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Building in the Present, Growing towards the Future

A Plan for Economic Development in the North End



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Thank you all.

Abstract

This Economic Development Plan for the North End in Springfield, MA has been produced by a team of students (the Project Team) from the Department of Urban Studies & Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) for the North End Campus Committee and North End Outreach Network (NEON). The Project Team focused on creating a population-based approach to economic development and utilized multiple methods for gathering information and understanding the economic development needs of the community, including site visits, quantitative analyses, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, a survey, and client working sessions. Based on its findings and analysis, the Project Team has developed a set of institutional capacity-building and programmatic recommendations:

Institutional Development

The North End requires strengthened institutional capacity for economic development within a coherent system that coordinates the myriad services available to residents, responds continually to community needs, and focuses solely on the North End's economic development goals. The Project Team recommends a capacity-building strategy that leverages the community's strengths: collaboration, as exhibited by the Campus Committee, and the case management approach exemplified by NEON. The Project Team thus recommends a new, independent 501(c)3 organization located on the Campus, with a core staff of professionals solely dedicated to North End-based economic development.

With the suggested name "El Puente/The Bridge," this organization's mission would be to improve the economic well-being of every North End resident by coordinating programs, assembling resources, and addressing the needs of other community institutions. Specific functions would include:

- » Coordinate outreach and case management network for economic development
- » Generate financial resources for existing agencies and services
- » Collaborate extensively with NEON
- » Implement economic development goals and vision of Campus Committee

Business Development

- » *Technical Assistance Hub.* Connects business owners to existing technical assistance resources through an information and referral service
- » *Pushcart Retail Program.* Offers low-risk, low-cost retailing opportunities to existing and potential storefront and informal business owners
- » *Property Control & Development.* Addresses years of disinvestment through a long-term strategy through which the North End can take control of its physical assets

Workforce Development

- » *“Healthy Beginnings” Workforce Training Program.* Connects North End residents to healthcare job opportunities, the community’s largest employment sector
- » *Comprehensive Vocational English Training Program.* Adapts Campus-based ESL courses through a case management approach that integrates “everyday” and “occupational” training
- » *Youth/School to Work Program.* Combines school retention, career exploration, and access to entry-level work opportunities in an integrated, comprehensive system

Executive Report

This Economic Development Plan for the North End in Springfield, MA has been produced by a team of nine graduate students (the Project Team) from the Department of Urban Studies & Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) as part of an ongoing, multi-year collaboration between M.I.T. and the North End community. The North End Campus Committee and North End Outreach Network (NEON) retained the Project Team to create a plan based on economic development principles established in its own 2003 strategic plan, as well as the work of previous collaborations between M.I.T. and the community. The Project Team's work has been completed as part of the "Springfield Studio" practicum course, co-taught by Professors Ceasar McDowell and Karl Seidman, during the period from September to December 2005.

Process

The client charged the Project Team with creating a plan for the North End that applies a population-based approach to economic development. In response, the Project Team utilized an analytical framework consisting of three main economic development pillars: workforce, business, and real estate development. The Project Team investigated these areas by striving to understand the client and community in as nuanced a manner as possible, given time and resource limitations. The research process included the following activities:

- » **Site Visits:** nearly weekly on-site meetings and interviews
- » **Quantitative Analysis:** labor, property, and local retail markets

- » **Stakeholder Interviews:** more than 40 interviews with stakeholders from the city, local agencies, schools, Baystate Medical System, and regional workforce and economic development agencies
- » **Focus Groups:** 4 focus groups on employment and business development issues, involving NEON staff, North End residents, storefront business owners, and informal business owners
- » **Survey:** more than 100 residents on workforce and business development needs
- » **Client Working Sessions:** 3 presentation and working sessions with Campus Committee members

Findings

From this process, several findings on economic development in the North End became readily apparent. In general, the North End has numerous assets that can be utilized towards promoting equitable economic development. First, the neighborhood is home to a host of dedicated service providers working on an array of workforce and business development issues. Several neighborhood and City stakeholders specifically remarked on the unique human capital that resides in the North End. Second, as evidenced by the Campus Committee, stakeholders are committed to collaboration, networking, and information sharing. Impressively, the Campus Committee convenes stakeholders both across program areas as well as levels of jurisdiction. Third, the case management approach utilized by NEON offers an impressive success in the neighborhood and an excellent model for application beyond healthcare services. This approach, in fact, can form the backbone for a comprehensive economic development program.

In addition, the Project Team found several specific programmatic needs required for the North End to build momentum towards overarching economic development goals. In the area of business development, these needs include creating opportunities for new and existing North End businesses, strengthening connections among business owners and between business owners and service providers, building cooperation among Main Street businesses, and targeting community control of vacant and occupied property (refer, Resource Section I). In the area of workforce development, needs include involving employers in planning training curriculum, integrating the basic skill needs and training opportunities for individual participants, and improving outreach to adult populations (refer, Resource Section II).

Institutional Recommendations

In considering these programmatic needs, the Project Team paid special attention to implementation requirements, and it became clear that institutional capacity represents the major challenge facing economic development in the North End. The myriad services available to neighborhood residents are offered in a fragmented manner that lacks coordination across providers and scales, such that providers cannot lead users from one program to another or provide tailored support throughout a structured process. For example, specific job placement services that a participant receives may not be coordinated with his/her ESL training, so the participant does not follow a coordinated series of services, thereby resulting in inefficiencies and mismatching. In addition, economic development in the North End is challenged by political factions at both the neighborhood and city level, stunting some opportunities for collaboration and creating an atmosphere in which some residents have lost faith in their community.

Conversely, the case management approach utilized by NEON for the coordination of healthcare services is a major asset that can be applied to economic development needs. This model allows for a continuous feedback loop that informs key providers in a timely manner to respond to the ever-changing needs of participants. Furthermore, by planning across providers, the community's resources can be leveraged most effectively. The programmatic recommendations in this report, though separated into workforce and business development areas for the sake of clarity, can best be realized through this case management, outreach-based approach, applied to economic development services in a coordinated and integrated manner. The Project Team thus focused on crafting an institutional arrangement that meets this vision with a core professional capacity dedicated to economic development in the North End.

The Project Team believes that this added North End economic development capacity needs to be housed within a new 501(c)3 organization, with the suggested name “El Puente/The Bridge” (refer, Resource Section III). There are several advantages to the formation of a new organization, in comparison to embedding this staff within an existing institution. First, El Puente can have a specific North End, economic development-focused mission. Although existing organizations address a number of economic development needs, no single entity is tackling the challenge in the holistic manner that is required. Second, El Puente would fill the institutional void of a coordinating entity. Rather than duplicate existing services, the organization would function through a case management approach and thus support existing providers. Third, El Puente would be uniquely positioned to implement the goals of the Campus Committee, a strong, established organization, but one which cannot presently act on its ideas. Finally, as the economic development engine for the North End, El Puente would be poised to receive funding from corporate community investment programs and city, state, and foundation grant programs. In this way, it would leverage existing com-

munity resources to attract additional funding in support of the efforts of service providers.

El Puente would function within the existing institutional fabric of the North End. Its relationship with the Campus Committee would involve receiving vision and guidance in return for providing implementation capacity for community needs. With existing service providers and employers, El Puente would provide information and human and financial resources in return for support for its North End focused mission. In addition, El Puente would hold a unique relationship with NEON by providing support and resources, while NEON would offer its outreach networks and case management expertise.

The Project Team has imagined a sequential process through which El Puente can initially work. First, staff would convene service providers to identify community resources and needs, followed by concentrated outreach efforts to increase participation and identify reasons for non-participation. With this information, staff would collaborate with other institutions to adapt program areas, accessibility, and effectiveness to better respond to the needs of North End residents. Furthermore, at this point, staff could seek additional funding for community-wide economic development initiatives, thereby increasing resources for all organizations.

A possible mission statement for El Puente is “**to improve the economic well-being of every North End resident by coordinating programs, assembling resources, and addressing the needs of other community institutions.**”

Specific functions of the organization can be summarized as follows:

- » Coordinate outreach and case management network for economic development
- » Generate financial resources for existing agencies and organizations
- » Collaborate extensively with NEON
- » Implement economic development goals and vision of Campus Committee

Key organizational characteristics of El Puente include:

- » Independent, 501(c)3 organization with official bylaws and articles of incorporation
- » Office located at the Campus
- » Board of Directors composed of Campus Committee members
- » Staffing plan initially includes an Executive Director and Program Manager
- » Organizational budget anticipated at \$120,000-\$180,000/year
- » Seed funding (5 years) from community investment programs, subsequent funding from private foundations

Program Recommendations

The Project Team has developed a set of recommended programs that follow its institutional strategy and represent the beginnings of a population-based approach to economic development in the North End. These programs have been designed to complement and support, rather than duplicate, existing initiatives.

Business Development Programs (refer, Resource Section I)

Technical Assistance Hub

A central coordinating office is critical to connecting North End business owners to technical assistance resources. A number of service providers exist at the city and state level that businesses can access, including the Springfield Technical Community College, Latino Chamber of Commerce, Western Massachusetts Enterprise Fund, Springfield Business Development Corporation, and the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network. Rather than duplicate efforts of existing service providers, this hub would function as an information gatherer and referral service for the business community. In addition, staff can conduct targeted outreach to connect business owners to one another, and can continually evaluate the needs of businesses and the services offered, thereby providing critical feedback to providers.

Pushcart Retail Program

A pushcart retail program supports market expansion efforts for existing and potential storefront and informal business owners by providing opportunities to sell products through a low-risk venture that requires minimal upfront capital investment. Due to difficulties in obtaining required health certifications and the higher cost of carts equipped for heating food, retail can initially focus on non-food items, such as crafts, jewelry, flowers and plants, CDs and tapes, clothes, health and beauty aids, and candy. However, given that food is one of the North End's

major assets, pushcart food vending can certainly be explored for the future. Two locations have been identified for situating the pushcarts: at the Campus' outdoor open public space and in front of Baystate satellite locations at the northern end of Main Street and Birnie Avenue. The program's public nature can provide a highly visible success for the community, upon which future business development efforts can be built, as well as promote street life and vibrancy.

Property Control & Development

Property control and development represents a long-term goal for the North End that is critical to commercial and overall economic development. Though this program area is largely beyond the scope of the Project Team's mandate, initial steps are required to lay the foundation for future work that addresses the disinvestment and poor conditions of the neighborhood's physical assets. Only through local property ownership can the neighborhood truly contribute to land use planning. The development of Main Street as a thriving commercial corridor, a goal mentioned by numerous stakeholders, also requires coordination in streetscape, security, and signage, all of which are facilitated by local control of commercial property. In addition, the neighborhood needs a strategy for working with the City to consider rezoning parcels to facilitate commercial development. The Project Team recommends conducting a rigorous property analysis, perhaps utilizing students from M.I.T., and forming a working group among North End business and community leaders to develop a formalized strategy.

Workforce Development Programs (refer, Resource Section II)

“Healthy Beginnings” Workforce Training Program

A healthcare job training program seeks to connect North End residents to job opportunities in healthcare, the community’s largest employment sector. The program initially focuses on outreach to residents to assess strengths and weaknesses, and then developing a targeted sequential training curriculum with the collaboration of employers. In addition, a strategy for moving residents through different levels of training is required, as is providing support to participants during initial years of work. In the long-term, this program can be integrated into a comprehensive workforce delivery training program. Its impact can be quite significant, by providing North End residents with entry to stable, living wage employment that is enhanced by job ladders into long-term career paths.

Comprehensive Vocational English Training Program

This program addresses several key objectives, including the need to re-focus ESL courses to vocational preparedness, integrate language training into a lifelong learning process, and advocate for a comprehensive ESL strategy for the North End. In response, the Project Team recommends a program that adapts Campus-based ESL courses to better serve North End residents through a case management approach. This program would integrate “everyday” and “occupational” ESL training such that course content is coordinated across providers and participants can graduate from one level of ESL to another in a sequential order. Critical first steps in this program include reorganizing Campus-based ESL courses to accommodate students’ purpose of study (everyday vs. occupational language skills) and skill level, as well as targeting residents already in the workforce for continuing training.

Youth/School to Work Program

This program recommends an integrated, comprehensive system to assist North End youth in the transition from education to career-oriented activities. It combines school retention, career exploration, and access to entry-level work opportunities to engage student interest, enhance skill acquisition, develop positive work attitudes, and prepare youth for high-skill and living wage careers. The goal is to encourage young people to think beyond the often limiting conditions of poor minority communities by building the confidence, education, resources, skills, and relationships required to reach their full potential. This program works to combat the realities of high rates of school drop-outs, teenage pregnancy, truancy, and juvenile delinquency. Most generally, such a program provides a support system for youth in desperate need of assistance to meet educational and professional potential.

Using this Plan

This Executive Report is intended to serve as an overview and gateway to the resources included in the remainder of the plan. Given that community members will have different interests in and uses for this document, it has been structured such that components can be utilized separately and also as chapters in an integrated plan.

Resource Section

I. Business Development

II. Workforce Development

III. El Puente

Business Development

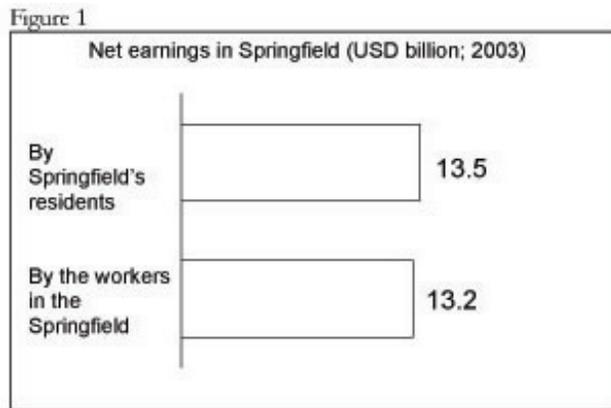
Analysis

Approach

- 1. Technical Assistance Hub*
- 2. Pushcart Retail Program*
- 3. Property Control & Development*

Analysis

Earning Leakage Analysis



Our data indicate that \$13.5 billion was earned by Springfield residents in 2003 while \$13.2 billion was earned by those who work in Springfield (not necessarily residents). These figures suggest that overall there is not a substantial leakage of earnings from Springfield to outside regions.

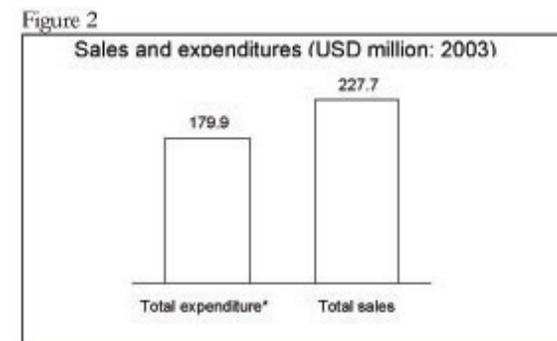
Sales Gap Analysis

As shown in Figure 2, in 2003, North End residents were estimated to have spent \$179.9 million.¹ Based on these calculated income levels, North End households had an estimated purchasing power of \$179.9 million in 2003. In reality, however, the data shows that \$227.7 million was sold in the North End in the same year. These figures suggest two possibilities: (1) households are spending more than estimated by the

¹This estimate was made by applying the average expenditure pattern of different income groups of the U.S. to the North End, then weight-averaging the national data so that the data reflects the North End's income composition.

data, and (2) households are buying only a portion of what is being sold in their neighborhood and the excess amount is being sold to non-residents. Available data are not sufficient to determine which possibility is the cause for the difference. The implication, however, is that, overall, the North End's internal demand is well captured by its internal supply.

Expenditure Allocation Analysis



In absolute terms, the North End's expenditure per household is less than that of the Northeast, due to lower income levels. Therefore, basic items that are necessary for living tend to represent a higher proportion of total expenditures of the North End (Figure 3). Basic items would include housing, groceries, restaurant/fast food, healthcare, and apparel. This suggests that a higher proportion of North End household resources need to be allocated to these items when compared with the Northeastern average.

Figure 3

Top retail categories*	% share in the total expenditure	
	North End	Northeast
Food (Groceries)	9.3	7.7
Personal insurance and pensions	7.7	11.0
Vehicle purchases	6.1	7.0
Restaurants	6.0	5.8
Healthcare	5.8	5.0
Apparel and services	5.2	4.7

* Housing is excluded as the size of housing business does not affect the store space
 ** Annual

Retail Space Gap Analysis

We selected the top retail categories and analyzed how much retail space could be supported by the North End’s internal demand and compared that to how much retail space exists currently. The result was that supermarkets, auto repair, retail, and bodywork shops and healthcare services had retail space (square footage) exceeding internal demand, implying that these businesses are selling their goods and services to non-residents of the North End (Figure 4). On the other hand, restaurants’ current amount of retail space is lower than what could be supported, indicating that this sector is not taking advantage of all of the North End’s internal demand. The analysis suggests that the retail space of restaurants in the North End could be increased by half, thereby fulfilling the internal demand.

Figure 4

Top retail categories*	Expenditure / household**	# of households	Sales / Sq.	Required retail space	Existing space
Food	\$2,80	593	\$33	49,597Sq.f	52,022Sq.f
Personal insurance and pensions	\$2,33		N /	N /	N /
Vehicle	\$1,85		\$1,21	9,064Sq.f	34,839Sq.f
Restaurant	\$1,82		\$17	61,893Sq.f	41,053Sq.f
Healthcar	\$1,77		\$19	53,346Sq.f	171,210Sq.f
Apparel and	\$1,56		\$37	24,830Sq.f	N /

* Housing is excluded as the size of housing business does not affect the store space
 ** Annual

Real Estate and Housing Analysis

Land use

The North End is a predominantly residential area by zoning. It has a solid residential core, consisting of multifamily residential space in the southern portion of Brightwood and most of Memorial Square, with single family residential units in the northern part of Brightwood. The North End also has an industrial area in the northeastern portion of Brightwood, in addition to a commercial strip along Main Street. Table 1 shows the different zones in the North End by area.

Table 1

Zoning in the North End		
Zone	Area (acre)	Percentage
Business	49.69	14.5%
Commercial	5.23	1.5%
Industrial	33.15	9.7%
Office	1.43	0.4%
Residential	253.64	73.9%
Total	343.14	100.0%

Housing stock

In 2000, there were 3,482 housing units in the North End, 6.4% of which were vacant, compared to the 1.44% state average. The North End also had an extremely low homeownership rate of 13.5%, compared to 63.8% for Massachusetts² (Table 2). A significant number of the North End's housing units are subsidized through Section 8 vouchers, representing a major portion of the 3,400 housing units in Springfield. Edgewater Apartments and Pynchon Terrace are major housing developments that accommodate 616 units of Section 8 rentals. Both developments, which are run by a private management company, receive HUD funds through the city and are in the process of rehabilitation.

Table 2

	Brightwood		Memorial Square		North End	
	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%
Owner occupied	237	16.33%	234	11.52%	471	13.53%
Renter occupied	1158	79.81%	1629	80.21%	2787	80.04%
Vacant	56	3.86%	168	8.27%	224	6.43%
Total	1451	100%	2031	100%	3482	100%

From the residential and commercial property market perspective, the North End needs to be considered as two separate areas, Brightwood and Memorial Square. Brightwood consists predominantly of housing, and anecdotal evidence suggests that there is an unmet demand for additional housing. However, Brightwood does not demonstrate a good balance of owner-occupied and rented units, as evidenced by its extremely low homeownership rate. Meanwhile, Memorial Square has a mix of commercial and residential space, and interviewees have noted a better balance of rented and owner-occupied space (although the official data contradicts this claim).

2 US Census, 2000

Substandard structures

The North End's real estate market is plagued by substandard conditions and overcrowded housing. Poor conditions are due to many reasons, including graffiti, broken windows, vacant properties, poor landscaping in public and private spaces, trash, lack of adequate lighting, and poor streetscapes. The problems may also include poor structural conditions, a situation that is hard to assess. Absentee landlordism contributes significantly to the problem and seems to contribute to a lack of caretaking in many residential blocks.

Property ownership and developable land

Property ownership in the North End is dominated by a few major landlords. Of the 343.14 acres in the neighborhood, 28% is owned by three major entities: the City of Springfield (14%), Pynchon Partners (8%), and the Springfield Housing Authority (6%). Furthermore, the top 11 landlords control 36% of all property (Table 3).

Table 3

Major North End Landlords	Area (acres)
City of Springfield	47.78
Pynchon Partners	25.29
Springfield Housing Authority	20.22
Bel Air Homes Associates	4.77
Brightwood Development Corporation	4.73
Alcoholism & Drug Services of Western MA	4.70
Park View South LLC	4.59
Villar Salvador J	4.50
The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority	4.25
Springfield Redevelopment Authority	3.51
Roman Catholic Bishop of Springfield	3.45
Total (top 11)	123.09
Total (all)	343.14

Vacant property in the North End is an asset and a challenge. There are 131 parcels of developable land in the North End (Table 4, Figure 5),

of which 68% are zoned as residential. The vacant parcels are scattered throughout the North End, which means limited opportunities for consolidating parcels into larger, perhaps more attractive spaces; on the other hand, the small parcels may be a benefit to increasing use by low-moderate income populations. 24% of these parcels are owned by seven landlords (Table 5). Of the total developable lands, Park View South owns 8.9%.

The significant number of absentee landlords poses a serious problem to maintaining residential and commercial areas, as well as coordinating development in a cohesive manner. Many properties have been put up for bid by the city. Finally, additional analysis is required of any brown-fields and general environmental hazards on the vacant properties.

Table 4

Zoning of Developable Land	Total area
Business (B1)	4.56
Business (B2)	0.78
Commercial (C1)	1.34
Commercial (C2)	0.86
Residential (R1)	2.92
Residential (R2)	6.46
Residential (R3)	7.45
Total	24.41

Table 5

Major Landlords of Developable Land in the North End	
	Area (acres)
Brightwood Development Corporation	1.13
Cumberland Homes Limited Partners	0.63
Dutkiewicz Mitcheill & Giuseppe Cicchet	0.50
NE Enterprises LLC	0.51
Park View South LLC	2.16
Villar Salvador J	0.28
Della Torre Robert J & Lynn A Baker & PAU	0.65
Total	5.85

Figure 5



Approach

The above analyses suggest that while the North End's internal demand has been well captured by the area, further business development opportunities might lie in basic item retail—particularly in restaurants. However, in reality there is relatively little growth in restaurant businesses in the North End, primarily due to the lack of capital, space and managerial skills, and the complex administrative processes required to start businesses. Given the high demand yet insufficient supply of businesses, there is a need to create a mechanism through which basic item retail businesses, particularly restaurant businesses, can be nurtured by the residents of the North End.

This business development mechanism would create opportunities for new and existing North End businesses, strengthen cooperation between business owners both on Main Street and off, and build connections with technical assistance providers. Strategies developed should also target community control of vacant and occupied property.

The Project Team recommends a set of programs focused on Main Street that represent the beginnings of a population-based approach to economic development in the North End. Revitalizing Main Street will provide stability to existing businesses, allow new businesses to enter the market, and could trigger development throughout the neighborhood. In order to address these needs, this report suggests implementing three programs: a technical assistance hub, the pushcart program, and real estate development and control. These programs have been designed to complement and support, rather than duplicate, existing initiatives. These programs will be discussed in detail in the coming section. We suggest that these programs are crucial to ensuring the success of a population-based, sustainable economic development plan.

North End Technical Assistance Hub Program

Objective

To provide easier access to the existing technical assistance programs to business owners through a decentralized model, promoting business development in the North End.

Description

A technical assistance hub program (The Hub Program) is intended to help those who are interested in starting new businesses or expanding their existing businesses by creating easier access to the technical assistance programs that a variety of agencies provide, disseminating information on programs and referring those who are interested to appropriate agencies. The Hub Program will pursue a decentralized model, in which the agencies that are providing technical assistance programs will stay independent, though cooperation and coordination amongst one another will be encouraged, and the Hub Program will function as a focal point/referral point of the different technical assistance programs. Initially, El Puente's Program Director should act as a coordinator that business owners and potential entrepreneurs could visit easily. The coordination could expand into a full-time position should the demand rise in the future. In the course of the implementation, thorough evaluation should be conducted on a regular basis in order to assure effective use of the Hub Program and make necessary improvements.

Rationale

There are a great number of businesses in the North End, both formal and informal businesses. While there are some extremely successful cas-

es, many are facing difficulties due to lack of financial resources and technical capabilities. Formalizing informal businesses entails daunting tasks such as getting licenses and going through accounting processes, etc. As a result, despite the fact that there is high demand for certain goods/services and there are people who are willing to provide these goods/services, many business owners are not able to expand their businesses simply because of the lack of capital and know-how to do so.

“I am a manicurist, and I moved to Springfield last year. I provide manicure service in my sister’s apartment. I know that on the Main Street there is only an English-speaking nail salon and people would like a Spanish-speaking one. I would be interested, but I don’t know how things work here. I don’t have money. I don’t know how to start a business, I don’t know anything.” (Manicurist, home-based)

As a matter of fact, however, there are a number of technical assistance programs in the North End that are intended to help business expansion in the North End, including those in the table below.

Existing assistance programs

(Details attached in Appendix H)

Programs	Types of assistance	Contents
Springfield Technical Community College (STCC)	Space & Technical	Affordable leases, office infrastructure, training sessions, business advice, etc.
Western MA Enterprise Fund	Financial & Technical	Different kinds of loans, business advice and loan application assistance
Affiliated Chamber of Commerce of Greater Springfield	Financial	Different kinds of loans
Springfield Business Development Corporation	Technical	Infrastructure support

Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network	Technical	Management counseling services and training
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However, these programs are not known to many business owners in the North. Consequently, the usage rate of these programs in the North End is significantly lower than in the other parts of Springfield.

“They don’t know how to grow their businesses with offered programs” (Springfield business development professional)

“The North End’s usage level of the assistance program is low” (Springfield business development professional)

“It has always been my dream to have my own store, but it seems so complicated to start a business. Registration, license, property management, etc. would be so tough. Plus I don’t have money. I don’t know any assistance program. I have never thought about taking out a loan.” (Craft-making business owner, home-based)

“I already have loans for my children and I wouldn’t be qualified for another loan to expand my business. If there is any loan available for starting a new business, I would jump on it. But I don’t know any.” (Translator, home-based)

Providing sufficient information about the assistance programs to business owners would be essential to grow their businesses. These assistance programs are currently provided by different and independent agencies, and this decentralized model should be continued; however,

there should be a function to bridge the gap between business owners and the programs. The Hub Program should assign a coordinator who will help business owners in the North End understand what kind of assistance they could receive and refer them to appropriate programs. The existing programs do not appear accessible and having a coordinator in a place that is accessible physically and psychologically for the community, such as the campus, would be a key for success.

“If I could find someone who would help me, I would love it. If there is an assistance person at NEON or elsewhere, I would even pay for this kind of service.” (Manicurist, home-based)

“It would be great if someone could help us gather information. Otherwise the whole process of starting a business seems so complex and impossible.” (Craft-making business, home-based)

Implementation

Short-term (3-6 months)

- » **Conduct outreach to assistance providers.** Though the Hub Program will pursue a decentralized model in which assistance providers will maintain their independent activities, El Puente will need to involve them to ensure a smooth and efficient referral system.
- » **Conduct needs assessment.** Though basic needs have been identified in this report, more detailed assessment will be required to design the Hub Program structure. The assessment will explore such needs as information required, qualification of the coordinator, hours of operation, site preference, etc.

Mid-term (6 months-2 years)

- » **Advertise coordination initiative.** The Hub Program must be effectively advertised to make sure people are informed. Communi-

cation tools such as flyers and posters should be used, but word-of-mouth effect plays an important role in the information dissemination processes in the North End, particularly in the Hispanic Community, and leveraging this channel should also be considered.

Long-term (2-5 years)

- » **Conduct evaluation of services.** Thorough evaluation should be conducted on a regular basis to consider areas for improvement. Hiring a full-time person should be considered should the demand be proven high in the long run.

Funding

Staff costs for coordination is the main expense for the Hub Program. Other than staffing, the program will have no costs except for miscellaneous office overhead, all of which should be funded by El Puente.

Staffing

A key to the success of the Hub Program is its implementation by a strong coordinator who has good rapport with North End businesses. In the beginning when El Puente is staffed solely by an Executive Director, the coordination of the Hub could be a part-time role for him or her. Later, a full-time Program Director should be hired to expand the program, as well as work on the pushcart program and other economic development functions.

North End Pushcart Retail Program

Objective

To implement a retail pushcart program in the North End that provides low-cost, low-risk opportunities for local storefront and informal business owners to expand their market presence.

Description

A pushcart program allows existing and potential storefront and informal business owners to sell their products through a low-risk venture that requires minimal upfront capital investment. Due to difficulties in obtaining required health certifications and the higher cost of carts equipped for heating food, retail should initially focus on non-food items, such as crafts, jewelry, flowers and plants, CDs and tapes, clothes, health and beauty aids, and candy. Given that food is one of the North End's major assets, however, food vending from pushcarts can certainly be explored for the future. Two locations have been identified for situating the pushcarts: at the Campus' open public space and in front of Baystate satellite locations at the north end of Main Street and Birnie Avenue.

Initially, the program can operate from late spring to early fall, when weather allows outdoor retailing; in the future, there are also opportunities for locating carts indoors at the Campus. Permitting considerations need to be raised with the city; anecdotal evidence suggests that such permits are not unnecessarily difficult to attain with the proper guidance and support. Finally, the program will need to be coordinated by a lead organization, which purchases pushcarts to be leased out to business owners on a monthly basis.

Rationale

The North End is home to a range of informal and storefront businesses on and around Main Street. While some of these businesses are stable, many face a difficult business climate—safety concerns, a disjointed commercial strip, abandoned properties, and uncoordinated signage make Main Street a challenging commercial corridor in which to operate a business. Business owners often struggle to make rent payments, do not have guaranteed leases, and exist without security for their future. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests that they do not feel supported by community resources and leadership.

The process of starting and expanding a business is extremely challenging to both storefront and informal business owners. Raising sufficient funds, obtaining required permits and licenses from the city, securing selling space, purchasing goods, hiring employees, and marketing products and services can be so daunting as to discourage entrepreneurial aspirations. A retail pushcart program responds to these challenges by providing a low-cost, low-risk mechanism through which business owners can sell goods in a supported, coordinated environment. The program targets those in the community with ambition who might not otherwise be able to start or grow a business.

Pushcart photo courtesy of: www.cblpushcarts.com

Though the actual number of people who participate in a retail pushcart program is limited, the benefits can spread community-wide. The program's public nature can provide a highly visible success for the community upon which future business development efforts can be built, as well as promote vibrancy in the neighborhood's street life. In addition, there are numerous opportunities to expand the program if successful, such as developing a community kitchen or a school-based business start-up program with neighborhood youth.

"We would like to have some good food from Main Street in the North End, but we do not know of many places. We end up ordering for delivery from places outside the North End" (Baystate resident)

Implementation

Short-term (3-6 months)

- » Identify lead organization. A Campus Committee working group focused on business development will need to determine the lead organization to manage and implement the pushcart program. Possibilities include El Puente or the Latino Chamber of Commerce.
- » Conduct outreach efforts. In cooperation with NEON workers, the lead organization will identify storefront and informal businesses interested in selling goods through pushcarts at the Campus. In addition, outreach efforts will need to work with existing business owners to assuage potential fears that pushcarts represent competition to their businesses.
- » Conduct survey of Baystate residents and employees. In order to determine the types of goods of potential interest for sale at the Baystate satellite facilities, the lead organization will implement a brief survey, and also explore both food and other goods targeted at visitors to the facility, such as flowers, cards, and balloons.

Mid-term (6 months-2 years)

- » Purchase pushcarts. The lead organization will buy the equipment, the costs of which range from \$3,000-\$5,000 per cart and can be purchased from online and traditional sources. Insurance will also be required for the equipment.
- » Develop leasing structure. The lead organization will determine an appropriate structure for leasing the pushcarts to business owners. Comparable programs have set fees at \$250-\$500 per month per cart, plus an initial deposit for participation.
- » Determine program timing. The lead organization will consider timing of pushcarts to coincide with lunch-time and after-school and work activity, as well as exploring possibilities for locating carts indoors at the Campus in the winter.
- » Identify technical assistance. The lead organization, in cooperation with other Springfield providers, will evaluate the assistance needed by push-cart businesses, including navigating the permitting process with the City, pricing goods, and marketing.
- » Streamline permitting process. The lead organization will work with the relevant City agencies to explore developing a streamlined permitting process for push-cart users. In addition, health requirements applicable to food vending will need to be determined.
- » Identify storage location. The lead organization will identify a central location for storing the pushcarts overnight and in the off-season. A space within the Campus or an underutilized City-owned building on Main Street are strong possibilities, as the carts should be stored near selling locations to minimize transportation.
- » Host a community-wide event. The lead organization will launch the pushcart program through a community-building event at the Campus to build interest and attract local shoppers. Following the launch at the Campus, and pending the survey results, the lead organization will explore setting up carts outside the Baystate satellite facilities, near Main Street and Birnie Avenue.

Long-term (2-5 years)

- » Explore food vending. Following implementation of selling non-food items, the lead organization will explore the possibilities of food vending in the pushcarts, working with the City and Board of Health on requirements.
- » Explore spin-off programs. The lead organization will explore establishing new initiatives that complement the pushcart program, such as setting up food preparation sites and/or a community kitchen at the Campus.

Funding

Comparable pushcart programs have cost approximately \$50,000 per year to operate, including equipment purchase, storage and maintenance costs, and staff time for coordination. Pushcarts cost between \$3,000 and \$5,000 each, and comparable programs have charged \$250 to \$500 per month for leasing. Business owners must also purchase general liability insurance and required permits.

Fundraising for the pushcart program can be targeted at several sources. Community institutions such as Baystate Health System, MassMutual, and other banks could be approached as sponsors of pushcarts, in return for banners or other promotional materials placed on the pushcarts. Baystate has expressed preliminary interest in this possibility through its Community Benefits Fund. The City is another potential source for institutional capacity funding through business development resources.

Staffing

A key to the success of the pushcart program is its implementation by a strong institution focused on North End business development. The lead organization will also need to coordinate the provision of technical assistance and/or referrals to other service providers with the Technical Assistance Hub, especially for new participants in the program.

The pushcart program will likely require a part-time staff position to coordinate and maintain ongoing logistics. Initially, however, a full-time position will be required to conduct outreach, establish protocols, liaise with the city, and launch the program.

Property Control & Development

Objective

To establish the basis for a real estate development approach that meets the community's need for business development and ensures its control over properties.

Description

Real estate development and control is a long-term vision. Real estate analysis needs a rigorous study that is beyond the scope and capacity of this report. Therefore, our plan for the real estate development and control will be a generic one that looks into the long-term vision and highlights possible future approaches, programs, and funding sources.

There is a focus in this implementation plan on Main Street, which is a hub for local retailers and service providers and could act as a trigger for the development of the whole neighborhood. Revitalizing Main Street will guarantee stability of the existing businesses and will enable new businesses to enter the market.

Real estate development on Main Street faces many challenges, including deteriorated physical conditions, development constraints relating to property ownership, zoning, land use, vacancy, and the lack of a community-based real estate and housing entity.³

³ The area of analysis is between Dover Street in the north (Campus) and Church Street in the south (the church). The area contains 75 land lots of which 58 have built structures of different sizes.

Poor and deteriorated physical conditions

Of the 58 structures surveyed on Main Street, only 13 are in good condition, 17 are in fair condition, and 28 are in poor condition (Appendix H). Poor physical conditions lead to an alarming disinvestment in Main Street, and create an extremely negative image that causes a feel of insecurity among residents. Empirical evidence shows that spaces that suffer from low standards of maintenance are less able to “defend themselves,” and are more vulnerable to vandalism and illegal activities than well-maintained spaces. Many interviewees expressed feelings of insecurity while they are in the street, especially at night. Two interviewees asked for a stronger police presence.

Feelings of insecurity have serious consequences on businesses on Main Street including a decline in the number of customers, threatening the stability of existing businesses and discouraging new businesses from entry, and depreciation of property values, including housing values.

“I used to take care of children at home in the North End. Now I am applying for a formal license but it was denied because they came to check the property condition, and my apartment was too hot (120F). So now I am waiting for the landlord to fix it and I rarely do day care service. I will not do it until I get a license.” (North End resident, informal business owner)

Zoning and land use

The corridor needs rezoning to ensure conversion of undesirable land uses to meet the community’s current business needs (Appendix H). Many residents expressed their dissatisfaction with the liquor store in Main Street and its negative effects on the neighborhood. Others expressed their wish to have a pharmacy. There is a need to convert industrial properties into office or retail space, to build on vacant parcels of lands that were cleared after the Urban Renewal Plan of 1958, and to take stronger measures towards violation of city ordinances. This

will meet the need for more retail space, especially restaurant space, and facilitate the entry of new businesses or the expansion of established ones.

“I would like to move to a bigger space, but I’m not sure where I would go, there aren’t places to build.” (North End resident, formal business owner)

“I would love to have a store on Main Street and sell b-day gifts, little crafts, and things.” (North End resident, informal business owner)

Ownership and vacancy

Just like the rest of the neighborhood, Main Street suffers from residential vacancy and absentee landlordism. Many business owners expressed their dissatisfaction with their landlords due to their unwillingness to improve the standards of the structures or to sell their properties. This tension in these relationships causes a feeling of insecurity and instability among business owners. Moreover, 36% of land parcels are owned by six public and private institutions. Community control over land should ensure that any future development meets the community’s current needs for different asset types, eliminates barriers for local businesses, and deepens the feeling of stability among existing businesses.

Lack of a specialized real estate and housing entity that can channel resources

Massachusetts is a state with many opportunities for community-based real estate development. There are nine major state agencies that act as vehicles towards increasing homeownership in healthy communities. However, the North End has not been able to benefit much from such resources due to the lack of a specialized, operational, community-based entity. Such an entity can locate funding resources, offer counseling and assistance to homebuyers and property owners,

and facilitate loans through agreements with financial institutions, and exert pressure or partner with property owners or other institutions at a later stage. This agency might be a non-profit developer that ensures the development of new structures or the renovation of the old ones in a way that meets the community's needs.

Rationale

Real estate development and control in the North End should meet the community's demand for commercial properties and housing through a broad vision for rezoning that encourages investment in vacant lands and substandard structures while ensuring community control over its physical assets. The development should also meet the community's need for a safe and secure place that reflects the vibrancy of the community to both outsiders and insiders.

This implementation plan focuses on Main Street, which is a hub for local retailers and service providers, and could act as a trigger for the development of the whole neighborhood. Community-based revitalization of Main Street will guarantee stability of the existing businesses and will enable new businesses to enter the market.

Implementation

Short-term (3-6 months)

- » Explore conducting a rigorous real estate analysis. The North End has a tradition of collaborating with the MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning and the Center for Reflective Community Practice through practicum classes, under which this report has been written. The Campus Committee should explore the possibility of having a new practicum in 2006-2007 to carry out such an analysis.
- » Form a Campus Committee Working Group on Property Development and Control to explore institutional opportunities for real

estate control and development. Possibilities include assigning the task to El Puente or to one of the existing institutions, or creating a new CDC. The assigned institution should hire a real estate and housing development expert and it should benefit from the expertise of other CDCs and non-profit real estate developers in the region. Appendix G includes a list of CDCs in the region with contact information.

- » Conduct a supply and demand study of different asset types. The Campus Committee Working Group on Property Development and Control should hire a consultant to conduct a thorough assessment that determines the existing uses, square footage, prices, conditions, etc. There is also a need to match these spaces to potential business recruitment opportunities through meetings with community members, residents of Main Street, service providers, property owners, and business owners (formal and informal).

Mid-term (6 months-2 years)

The development of real estate will depend highly on the entity that the Campus Committee names to carry out the responsibility. While it is beyond the scope of this study to give specific implementation processes, we emphasize taking the following issues in consideration in the long-term:

- » Create a broad vision for rezoning, conversion of spaces, and demolition of old properties to meet the community's current needs.
- » Create an open public space. Such a space will deepen the sense of ownership among the community members and will ensure to the outsiders the vibrancy of the community. The Plan for the North End Campus, recommended by the MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning studio in 2004, created designs to connect the North End residents through reclaiming Thomas Street Park, the Gerena School, and Chestnut School areas and creating a public spaces for the community.

- » Enforce existing city ordinances. Initially, there is a need to enforce ordinances that do not cause permanent changes in structures and do not require many resources. These ordinances lack substantial immediate impact on the Main Street, but will result in incremental transformation over time. An example on this is removing trash and keeping the residential yards on a good shape. The City may name a staff member to implement this strategy. At a later stage though, stronger measures should be taken towards substandard buildings, vacant properties, and all other violations of city ordinances.
- » Create best property practices program. This program will address business owners, tenants, property owners, and homebuyers to educate them about their legal rights and obligations, financial resources and strategies, and assistance programs available to them. This could be through workshops or one-to-one consultations. Consultation may also include improving designs, marketing and advertising for business owners. The program may be interconnected with the Technical Assistance Hub. At a later stage the program may be expanded to offer the participants financial resources through matching funds from the City.

Long -term (2 years-5 years)

- » Create Façade, Lighting, and Signage Design Guidelines. The program will enhance the physical appearance of storefronts and increase safety through additional storefront lighting. The restoration of an historic storefront's signage and lighting should also be included in the guidelines. The program should provide matching funds, possibly from the City, to be used for the new signage and lighting. Applicants will be responsible to hire qualified professionals to implement the City-approved designs, including installation. The Best Property Practices Program should be able to offer consultation about conceptual design ideas.
- » Develop designs for the streetscape, lighting, sidewalks, and pedestrian lines. The City may be able to use Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and other state sources for implementation.

- » Evaluate the need for land trust to ensure community control over the land.
- » Assess the need and possibility of nominating buildings for the National Register for Historic Places. Main Street has old structures with an average age of 77 years. Many of the structures were built before 1920, around 35 of them were built before 1955, and 5-7 only were built after 1990 (Figure 8). Many of these structures have their historic significance and still maintain their integrity. Possible nominations include the bus depot.

Funding

Funding for the proposed implementation initiatives may come from different sources. There are numerous real estate development and housing rehabilitation programs that are available at the city, state, and federal levels. Those include CEDAC, HAP, MACDC, Healthy Homes Demonstration Program, Lead Based Paint Hazard Control Grant Program, CDBG, and Section 108 loan guarantee program. Appendix G highlights some of the possible funding sources.

Staffing

A key to the success of real estate development and control is its implementation by a strong institution. In the short run, the Campus Committee Working Group on Property Development and Control may hire a consultant. Tasks include visioning, rezoning and conversion of space based on demand and supply assessment. In the long term, however, there is a need for a full-time real estate development and housing specialist. Tasks will include negotiating with other stakeholders, building alliances with CDCs and non-profit development agencies, writing grants and applying for different programs, and proposing new programs to the city and New North Citizens' Council. There might be a need for the New North Citizens' Council to hire another staff member to help enforce city ordinances, formalizing proposals for rezoning, developing street designs, and creating new

programs like the Best Property Practices and Façade, Lighting, and Signage Design Guidelines.

Workforce Development

Analysis

Approach

- 1. Healthy Beginnings*
- 2. Vocational English*
- 3. Focus on Youth*

Analysis

Overview

The North End in Springfield suffers from poverty and unemployment, yet the greater Springfield-regional economy in which it is situated offers a large number of well-paying, entry-level jobs that have potential for career advancement. We believe that the reasons for North End residents' inability to access this vast arena of potential employment include low educational attainment, insufficient comfort with or proficiency using English, and lack of social or institutional connections to the labor market and workforce development resources.

The region is well-served by a variety of successful programs addressing issues of workforce development including ESL, career counseling, retraining, and job placement programs. However, the number of North End residents that have enrolled in these programs is very small. This is due to the lack of outreach on the part of existing programs to people in the North End, inappropriate curricula to meet existing needs, and a lack of knowledge on the part of North End social service agencies of existing programs.

To remove these barriers and place more North End residents into gainful employment, we propose a case-based management approach to workforce development. This approach is distinguished by a primary focus on the needs of North End residents, and builds on the well-established population-based strategy with which NEON has successfully addressed healthcare issues. This strategy also seeks to create horizontal and vertical integration between the needs for basic skills and training by North End residents and workforce training and institutions, with the

goal of tailoring pathways to employment to the specific needs of North End residents.

This document lays out concrete ways to increase employment opportunities for North End residents. It includes background information on employment needs, opportunities, and ongoing challenges, and concludes with a menu of strategy recommendations and a proposed plan for implementing priority initiatives.

Barriers to Workforce Entry

The barriers for North End resident participation in the workforce are numerous. In this section, we lay out several of the key barriers to workforce development in the North End. These include: a lack of connection between residents and institutions and among institutions, a discouraged labor force, low educational attainment, and a lack of capacity to implement systemic change. Simultaneously, there are a large number of significant employment opportunities in the region.

A lack of connection between residents and institutions and among institutions

The North End is linguistically, socially, and institutionally isolated. Residents are not well connected to the labor market or to service providers outside the North End. Social service providers within the North End have limited connections to opportunities outside the neighborhood, and regional and citywide initiatives do not perform outreach addressed specifically to the North End.

Additionally, workforce development agencies are insufficiently connected to each other. Neither curricula nor resource gathering are planned for in a collaborative way among service providers. Lack of coordination between social service agencies and workforce development programs limits the efficacy of existing programmatic solutions. North End agencies lack institutional connections that would allow them to direct residents to existing programs outside the community, and because of a language barrier, residents are unwilling to seek outside resources on their own.

A discouraged labor force

In the North End, only 56% of men and 46% of women over 16 worked at all in 1999. More than 44% of single-parent families and 33% of two-parent families had no one in the workforce. However, unemployment in the North End, as measured by the US Census, was virtually 0%. Unemployment measures only those who have actively sought work within the four weeks prior to the census. Thus, more than half the adults in the North End were neither employed nor seeking employment. Some of these people are no doubt retired, disabled, or otherwise out of the labor force by unavoidable circumstance or by choice, but some percentage was – and is today – a discouraged labor force. This indicates that a vast majority of residents needing jobs would need significant training, and significant encouragement, to re-enter the workforce.

Low educational attainment

Low educational attainment is a significant obstacle to most North End residents seeking (or who might be discouraged from seeking) gainful employment. With a high school dropout rate of more than 50%, the North End has the lowest educational attainment in the city of Springfield, where citywide educational statistics are already poor. Youth in the community are not effectively prepared to enter the job market of the future. The MCAS failure rate in Springfield is nearly 75%.

Significant employment opportunities exist in the fields of healthcare and insurance

There are many jobs in the Springfield area that offer relatively high wages and do not require a college degree. A number of high-growth areas present meaningful opportunities in which North End residents could seek employment. Customer Service jobs in Springfield are growing by 20% annually, and for bill collectors, the employment growth rate is nearly 12%. In the medical sector, for example, there are at least 2,663 jobs paying \$12.00/hour. In all, there are more than 3,600 high-paying, career-oriented jobs requiring minimal skills. Local employers, including Baystate, are looking to fill hundreds of positions a year and are interested in partnerships to provide training and education.

The Case-Based Approach

Our approach to workforce development focuses on two primary concerns: reaching the largest possible number of North End residents, and maximizing employment outcomes for participants in workforce development programs – that is, making sure that people who go through training can expect to be rewarded with a good job at a good wage. We offer the case-based management approach as the best strategy.

Rationale

There are several reasons why a long-term case-based approach is the most appropriate for this program. First, this approach has been the basis of success for many workforce intermediaries across the nation in sectors with large employers. A case-based approach reduces the transaction costs of employers' own recruitment efforts by building, through caseworker data-gathering, a sophisticated base of information that intricately links employers' needs to the training of workers. NEON already has achieved success in this area by creating a power-

ful knowledge base of community demographics and health needs. An expanded NEON model can track participants through a training and development progression that will involve multiple steps. Not only is this information-building a powerful incentive for employers to come to the table, it can be a source of bargaining leverage that will create closer ties between employers and the community itself.

Also, a case-based approach is absolutely crucial to understanding the necessities of curriculum development and resource structuring (e.g. times, locations, costs, lengths of classes), not just in terms of ensuring the appropriateness of the classes offered, but in terms of mediating participants' transition into what for them is a very new and perhaps intimidating institutional environment. The process of gaining basic skills, then job skills, then seeking employment, then is a process that could take many years, and can be an incredibly difficult and frustrating experience. Having a person help the job seeker along the way can make a major difference in achieving success.

In addition, this particular approach is key to the consideration of the very specific needs of the North End. Many service and training providers interviewed by this class noted that there is a “service provider learning curve” that forced providers of assistance to tailor their programs to certain traits of the North End. These traits include:

- » The specifics of this Puerto Rican population's integration experience in Springfield and the North End
- » The history and effects of Urban Renewal efforts in the neighborhood
- » The spatial arrangement and conditions of residential commercial properties in the area
- » Specific language needs of a long-term non-English-proficient resident population
- » Transportation/accessibility issues

With the success brought about by pursuing a case-based approach, El Puente can establish itself as a model workforce intermediary and compete in an arena of private funding unavailable to most social service agencies in the North End.

Models

In a typical case-based program, an outreach worker is assigned a group of job seekers. The caseworker assesses the needs of a job seeker, and helps him or her access resources that can be of assistance, such as childcare resources, an ESL or GED course, or information about how his or her benefits will be affected by income earned. The case worker then regularly follows up with the job seeker, making sure that he or she continues progressing through the available training programs and services to a job.

This model has been shown to be both necessary and a significant source of success for other workforce programs. One well-known example is Project QUEST in San Antonio, Texas (www.questsa.com), in which participants receive support from case managers for a full two years. Evaluation has shown that program length is a key part of QUEST's high success rate. Federal programs such as the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), which only provides casework assistance for four months, have enjoyed less success. Especially when learning a new language or basic skills, having the assistance and encouragement of a caseworker for at least two years is key.

Strategic Recommendations

On the following pages, we present an overview of three strategies which we believe have the potential to transform workforce development in the North End.

Approach

Workforce Training Program: Healthy Beginnings

Objective

To establish a model program of case-managed worker training and placement in healthcare, the largest growth sector in Springfield.

Description

The healthcare workforce development program will have three phases: first, the harmonization and coordination of existing training programs for youth and adults. Second, the establishment of a labor market intermediary capable of shepherding workers through a multi-tiered process on a case-by-case basis into initial living wage-level employment in the sector. Third, the program should eventually be expanded to include follow-up of workers who have secured employment to help them gain further skills and certifications to move farther up their job ladders.

For the second and third phases to work at all, this program will require very close collaboration with employers in the healthcare sector. This is partly because training needs across jobs in this sector vary widely, and so the allocation of limited training resources will only be made efficient if employers are communicating clearly where the openings in their organizational structures are, as well as their specific interests in skills and training. Therefore, in the first phase of this program, a coalition will be built that can effectively approach employers as the one relevant entity with whom to communicate about the local workforce supply for local healthcare employment. The building of this coalition, along with a subsequent agreement to set formal terms of cooperation with employ-

ers in the sector, will be the basis for eventually seeking funding to make this a program with its own dedicated administrative staff.

Rationale

Across Massachusetts, the aging of the workforce creates two important opportunities for immigrants: first, the chance to replace older workers as they retire; and second, new jobs are created in healthcare to accommodate the needs of the growing elderly population. Already, the healthcare sector provides 8,000 full-time positions in Springfield alone, over 1,000 of which require an associate's degree or less while paying at least \$12 per hour. The amount of capital investment already operating in this sector cannot be matched by any publicly-supported job creation efforts, and the aggregate job compensation and mobility offered by this sector are on a scale far greater than anything possible through micro-enterprise efforts. Therefore, if the alleviation of poverty and the capacitation of North End residents to take control of and transform their neighborhood is a goal of the Campus Committee, then training for work in the healthcare sector is a necessary topic for concerted effort.

Implementation

Short-term (1-2 years)

- » Convene workforce-development service providers and employers: The Executive and Program Directors of El Puente create a healthcare-sector training coalition in the North End much like the original design of NEON: an outreach and coordination effort that reduces duplication of effort between agencies with similar programs and goals. Employers will discuss with training agencies how to make programs more effective conduits to jobs, and ideally would develop formal relations between the training coalition and employers' hiring departments. For example, they might collaborate

to provide guaranteed in-person job interviews for all students who reach a certain level in the training programs. Equally as important, the group will work to consider workforce training in health care as a North End-specific goal.

- » Train NEON staff: The information gained from employers and training providers will have to be communicated to NEON staff, whether through their participation in the initial meetings or through separate trainings conducted by El Puente staff. In either case, the goal will be to build outreach workers' knowledge of the skills needs of these jobs, which programs address which gaps, and how residents can participate in a long-term training process to reach basic literacy and requisite skill levels on job-specific skills.
- » Perform outreach/begin case management: Once service providers and employers have been brought together to build consensus on how best to cooperate on outreach to North End residents, the staff of El Puente will coordinate with staff from NEON to increase program attendance with door-to-door outreach. In this phase, case management will begin in a somewhat simple form, in which return visits to residents will be to check up on their progress and see how other programs/support may be appropriate to help them in their job training and search paths.
- » Tailor programs based on outreach and case management results: Based on anecdotal feedback and initial surveying efforts on the part of NEON, information on bottlenecks and limitations in program design and location will be brought back to the employer/service provider coalition for further discussion. From this discussion will come plans on how to alter the design and logistics of these classes to facilitate increased participation and success on the part of North End residents.

Mid-term (3-4 years)

- » Evaluate impact: Once the coalition's outreach methods have been established and its members have taken North End-specific needs

into account for at least one year, the program can be evaluated with a formal mechanism. Some important impacts to measure include:

- » The increase in job training program enrollment for each coalition member
- » The increase in North End residents as proportion of overall enrollment change
- » Number of job placements for North End residents through participating programs
- » The placement percentage rate for North End residents vs. program average overall
- » The average wage of new placement job
- » The average number of separate training programs to which NEON workers refer each resident
- » Generate partnership agreements with employers: After establishing multi-year partnerships that brings to employers local workers that fully meet their training needs, an important part of the agenda should be to deepen the partnership with guaranteed positions for graduates of the coalition's sequence of training programs. What makes this a reasonable commitment will be the previous two years of activity that show how cooperative effort on the part of service providers can lower employers' costs and improve relations with the local community.
- » Apply for funding as a workforce intermediary: With proven, measurable results stemming from concerted effort on the part of local training providers and employers (not to mention the dedicated efforts of El Puente staff in cooperation with NEON), a North End-wide "Healthy Beginnings" coalition can be prepared to compete for major private foundation resources. These resources will be key to expanding the number of outreach workers and case managers, as well as administrative support in El Puente to coordinate all of these efforts. This funding would both add staff in these orga-

nizations and contribute to the resources of the individual training providers who would be collaborative partners in the grant.

Long-term (4-5 years)

- » Increase job ladder support: Although movement through job ladders should be part of the coalition’s dialogue all through its process, this aspect of the workforce intermediary’s activities will require more attention once the groundwork of the program has been laid. Improvement through job ladders would include helping workers develop three-year plans for their promotional ambitions after initial hiring.

Funding & Staff

The funding structure of this workforce intermediary is intended to ratchet up as the program builds its own competence. At the beginning, it will act as one of the several responsibilities of El Puente staff to handle the coalition-building and coordination. Any shortfall in capacity on NEON’s part to carry out the necessary outreach for the program must be met either through grant writing from El Puente staff, contributions from coalition members, or both. Once the program reaches its second phase (Years 3-4), a separate El Puente employee will be needed to carry out the impact evaluation; based on the overall El Puente plan, this should come as a direct result of the overall organization’s growth path to hire dedicated employees for workforce development efforts. If this is not accomplished before the healthcare workforce coalition is prepared to move forward, then an independent evaluator will need to be contracted. The funding application approach as described in this phase will also be the source of the increase in administrative and outreach staff (the latter of which will remain under NEON) over the long-term continuation.

ESL Program: Comprehensive Vocational English

Objective

To focus existing English as a Second Language (ESL) classes on workforce readiness issues, help residents approach gaining language skills as part of a life-long learning process. and more effectively lobby for funding of a comprehensive ESL strategy for the North End.

Description

We recommend that the campus:

1. Make changes to existing language courses taught at the campus to better serve particular groups of residents.
2. Integrate ESL into a case-based workforce development strategy.
3. Start building a case for El Puente to argue for the resources needed to combat illiteracy and language barriers in the North End on a large scale.

Rationale

There are two main types of English classes – “survival” classes and occupational classes. Survival classes focus on helping residents to get around, help their children with their homework, and access services. Because most adults in the North End come in with very low levels of English and overall literacy, most of the classes offered through the campus or other local social service organizations are of this type, while most of the classes taught at the local community colleges are occupational in nature. Most of these occupational courses require some existing English skills, and relate specifically to particular occupations. Although the classes taught at the campus are usually at or over capacity, many of the classes offered in other areas of the community are not at capacity, especially those connected more directly to job training.

Although there is a need for greater ESL classes at all levels, workforce development may best be served in the short term by reaching into this gap between “survival” ESL and workforce ESL, to make sure that students who start out in classes offered by the social service agencies progress to the more technical courses offered through the training institutions. This indicates a need for English courses taught at the “survival” level that provide a greater focus on job skills, and in providing students the resources needed to move from one level of ESL to another.

Implementation

Short-term (1-2 years)

Make changes to existing language courses taught at the campus to better serve particular groups of residents.

- » Organize classes by students’ purpose, not just their skill levels. Survival English classes should be separated into Job Skills sections that include only students who are learning English specifically to help with their job search or to access workforce training, and sections that include those learning English to address daily tasks and needs. Even beginner lessons in these Skills classes can include role playing interviews or workplace situations. Often, beginning classes are not as effective as they could be because they are focused on “survival” English. These classes are not very useful for students who need a more concentrated focus on reading skills or vocabulary to build readiness for workforce development programs, and make it harder for students to see the progression from language acquisition to job acquisition.
- » Invite recruitment staff from other programs to visit job readiness ESL classes. Job Skills ESL classes should be tied to other existing classes and resources outside the North End. Bilingual services and recruitment staff from MCDI, STCC, and FutureWorks should be invited to these classes to speak about their programs, and should

be consulted in the skills that students should have when they enter these classes. In focus groups, many residents reported that they believe that there is no one at these training centers who speaks Spanish, even though there are many Spanish-speaking staff and Spanish-language resources available at these centers. Introducing someone from these programs directly to students can make them more comfortable when accessing these options.

- » Focus some ESL resources on those already in the workforce. Gaining English fluency is not a matter of taking one class, it is a set of skills learned over time. Focusing some resources on those already in the workforce who want to increase their skills can be a very effective use of scarce resources in increasing incomes as students are able to access further training and job opportunities.
- » Encourage men to participate in ESL classes. Fewer men than women are currently participating in ESL classes throughout the spectrum of courses offered. This problem is not unique to the North End. Many ESL and basic literacy programs in Western cultures attract many more women than men. Often this can be countered by marketing and creating classes specifically for men. Sometimes, stereotypes of language skills being “feminine” skills can be overcome by providing courses on computer training, job skills classes, or other types of issues, but starting the class with language acquisition at its core. Creating a men-only English class may make men feel more comfortable and encourage their participation as well.

Mid-term (3-4 years)

Integrate ESL into the case-based workforce development strategy described above).

- » The case-based method will seamlessly integrate ESL with the overall workforce development strategy. Workers uncomfortable with English would be advised by their caseworker to start with an ESL class before entering a job skills class, and case workers can help students identify classes at their level throughout their progress. In

addition, caseworkers can help people currently working to improve their English enough to access job ladders.

Long-term (4-5 years)

Start building a case for El Puente to argue for the resources needed to combat illiteracy and language barriers in the North End on a large scale.

- » The North End needs to prove its demand for ESL resources not only by holding classes on the Campus, but by sending students through training programs in other parts of Springfield as well. Although beginning ESL classes at the Campus, the Gray House, and other social agencies are often oversubscribed and have long waiting lists, there is often excess capacity at the community colleges, which makes it difficult to argue for more workforce development resources to be allocated at the city or regional level, which is the scope at which most of the resources are allocated. Increasing student participation from the North End in ESL classes outside the North End will strengthen arguments for more resources in the future to be allocated to the North End. Right now, the community colleges often do not know how many of their students are from the North End community.
- » To start building a case, NEON needs to keep good records of who is interested in training classes, what attendance is at classes that are offered at the Campus, and how many North End residents' access ESL training courses outside the North End. When there is demonstrable demand for ESL, based on resident surveys and increased participation in other programs, the workforce development working group of El Puente can attempt to develop and fund a comprehensive ESL program.

Funding & Staffing

To implement a case-based approach, NEON would need to increase

its capacity in terms of knowledge about ESL training programs, and in terms of sheer staff time. NEON could do this by having one dedicated person who would be in charge of knowing all about the different ESL resources offered in Springfield, and who would be an access point for information between the North End residents and the Springfield ESL community. This staff member could also be charged with reporting to El Puente about progress made in ESL training, and about ESL needs that El Puente may want to advocate for in the larger Springfield community.

This may not start out as a full-time position, but would become one as more and more clients were added into the program. In addition, all NEON case workers should be trained in basic ESL methodologies. Many Springfield organizations, such as the United Way and Lutheran Social Services, offer such basic training for free. In this way, the case workers will better understand the methodologies used in ESL classes, challenges and frustrations faced by their clients, and how to encourage them along the way.

Other Considerations

Learning English in a totally Spanish-speaking environment creates an additional barrier

Although residents feel more comfortable in the North End, the campus may not be the best place to study English. Anyone who has gone through a high-school language course knows how hard it is to learn any language when there is little chance for interaction with “real” speakers who force one to speak and practice. Much ESL research points to the benefit of mixing students of different language groups, encouraging communication in English. Also, having residents interact with others outside the North End can increase their comfort level with English speakers overall. Perhaps the North End could collaborate with

the services offered new Somali residents to create blended classes that will require Spanish speakers to communicate in English.

ESL is an area in which volunteer and youth participation is particularly effective

ESL, as opposed to many other community needs, is an area in which volunteers from inside and outside the community can be of great assistance. Although classes need trained teachers, tutors providing individual instruction can help as well. When the North End is approached by local colleges with offers of collaboration, ESL tutoring can be one of the main “asks.” Volunteers should be trained in ESL and literacy methodologies. In addition, youth are a great resource here. Young people who have grown up in Springfield speak English well, and with some training, North End youth can be effective English tutors, increasing their confidence as well as the language skills of adults.

ESL should be a component of any job training or workforce readiness proposal

When evaluating any proposal for job training program collaboration at any level, El Puente should consider whether the proposal includes addressing English language instruction.

Youth Training Program: Focus on Youth, School-to- Work Program

Objective

To increase school retention for a majority of North End youths, support career exploration at an early age, an increase access to entry level work by North End youths.

Description

The Youth/School-to-Work Program is a comprehensive system that helps youths in the North End make an effective transition from school to career-oriented work or to further education and training. When it is fully in operation, the Youth/School -to-Work program will provide intervention and prevention services to young people in the North End. The goal is to encourage young people to dream beyond the often-limiting conditions of poor minority communities by giving them the confidence, education, resources, skills, and relationship they need to reach their potential. It will combine School Retention, Career Exploration and Access to Entry-level Work to engage student interest, enhance skill acquisition, develop positive work attitudes, and prepare youths for high-skill, high-wage careers.

Rationale

In today’s world of increasing knowledge, new technology, and intense competition, the path to a living wage job starts with the attainment of a good high school education at a minimum. But the many youths in

the North End dropping out of school leave a frightening expectation of the future direction of the community.

In order to stem this tide, it is imperative to encourage young people in the North End not only to remain in school but also to gain essential skills that will give them a better future. It is against this background that we are proposing that the Campus Committee considers a Youth/School-to-Work Program. We envisage that the Program will have three key strategies: The first strategy includes an initiative to increase K-12 completion and ensure a corresponding increase in the percentage of post-secondary enrollments into colleges. The second strategy is career exploration, and the third is providing entry-level work opportunities for qualified North End youths. These strategies are designed to give new perspectives and new meaning to the lives of many North End youths. By giving them access to education, resources, skills, and relationship, we believe that young people in the North End can transform their community into a better place to live.

Programs

School retention

To pursue this goal, the community needs to provide essential support to young people. We propose that under the school retention initiatives. One example of a typical activity could be youth mentoring and tutoring by college students, especially in math, reading and science. We understand that a similar program of this kind is being implemented between at the Gerena School with Smith College. We believe this effort should be expanded to include all youth living in the neighborhood. A partnership between North End youths and college students will spark the flame of inspiration that may encourage many of them to pursue further education.

Examples of School Retention Programs

- » Establish a mentoring program involving community leaders and residents and professionals working within and around the North End. Many of the older people in the community already function in mentoring capacities for young people as they seek to keep youth out of trouble and on the right track. These individuals could be supported in their role through training and information that will help them direct youths into productive learning activities.
- » Youth mentoring and tutoring by college students, especially in math, reading and science. We understand that a similar program of this kind is being implemented between the Gerena School and Smith College. We believe this effort should be expanded to include other area colleges, particularly the ones in Springfield. A partnership between the North End students and college students will spark the flame of inspiration that may encourage many young people to pursue further education.
- » College promotion and incentives. This is an initiative in which the Campus Committee could negotiate with area colleges to promote interest in completing high school and attending college. Through activities such as college weekends or camps, area colleges can give young people an opportunity to sample the college experience, and a small number of merit scholarships for North End neighborhood youths who excel in academics and community service.
- » Parental support and involvement. Parental involvement can take the form of coaching for parents on supporting their children's education and keeping them in school. Other ideas include joint learning activities by parents and children that help parents create a learning environment within the home. An example of this is the "Technology Goes Home" program model that many Community Development Corporations used. It involves parents and children learning to use computers together, and receiving a free computer to take home at the end of the program.

- » Technology in Youth Programs. Various models of Technology in Youth Programs are possible. Some examples are as follows:
 - After-School Tech Time* – This model integrates computers with other activities in the After-School program, where there are regular times for technology
 - Walk-In Computer Center* – Youth can come at anytime during open hours to use the computer.
 - Computer Club* – This model provides a once a week activity particularly targeting children who are interested in technology.
 - Computer Classes for Youth* – Classes provide computer classes with topics of interest to youth such as video production, web design, and digital music mixing.
 - Teen Tech Entrepreneurship* – This program helps teens start a youth-run business in, for example, web design, T-shirt business, graphic design while using technology to teach technical and business skills.

Career exploration

Education experts have observed that young people are more likely to stay engaged in education if they develop career interests. Career camps, for example, could be organized by local areas colleges such as Smith, University of Massachusetts, or Springfield Technical College. Ohio State University College of Medicine holds a day camp for high school students who want to become doctors, with medical students as their supervisors/mentors. Activities include a range of classes and labs that help students identify their strengths and interests. A career camp in the health professions in collaboration with the Baystate Health System is another example of how the community could undertake a career exploration activity.

Examples of Career Exploration Programs

- » Set up a Community Youth Center in the North End, which provides a range of services for at-risk youths. These may include creative enterprises that design, produce, and market products such as t-

shirts, tiles, and greeting cards, performing arts programs (including dance, music, and theater), and CD production. These programs are designed to build self-esteem, discipline, and academic, creative, business, communication, and leadership skills.

- » Summer camps that concentrate literacy classes and tutoring for neighborhood youth, volunteer opportunity for students and tutors, math and science clubs that are held once a month or summer camps that focus on career exploration in science and technology fields, remedial education and early college programs.

Implementation

Short-term (1-2 years)

Form a Youth/School-to-Work Implementation Subcommittee in the Campus Committee. The subcommittee will refine and detail the early-stage institutional and programmatic priorities and organize the handoff of implementation responsibilities of the program to a lead implementing entity.

Designate a lead Implementing entity. Once a lead implementing entity is identified, the subcommittee on Youth-to-Work should begin discussion with the entity to confirm if they would want to play this role and to develop an organizational plan to achieve this transition. This might likely involve the following:

- » Identifying additional organizations to participate in this group and contacting these organizations
- » Developing an initial work plan
- » Obtaining professional capacity. This may initially involve using “loaned staff” from participating organizations (i.e., staff who devote a proportion of their work time to the activities of the lead entity), but will eventually require putting in place dedicated professional staffing.

Develop initial work plan for lead implementer. Working with its constituent organizations, the lead implementer should develop an initial work plan. The work plan should include the following:

- » An organizing campaign to engage more neighborhood residents in the process of skill-building and employment for young people
- » A plan to expand and coordinate outreach, information, and referral capacity
- » Identification of high-priority youth development programs and services
- » Raising awareness of existing neighborhood and citywide youth development resources among North End youth

Long-term (4-5 years)

Plan for longer-term initiatives to address youth needs. While addressing the immediate task of beginning an effective Youth/School-to-Work program, the lead implementing entity should begin to put in place a long-term strategy to focus on youth education and career development. These might include mentoring, tutoring and internships, professional development classes, job search assistance, technology training, GED, ESL, and other preparatory courses for college and for the workforce.

Funding

1. Parents
2. Federal Grants
3. Private Foundations
4. Local Businesses and Civic Groups
 - Baystate
 - MassMutual

El Puente

Institutional
Recommendation

El Puente: A New Organization for Economic Development Planning in the North End

Introduction

The North End Campus Committee is uniquely capable of taking the lead in bringing together diverse neighborhood organizations, and playing a leadership role in local economic development planning. The purpose of this section is to highlight the opportunities and implications for creating a stronger, more centralized economic development mechanism in the North End.

In order to fulfill the vision of a population-based approach to economic development:

- » NEON's household-level outreach and case management capacity must be strengthened.
- » Private and public sector agencies must collaborate to assist North End residents.
- » A core group of professionals must be hired to lead economic development efforts.
- » The North End Campus Committee should initiate this new capacity, recognizing that inter-agency cooperation always benefits community residents.

Rationale

The North End community has benefited tremendously from the working relationship between the Campus Committee and many institutions including the City of Springfield, Baystate Health System, Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council, the Regional Employment

Board, and many other regional and state level economic development agencies.

The community has also benefited from inter-agency cooperation through the creation of NEON by five human and health service agencies that recognized the importance of household-level outreach in the neighborhood. In spite of severe resource constraints, NEON has been able to reach over 6,000 residents in the North End. The organization's commitment to a case-based approach to healthcare serves as a useful model for community and economic development activities in the North End.

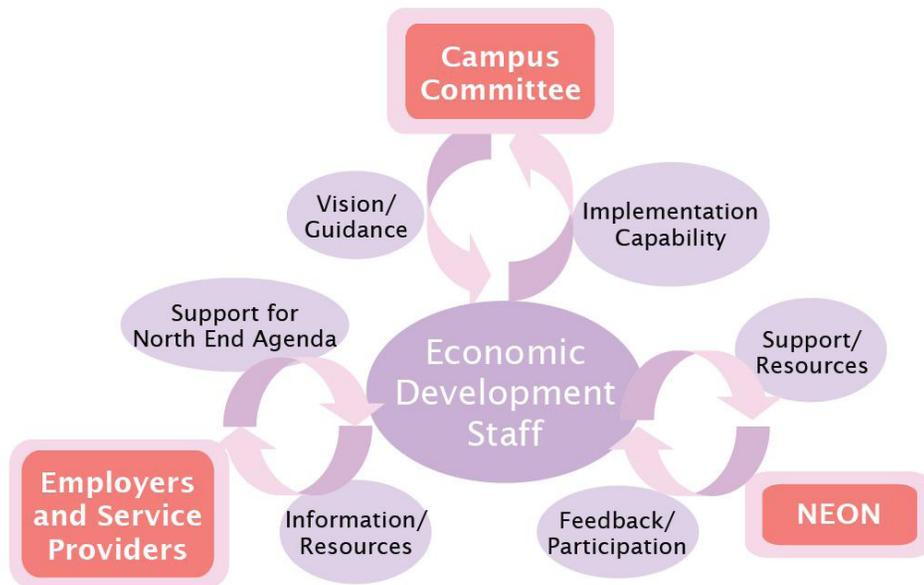
Creating a New Organization

Despite all the successes achieved by the Campus Committee and its status as an invaluable forum for debate between different stakeholders, it is our belief that there is a need for a new organization. This new organization will be able to reach a larger community of service providers, local government, and donors. It will also have an explicit focus on economic development in the North End, and as a 501c(3), it will be poised to receive funding from many organizations. These goals are hard to reach by the Campus Committee given its large size and lack of legal status.

Therefore, we recommend that the Campus Committee takes steps to create a new organization explicitly focused on economic development in the North End. We tentatively call this organization El Puente (The Bridge) because it will be a bridge between the community in the North End and the resources available to it.

Connecting Organizations Committed to a Better North End

El Puente’s primary responsibility will be to manage the partnerships already built by the North End Campus Committee. One way in which El Puente will succeed in this mission is to identify and secure city, state and federal

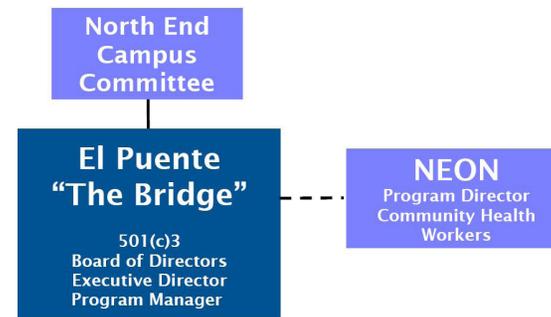


resources that can support the existing organizations in the North End. The by-laws and articles of incorporation of El Puente should reflect this mandate, and explicitly direct El Puente to only fundraise for collaborative economic development programs. El Puente will be an engine for fundraising and organizational growth. Therefore, it is important to clarify its composition, reporting procedure and accountability structure. In its first couple of years, El Puente would be staffed by two economic development professionals: an Executive Director and a Program Manager (Appendix E). Both the

El Puente Executive Director and its Program Manager are ultimately responsible to a governing Board of Directors. Members of this Board of Directors would be nominated and elected by members of the North End Campus Committee for a three-year term. The El Puente Executive Director would formally present a financial report and a statement of activities to the El Puente Board of Directors on a half-yearly basis.

The North End Campus Committee would continue to meet once a month, and would act as an advisory group to El Puente. The Chair of the Campus Committee and the NEON Program Director will serve on the Campus Committee and they will finalize the agenda for the monthly meetings.

*Organizational
Chart for “El Puente”*



Next Steps

Over the course of the next four months, the Chair of the North End Campus Committee should report to the Campus Committee on the following issues:

Incorporation of El Puente

The Committee Chair should engage a non-profit consultant, a regional or national organization that provides consulting and infrastructure services to non-profits, or a law firm to provide professional counsel. Such counsel can provide guidance on how to go about creating and structuring El Puente. Particular emphasis should be paid to determining the governance and reporting structure of El Puente. A lawyer should also draw up statutes for the Campus Committee which will remain an informal coalition of stakeholders. These statutes, at a minimum, should provide for the tenure as well as voting rights and responsibilities of Campus Committee members, and the designation of an honorary Ombudsman. Membership to the Campus Committee should be expanded to include the El Puente Executive Director along with representatives from MassMutual and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

Advising Baystate's Community Benefits Program

The North End Campus Committee Chair should submit a formal proposal to Baystate Health System to appoint the El Puente Executive Director to the Baystate Medical Center's Community Benefits Advisory Council.

Seed Funding for El Puente

The Committee Chair should report on progress made in discussions with Baystate and other institutions on funding salaries for the El Puente Executive Director and Program Manager.

Over the course of the next four months, the NEON Program Director should report to the NEON Governing Board on the following issues:

Legal Status of NEON

NEON remains a program of five different entities as it had been originally conceived. NEON enjoys a distinct identity within the North End and strong relations with the residents through its Community Health Workers. While it may choose to remain a program under the umbrella of five human and health service agencies, NEON must consult with its legal counsel on the implications of providing voter education services in the neighborhood. Depending on the specific nature of a voter outreach or education drive, the provider must be incorporated as either a 501 c(3), 501 c(4), or a Political Action Committee (PAC). Failure to comply with campaign finance regulations could be very damaging for NEON.

NEON Staff Development

In order for NEON to provide effective case-based assistance to North End residents, its outreach staff must be expanded to at least its original planned capacity of ten staff members. The NEON staff should be trained on data collection and outreach that is specifically useful for economic development planning. The El Puente Executive Director could provide this training directly and assist the NEON Program Director with fundraising for additional Community Health Workers.

Appendices

Appendix A: Community Profile

Appendix B: Methodology & Data Sources

Appendix C: Interviewee Contact List

Appendix D: Timeline for Implementation

Appendix E: Job Descriptions, El Puente

Appendix F: Bus. Tech. Assistance Programs

Appendix G: Local Contacts & Resources

Appendix H: Maps & Photos

Community Profile

The North End is one of 17 neighborhoods in Springfield, Massachusetts, the third largest urban center in Massachusetts. Many well known companies make this city an important base for their operations. These companies include Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company, Friendly's Ice Cream Corporation, Milton Bradley, Peter Pan Bus Company, and Smith & Wesson. In addition, the Baystate Health System, today a recognized major teaching and research facility, has a significant history in the Springfield area.

However, Springfield is also known for several public health crises and low educational attainment figures. The city has the state's highest mortality rate and the second highest diabetes rate. Over 10% of the population has less than a 9th grade education, almost double the state average. In addition, the failure rate in Springfield for Massachusetts Standardized Tests is approaching 75%. Poverty is an increasing crisis with almost 20% of Springfield families living below the federal poverty level. Consistent with national trends, poverty rates are higher for children and people of color in Springfield.

The North End consists of two Springfield neighborhoods separated in 1961 by the construction of Interstate 91: Brightwood and Memorial Square. These two neighborhoods are home to approximately 5,000 residents each. This area has a long and proud working-class, ethnic history. The first Puerto Ricans arriving here were attracted to Springfield and the North End community in particular because of job opportunities. Originally, migrant laborers came from Puerto Rico to work in the farms of the Connecticut River Valley. Eventually, some decided to stay year-round in the closest urban area – Springfield. With this commu-

nity established in the North End, increasing numbers of Puerto Ricans moved to Springfield to reunite with friends and family. The thriving manufacturing sector of Springfield also provided economic opportunity for this newly arrived group.

The North End is mostly residential and is bordered by the Connecticut River, downtown Springfield, and a nearby industrial area. The neighborhood is dominated by youth, yet has a significant elderly presence. Since the early 1960's, the North End community has been a safe haven for the rapidly expanding Puerto Rican population: over 75% of the residents in the North End are of Puerto Rican heritage. Commercial activity is centered on Main Street in the Memorial Square neighborhood, and on Plainfield Street in Brightwood. Main Street contains many retail and service businesses. Most storefronts are occupied, although some lots along Main Street are vacant. Plainfield's commercial activity is predominantly industrial and manufacturing-related, with some industrial sites less than a block from residential properties. Many of the sites are vacant or in disrepair.

The community is known as the poorest in Springfield and contains the poorest census tract in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (according to the 2000 census). With a 50% high school completion rate (a statistic which is even lower for males alone), the North End also has the lowest educational attainment in the city. Incarceration rates are high with 10% of the community population passing through the Hampden County Correctional Center each year. The community also exhibits high rates of environmentally related diseases such as asthma and diabetes. Twenty percent of families report that at least one member of the household

suffers from asthma. In addition, as of 1999, Springfield had the 11th-highest new HIV case rate in the country. Other health related challenges include a high teen birth rate and infant mortality rate, as well as low child immunization rates.

Although the community faces many challenges, the population of the North End is relatively stable. The family structures are strong with many extended families supporting each other through good and bad times. The Puerto Rican culture, particularly through music, food and dance, maintains its prominence within the community and is seen as a source of pride for the neighborhoods. There is also wonderful spirit and community involvement throughout the North End with voter participation rates reaching 40% for board elections of the local citizen's council.

Methodology & Data Sources

Project Timeline

We began with a project kick-off meeting with NEON and leaders of the Campus Committee in Springfield. The team left this initial meeting with impressions, preliminary information, and a charge: to develop a population-based economic development plan for the North End. We followed-up with stakeholders individually and began an analysis of constraints and opportunities for workforce development, small business development, and real estate in the North End, based on both qualitative and quantitative data.

Our analysis of opportunities and constraints was then presented to the Campus Committee and interested parties through an interim review with a small group of Campus Committee members. We recommended an economic development plan with two inter-related tracks: workforce development and real estate development. The Committee asked that we continue our efforts with workforce development, but that we pursue business development as the second track.

After considering the Committee feedback, we revisited our charge. We undertook new analyses and began developing a plan based on follow-up conversations, group interviews, a survey of residents, a physical survey of properties on Main Street, and additional quantitative data analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with both formal and informal business owners in the North End. In our third and final review with the Campus Committee, we presented a summary of our work, recommendations, and next steps.

Data Collection

Our quantitative assessment consisted of analysis of data collected from a variety of sources including the U.S. Census (2000), Bureau of Labor Statistics, Springfield Redevelopment Authority, Springfield Assessors Department, and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

Qualitative data were collected primarily through stakeholder and resident interviews and focus groups. Approximately 40 interviews were conducted with stakeholders, and three focus groups were held with residents and local business owners. A survey of 103 residents was also conducted by NEON. A summary of findings from focus group interviews is attached below, as well as a list of interviewees.

Focus Group Summaries

Informal Business Focus Group

Four North End residents with informal businesses run out of their residences participated in this focus group. All four were women, providing child care, beauty services, handicrafts, and professional services. Half started their own businesses by choice after or while pursuing other jobs. None of the four supported themselves or families solely on the money generated by their business. All expressed an interest in growing their businesses and sought information on what they needed to do and what funding might be available. The women requested information on permitting and licensing procedures, small business loans, and office space. The women reinforced the idea that there is a

disconnection between existing services and entrepreneurs and a need for greater outreach.

Formal Business Focus Group

Five formal business owners were interviewed in this focus group. All were men, and four were located on Main Street. Concerns about property management, availability of community support and funding, and accountability were shared by most. The need for engagement with and investment in the community and their neighbors was expressed by all. All mentioned limited resources and a lack of property control as hurdles to growing their businesses. Two expressed interest in some sort of merchant or business owner group on Main St. to address issues such as safety. All places of business had customer activity during the time of interviews. These business owners generally supported the need for new retailing opportunities in the North End, as this would create a broader market for their goods and services. Furthermore, they felt that for long-term, coordinated business development to take root in the North End, the property control issue must be addressed.

Non-Working Resident Focus Group

Twelve non-working North End residents participated in this focus group. Ten women and two men discussed applying for jobs, the type of work they pursued, and the barriers to employment they experience. Two central themes emerged from the discussion: a lack of knowledge of services (although there is some dissemination of information by word-of-mouth), and the urgent need for English language skills. In addition, all were committed to the neighborhood and not, as some other Springfield stakeholders had indicated, transitory residents interested in making money and returning to Puerto Rico. Participants overwhelm-

ingly thought that not knowing English was their biggest barrier to getting a job, confirming the community's need for more language services.

Contact List

Name	Organization	Position
Allan Blair	Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts	President & CEO
Armando Feliciano	Springfield Redevelopment Authority	Chair
Austin Miller	MBL Housing & Economic Development	Director
Bailey Robert	Spanish American Union, Inc.	Executive Director
Belinda Pioggia	Brightwood Health Center	Nurse Practitioner
Bill Ward	Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Inc	Executive Director
Carlos Gonzalez	Latino Chamber of Commerce	President
Connie Pettengill	Springfield Technical Community College	Professor of Medical Assisting
Eileen Hurley	Gray House	Executive Director
Haydee Hodis	Brightwood Branch Library	Librarian
Jean Zenor	Springfield Technical Community College	Department Chair of ESL
Jeffrey Scavron	Brightwood Health Center	Medical Director
Joanne Campbell	Valley CDC	Executive Director
Julia Arroyo	NEON	Case Worker
Katie Stebbins	City of Springfield	Director of Economic Development
Kevin Winn	Nuestra Comunidad	Director of Economic Development
Luis Colon	Springfield Dept of City Planning	-
Maira Velez	NEON	Case Worker
Marisol Jimenez	NEON	Case Worker
Michael Denney	New North Citizens' Council	Executive Director
Michael Denney	Springfield Business Development Corporation	President
Milta Franco	NEON	Program Director
Pam Greene	Springfield Technical Community College	Professor of ESL
Pedro Rodriguez	New North Citizens' Council	Youth Coordinator
Peter Lavanos	Gerena Community School	Principal
Russell E. Denver	Affiliated Chamber of Commerce of Greater Springfield, Inc.	President
Steve Bradley	Baystate Health Systems	Vice President of Government Relations
Timothy Brennan	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission	Executive Director
Vanessa Pabon	NEON	Case Worker

Job Descriptions, El Puente

Executive Director

About the Organization

El Puente is a membership-based community development organization serving the North End of Springfield, MA. Formed by the North End Campus Committee, an alliance of human and health service agencies, educational institutions, regional organizations, public agencies and individuals interested in building a vibrant North End, El Puente plays a key role in designing collaborative economic development programs that bring together social service organizations, government agencies and private sector corporations. El Puente works towards strengthening North End resident participation in workforce training programs, and connects micro-enterprises to technical assistance services and cooperative marketing ventures.

Position Summary

The Executive Director of El Puente is the chief operating officer for the North End Campus Committee. The Executive Director prepares the agenda for the monthly meeting of the North End Campus Committee in accordance with its policies. These meetings are meant for Campus Committee members to formulate short and long-term objectives for the neighborhood. The Executive Director also develops and executes strategies to expand the membership of the North End Campus Committee and increase communication among Campus Committee members.

The Executive Director is responsible for El Puente's consistent achievement of its mission by providing information and guidance to the North

End Campus Committee members in formulating objectives and economic development programs for the North End.

The Executive Director manages the daily business and operations of El Puente in accordance with the policies set by its Board of Directors, and ensures that El Puente meets its financial objectives. In addition to providing leadership for the general administration, fundraising, budgeting and financial functions of El Puente, the Executive Director should increase communication between the Campus Committee and public agencies as well as private foundations with the aim of securing grants for economic development programs that specifically serve residents in the North End.

Initially, the Executive Director will supervise one staff member and a \$150,000 budget.

The Executive Director reports to the President of the Board of Directors of El Puente. Policies governing El Puente are set by its Board of Directors in collaboration with the Executive Director.

Qualifications

- » Five to eight years of experience with a membership-based community development organization
- » Demonstrated non-profit management experience, including budgeting and financial control
- » Successful fundraiser with a strong understanding of the aims and objectives of foundations and corporations serving the Western Massachusetts region

-
- » Knowledge of government funding streams and experience working effectively with city and state agencies
 - » Strong communication and presentation skills
 - » Sincere commitment to the goals of the Campus Committee and its members
 - » Knowledge of Springfield and the North End is a plus
 - » Fluency in English and Spanish is essential. Experience working in Latino majority neighborhood is desirable
 - » Willingness to be flexible in work hours

Women and minorities are strongly encouraged to apply.

Program Manager

Background

El Puente is a membership-based community development organization serving the North End of Springfield, MA. Formed by the North End Campus Committee, an alliance of human and health service agencies, educational institutions, regional organizations, public agencies and individuals interested in building a vibrant North End, El Puente plays a key role in designing collaborative economic development programs that bring together social service organizations, government agencies and private sector corporations. El Puente works towards strengthening North End resident participation in workforce training programs, and connects micro-enterprises to technical assistance services and cooperative marketing ventures.

Job Description

The Program Manager will work primarily with small entrepreneurs engaged in retail businesses as well as in food-related businesses. The Program Manager reports to the Executive Director.

Job responsibilities include:

- » Assist North End Campus Committee members accomplish shared economic development goals
- » Talk to business owners about difficulties they are facing, and identifying and implementing solutions
- » Conduct participatory studies to determine the feasibility of offering technical assistance programs in the North End
- » Gather baseline data on neighborhood consumption spending patterns, and micro-enterprise marketing and distribution systems
- » Develop quality educational materials, ensuring that business owners receive information on services offered by partner organizations and Campus Committee members
- » Developing relationships with allies, decision makers and the media

Qualifications

- » Shares commitment to the mission of El Puente and the North End Campus Committee
- » Good organizing skills; ability to develop relationships with grassroots leaders, understand the challenges of running a sustainable micro-enterprise, and understand the relationship between El Puente and the North End Campus Committee

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- » Ability to work with various public and private sector agencies toward the same goal
 - » Extensive knowledge of steps of incorporating and licensing a retail or food related business
 - » Strong computer skill, including familiarity with research applications like GIS and database management software
 - » Three years experience in economic development research and Masters degree in relevant field, or five years experience in the development of a retail or food related business
 - » Capable of transforming data into strong communication and fundraising material
 - » Capable of developing effective bilingual educational materials
 - » Experience in a grassroots community-based nonprofit organization
 - » Knowledge of Springfield and the North End is a plus
 - » Fluency in English and Spanish is essential. Experience working in Latino majority neighborhood is desirable
 - » Willingness to be flexible in work hours

Women and minorities are strongly encouraged to apply.

Business Technical Assistance Programs Currently Serving the Springfield Area

I. Springfield Technical Community College (STCC)

- i. The National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (Association of community colleges to foster economic development through entrepreneurial initiatives)
- ii. National Center for Telecommunications (Training for ICT technicians and technologists)
- iii. SIMS Medical Center (Virtual Hospital at STCC)
- iv. Scibellie Enterprise Center (To support, assist and incubate new businesses and enhance the economic development)
Business Incubation Services located at Tech Park
 - a Affordable leases
 - b Shared support services
 - c A computer resource lab
 - d Training opportunities
 - e Educational opportunities at STCC
 - f Referral to products and services (E.g. legal and accounting services)
 - g Networking opportunities
 - h Access to local lenders
 - i Business advice
- v. STCC Technology Park (Space for technology-based and light manufacturing companies.)
- vi. Tech Prep (Support for students)
- vii. The Western Massachusetts Entrepreneurship Hall of Fame (To honor entrepreneurial spirits)

II. Western Massachusetts Enterprise Fund

- i. Financial assistance
 - a Term loans (\$1,000 - \$150,000)
 - b Lines of Credit (Up to \$25,000)
 - c Subordinated loans
 - d Accounts receivable loans
 - e Financing with royalty payments
 - f Other loans
- ii. Technical assistance
 - a Business Counsel
 - b Loan application assistance

III. Affiliated Chambers of Commerce of Greater Springfield

- i. Technical assistance grants to help business owners help pay for services such as accounting, legal, architectural, and marketing services; etc.
- ii. Soft loans up to \$35,000 for businesses whose loan applications were turned down by commercial financial institutions.
- iii. A new program to fill vacant store fronts for the 4 neighborhoods, one of which is the North End, was just launched. The program was granted \$100,000 by the State, and has a commitment of another \$100,000.

IV. Springfield Business Development Corporation

Infrastructure improvement projects.

V. Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network

- i. Management counseling services
 - a Start-up businesses
 - b Business plan development
 - c Financial plan development
 - d Marketing and sales strategies
 - e Cash flow analysis
 - f Organizational and personnel issues
 - g Government procurement assistance
 - h Minority business assistance
 - i International trade assistance
- ii. Training

Local Contacts and Resources

Resources for Nonprofits

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)

www.lisc.org

Provides capital, technical expertise, and training to CDCs. Technical assistance includes help in managing assets, properties, and financial resources, as well as legal and organizational aspects.

Connecticut Urban Legal Initiative (CULI)

<http://www.culi-law.org>

Attorneys provide free legal services to non-profit organizations throughout the Hartford Capitol Region. Services are broad but relate to specialized areas including the incorporation, review, and revision of bylaws and other corporate policies and procedures; filing for tax-exempt status; preparing memoranda of understanding and fiscal sponsorship agreements; and assistance with employment matters. Despite the fact that CULI's services are exclusive to non-profits based in Connecticut, they may be to provide referral services for peer initiatives in Hampden County, Western Massachusetts, or the Pioneer Valley.

Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC)

<http://www.cedac.org>

CEDAC is a public-private, community development finance institution that provides technical assistance, pre-development lending, and consulting services to non-profit organizations involved in housing development, workforce development, neighborhood economic development, and capital improvements to child care facilities. These organizations may include CDCs, non-profit developers, and tenants' associations.

Tides Center

www.tidescenter.org

Tides Center is a leading provider of nonprofit infrastructure services. For a fee, Tides Center provides management services such as administering employee benefits and payroll, and also assists organizations with financial management.

Community Development Corporation Contact Information

CDC	Town	Phone	Website
MA Association of CDC's	Boston	617.426.0303	http://www.macdc.org/
Valley	Northampton	413.586.5855	http://www.valleycdc.com/
Hilltown	Pittsfield	413.499.9371	http://www.hilltowncdc.org/index.html
Mason Square	Springfield	413.739.7211	NA
Franklin County	Greenfield	413.774.7204	http://www.fccdc.org/
Greater Gardner	Gardner	413.774.7204	http://www.ggcdc.org/
Hungry Hill	Springfield	413.788.9014	http://www.hhcdc.org/
Nueva Esperanza	Holyoke	413.533.9442	http://www.pacdc.org/cgi-bin/board.cgi?NECDC
Solutions	Holyoke	413.315.6017	NA
Quaboag Valley	Palmer	413.283.3003	http://www.qvcdc.com/
Twin Cities	Fitchburg	978.342.9561	http://www.twincitiescdc.com/home.html
Westfield	Westfield	413.562.7221	http://westfieldcdc.org/

Maps & Photos

Current Land Use, North End, Springfield



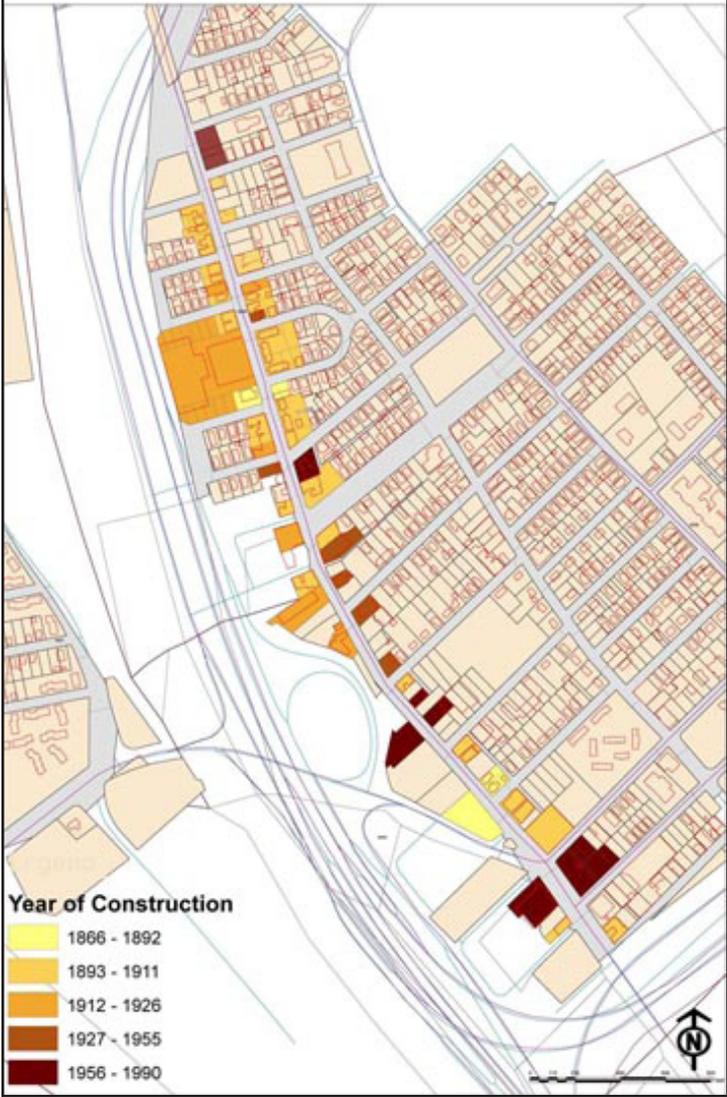
Example of vacancy on Main Street



Examples of graffiti on Main Street

Maps & Photos

Building Year of Construction, North End, Springfield



Example of inconsistent storefront design



Building with historic architectural details