Pearce, Jennifer

From: Peurifoy, Cynthia
Sent: Thursday, February 18, 2016 10:02 PM
To: Davis, Anita
Subject: Fwd: North Birmingham Action Plan
Attachments: R4 North Birmingham NBCC Action Plan 2015 01 16.pdf; ATT00001.htm

FYI.

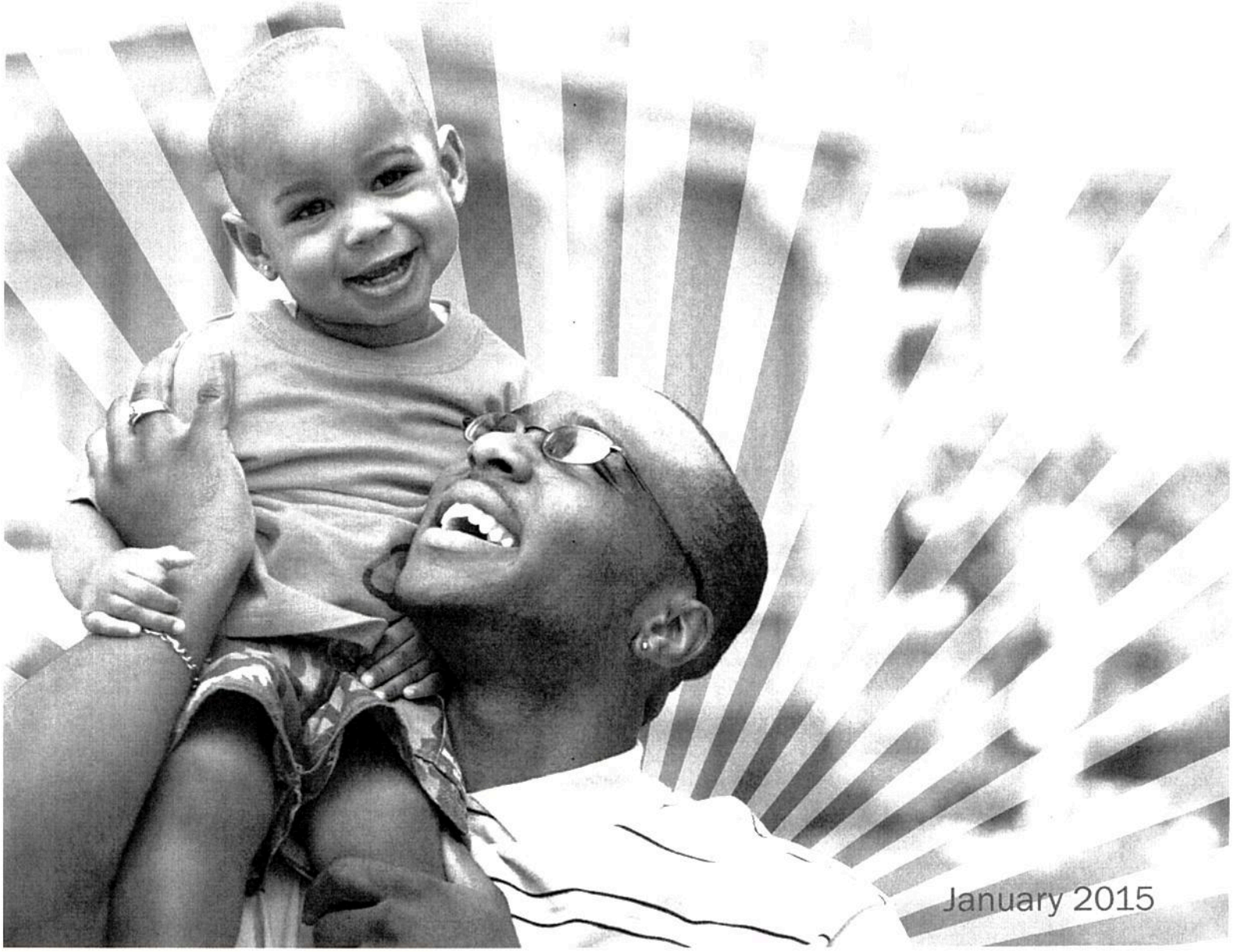
Cynthia Peurifoy
Environmental Justice Coordinator
EPA Region 4
404-562-9649

Begin forwarded message:

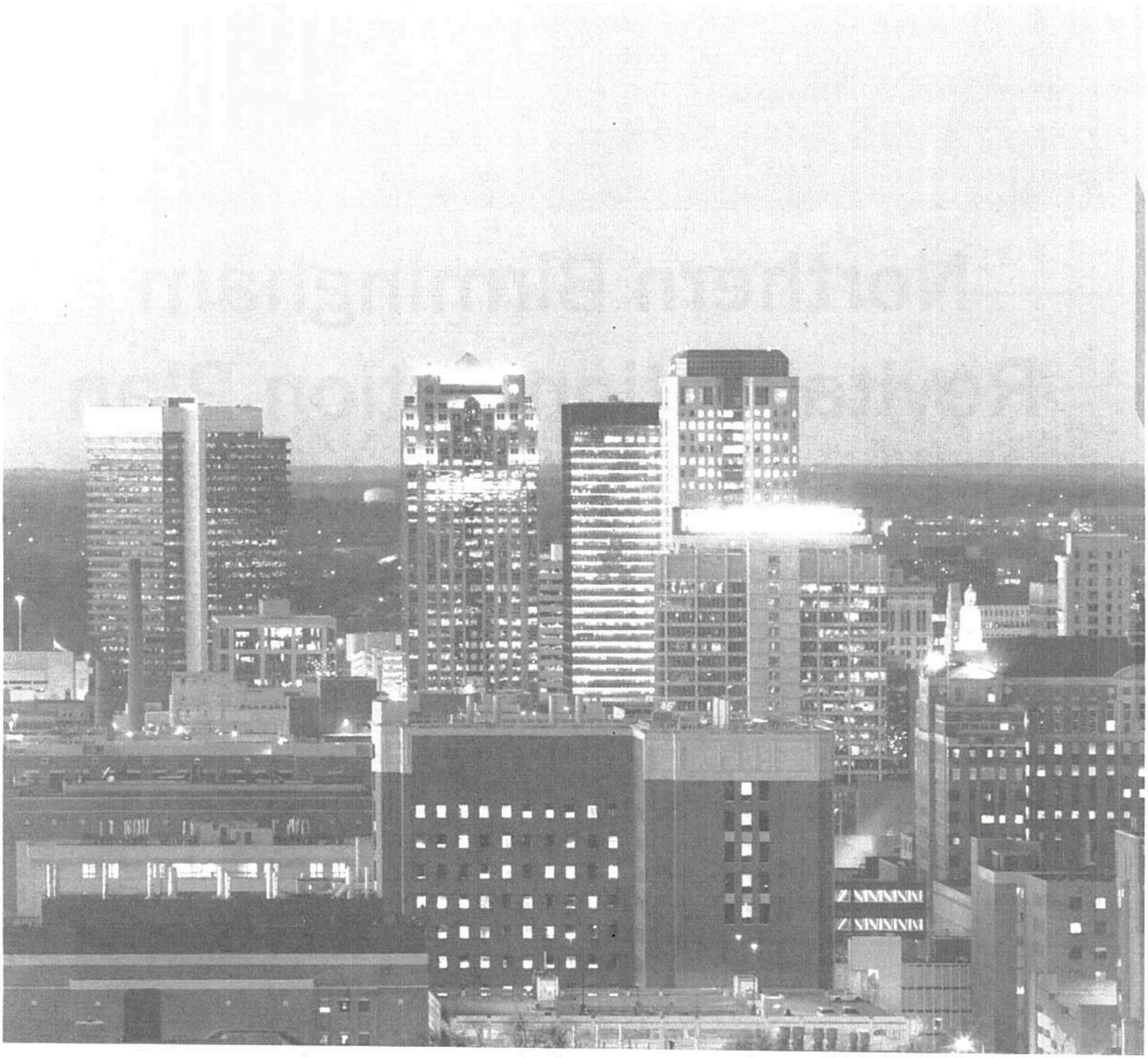
> **From:** "Wells, Suzanne" <Wells.Suzanne@epa.gov>
> **To:** "Peurifoy, Cynthia" <Peurifoy.Cynthia@epa.gov>, "Bryant, Kyle" <Bryant.Kyle@epa.gov>
> **Cc:** "Margand, Freya" <Margand.Freya@epa.gov>
> **Subject: North Birmingham Action Plan**
>
> Cynthia and Kyle,
>
> Hi! Wanted to touch base with you about something. I happened to be looking at the North Birmingham website (http://www.epa.gov/north-birmingham-project), and noticed that the action plan that was developed under the TASC contract wasn't on the website. Do you know if there are plans to post the action plan on the website? We think it is a great product, and would like to see if be more visible. Thanks.
>
> Suzanne Wells
> Chief, Community Involvement and Program Initiatives Branch
> Office of Superfund Remediation and Technology Innovation
> (703) 603-8863
> (703) 603-9112 (fax)
> USEPA/William Jefferson Clinton Federal Building (MC 5204P)
> 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
> Washington, DC 20460

Northern Birmingham Revitalization Action Plan

Developed by the
Northern Birmingham Community Coalition



January 2015



This plan and the development of the Northern Birmingham Community Coalition was funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency including the Superfund Redevelopment Initiative, the Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center, the Technical Assistance Services for Communities Program and Region 4.

EPA
United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

U.S. EPA sponsored the formation of the Northern Birmingham Community Coalition (NBCC) to plan for the future of the communities of northern Birmingham (including the North Birmingham, Fairmont, Collegeville and Harriman Park neighborhoods). The communities of northern Birmingham face many economic, environmental and social challenges. The Coalition seeks to bring together residents, community representatives and government agencies to address issues of environmental cleanup, enforcement and community investment. The Coalition has engaged neighborhood representatives as well as business, faith, and community leaders and government agencies. Together, they have forged a shared vision and are working to create positive community change through implementation of this Action Plan.

Welcome!

On behalf of Collegeville, Fairmont, Harriman Park and North Birmingham, we are pleased to present the *Northern Birmingham Revitalization Action Plan* (the *Action Plan*). The process of developing this plan began in March 2013 when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency convened our communities at a public meeting to consider the formation of the Northern Birmingham Community Coalition (NBCC, Coalition). The idea received overwhelming support, and the Coalition formed in May 2013 to plan for the future of the communities of Northern Birmingham.

The *Action Plan* you are reading represents the enthusiastic and diligent work of the Coalition members and many community-based organizations and resource partners, including local and federal government representatives. We are grateful to all who have so generously given their time and talents to make both this *Action Plan* and the revitalization of the communities of Northern Birmingham possible.

The Northern Birmingham neighborhoods hold a special place in the history and culture of Birmingham. Historically, our thriving residential and commercial areas have been home to generations of Birmingham families and entrepreneurs. Our faith communities and schools have produced outstanding civic leaders, including Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and many of the young people who led the Civil Rights movement in Birmingham and elevated our city to its bellwether status as a symbol of America's growing pains and hard-earned progress on Civil Rights. Furthermore, Northern Birmingham has long been home to important industrial drivers for the local, regional and state economies.

The Coalition envisions a revitalized and beautiful community in Northern Birmingham with safe and affordable housing, thriving commercial areas, and active, healthy residents, school children, workforce employees and faith communities. While this work will not be accomplished overnight and will require the partnership and investment of many leaders and organizations from Birmingham and beyond, we are already seeing signs of hope and restoration.

We thank you for taking the time to read the *Northern Birmingham Revitalization Action Plan* and invite you to join with us in this work!

Sincerely,

Northern Birmingham Community Coalition

The Northern Birmingham Community Coalition. Back row (left to right): Ronald Mitchell, Dennis Mallory, Chester Wallace, Thurman Thomas, Rev. E.O. Jackson, Jones Monday, Robert Hill. Front row (left to right): Jimmy Smith, John Toyer, Joyce Ray, Alberta Weeden, Sandra Brown, Loraine Barker, Vivian Starks.

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Dedication

With gratitude and love, the Northern Birmingham Community Coalition dedicates the Northern Birmingham Revitalization Action Plan to the late Council President Maxine Parker. Her tireless advocacy for environmental investments and quality of life in Northern Birmingham and her faith in the power of community leadership left a firm foundation and a lasting legacy that we hope to carry forward for future generations.

The Coalition would also like to extend its deep gratitude and appreciation to the Office of the Mayor of Birmingham and to Councilor William Parker for their support.

Photo courtesy of the City of Birmingham

Introduction

The Collegeville, Fairmont, Harriman Park and North Birmingham neighborhoods have a strong, shared legacy of vibrant community life, leadership and economic significance to the City of Birmingham. However, over the past several decades, the neighborhoods of Northern Birmingham have experienced decline and disinvestment as well as a growing awareness of environmental and health conditions related to the industrial core.

Coalition Formation and Action Planning Efforts

In response to these conditions, neighborhood leaders have come together to form the Northern Birmingham Community Coalition (Coalition, NBCC) to plan and advocate for the future of Northern Birmingham. Over the past 18 months, the Coalition has met with numerous community-based organizations and resource partners to dig deeply into the community's existing challenges and develop strategies to spur revitalization. The Coalition has also built relationships with other environmental justice and community revitalization organizations tackling similar issues in the Southeast region of the United States.

Revitalization Priorities and Workgroups

Based on this work, the Coalition has developed a mission, principles and vision for revitalization. To achieve this vision, the Coalition has developed this Action Plan to guide revitalization around three priorities, which include:

- Housing: Rehab, Rebuild, Reclaim
- Commercial Revitalization: Food, Fuel, Retail
- Health: Health Care and Comprehensive Wellness

This *Action Plan* outlines specific goals and strategies for each of these priorities as a shared road map for the many partners that will join in making this vision a reality. The following Context section provides a snapshot of the significance of the community's past, the present conditions, and a framework for planning the future. Then the Action Plan includes a section on each priority that outlines current conditions, goals and strategies, signs of hope and successes in other communities for fostering revitalization in Housing, Commercial Revitalization and Health.

Mission

To improve the quality of life for the neighborhoods of Northern Birmingham (Collegeville, Fairmont, Harriman Park and North Birmingham) by encouraging a sense of cultural pride and investment in the communities and increasing access to comprehensive wellness amenities and health care services, neighborhood-oriented retail, job opportunities, healthy, safe and affordable housing and a clean environment.

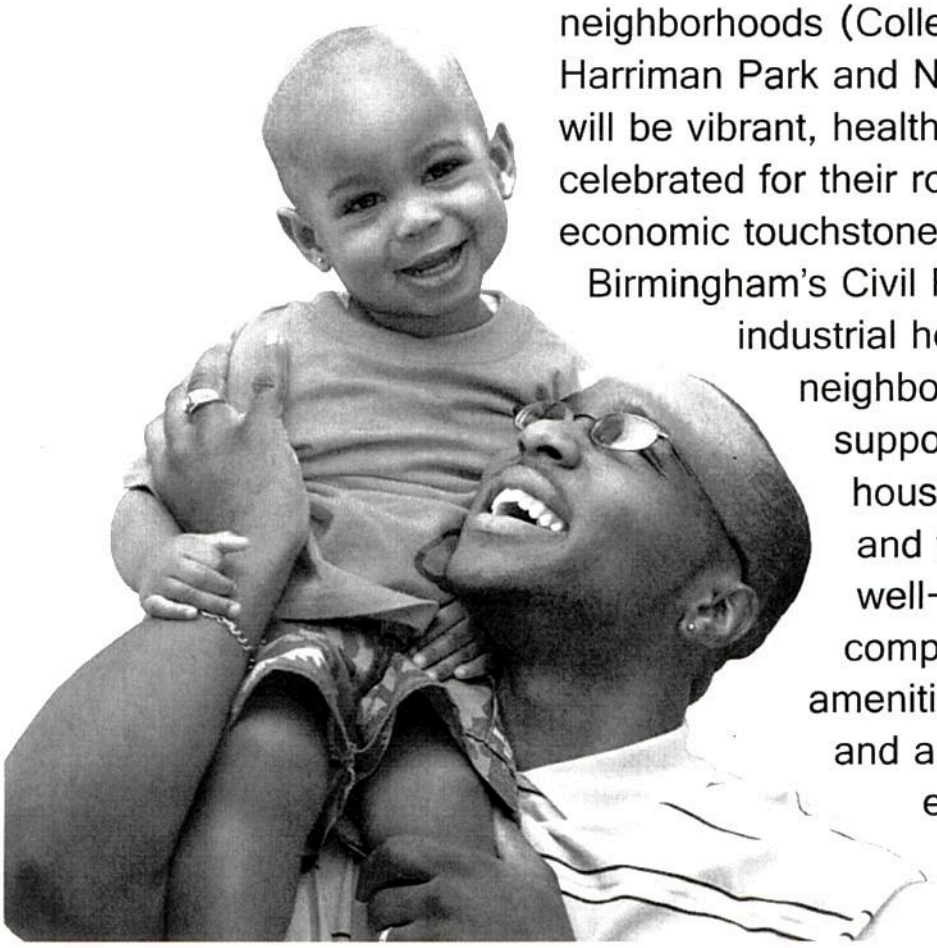
Principles

In striving to fulfill our mission, the NBCC is committed to:

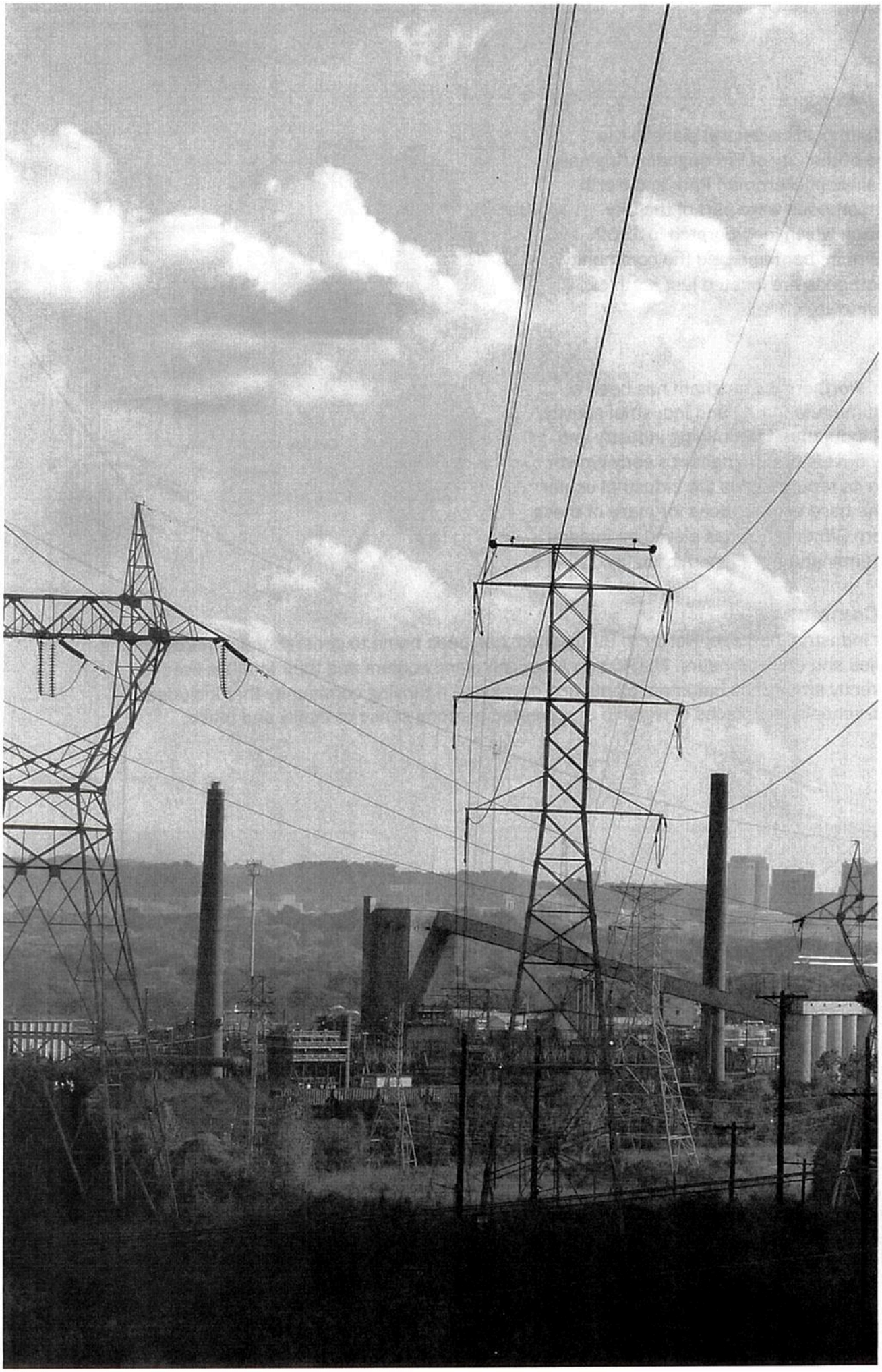
- Increasing cooperation, communication and collaboration between the Collegeville, Fairmont, Harriman Park and North Birmingham neighborhoods to help ensure investments benefit all the neighborhoods of Northern Birmingham.
- Supporting equitable investments that respect and lift up our existing communities.
- Fostering a culture where residents, business and industry collaborate, innovate and receive mutual benefit from community revitalization efforts.
- Developing intergenerational community leadership.
- Using a consensus-based decision-making process to govern the Coalition's actions and ensure that the Coalition speaks with a unified voice.

Vision

The NBCC has developed the following vision statement to guide community revitalization:

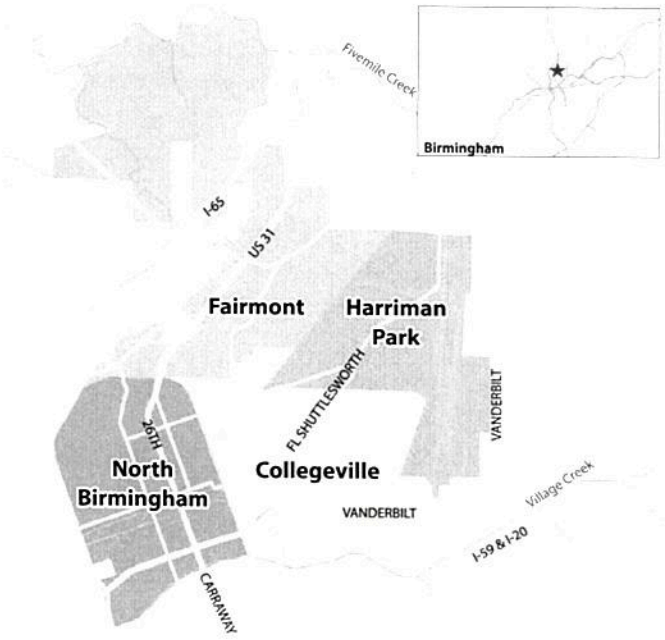


"It is our vision that Northern Birmingham neighborhoods (Collegeville, Fairmont, Harriman Park and North Birmingham) will be vibrant, healthy communities celebrated for their role as cultural and economic touchstones for the City of Birmingham's Civil Rights movement and industrial heritage. Together the neighborhoods prosper by supporting jobs, affordable housing and retail options and foster community well-being with access to comprehensive wellness amenities, health services, and a safe and clean environment."



History

Northern Birmingham holds a central place in the history and culture of the City of Birmingham. Originally, the Collegeville, Fairmont, Harriman Park and North Birmingham neighborhoods were part of the City of North Birmingham, which incorporated in 1902. Later, the City of Birmingham annexed the community. Today, the neighborhoods are located just north of Birmingham's downtown.



Vital Industries

From its inception, Northern Birmingham has been a locus of significant manufacturing and industrial activity. The iron and steel industries, coal mining industry and railroads were key drivers of Birmingham's early growth and contributed to its reputation as the industrial center of the South. As the base of operations for many of these industries, Northern Birmingham has played an integral role in propelling Birmingham's economic vitality.

Once Thriving Community

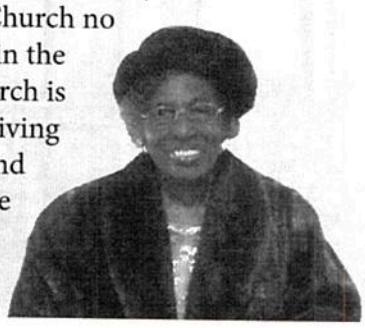
In part due to this industrial heritage, Northern Birmingham has been home to generations of hard-working Birmingham families and entrepreneurs. The African American plant workers and their families lived in neighborhoods directly around the industrial plants and developed a thriving community that included commercial areas, schools and places of worship that created a strong sense of family and place.

Our Community Then and Now

by Eura Garrison, Northern Birmingham resident

My family and I moved to the "Town of David" in the Fairmont Neighborhood in 1943. At that time the neighborhood was heavily populated with lots of houses. The houses were well kept and the neighbors were friendly. There were three churches in the community, a Methodist, a Baptist and an A.O.H. Church. There were several businesses in the area and along Thirty One Highway. There were two tourist courts that employed some of the residents, four small grocery stores, a cleaners and three service stations. Students went to Hooper City School by Jefferson County School buses. There was also bus service in the area, a bus passed through going to and from the North Birmingham District several times daily.

As the years passed, things began to change. The bus service was discontinued, businesses gradually closed and the community became less populated as homes became empty due to death or occupants moving for various reasons. Eventually the houses became uninhabitable and were demolished. Today very few houses are remaining, in certain areas they are completely gone. The Methodist Church no longer exist, the Baptist church is in the same location but the A.O.H. Church is in a new location. Those who are living in the neighborhood are hoping and praying that one day it will become a large neighborhood again.



Our Civil Rights Legacy

Northern Birmingham has played a significant role in shaping the cultural and social identity of Birmingham. Its faith communities and schools have produced outstanding civic leaders, including Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and many of the young people who led the Civil Rights movement in Birmingham.

The legacy of the Civil Rights movement still resonates in Northern Birmingham today. Residents and Coalition members speak of steadfast and fearless moral leadership, widespread civic and youth participation, and continued hope that guides their efforts for equitable development and community revitalization today.

MARCH ROUTE FROM CARVER HIGH SCHOOL

Thurman Thomas (center), present-day NBCC member, marches for civil rights in the Children's Marches of 1963.

Mr. Thomas remembers, *"[We are] in line marching just before we were arrested in 1963. I was a senior in high school. We marched from the old Carver High School to downtown Birmingham."*

Credit: Photo courtesy of Thurman Thomas. This image appeared in a 2008 edition of Birmingham Magazine.

Top: Bethel Baptist Church and the parsonage following a bombing during the Civil Rights movement. Photo courtesy of the Fred Shuttlesworth Foundation

"Fred [Shuttlesworth] didn't invite us to come to Birmingham. He told us we had to come."

Andrew Young,
Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Top: Bethel Baptist Church and the parsonage following a bombing during the Civil Rights movement. Photo courtesy of the Fred Shuttlesworth Foundation

Existing Conditions

Despite a powerful and significant history, Northern Birmingham suffers from a legacy of disinvestment, discrimination, pollution and land use decisions that have resulted in isolated neighborhoods lacking adequate amenities and services. Strategic public and private investments in cleanup, housing, services, transportation and flood mitigation could reverse this trend and help restore vibrancy to this essential community of Birmingham that has contributed so significantly to the industrial and cultural heritage of the region.

Economic Disparities

The median income of Northern Birmingham is 25 percent lower than that of Birmingham as a whole.[1] This economic disparity underscores the need for public, private and non-profit investment to offset the significant lack of capital within Northern Birmingham and effect positive change.

Isolated Residential Areas

Residential neighborhoods are isolated from each other by large tracts of industrial activity. The rail network further divides neighborhoods and creates barriers for pedestrians, cyclists, drivers and emergency vehicles. Trains may sit on the tracks for indefinite periods of time, blocking traffic flow and creating a safety hazard.

Vacant Lands

Vacant properties in Northern Birmingham offer opportunities for development and reinvestment including space for new housing and commercial uses, parks and open space, and buffers from industry. Vacant parcels could be used to reduce flooding from Village Creek in residential areas through the addition of green infrastructure.

94%

African American
compared to 74% in the City

22%

Unemployment
compared to 14% in the City

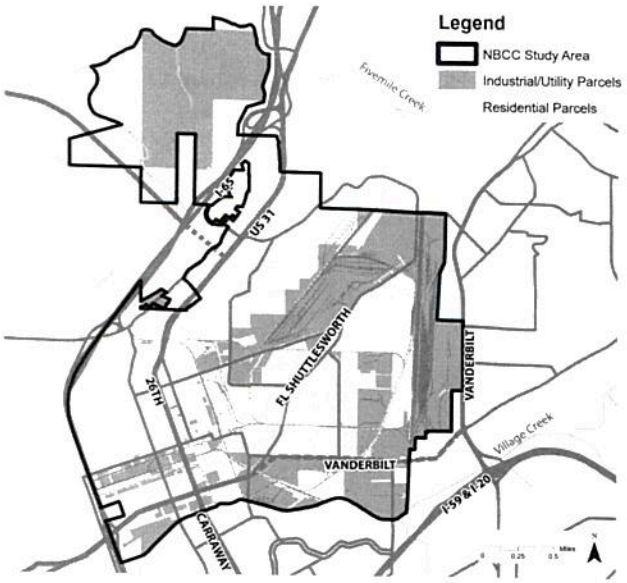
32%

Poverty
compared to 27% in the City

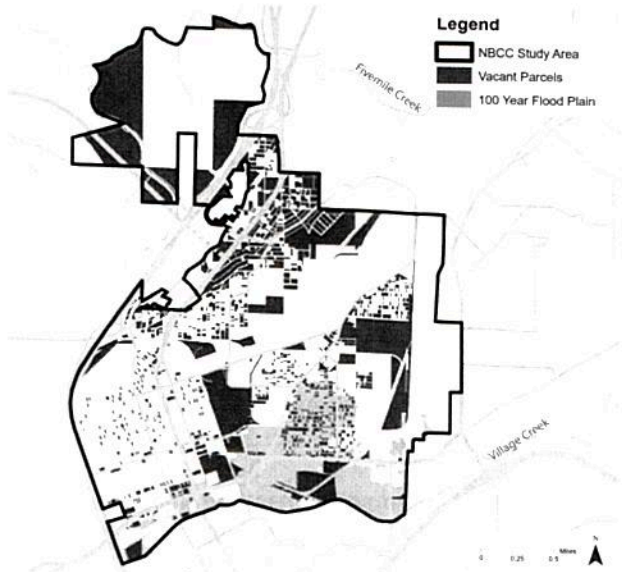
3,482 households
x $7,965 in income difference

$27.7 M

Economic Disparity



Land Use and Transportation



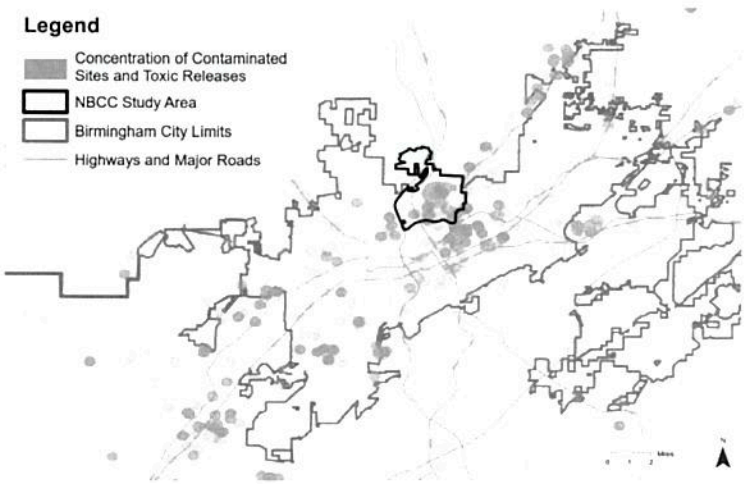
Vacant Land and Floodplain

[1] Data from the 2011 American Community Survey five year estimates. Census tracts 7, 8 and 55 approximate the Northern Birmingham community. The economic disparity figure represents the difference in median household income in these census tracts and the median household income in Birmingham.

Northern Birmingham: Present

Environmental Disparities

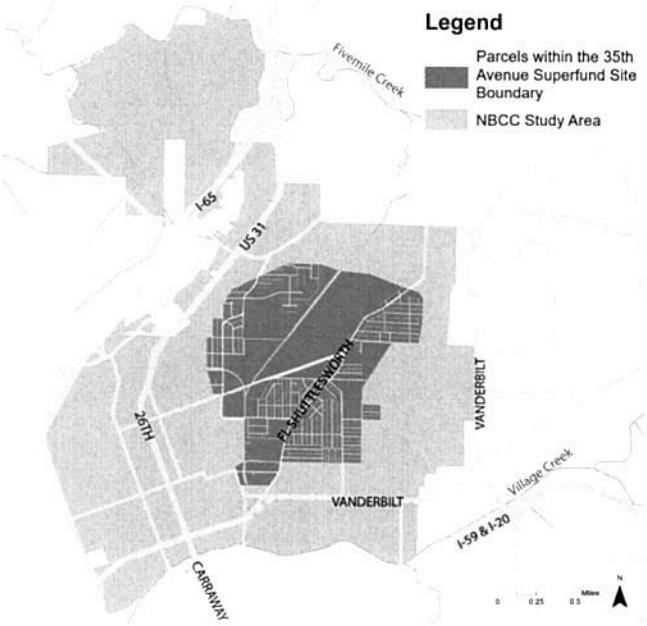
For years, industry in Northern Birmingham has served as the backbone of the local economy. Operating facilities in the area have produced jobs and wealth for families across Birmingham and Jefferson County. But industrial activity has also lead to contamination of water, air and soil in the neighboring communities, particularly in Northern Birmingham. As illustrated in the map at right, Northern Birmingham bears a higher environmental burden than other residential communities due to the concentration of contaminated sites and toxic releases.



POTENTIAL CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF CONTAMINATED SITES AND TOXIC RELEASES

As described by EPA, Environmental Justice "will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work." [2]

Leading Federal Investments in Revitalization



35TH AVENUE SUPERFUND SITE CLEANUP

The EPA Superfund Program is cleaning up properties within the 35th Avenue Superfund Site to ensure protection of human health and the environment. As cleanup is completed, EPA could provide information to assure investors that the area is ready for reinvestment.

For more information, see: http://www2.epa.gov/north-birmingham-project

Thanks to the efforts of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Superfund Program, cleanup of environmental hazards is underway. Under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), EPA is also working with local industries to ensure cleaner operations at active facilities. Other active EPA programs in Northern Birmingham include: Superfund, Air, Water, Environmental Justice and National Environmental Policy Act Programs.

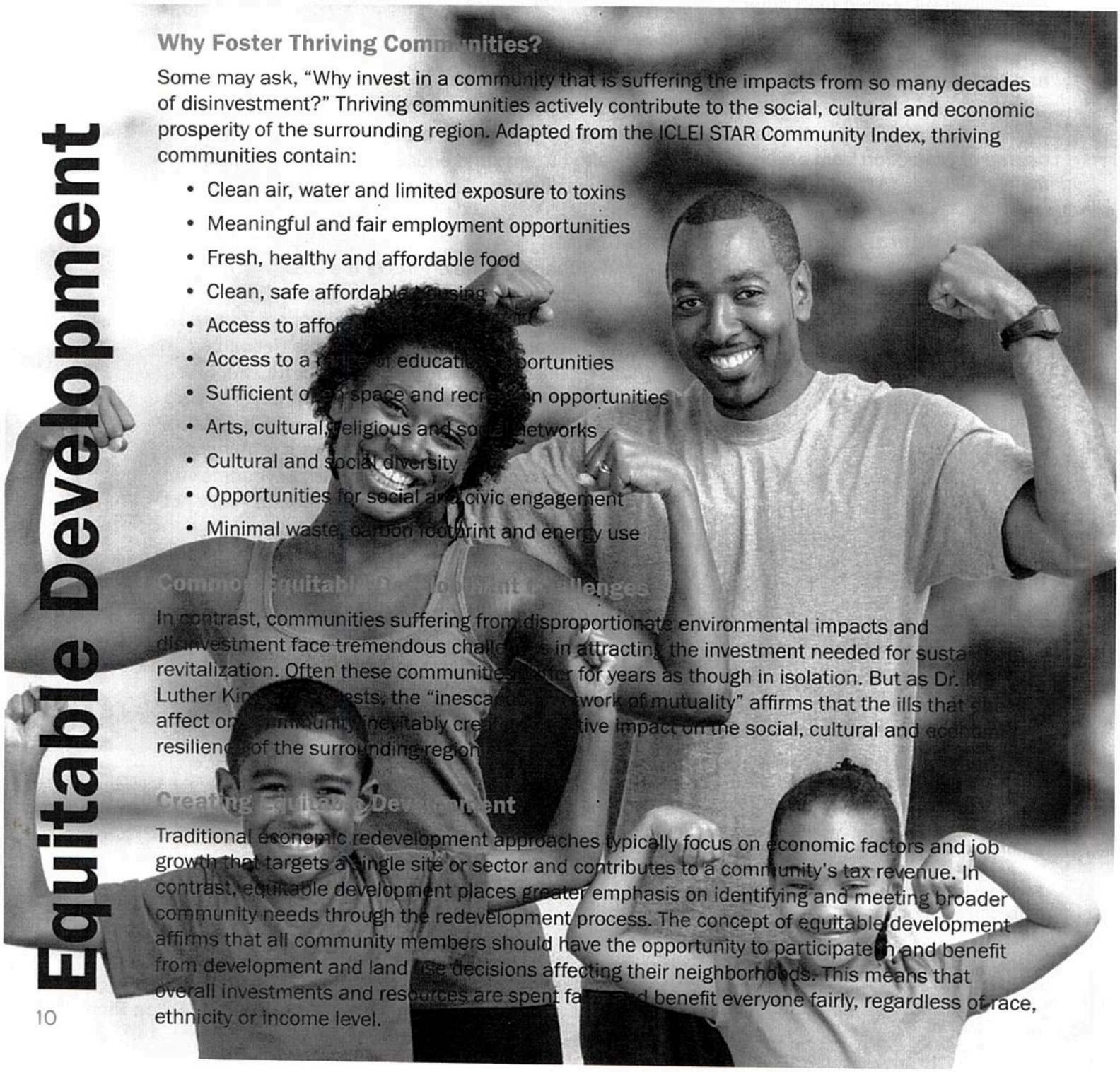
As the contamination is addressed, Northern Birmingham is ripe for reinvestment to rebuild a vibrant sustainable community. EPA's cleanup efforts and the leadership of the Northern Birmingham Community Coalition have initiated interest across federal, local and philanthropic programs to leverage additional investments. For example, the Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice is currently working to identify federal programs that can support investment and implementation efforts in Northern Birmingham.

[2] U.S. EPA. 2014. What is Environmental Justice? Retrieved from: www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice.

"Love is the willingness to understand that your "enemy" is just as much a part of the solution as the problem. They are just as much a victim of inequity as you are. You must have the power and the courage to turn enemies into friends."

Nathaniel Smith, Partnership for Southern Equity

Equitable Development



Why Foster Thriving Communities?

Some may ask, "Why invest in a community that is suffering the impacts from so many decades of disinvestment?" Thriving communities actively contribute to the social, cultural and economic prosperity of the surrounding region. Adapted from the ICLEI STAR Community Index, thriving communities contain:

- Clean air, water and limited exposure to toxins
- Meaningful and fair employment opportunities
- Fresh, healthy and affordable food
- Clean, safe affordable housing
- Access to affo[illegible]
- Access to a range of educational opportunities
- Sufficient open space and recreation opportunities
- Arts, cultural, religious and social networks
- Cultural and social diversity
- Opportunities for social and civic engagement
- Minimal waste, carbon footprint and energy use

Common Equitable Development Challenges

In contrast, communities suffering from disproportionate environmental impacts and disinvestment face tremendous challenges in attracting the investment needed for sustainable revitalization. Often these communities suffer for years as though in isolation. But as Dr. Martin Luther King [illegible] tests, the "inescapable network of mutuality" affirms that the ills that [illegible] affect one community inevitably create [illegible] tive impact on the social, cultural and economic resilience of the surrounding region.

Creating Equitable Development

Traditional economic redevelopment approaches typically focus on economic factors and job growth that targets a single site or sector and contributes to a community's tax revenue. In contrast, equitable development places greater emphasis on identifying and meeting broader community needs through the redevelopment process. The concept of equitable development affirms that all community members should have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from development and land use decisions affecting their neighborhoods. This means that overall investments and resources are spent fairly and benefit everyone fairly, regardless of race, ethnicity or income level.