service organizations and community events in the target neighborhoods. In 2011, through mini-grants to grassroots, neighborhood based efforts, the Foundation gave six \$1,000 grants to both formal 501 (c)(3) organizations and informal block clubs for trash removal from sites of illegal dumping, summer youth programs, and urban gardens, among others.
9. **Church Without Walls** is located in the Ward 1 target area and sponsors the **Community Action Neighborhood Coalition (CAN-C)** which marshals existing resources to take direct action toward violence prevention among youth and support for families. Additionally, the church serves its surrounding neighborhood with “Friday Night Live” weekly activities for youth and their parents; Service Outreach Action Resources (SOAR) which provides individual counseling and support groups; the Parent Empowerment Project which supports area mothers; and Dare to Dream which empowers students between the ages of 11 – 14 years old who have been deemed “frequent flyers”, i.e. they are repeatedly expelled from school.
10. **Foss Avenue Baptist Church** has been located in the Ward 3 target area for 50 years and has provided community programs including Brothers Battling Bloodshed to prevent and combat violence and deter gang membership; a Single Mothers Ministry; and weekly Youth Growth Nights / Real Talk Sessions. Further, the church has established subsidiary organizations, all located in the Ward 3 target area, to serve the community including the **Foss Avenue Federal Credit Union** and **Eagle’s Nest Childcare Center**. The church also started **Northridge Academy** which is now a charter school for grades K-8 and **North Flint Reinvestment Corporation** which is developing Ujima Village, a project to build new homes, renovate existing homes, relocate the credit union and day care center and bring in a health clinic and arts center.
11. **Our Savior Lutheran Church** is located on the dividing line between the target areas and operates “Reaching Our Children with Kindness” (ROCK), an after-school tutoring and meal program for children in grades 1-6 and a summer program of tutoring, art, and recreation. Community outreach programs also include an annual health fair, a year round and mobile food pantry, adopting families at Christmas for food and gift donations, and a Halloween party. Currently, OSLC is partnering with Hurley Hospital to provide free blood pressure screenings at the church and is looking for a development partner to renovate a donated house nearby.
12. **Habitat for Humanity** – Genesee County’s Habitat for Humanity has focused on a 15-block section of the BNCP Ward 3 target area where they have built new homes, renovated existing ones, assisted home owners to make façade improvements and conducted a neighborhood survey through the NeighborWorks’ Success Measures Program. Habitat is currently a partner with Foss Avenue Baptist Church to develop the Ujima Village project.
13. **Building Neighborhood Power (BNP)** - BNP is a collaborative of individuals, organizations, and institutions formed to support Flint residents in realizing their collective power to create change. Housed at the Genesee County Land Bank, BNP provides capacity building trainings and technical assistance on topics such as Getting the Word Out, Starting and

Strengthening a Block Club, Neighborhood Planning, Advocating for Your Neighborhood, Running effective Meetings and others. BNP will collaborate with the BNCP to engage residents of the target neighborhoods in trainings and provide sustainability after the 18 month program ends.

14. **Genesee County Land Bank** – Established to manage and return thousands of abandoned properties in the city and county to productive use, the Land Bank currently has an inventory of 7,000 properties. The Land Bank houses Building Neighborhood Power, a BNCP cross-sector partnership member working in the target neighborhoods, and is committed to providing a wide range of land use and property related data, limited GIS mapping using existing data, plus access to and connection to additional data and maps created and collected through the City’s Master Planning process.
15. **Neighborhood Without Borders** – Led by Michigan State University Outreach and the University of Michigan – Flint and sponsored by 35 local organizations, Neighborhoods Without Borders is a network of networks which convenes individuals from the community to focus on 10 areas of healthy communities and take direct action using existing resources of the participants to drive community change. For the BNCP initiative, NWB will focus efforts specifically on the target area and bring the approach of direct action meetings to the BNCP process.
16. **BEST Project** – As a program of the United Way, the BEST Project is Flint’s capacity building provider for non-profit organizations and their leaders. As such, BEST staff will help guide the design of the BNCP initiative, combine local capacity building resources with national TA providers and provide sustainability after the 18 month program ends.
17. **Genesee County Health Department** - In addition to offering free immunizations, family planning services and affordable health insurance through the Genesee Health Plan, the **Genesee County Health Department** administers the WIC supplemental food program and created “Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health Across the U.S.” (REACH US) to decrease racial health disparities with a particular focus on African Americans infant mortality.
18. **Genesee County Community Action Resource Department (GCCARD)** – the County’s community action agency provides a wide-array of publicly funded services to help families in need including Head Start, weatherization, rental and utility assistance, food programs specifically for seniors and children, employment services, and workforce development. GCCARD participates in the Genesee County Continuum of Care and will use the opportunity created by the BNCP Initiative to focus its programs and services in the target area.
19. **Flint Area Reinvestment Office (FARO)** FARO actively partners with area organizations to identify, attract, and utilize federal and state funding with the goal of bringing new investment, economic development, and jobs into the area. FARO also helps create opportunities to assist local neighborhood organizations through existing programs. For the BNCP Initiative, FARO staff will commit resources to share philanthropic and other funding opportunities with the partners and to participate in meetings to help further the project.
20. **Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)** – The Flint office of the Michigan Statewide LISC supports community development organizations to transform distressed neighborhoods by providing loans, grants, policy support, technical assistance and

placement of AmeriCorps members. The Flint LISC office is committed to focusing its capacity building expertise and other resources in the target areas for the BNCP Initiative.

21. **Genesee County Community Collaborative (GCCC)** – The GCCC is the state endorsed local collaborative body comprised of public and private organizations, universities, small businesses, schools and neighborhood groups that plan and deliver health and human services for Flint and Genesee County. As an effective vehicle for information dissemination and collaboration, the GCCC is an example of how organizations in Flint work together and will marshal the health and human services resources individually and collectively to improve the BNCP target areas.
22. **Resource Genesee** - Resource Genesee links volunteers and donors who want to give help, connects individuals who need help, publishes a Community Resource Book and provides leadership training for youth and adults. Additionally, Resource Genesee has experience creating satellite offices in targeted neighborhoods and will bring this expertise to guide the successful implementation of satellite offices in the BNCP areas as part of this initiative.
23. **Genesee Regional Chamber of Commerce** – The Regional Chamber facilitates strategic partnerships between public, private and non-profit entities to maximize economic growth in the county and recently added a Community Outreach position designed to connect community leaders and residents to the economic development activities that provide job opportunities and resources. As part of its participation in the BNCP Initiative, the Regional Chamber will focus these resources on the target neighborhoods.
24. **Youthbuild** - Metro-Flint YouthBuild, a program of MCD, engages youth in high school completion, personal development and construction skills acquisition. Partners include: C.S. Mott Foundation, the U.S. Dept of Labor, Mott Community College, Flint STRIVE, Oasis Counseling, Habitat for Humanity, and Career Alliance/MichiganWorks! Currently, Metro-Flint YouthBuild is raising funds to open a charter school, Metro YouthBuild Academy (MYA) to provide students in grades 9-12 a relevant and rigorous, career-focused academic program in a small and personalized school setting. Located just one block south from the Ward 1 target area and enrolling students from the target neighborhoods, the school will engage its faculty, staff, parents and students in the BNCP Initiative.

Through the attached Letters of Support, the cross-sector partnership organizations have expressed their willingness to partner with BNCP Initiative which will refine and test the capacity building framework and develop revitalization plans. We have also attached Letters of Support from the City Council Representatives from Wards 1 and 3 as well as from others that, while not participating on the Steering Committee for the cross-sector partnership, support the project. These include:

Salem Housing CDC – Salem Housing serves Flint’s neighborhoods just south of the BNCP target area by developing newly constructed and renovated homes, supporting neighborhood planning efforts, operating a community tool shed, and leading classes on home ownership, home repair and rebuilding credit. Salem has committed to share their expertise in neighborhood planning to the BNCP initiative.

CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE TARGET NEIGHBORHOODS

We believe that capacity building is the process whereby a community increases its well-being based on assets—human, social, physical, and environmental—that already exist. It enhances the ability of a community to access and creatively combine outside resources with existing resources and build toward a shared group vision. It is through this process of capacity building that we believe we can meet the overwhelming needs of our community.

The Flint BNCP Initiative will:

- Manage a community process, broadly supported by the 24 cross-sector partnership organizations as well as residents of the target areas, that is designed to improve results for all children, families, organizations and businesses in Census Tracts 2 and 4 of Ward 1 and Census Tracts 17 and 18 of Ward 3;
- Secure matching funding for the BNCP grant;
- Identify residents who are already leaders and build the leadership capacity of other residents as owners and implementers of transformation in these target areas;
- Build on the commitments of 24 organizations as a strategic and accountable cross-sector partnership that engages multiple sectors across the city and county to support the targeted neighborhoods and share accountability for results;
- With the support of BNCP, provide assistance to neighborhoods around 1) using data for learning and accountability and linking to public data systems, 2) aligning local, regional and state policy and funding with neighborhood efforts and 3) developing strategic approaches to financing;
- Collect, analyze and use data for learning and accountability. Existing data will be gathered from Habitat for Humanity's neighborhood survey, Genesee County Land Bank, the 2006 Neighborhood Master Plan conducted in Ward 3, the 2009 Neighborhood Action Session in Ward 1, the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, and other available sources. The BNCP Initiative will design collection instruments (e.g. surveys) and methods (e.g. focus groups) to gather new data;
- Deepen organizational and leadership capacity of organizations in the target areas and those serving the target areas;
- Participate in the BNCP community of practice and the BNCP formative evaluation; and
- Work with cross-sector partnership members from the health and human services field to design and implement the type of strategies that are most likely to improve results for children and families – including increased opportunities, formal services, protective factors for families, youth and communities and informal supports – based on the best available evidence.

Flint's BNCP Initiative will be led by Metro Community Development (MCD), a housing and community development intermediary and certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), and will be guided by the 24 organizations from the cross-sector partnership serving as a Steering Committee. Our approach is to create a place-based program, operating satellite offices in facilities in the target neighborhoods, as a lightning rod that channels resources from our partner organizations into the target areas and connects residents with community anchors outside of their immediate boundaries. We will be working most closely

with the three lead churches since they are in the target areas and have strong, existing relationships with residents. Therefore, the BNCP staff will most likely be working on-site at one or more these churches or their affiliates.

Part of the funding will be used to pay a Project Director as well as two part-time staff, each focused on one of the two target neighborhoods, who will be working together and supervised by the Project Director. We will also recruit 10 residents, five from each of the target neighborhoods, to participate as community liaisons and provide stipends for their involvement. Further, we will involve a facilitator and an urban planner to work with the national technical assistance providers and assist with facilitating community meetings and creating the neighborhood revitalization plans.

With this structure in place, we will use our successful past experience to create a community-driven process – inclusive of families, youth, professionals and programs – that is grounded in bi-directional sharing of power, decision-making, and open dialog. As evidence of our commitment to working closely with neighborhood residents and other neighborhood stakeholders, the part-time neighborhood coordinators will be housed in the target neighborhoods, possibly at the participating churches or schools and work directly with the organizations in the target areas that have established trust and credibility with residents in order to engage the community in the BNCP initiative.

Neighborhood Revitalization Plans

The primary outcome of the BNCP Initiative will be creating community-driven Neighborhood Revitalization Plans for each of the target areas, and we know that to be successful and sustainable in this endeavor, the plans must be developed through a process that engages resident participation as leaders, owners and implementers. With the City of Flint's Master Planning process underway, there is a heightened awareness throughout the entire community of the importance of civically engaged planning which reinforces this approach.

It is through this process of creating neighborhood plans that the BNCP Initiative will build individual and organizational capacity for community change. First, we will work with the BNCP national providers to design the process. Next, we will engage residents who participate in formal and informal block clubs in the target areas, those involved with the Tenant Associations of the Flint Housing Commission public housing developments, parents who participate in Parent Groups at the schools in and near the target areas, and residents who have existing relationships with organizations participating in the cross-sector partnership: Church Without Walls, Foss Avenue Baptist Church and Our Savior Lutheran Church, Community Action Neighborhood Coalition (CAN-C), North Flint Reinvestment Corporation, Habitat for Humanity, Building Neighborhood Power, and the Dept of Public Safety's community policing officer.

As we build individual capacity of neighborhood residents, we will also be building organizational capacity for the block clubs, Tenant Associations, Parent Groups and participating non-profits. Another level of capacity building will be networking all of those involved together, and further, to focus all of the available resources – financial, human capital,

and information – to these specific geographic areas to build the collective capacity of the neighborhoods.

COMMITMENT TO WORKING WITH BNCP

With financial resources continually declining over the years, community stakeholders in Flint have become adept at collaborating to maximize our collective assets. Motivated by the Promise Neighborhoods opportunity, we organized as a cross-sector partnership to focus on specific neighborhoods on Flint's north side. With the partners and structure already in place, Flint is poised and ready to work closely with the BNCP to build the capacity of two distressed neighborhoods in this area.

The BNCP Initiative is timely for Flint as it will build on the foundation created individually and collectively by stakeholders in the target areas and will provide community-driven Neighborhood Revitalization Plans that are integrated into Flint's Master Plan. However, the best developed plans are only the beginning. We need to ensure that outside resources come into the target areas before the 18 month BNCP Initiative is completed in order to build trust among residents that this is a long-term commitment to implement the plan and sustain it over time. Based on our experience, we believe the components of this initiative that support this outcome include creating satellite offices on-site at our community partners' facilities and guiding the initiative with a Steering Committee made up of the cross-sector partnership. We also look forward to working with the BNCP national providers and other BNCP neighborhoods to identify best practices that lead to success.

As an example of our ability to sustain collaborative efforts, Metro Community Development (MCD), the lead agency, has an established track record of creating and managing successful, sustainable collaborative initiatives that mobilize resources for community change including the Flint/Genesee County Homeless Continuum of Care which brings together more than 30 agencies and stakeholders to focus on the goal of ending homelessness, and the Genesee County Community Collaborative (GCCC), created to enhance the effectiveness of the county's human services delivery system.

Further, we have experience targeting a specific area, the University Avenue neighborhood of Flint, and implementing a comprehensive, community building effort that improved the community and raised the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) level of an elementary school there. To sustain the capacity- building efforts in the Ward 1 and Ward 3 target areas, MCD will model the BNCP Initiative on this previous place-based revitalization success.

The strategy for that initiative involved 1) hiring a Community Coordinator who worked on-site at Durant-Tuuri-Mott (DTM) Elementary, 2) going door-to-door to engage residents, 3) working directly with the school faculty, staff, and parents, 4) bringing community resources on-site at DTM including a Michigan Department of Human Services Family Resource Center, 5) mobilizing funders, the City of Flint, neighborhood organizations, a local university in the target neighborhood (Kettering University), and other businesses, and 6) creating a "Community

Partners in Action” collaborative which includes over 30 community partners committed to working together for the well-being of the school and the neighborhood.

Through door-to-door surveys and community meetings, MCD gathered information on the needs and concerns of the people in the school and in the neighborhood, as well as their suggestions for changes, and, in direct response, created programs and services including after-school programs, a mentoring program between Kettering and DTM students, a community playground, and many others.

As a result of this comprehensive, community-driven effort, DTM went from being designated as a “persistently low-achieving” school, progressed to the “low performing” level, and received an Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) award in 2006 from the US Dept of Education. Further, the neighborhood shows improved indicators of health and stability, and there is an active coalition of area stakeholders committed to continuing its work to build on this success.

As evidence of support for Flint’s BNCP Initiative by our government leaders, we have included a letter of support signed by both Flint’s Mayor Dayne Walling and the Emergency Manager, Michael Brown, who has temporarily been appointed by Michigan’s governor to balance the budget for the City. Further, the project is supported by City Council Representatives from the target areas: 1st Ward Councilman Delrico Loyd and 3rd Ward Councilman Bryant Nolden.

We have also included support letters from the three philanthropies in Flint – C.S. Mott Foundation, Ruth Mott Foundation and the Community Foundation of Greater Flint – which are all participating in the cross-sector partnership and have committed to assisting the BNCP initiative to secure matching funds.

Adding to the sustainability of the initiative, there are four local capacity building organizations participating in the cross-sector partnership: Building Neighborhood Power which works with neighborhood residents, the BEST Project which assists non-profit organizations, Resource Genesee providing leadership training and Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) which supports community development corporations. All of these organizations will be involved in the design and implementation of the BNCP Initiative, working with national providers, in order to retain the lessons learned, capture the momentum and continue the capacity building effort once the BNCP investment has ended.

On behalf of Metro Community Development, the City of Flint, the target neighborhoods, and all of the participants of the cross-sector partnership, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
[Ravi Yalamanchi](#)

Ravi Yalamanchi, CEO
Metro Community Development