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HUD awards choice neighborhood grant in Gary

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Building on a commitment to help local communities redevelop distressed public or assisted housing and transform neighborhoods, U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Julián Castro announced seven new Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant awards, including \$500,000 to the City of Gary, Indiana. These awards will help grantees craft comprehensive, locally driven plans to revitalize and transform distressed neighborhoods. Part of the Obama Administration's effort to build Ladders of Opportunity to the middle class, HUD's Choice Neighborhoods Initiative promotes a comprehensive approach to transforming neighborhoods struggling to address the interconnected challenges of distressed housing, inadequate schools, poor health, high crime, and lack of capital.

Secretary Castro made the announcement at the Louisville Metro Housing Authority, one of the grantees that will use the funding to improve the Russell neighborhood in Louisville, Kentucky.



Back row (l-r) Commander Kerry Rice, Police Chief Larry McKinley, Lucia M. Clausen, Gary Housing Authority Chair, Charlton Baker, Executive Director of Gary Housing Authority. Front Row (l-r) Antonio Riley, HUD Regional Director Region 5, Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson, Carolyn Saxton, Executive Director of the Legacy Foundation, Kelly Anoe, Director of Grants, Legacy Foundation, Dr. Marlon Mitchell, President of the Gary Campus of Ivy Tech Community College, Charmella Greer, Gary Community School Corporation, Arlene Colvin, City of Gary Community Development Director, Laura Wynn, Indiana Parenting Institute Executive Director, Alicia Nunn, Founder of ARISE.

"These Choice Neighborhood grants will spark the creation of community plans for progress," said Castro. "We look forward to working with local leaders to breathe new life into struggling neighborhoods, transforming them into places where residents can flourish and dreams can thrive."

"We are fortunate to have a phenomenal interagency federal partnership through the White House Council on Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) working in lockstep with Gary to effectuate change in the University Park East neighborhood; The Choice Neighborhood grant will help support our joint-efforts and Transformation Plan" said Antonio R. Riley, HUD's Midwest Regional Administrator.

"Being selected as a Choice Neighborhood by HUD today, has further confirmed that we definitely have people locally and all the way to the White House pulling for Gary, Indiana's comeback," said Mayor Freeman-Wilson. "These funds will not only help us transform a neighborhood, but we'll change perceptions and continue to restore hope. That's priceless."

As an older industrial city, the City of Gary has struggled to stabilize its population and economic base over the last 40 years. The University Park East neighborhood has continued to steadily lose population and experience significant challenges. The long-term vacancy rate is near 40 percent. The violent crime rate is nearly three times the City's average. The neighborhood's one elementary school was closed in 2008 and still stands vacant today. Of the public schools that students can choose to attend, 23 out of 25 schools received a grade of D or F from the Indiana Department of Education. Additionally, the community's 78 public housing units in Colonial Gardens #1 and #2 are severely distressed, mostly vacant (only 18 are occupied), and exert a blighting influence on the neighborhood.

Despite these challenges, the neighborhood possesses many of the qualities and resources critical to realizing a successful transformation effort. University Park East and the broader community are home to the only two higher educational institutions in the City.

Gary was selected as one of seven (SC2) communities – an initiative that aims to create new partnerships between federal agencies and localities to spark economic development. With support from the Legacy Foundation's Neighborhood Spotlight Initiative, University Park has begun community outreach, using a collective impact approach to effectuate place-based

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development.

The award of a Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant will allow the City and Co-Grantees to focus on the eastern portion of University Park, which experiences significantly higher rates of vacancy, poverty, crime, and disinvestment. It also provides opportunity to plan for the redevelopment of a portion of the Gary Housing Authority's scattered site public housing portfolio. The City will use the planning process to develop a Transformation Plan that positively affects all of the residents in University Park East and supports the broader vision for the neighborhood and the City as a whole.

Choice Neighborhoods is HUD's signature place-based initiative and its vision builds on the work that has been done by the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative, an interagency partnership between HUD, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Justice, and Treasury, since 2009. Choice Neighborhoods also supports the Ladders of Opportunity plan, which will help community partners rebuild neighborhoods, expand early learning opportunities, create pathways to jobs, and strengthen families. Choice Neighborhoods is focused on three core goals:

- **Housing:** Replace distressed public and assisted housing with high-quality mixed-income housing that is well-managed and responsive to the needs of the surrounding neighborhood.
- **People:** Improve educational outcomes and intergenerational mobility for youth with services and supports delivered directly to youth and their families.
- **Neighborhood:** Create the conditions necessary for public and private reinvestment in distressed neighborhoods to offer the kinds of amenities and assets, including safety, good schools, and commercial activity, that are important to families' choices about their community.

HUD's commitment to teamwork means local residents and leaders are leading the way in revitalizing their communities. In order to develop a plan that meets the core goals of Choice neighborhoods, broad civic engagement will be needed. Local leaders, residents, and stakeholders, such as public housing authorities, cities, schools, police, business owners, nonprofits, and private developers come together to create a plan that transforms distressed HUD housing and addresses the challenges in the surrounding neighborhood. This Transformation Plan is the guiding document for the revitalization of the public and/or assisted housing units, while simultaneously directing the transformation of the surrounding neighborhood and positive outcomes for families.



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