DREAM IN PROGRESS:
The Cleveland Dream Neighborhood
A case study of proposed revitalization in the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods through housing rehabilitation and refugee resettlement

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# DREAM IN PROGRESS: The Cleveland Dream Neighborhood

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Cleveland, decades of white flight, suburbanization, and a manufacturing exodus caused some of the worst vacancy and property value decreases in the country. Through the resettlement of refugees in vacant but rehabilitated structures, local stakeholders—city councilmen, community development corporation organizers, refugee resettlement agency staff, native-born residents of the neighborhoods, and refugees themselves—hope to revitalize the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods on Cleveland’s West Side. In general, Dream Neighborhood advocates have succeeded in building personal relationships that not only favor the project, but they also contribute to the inclusivity of refugees and marginalized residents in decision-making processes; solidarity between and among diverse residents of different backgrounds; and social growth that emphasizes community leadership, education, and integration.

Proponents of the Dream Neighborhood believe new refugee tenants will improve low property values and lift the neighborhood out of a vicious cycle of blight—run-down and dilapidated houses not fit for occupancy—that too often leads to poverty, crime, and further disinvestment. Dream Neighborhood organizers also believe they can help refugees who come to the US fleeing political, religious, or cultural persecution; violence; warfare; disaster; or famine. In Cleveland, refugees significantly contribute to the economy—a 10:1 return on resettlement agency investments, or a $48 million total economic impact in 2012—and they make extremely reliable tenants because of their consistency, carefulness, and conscientiousness. Landlords who rent to refugees rarely evict them, rents come in on time, and families tend to take care of their homes after experiencing precarious living situations while on the move from their countries of origin.

Community leaders organized and promoted the Dream Neighborhood project in Stockyard and Clark-Fulton because of pre-existing resources: the Thomas Jefferson International Newcomers Academy educates immigrants and refugees from 45 different countries who speak 25 different native languages. Enrollment there increased from 118 students in 2010 when the school first opened to 919 so far in 2017. Each teacher has TESOL (teachers of English to speakers of other languages) certification; teachers and classroom aids are multilingual. Further, it is a school of choice: students can attend and bus there from anywhere in Cleveland. The school’s welcoming center also offers workshops and language classes to adults, whose livelihoods and future success depend upon swift acquisition of English.

In an effort to ease the integration of newcomers, the International Village Block Club in Stockyard and Clark-Fulton—one of the most active block clubs in Cleveland—provides community garden plots to all interested residents in the area. In warmer months, members organize welcome wagons for new arrivals and celebrate community through block party events and cookouts. The neighborhoods already have one of the largest foreign-born populations in the city, and nearby businesses, employers, and potential job centers
can support new households with training and fair wages.

Perhaps most importantly, Stockyard and Clark-Fulton contain abundant affordable housing made possible through the rehabilitation of older stock. To accomplish this crucial component of the project and benefit refugee families, many stakeholders must work together: the Cuyahoga County Land Reutilization Corporation (Land Bank), the Metro West Community Development Organization (CDO), small scale contractors, employers, and resettlement agencies. The process involves multiple steps: first, financial institutions transfer low-value, real-estate owned (REO) properties in the project area to the Land Bank at low or no cost. Second, the Land Bank acquires these tax delinquent and foreclosed properties by state law. Third, through the Deed-in-Escrow Program, the Land Bank gives houses to Metro West or sells them to other contractors and developers; they repair homes within a certain amount of time for an agreed upon budget, and the Land Bank retains the deed until completion. Fourth, the Land Bank then transfers title to the contractors—who rent or sell the house.

Metro West CDO obtains property from the Land Bank—sometimes in partnership with other nonprofits and resettlement agencies. With resettlement agency staff, they find trustworthy contractors to rehab and serve as landlords for new refugees. Eventually, new families settle into new homes: they must achieve economic sustainability within three months. Limited government funding subsidizes job searches, and most find jobs within the first five months. Refugee households continue to receive services from local resettlement agencies.

Cleveland’s three resettlement agencies—Catholic Charities - Migration and Refugee Services, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, and US Together—provide a broad level of services to refugee households, including pre-arrival processing and reception planning, housing arrangements, case work management, orientation and acculturation, language training, job placement, and other significant supports. Together, these agencies have attained annual refugee resettlement increases over the last decade, resettling 635 refugees per year on average between 2002 and 2015. In total, the agencies resettled 3,336 refugees within the Cleveland city limits in these years and 4,518 within the metropolitan statistical area as of 2013.

Even with dedicated people striving to make the Dream Neighborhood a reality, in 2016, the year of the Dream Neighborhood pilot program, organizers rehabbed only seven out of a planned 20 houses. Few refugee households moved in. This occurred for different reasons: For one, there is a lack of direct investment from the city. City leaders all have their own pet projects and not a lot of time to devote to something new. Further, complementary projects and $150,000 in citywide ECDI business start-up funds may indicate that the city has chosen to invest only indirectly and would prefer to spread funds throughout established constituency districts. There are no funds for developers to increase work capacity or for upfront capital costs, and only US Together has committed to placing refugees in the Dream Neighborhood. Moreover, some pushback has occurred from local native-born residents, reflecting not only deep-seated ethnic and racial tensions but also the current political climate. In that regard, national politics and federal changes constrain the refugee resettlement process—
especially budgets.

Nonetheless, reasons exist for optimism: a reshuffling of positions at Metro West CDO will open up funds to redouble efforts for the Dream Neighborhood, and much greater community engagement since the presidential election has brought in more donations and more volunteers. The Dream Neighborhood has achieved plenty of visibility, and the principal drivers of the project—Metro West CDO, Mustard Seed Development contracting firm, and US Together—are dedicated true believers who have forged strong, trusting bonds that reinforce humanitarian and economic revitalization strategies. The Dream Neighborhood will have an improved future position if organizers can survive these most recent “famine times.” Ultimately, with the support of current community activists, Dream Neighborhood stakeholders, and the willingness to advocate city leaders and partner with common-cause organizations, the initiative is on the cusp of snowballing into a much grander success—one that has the potential to influence the way other Rust Belt cities look at revitalization and refugee resettlement.
What is the Cleveland Dream Neighborhood? In brief, the project consists of a novel idea to revitalize a historically disinvested area on Cleveland’s West Side—the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods—through the resettlement of refugees in vacant but rehabilitated structures. As a “Rust Belt” city that experienced decades of white flight, suburbanization, and a manufacturing exodus that critically impacted local economies, Cleveland suffers some of the worst vacancy in the country, and with high vacancy comes low property values. By resettling refugees within this area of the city, local politicians, city planning officials, nonprofit and social service workers, business owners, and existing residents hope to improve those low property values to lift the neighborhood out of a vicious cycle of “blight”—run-down and dilapidated houses not fit for occupancy—that too often leads to poverty, crime, and further disinvestment. This case study explores one of Cleveland’s efforts to address blight and disinvestment. Through quantitative census data, reports, and plans, as well as through qualitative data gathered from 12 in-person and phone interviews with key stakeholders, this report frames the problems of Rust Belt Cleveland and the work of key stakeholders to solve those problems.

Over a period of decades dating back to the 1950s, deindustrialization and depopulation across the urban Midwest resulted in hundreds of thousands of vacant properties—more than 12,000 abandoned structures in Cleveland alone (see Map 1 below). A huge withdrawal of manufacturing companies, coupled with newly built suburban communities, spurred a mass departure of residents from the inner city. Companies left for non-union states in the South or overseas where fair labor laws have yet to take hold. After jobs disappeared, government could not adequately provide for remaining residents of the neighborhoods where vacancy took place.

Lots and houses, left unattended, fall into disrepair. Especially for Rust Belt cities, problems of blight negatively impact property values, and city officials must make difficult choices regarding costly services. Without a broader tax base, disparities lead to cuts in funding of social services, police enforcement, and other necessities—particularly for residents who live amongst abandoned buildings. Moreover, such structures are dangerous in and of themselves: they are physically unsafe, and, as inconspicuous places, they can become havens for prostitution, drug dealing and using, robbery, and violence.

Disinvestment by private markets created a vicious cycle of joblessness, vacancy, poverty, government incapacitation, and more disinvestment. Private housing development and commercial firms that may have invested in these neighborhoods in the past will no longer do so because property values have sunk so low. Regardless of the quality and intrinsic value of inhabited properties, the level of vacancy in some neighborhoods precludes the attraction of needed outside funding for rehabilitation and economic development.

Though all cities experience challenges with housing provision, poverty, and associated
problems of blight, the American Midwest encompasses a disproportionate number of “declining” or “shrinking” cities. To a large extent, this lack of growth and paucity of alternative strategies to guide and effectively operate cities that lack growth compound the problems of disinvestment in inner city neighborhoods, where a majority of African Americans, immigrants, and other marginalized residents live. Since the 1960s, activists, organizers, and planners founded Community Development Corporation (CDC) nonprofits to provide social services to the very poor who slipped through the cracks of inadequate private market largesse and government safety nets. Over the decades, CDCs have come to represent a crucial component of assistance for the very poor. They provide Rust Belt cities like Cleveland with affordable housing stock through rehabilitation and construction; train the jobless through work development and placement programs; revitalize main streets through economic development initiatives; and fight to support and empower the marginalized poor through education and youth development programs. This case study of the Cleveland Dream Neighborhood in part recounts the formation of the Metro West Community Development Organization, a nonprofit CDC formed in July of 2010 as the Stockyard, Clark-Fulton & Brooklyn Centre Community Development Office—an offshoot of the Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization—and renamed in 2016.

Few other cities, if any, currently focus refugee resettlement in select neighborhood geographies as a revitalization strategy. In terms of scale and opportunity, the Dream Neighborhood is unique and warrants further study. This case study comprises several sections that follow a rough chronological timeline. While the Dream Neighborhood itself did not begin in
earnest until late 2014, the challenges it seeks to address and the contexts surrounding the project have been decades in the making. The first section details some of Cleveland’s shrinkage using census data, catalogues some of the existing logic behind economic development initiatives that seek to attract and support refugees and immigrants within Rust Belt cities, describes past and current neighborhood conditions within the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton areas, and gives a brief overview of Cleveland’s current refugee resettlement programs. Together, these four elements provide background for the Dream Neighborhood concept and help to explain its origins. Section two illustrates the crucial institutional and organizational components necessary for project formation and success—existing neighborhood resources and opportunities, the reorganization of CDCs in the area, redistricting of city wards, and the people and nonprofits leading the charge for housing rehabilitation and refugee resettlement. Section three explains the processes and procedures necessary for rehabilitation and refugee resettlement, including land and property acquisition; transfers of title; actual completion of structural improvements; and the entire resettlement process, from background checks before arrival to household supports after move-in. These complexities feature the difficulties built into the Dream Neighborhood project and highlight the dedication of all those involved in its fruition, from existing residents of Stockyard and Clark-Fulton to local contractors, nonprofit agencies, and newcomer refugees. Section four elucidates the successes so far attained by all involved with the project and underlines impediments to its future success. Financial exigencies, recent political change at all levels, and local red tape present significant barriers. Finally, section five closes with a comparative discussion of other initiatives like the Dream Neighborhood in cities across the US and in Europe. Though no other project replicates Cleveland’s achievements, other cities have had some success with economic development and integration through resettlement.

It should be noted that recent economic development initiatives throughout the country have already begun place-making strategies centered on bolstering existing immigrant communities and attracting “New Americans” who, as numerous studies show, are far more likely than native-born citizens to found local businesses. This case study reveals the traditional economic development logic used to promote the Dream Neighborhood project—provision of low-cost and affordable housing, job training and local placement, and education—but more than anything emphasizes the vital human connections necessary to make such a project succeed. Ultimately this report concerns community and relationships. Without enduring interpersonal investments from key stakeholders that do not necessarily revolve around economic impacts, this project would not exist. Beyond the technical arguments involved in city planning and economic development, people who care about the Dream Neighborhood—the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton areas of Cleveland—recognize it as an attempt to create space within the city for current residents and newcomers alike to call home. Dream Neighborhood organizers are literally building and creating communities, and this is their story.
Cleveland, like so many other Rust Belt cities over the last 60 years, experienced record population loss that resulted in vacant land and abandoned property. Tax base contraction similarly created local budget crises, as property tax revenue shrank and could not account for the maintenance of previous levels of public infrastructure and services. Together, these trends negatively impacted Cleveland residents, who experienced declining wages, unemployment, and less secure housing tenure. Since 1950, when the city’s population peaked at 914,808 people, Cleveland has lost more than 57 percent of its residents—shrinking to a population of 390,584 as of 2015.\(^7,8,9\) Much has been written about the Rust Belt’s woes and their extent. This section utilizes census data to describe the scale of the challenges Cleveland residents, officials, businesspeople, and nonprofit organizers seek to address.

### 1.1 Cleveland’s Shrinkage Challenges

As mentioned above, a large amount of this population loss owes to manufacturing losses. Cleveland’s formerly robust manufacturing sectors included textiles, iron and steel, and automobiles. Its location on Lake Erie made it a prime shipping hub, and abundant railroads and highways made the city a transportation center for raw materials and some finished products. By the early 1990s, however, economies shifted. From 1990 to 2015, Cleveland’s total employment force decreased from 182,225 to 147,231, respectively, or a 19.2 percent drop.\(^10\) Manufacturing employment dropped even more precipitously, from 42,137 jobs in 1990 to 19,026 in 2015, or a nearly 55 percent decrease.\(^11\)

Comparison to national census data proves the extent of Cleveland’s struggles. Whereas the US median household income and poverty rate were $53,889 and 15.5 percent, respectively, in 2015, Cleveland households earned a median income of only $26,150—less than half of the national median—and 36.2 percent of Clevelanders lived below the poverty line.\(^12\) Housing statistics present equally dire numbers: contrasted with the national owner-occupancy rate of 63.9 percent, only 42.2 percent of Clevelanders owned their places of residence in 2015.\(^13\) Nationally, the median home value for 2015 surpassed the city’s median home value by $109,000—$178,600 versus $69,600—and the median home value for Ohio ($129,900) nearly doubled that of Cleveland.\(^14\) Though vacancy rates provide imprecise estimates given all of the various reasons a property might be labeled “vacant,” only 12.3 percent of all housing units nationally qualified as vacant in 2015, while 21.2 percent of Cleveland’s units qualified as such.

### 1.2 Compounding Effects of the Foreclosure Crisis in Cleveland

In addition to Cleveland’s Rust Belt challenges, the foreclosure crisis dealt greater blows to a city already reeling from factory closings
and lost jobs. In the run-up to the crisis, many Clevelanders extracted equity from their free-and-clear home ownership to fund improvements or other necessities like healthcare for sick loved ones, and mortgage firms viewed Cleveland’s real estate market opportunistically. Predatory lenders took advantage of residents through unfairly structured mortgages, ballooning costs after the first few months or year of ownership. Many of these residents fell behind on payments, and once mortgages surpassed the value of the homes they meant to pay off, some owners simply walked away. This led to a plethora of cheap houses that investors could purchase for mere thousands, nominally repair, and “flip” for big profits, leaving unsuspecting purchasers worse-off. Mortgage-lenders and appraisers helped mask the low values of older homes in need of significant structural repairs. In 2008, the city sued 21 financial institutions—including Citigroup, Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Merrill Lynch, and Countrywide Financial—for subprime loans issued to residents who could not pay, but they lost on appeal for failing to prove that foreclosures directly led to blight and crime. All told, between 2007 and 2015, lenders foreclosed upon approximately 127,151 residential properties in Cleveland, comprising more than 25 percent of all residential parcels in the city. Predominantly African American East Cleveland suffered the highest foreclosure rates—19,219 filings within that time period—with West Cleveland coming in second with 13,227 filings.

These foreclosures became increasingly difficult to manage. Between lenders, unscrupulous or uninformed investors, mortgage-brokers, flippers, and first-time homeowners, city officials struggled to identify the party or parties responsible for taxes and maintenance of properties, especially for homes going through foreclosure. Sometimes lenders became absentee owners, unwilling to pay for upkeep. Squatting and deterioration frequently occurred in these cases, and houses were often stripped for their appliances and copper piping. For the City of Cleveland, demolition of foreclosed properties and subsequent lot vacancy looked like the best scenario, but this could cost more than $8,000 per house.

1.3 Economic Development Through Immigration

In this context and with the ensuing Great Recession, Rust Belt cities facing similar circumstances took notice of research that suggested new immigrants created jobs and offset population loss in cities across the US. Nonprofit organizations like Welcoming America and Welcoming Economies (WE) Global Network focus their work on cultivating and supporting socially and economically inclusive communities. These efforts particularly impact immigrant entrepreneurs and small business owners. As stated by such groups, welcoming immigrants leads to growth and prosperity: “The mission of the Welcoming Economies (WE) Global Network is to strengthen the work, maximize the impact, and sustain the efforts of local economic and community development initiatives across the region that welcome, retain, and empower immigrant communities as valued contributors to the region’s shared prosperity.” This mission goes hand-in-hand with place-making strategies that build upon existing cultural assets of immigrant communities within Rust Belt cities—strategies that transform or underline the character of predominantly immigrant neighborhoods. Examples abound: across the country, “Chinatowns” and little villages that
explicitly identify with the cultures of their residents have become prime tourist destinations. Latinx communities are the latest in this economic development strategy of “cultural tourism,” and city officials point to the success of immigrant-owned businesses in these districts and call for specific policy supports to aid them.

Most importantly, there is ample evidence that they are correct to do so. According to a 2012 report by the Partnership for a New American Economy, immigrants are twice as likely to start a new business venture than native-born residents, and their businesses make up a growing share of the American economy. Even though immigrants only make up 12.9 percent of the US population, they accounted for 28 percent of new US business start-ups in 2011. Collectively, immigrant-owned businesses produced a $775 billion share of the US gross domestic product, and one in 10 US workers is employed by an immigrant-owned firm. Further, not all of these businesses are small: first- or second-generation immigrants founded “40 percent of America’s Fortune 500 companies.” Such data provides Rust Belt cities with real opportunities for job growth if officials can successfully implement supportive and inclusive strategies, such as low-interest loans and grants for aspiring immigrant entrepreneurs or targeted, low-cost mortgages.

One big part of this successful implementation is housing. Many people—native-born and immigrant newcomers alike—come to the Midwest because of its low cost of living. With job losses, dwindling population, and a wealth of vacant land and property, Rust Belt cities need what immigrants can offer, and many immigrants value affordability when they first start out in a new country. If cities can connect these mutual needs, immigrant-welcoming strategies could prove to be real solutions to Rust Belt shrinkage. Already, Rust Belt cities like Chicago and Detroit depend on immigrants to offset even greater population losses. The logic in the Welcoming America and Welcoming Economies missions is plain to see.

1.4 Surrounding Areas: The Stockyard and Clark-Fulton Neighborhoods

Stockyard and Clark-Fulton together situate the Dream Neighborhood project, so an explanation of local conditions helps observers understand the unique context within which the initiative exists. The Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods of Cleveland lie on the city’s near-West Side, just south of Detroit Shoreway, Ohio City, and Lake Erie and west of the up-and-coming Tremont neighborhood (see Map 2). Interstate-90 bounds the northern edge of Stockyard, and Interstate-71 bounds its southern edge. In between, West 65th Street generally separates residential from industrial uses near its western border, and West 48th Street divides the area from Clark-Fulton to the east. Stockyard still has a distinctly Rust Belt feel, with industry and low-density commercial businesses centered on rail lines to the western and southern sectors of the neighborhood. The area gained its name in the late 19th Century as a working class immigrant quarter that provided labor for the local Cleveland Union Stockyards Company. Other residents worked at the nearby Pilsener Brewing Company. By the early 20th Century, the Stockyards and brewery were attracting European immigrants to the area—mostly from Germany, Italy, Poland, Hungary, and the former Czechoslovakia. But like the rest of Cleveland, these neighborhoods went into decline. When the major employers shuttered in 1968 and
1984, respectively, long-time residents moved out and populations decreased.

Like Stockyard, Clark-Fulton housed many of the European immigrants brewing and working with livestock in the last hundred years. The area itself became part of Cleveland in the late 19th Century after its annexation from Brooklyn Township. Construction of I-90 and I-71 in the 1960s and 1970s presented challenges for Clark-Fulton: they bisected and isolated the predominantly residential area. Those highways now bound Clark-Fulton to the north, east, and south, with West 48th Street dividing the neighborhood from Stockyard to the west. The area’s primary business activity consists of light commercial development along Clark Avenue to the north and the southern end of Fulton Road, which both serve as main arterials (note Map 3 on the following page).

Since the area’s major employers shut down decades ago, more African American and non-European immigrants have come to the West Side—especially Latinxs. According to Map 2:

Map 2: Stockyard, Clark-Fulton, and surrounding neighborhoods of Cleveland
Source: City of Cleveland Planning Commission
decennial census data compiled by the Cleveland City Planning Commission, the Stockyard Statistical Planning Area (SPA) shrank every decade for 50 years: with a peak population of 13,194 in 1940, the SPA dropped to 8,482 people in 1990—a 36 percent decrease. From 1990 to 2000, the census actually documents a 1.6 percent gain in population—from 8,482 residents to 8,616—that defies city trends. After decades as a mostly white neighborhood, Stockyard has diversified and now comprises large black and Latinx communities (see Table 1). From 1980 to 2000, the area went from hardly any black residents to 864, and from 1980 to 2010, the area went from 635 Latinx residents to 3,626. Without an influx of non-white residents, the Stockyard would have lost population like the rest of the city.

The same can be said for the Clark-Fulton SPA. Reflecting city trends, the neighborhood population peaked at 21,701 in 1940 and dwindled to 13,103 in 1990—a 40 percent decrease over 50 years. Then, from 1990 to 2000, Clark-Fulton grew by 260 total residents, or a 2 percent gain. This increase largely owes to new black and Latinx households; as white residents moved out, non-white residents moved in. The area’s black population increased from 83 to 1,376 in the 20

| Table 1: Race and hispanic origin for the Stockyard neighborhood in selected years |
| Sources: City of Cleveland Planning Commission and the US Census Bureau |
| White | 8,623 | 7,461 | 6,028 | -13.5% | -19.2% |
| Black | 17 | 201 | 864 | 1082.4% | 329.9% |
| AmerIndian | 13 | 26 | 45 | 100.0% | 73.1% |
| AsianPacific | 105 | 161 | 112 | 53.3% | -30.4% |
| Other | 313 | 633 | 1,211 | 102.2% | 91.3% |
| Two-Plus Races | 356 | |
| Hispanic | 635 | 1,000 | 2,337 | 57.5% | 133.7% |
years since 1980, and the Latinx population grew from 1,827 to 5,329 over the same period (see Table 2 below). Part of this new influx of residents comes from the neighborhoods’ affordability. Though the housing stock within the area consists of mostly single-family homes, tenure in the past two decades split evenly between renting and owning. Recently, however—partly as a result of the foreclosure crisis—renters predominate. As of 2010, a slightly higher proportion of residents in Stockyard rents (59 percent) compared to other Clevelanders (56 percent), and fewer households own their homes (41 percent) than do other Clevelanders (44 percent). The same is true for Clark-Fulton, with 60 percent of homes renter-occupied versus 40 percent owned.

Furthermore, housing stock degraded over time. Of the 3,442 mostly single-family housing units in Stockyard in 2000, 93 percent of homes were valued at less than $80,000. Fully half of Stockyard homes in that year fell below $50,000. Other Cleveland homes were worth far more: greater than 35 percent were valued over $80,000 (see Table 3 at right), and Stockyard’s median home value for 2000 came to $47,922 versus Cleveland’s $71,100. Clark-Fulton faired similarly, with 85 percent of the 5,066 homes in 2000 worth less than $80,000 and nearly 37 percent of homes worth less than $50,000. Clark-Fulton’s median home value came to $58,333 for the same year.

Most of the units in both areas remain single-family (52.2 percent and 51.9 percent for Stockyard and Clark-Fulton, respectively, about even with the rest of Cleveland), and lower-density two- to four-unit structures make up the remainder. In keeping with the residential character of the area, both Stockyard and Clark-Fulton comprise predominantly multi-person and family households—upwards of 74 percent and 67 percent in 2010, respectively, compared to only 61 percent and 54 percent for the City.

| Table 2: Race and hispanic origin for the Clark-Fulton neighborhood in selected years |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| White                           | 12,612          | 10,306          | 8,141           | -18.3%           | -21.0%           |
| Black                           | 83              | 428             | 1,376           | 415.7%           | 221.5%           |
| AmerIndian                      | 31              | 71              | 111             | 129.0%           | 56.3%            |
| AsianPacific                    | 104             | 184             | 102             | 76.9%            | -44.6%           |
| Other                           | 1,112           | 2,114           | 2,954           | 90.1%            | 39.7%            |
| Two-Plus Races                  | 679             |                 |                 |                  |                  |
| Hispanic                        | 1,827           | 3,346           | 5,329           | 83.1%            | 59.3%            |

Table 3: Year 2000 house values in the Stockyard neighborhood

Source: City of Cleveland Planning Commission and the US Census Bureau 2000 Decennial Census
of Cleveland. Additionally, upwards of 42 percent of households in each SPA for 2010 are home to children under age 18, which is proportionally greater than the 30 percent of Cleveland households that claim the same. Both neighborhoods concentrate poverty more heavily than does Cleveland, on average, and residents generally obtain less education. In 2010, census data estimate the poverty rate for Stockyard at 47 percent, or 16 percent higher than the Cleveland citywide figure of 31 percent, while Clark-Fulton—closer to the middle-income Tremont neighborhood—has a poverty rate of 38 percent. Again looking at census data from 2010, three markers for educational attainment—residents without a high school degree, residents with a high school degree, and residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher—reveal unbalanced outcomes compared to Cleveland as a whole. Stockyard and Clark-Fulton have higher percentages of residents with no high school (double the city rate) or some high school but no diploma, and they have significantly smaller percentages of residents attaining college degrees or higher (a third or less) (see Table 4). Comparatively low educational attainment figures could imply why median incomes for both neighborhoods fall below the city median—$19,658 for Stockyard, $24,485 for Clark-Fulton, and $27,349 for Cleveland. The data clearly shows a level of economic insecurity for the residents on Cleveland’s near-West Side. Broader global economic trends started the Rust Belt decline experienced by so many in Stockyard and Clark-Fulton, and the foreclosure crisis exacerbated such shifts. Between 2005 and 2015, Stockyard, Clark-Fulton, and the Brooklyn Centre neighborhood south of these areas collectively faced 3,075 foreclosures. Based on data from the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, as of 2015 Stockyard and Clark-Fulton together still had over 1,300 vacant lots or houses. Residents needed a way forward.

1.5 Local Context: The International Village Community

The approximate geographical footprint of the Dream Neighborhood project lies within both the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods and encompassed a small community called the International Village, which includes homes from West 46th Street to West 53rd Street. The outline of the Dream Neighborhood actually stretches beyond this community—in a rough half-mile radius centered on the Thomas Jefferson International Newcomers Academy, a public pre-K-12 school that specializes in English-language acquisition for
immigrant children and other newcomer youths (see Map 3 above). Within that footprint area, experts estimate there are as many as 162 vacant properties—including 57 active condemnations and 53 foreclosures—in need of attention as of 2015. As seen in the map, I-90 and Storer Avenue bound the Dream Neighborhood to the north and south, and West 58th Street and Fulton Road border it to the west and east. Because the Dream Neighborhood makes up a much smaller area than either Stockyard or Clark-Fulton but straddles both, definitively measuring and presenting census data proves difficult. Nonetheless, the Dream Neighborhood mimics the demographic trends of the two larger sections already explored, and census tracts 1027, 1028, and 1029 (see Map 4 on the following page) nearly coincide with the footprint shown in Map 3 above.

Following the larger Stockyard and Clark-Fulton SPAs, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year data from 2011 to 2015 show that, out of a total population of 8,453, the Dream Neighborhood hosts a disproportionate share of Latinx residents, and more move there every year. From 2006 to 2015, the proportion of Latinx residents living there increased from 31.7 percent to 36.4 percent, dwarfing the 10.5 percent citywide proportion. African American residents are moving there, too: though the proportion of African Americans in the Dream Neighborhood falls below the citywide percentage, their share of the population increased from 20.1 to 26.6 percent in a comparison of ACS 5-year data from 2006-2010 and 2011-2015. The Dream Neighborhood is also home to higher percentages of foreign-born residents and those born in US territories—especially Puerto Rico.

1.6 Cleveland’s Refugee Resettlement Programs and Their Impacts

This subsection introduces Cleveland’s three refugee resettlement organizations and some of their collective effects on the city. Resettling refugees in the US from around the world is a long, complicated, and arduous process (section 3.1 provides more specific details about the federal government’s role and the intersection of nonprofit and government services). The three Cleveland resettlement groups that work to transition refugees from their countries of origin to the United States are Catholic Charities’ Office of Migration and Refugee Services (MRS), US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI, formerly International Services Center, or ISC), and US Together (UST). Each of these smaller nonprofit organizations receives support from one of nine larger Voluntary Agencies (volags) officially sanctioned by the State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) to disburse federal funds to local affiliates. MRS is the biggest resettlement organization in Cleveland and resettles the most refugees on a yearly basis. Its volag is the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). USCIR is the oldest resettlement group in Cleveland and receives funding through the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. Although UST is the smallest agency, it is the only mutual assistance operation, which means that its leadership consists primarily of former refugees. The volag Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society helps to support US Together. Each of these nonprofits works hard to provide newcomer refugees to Cleveland with housing, basic household necessities, language education, job training, case work, and a variety of other important services (for more on these services,
see section 3), and they work together within the Refugee Services Collaborative of Greater Cleveland (RSC) to achieve mutual goals.

According to a 2013 study conducted by Chmura Economics & Analytics commissioned by RSC, these three local agencies resettled 4,518 refugees within the Cleveland metropolitan area, or roughly 347 per year.\textsuperscript{67} That number steadily increased over the last five years of the study period, reaching an average of 436 refugees annually from 2008 to 2012.\textsuperscript{68} From 2002 to 2015, refugees resettled within Cleveland city limits alone totaled 3,336 (see Figure 1).\textsuperscript{69} Most refugees who settle in Cleveland come from Bhutan, Somalia, Myanmar (Burma), and Iraq, but the city is home to refugees from over 33 different countries (see Figure 2).\textsuperscript{70} Not only do these refugee resettlement programs provide humanitarian relief to individuals and families hard hit by political and economic strife, warfare, disease, and famine, but they also have a positive effect on local and regional economies. Between the three agencies, the total resettlement budget including salaries for full-time and part-time staff as well as money that went to service and supply refugee households came to $4.8 million.\textsuperscript{71} Most of this funding came from outside area economies—namely federal grants and

\textbf{CITY OF CLEVELAND SELECTED CENSUS TRACTS}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Map_4.png}
\caption{Census tracts that approximate the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods}
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\end{figure}

\textit{Source: City of Cleveland Planning Commission}
assistance aid to support refugees in their first few months in country.  

Once refugees acclimate more to life in the US and begin to learn English, they obtain jobs—typically within five months of arrival and sometimes sooner—and become more self-sufficient. The same Chmura study found that the average refugee resettled in Cleveland in 2012 earned $19,913 per year, and the average refugee household earned $31,024 in the same year. With 80.5 percent of refugees in the labor force and 91.4 percent of that labor force actually employed, the economic impacts of refugees in Cleveland prove significant: in sum, these earnings equate to an estimated $22,406 in household expenses per refugee family for a total of $22.2 million in refugee household expenses in 2012. As with other immigrants noted in sub-section 1.3, refugees on average possess an entrepreneurial spirit and are more likely than native-born citizens to start new businesses. In the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods, immigrant-owned restaurants, grocery stores, drycleaners, and other service locations line Clark Avenue and Fulton Road. Foreign-born residents also have broad networks that can facilitate transnational business. Refugees resettled in Cleveland also start businesses: between 2002 and 2012, refugees started 38 businesses and employed 141 people—often but not always other refugees. In all, these businesses directly contributed $7.6 million to the local economy.

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**Figure 1: Refugees resettled in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County since 2002**

Source: Department of State - Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration

![Refugees Resettled in Cleveland 2002-2015](image-url)
Combining all of the direct, indirect, and induced impacts on the Cleveland economy yields a $48 million injection of funds that would not exist without refugee resettlement. Direct funds come from resettlement agency employment and spending as well as the earnings, spending, and employment of refugees themselves and their businesses. Indirect and induced funds come from the economic activity produced by refugee households and employment demands—for instance, when area businesses hire more help to accommodate the services that additional households require. These are the economic “ripple effects” of resettlement. This $48 million does not even include local and state tax revenue, which allots Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, and the State of Ohio $2.8 million from sales and income taxes. Given all of these inputs, then, how can the City of Cleveland, its native-born residents, political leaders, and other stakeholders best support and integrate refugees while also encouraging their meaningful socio-economic contributions?
It was this question that then-Ward 3 Councilman Joe Cimperman—who politically represented some of the Dream Neighborhood areas of the city—pondered when he and his colleagues first thought to push for targeted resettlement of refugees in the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods of Cleveland. Lakewood and West Park, two western suburbs of the metro, now host hundreds of refugees and had been welcoming them since at least 2000 (see Map 5). Along with Ward 14 Councilman Brian Cummins, local resettlement providers, and community organizers familiar with the area, Cimperman knew what existing residents brought to bear, and he knew the unique resources available to support any refugees who did resettle to Stockyard and Clark-Fulton. In this light, why not create a plan to concentrate resettlement there? These neighborhoods need more residents to make up for decades of depopulation, and refugees need affordable homes.

Map 5: Neighborhood locations of refugees resettled in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County from 2008 to 2011
Source: Refugee Services Collaborative
In 2014, when Cimperman and Cummins began more serious discussions about the project, the International Village area had already begun a rejuvenation of sorts, and the local councilmen wanted to join the value and resources that immigrants and refugees bring with the pre-existing neighborhood resources available to support them—resources like the people who have lived in Cleveland, perhaps even on the near-West Side, for most of their lives. When asked about their neighborhood, longtime residents frequently contrast a strengthened community and new initiatives of the last few years to the widespread drug dealing, gunshots, arson, and sirens much more common to the area a decade ago. In part as a response to crime, members of the neighborhood formed the International Village Block Club to foster togetherness and keep an eye out for their neighbors, friends, and family. As the impact of the foreclosure crisis on the West Side turned older houses into vacant lots, the community decided to do something about it. Over time, Block Club organizers got together to construct pocket parks and gardens in vacant lots that had become eyesores for neighbors and detracted from property values (see Figure 3 at right).

These gardens eventually grew in size and number—ten in the International Village plus two large hoop houses for growing vegetables year-round—and became part of the character of the area. Thanks to a cooperative partnership between the City of Cleveland and the Ohio State University Extension – Cuyahoga County in existence since 1977, community gardeners like those in the International Village can test their soil and receive seeds, plants, materials for raised beds, and educational outreach from experts. The neighborhood’s hoop houses (see Figure 4 on the following page), qualified for Summer Sprout assistance. Not only do these gardens provide fresh produce for healthy eating, but they also foster community as neighbors grow together and share stories around communal plots. Notwithstanding the ubiquity of community garden plans for neighborhood revitalization, shared spaces can play an outsized role in developing camaraderie and sense of place in their neighborhoods.
disseminating information among participants. For a neighborhood coming out of the doldrums of the foreclosure crisis and Great Recession, building relationships based on valuable skills like growing food should not be trivialized. Furthermore, the Block Club decided to brand the neighborhood by implementing a bold place-making strategy: leaders painted telephone polls throughout the area with green, yellow, and red stripes to signify to residents, visitors, and passers-by that they are in the International Village (see Figure 5 below). As stated previously, these place-making strategies can boost community identity and have an economic impact by drawing visitors to the area who inevitably spend money on local services, restaurants, and

Figure 4: Two hoop houses within the International Village area, where community leaders have started several gardens with help from the Summer Sprout program

Figure 5: Place-making strategies in International Village around Thomas Jefferson Newcomer’s Academy
other venues. Nonetheless, lots of Cleveland neighborhoods have close-knit communities willing to look out for each other. In the eyes of so many Dream Neighborhood organizers, what makes Stockyard and Clark-Fulton truly unique—and uniquely equipped to welcome refugees—is an extraordinary local public school. The Thomas Jefferson International Newcomers Academy is not just any school; it is one of the only public English language immersion schools in the State of Ohio and the only pre-Kindergarten through twelfth-grade immersion program in the country. With an “environment prepared to support [newcomers’] academic, social, emotional, and developmental needs,” the school takes a holistic approach to providing for an immersive education.82 Started in August of 2010, the Newcomers Academy combined a number of other bilingual education programs under one roof in an effort to save Cleveland Metro School District funds through greater efficiency. Since then, its enrollment has increased steadily from 118 in its first year to 919 as of this academic year. The school embraces diversity: multilingual teachers and numerous classroom aides instruct immigrant and refugee students from all over the world—the number has grown from 20 countries of origin plus Puerto Rico and 13 native languages spoken to 45 countries and 25 languages over the past seven years. About half of the students come as immigrants while the other half come as refugees (see Figure 6).83 Teachers, administrators, and even students themselves all endeavor to mainstream new arrivals and transfer them to other Cleveland schools within a year or two of enrollment. In this way, Thomas Jefferson serves as a transitional step to other public schools: it prepares students for transfer by narrowing if not closing any gaps in their English language skills and academic knowledge. Families can choose whether to enroll their kids there, but for immigrant and refugee students with particularly low proficiencies in English or who have fallen behind core competency levels, the academy usually provides the best bridge to success. High school students who come to Thomas Jefferson as ninth graders or later can stay until graduation if they so choose, as language acquisition and integration can prove more difficult as students age. Cleveland provides school bus services to all academy students regardless of location around the city; the school does not require proximity for attendance.

2.2 The Thomas Jefferson International Newcomers Academy

Figure 6: Key Facts about Thomas Jefferson Students

- 412 Spanish-speaking students
- 175 Arabic-speaking students
- 125 Swahili-speaking students
- 48 percent of students are refugees
- 52 percent of students are immigrants
Success is gauged through simultaneous achievement of English proficiency as well as core competency. The International Newcomers Academy uses a widely accepted curriculum format—Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)—that integrates language instruction with other academic lessons. Teachers and their aides make use of surveys, letter writing, models, plays, and games to build language competency with standard knowledge-based lessons. The vast majority of teaching consists of student engagement and active participation rather than passive lecturing. All of Jefferson’s instructors have certification as teachers of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL).

Thomas Jefferson staff strive to make the school a family-oriented, community learning space. In addition to supporting students who come with disparate language abilities and academic levels, most have been through stressful if not traumatic life events that pushed them to relocate in the first place. The school considers these factors in advancing student education and classroom placement through casework, and a variety of school employees maintain regular communication and engagement with parents and other family members. Previously, Cleveland bilingual schools combined too many age groups into English language-learning classrooms, so by having a pre-K through grade 12 structure, students can learn with similar age cohorts, and instructors do not have as many challenges teaching to such distinct young and old students. At the same time, having so many grades in one school ensures that families and siblings can stick together. This deep community character has two principal benefits: on the one hand, immigrant and refugee families can take advantage of close proximity to similar cultures and languages within the school, aiding in the transition from their more familiar homelands to a foreign host country. On the other hand, interacting with other students in the classroom allows students and their families exposure to different cultures while emphasizing common bonds. All of these families face the challenging immigrant and refugee experience of acculturating to a new society and way of life.

To help with these challenges, the International Newcomers Academy offers a number of opportunities for students and their families. Extracurricular clubs based on country and culture of origin (e.g., an Arab club, an African club, etc.) validate existing identities and foster cultural exchange. These clubs perform, put together cultural events, and together share their thoughts and concerns about adapting to change. The school also provides after-school and summer tutoring sessions as well as some adult language-learning opportunities. The Multilingual Welcome Center offers limited English proficient parents and other family members with “orientation and guidance in the resolution of parent concerns,” adult GED and citizenship courses specifically geared towards English language learners, and a number of other instructional workshops to aide in the education of newcomer adults and their children. Although newcomers may only spend a year or two at Jefferson, community ties endure: according to the academy’s principal, everyone involved maintains their connections, and administrators have implemented mentorship programs between older and younger students, even for those who have already moved on to other Cleveland schools.

With this anchor resource right in the middle of Stockyard and Clark-Fulton, Councilmen Cimperman and Cummins envisioned a broader integration between the school and its surrounding neighborhood. Though school buses
can transport students to Thomas Jefferson from around the city, settling refugees closer to the school could help prevent long commutes and difficulties negotiating public transit systems for parents of young students. Those same parents could also make better use of the resources the school offers, such as adult ESL classes and orientation programs. Since English language acquisition is one of the most important measures of immigrant and refugee success in a host community after arrival, highlighting and placing stock in an institution that does just that can only benefit integration and revitalization efforts. Concentrating refugees in these areas would take advantage of existing capacity.

2.3 The Local Refugee Resettlement Role and the Refugee Services Collaborative

One of the primary and most pressing responsibilities of local resettlement agencies includes obtaining low-rent housing that will put refugee households in good stead in their first few months in country. Especially since most of a refugee’s earliest income comes from government social programs, rent constitutes one of the largest household expenses. But not just any unit or household will do—agencies must find safe, clean living quarters offered by trustworthy landlords who will rent to refugees, understand their culture- and language-related challenges, and above all will not take advantage of their potential lack of English proficiency or knowledge about housing in the US. Such accommodations can be few and far between.

In addition to finding affordable homes for refugees, local resettlement agencies provide a plethora of all-encompassing services, from picking refugees up at the airport to actually furnishing houses to job training and placement. In all, resettlement agencies are supposed to ensure refugees’ welfare and security. As noted, refugee households generate little income in their first few months after resettlement, even if some of them do find jobs right away. Besides supporting refugees emotionally and setting them up for financial sustainability into the future, much of the resettlement agency role consists of traditional casework and connection to social services. US Together, for example, does pre-arrival processing and reception planning, housing or apartment set up (making sure to rent and furnish the unit), airport pick up, a hot meal on the night of arrival, case management, development and implementation of a resettlement plan—essentially a roadmap to social and financial autonomy, documentation, orientation, employment and skills assessment, acculturation, referrals and social service linkage, information and referrals to community resources like the Newcomers Academy, advocacy, coordination of community volunteers, classes and workshops, and follow up and basic needs support.85

Cleveland’s three local agencies have become better at service provision since they and several other partners formed the Refugee Services Collaborative in 2011 (see Appendix). Though this group does not directly serve refugees as a nonprofit, it facilitates communication and information sharing between the agencies, the City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, and several other nonprofit providers. In essence, the collaborative helps increase accessibility to services and connects refugees in need while streamlining and reducing service overlap and redundancy that could prove wasteful (see Figure 7 on the next page).
Councilman Cimperman’s approach to the Dream Neighborhood idea stemmed in part from the creation of the Services Collaborative. If refugees could gain easier access to services already provided by resettlement agencies and other nonprofits, they could help revitalize Stockyard and Clark-Fulton without spending money that the city does not have or is unable to give. If he and other organizers could convince resettlement agencies to move refugees into the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods near the Thomas Jefferson school, the process could quickly gain momentum and reach a level of scalability that benefits everyone — refugees, native-born residents, and the city. Of the three local resettlement agencies in Cleveland, US Together placed the most refugees within the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods since Thomas Jefferson opened in 2010. Catholic Charities has its office just north of the area, in Detroit Shoreway, so they prefer to resettle clients there, where they can receive the best support in proximity to the MRS office.
2.4 Mustard Seed Development and the Need for Affordable Housing

Mustard Seed Development—originally founded as AP Business Solutions, LLC—rehabs homes in Detroit Shoreway and, through partnerships with Dream Neighborhood organizers, started working on homes in the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods over the last two years. Its owner grew up in Cleveland and now lives in Stockyard with his family. After serving in the Marine Corps then returning to the city to earn a masters degree, he and his brothers founded the small real estate and development-consulting firm to help revitalize Cleveland’s moribund markets and invest in their futures. The work has grown from modest beginnings: some early investments did not go as planned, and the brothers had to learn by doing. They sometimes purchased homes for too much given the depressed markets, and at first they did not have the specialized plumbing and electrical knowledge required to complete home renovations. Still, they kept learning and started making good money rehabbing West Side houses that retained solid foundations and structures. The brothers could purchase a house for only a few thousand dollars, work on three or four at a time, then rent them to native Clevelanders. Much of their work stems from a desire to alleviate disinvestment.

While serving tours of duty in Iraq, the founder realized that transplanting cultures, processes, and entire social contexts from one country to another makes little sense. As he learned to rehabilitate homes and became good enough to make money at it, he began volunteering with International Services Center. At first, he wanted to hire refugees on his small but committed work crew—he saw the frustration of unemployed youths in Iraq and, then a young man himself, identified with their plight. He figured jobs and some hands-on skills training would earn them money and open up future opportunities. Along the way, ISC staff mentioned the pressing need for affordable refugee housing. Now, he and his brothers do both: they have a seven-man work crew that guts homes purchased at deep discounts from the Land Bank and the Metro West CDO in and around the Dream Neighborhood, and the other workers all come to Cleveland as refugees. Members of the crew earn good wages and gain valuable home construction and rehabilitation skills. The more Mustard Seed worked with refugees, the more they realized the need for housing, and so they began to rent their rehabilitated houses to refugee tenants.

Providing refugees jobs, training, and housing is actually only half of a bigger mutually beneficial relationship. Mustard Seed’s owner studied French as an undergraduate at John Carroll University in Cleveland, and ISC informed him of the large refugee population from the Democratic Republic of Congo, most of whom speak French. By hiring refugees, the founder not only fills places on his crew with hardworking, fast-learning, eager employees: he also learns from them by improving his French. As these relationships develop and the refugees get better at rehabbing houses, their English improves, and some of them move on to specialized supervisory roles like electrical work. In this way, Mustard Seed cultivates mutual collaboration, teaching, and learning. All of the workers on the Mustard Seed crew know that the work they do really benefits fellow refugees. Everyone understands how difficult it is to start out in a completely new environment, with all of the challenges that entails. Though they do not earn a lot of money, the money they do receive pays the bills, and the
skills they develop contribute to their futures. The owner has helped two members of his crew buy their own homes—one as a residence and the other as an investment property to sell. They all recognize that real estate is a primary source of wealth accumulation in the city: the process can be slow, but it works.

Except for one worker who transitioned into nursing, every refugee to ever work at Mustard Seed still works there. The brothers and crew members engender loyalty and trust—they treat each other the way they themselves want to be treated—and growth in property values due to the rehab work parallels the growth of human relationships. By creating this learning, trusting, growing environment, Mustard Seed passes on the opportunities that its founder brothers received while growing up in Cleveland. In an interview, one of the founders reiterated his motivation: unlike some developers, they do not principally rehab houses for the money; rather, they want to give people opportunities for a better life. Involvement in Mustard Seed Development is involvement in integration and progressive thinking—rehabilitation of homes in the Dream Neighborhood is a way to help refugees move forward.

Prior to the foreclosure crisis and before his election to public office, Councilman Cummins pushed for housing-centric solutions to disinvestment as executive director of the Brooklyn Community Development Corporation, a West Side CDC for the neighborhood southeast of Stockyard and Clark-Fulton. From 2001 to 2005, he focused on capacity building and, for the first time in the organization’s history, used Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding from the city to help transition the CDC from a low-capacity, business-oriented group to a more engaged, community activist-style nonprofit. At the same time, the existing Clark Metro Development Corporation and Stockyard Redevelopment Organization that served the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton areas, respectively, lacked organizational capacity, investment, and oversight. In late 2009, the existing CDCs struggled to serve frustrated residents impacted by foreclosures.

As the crisis ramped up, residents of the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods desired relief. They wanted a more comprehensive approach to servicing needs that addressed the rampant foreclosure, vacancy, blight, and crime that affected their communities (see Map 6 below). Between November of 2009 and June of 2010, after significant redistricting that placed much of the Clark-Fulton neighborhood inside Councilman Cummins’ Ward 14 purview, the former CDC director turned councilman banded
This reorganization served several purposes, including better oversight, a budget that allowed some holdover CDC organizers to keep their jobs, and more efficient coverage for the four-neighborhood service area that had suffered population loss like the rest of Cleveland. The new satellite office took advantage of strong existing resources: the established processes of DSCDO—in operation since 1973—expertise from knowledgeable professionals and its board of directors; financial support from the City of Cleveland, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), and Neighborhood Progress, Inc.; and grassroots direction from an advisory council made up of residents living in each incorporated neighborhood. The operating budget for DSCDO in January of 2017 reached approximately $10 million from a roughly equal share of development fees, donations and foundation grants, and CDBG funds from the city.  

As part of a strategic planning process, community leaders identified five core service elements upon which the new office would concentrate its efforts: community organizing and outreach, housing development, land reutilization—especially reclamation and conversion of vacant lots to open, green, or gardening spaces—safety and quality of life services, and economic development.

Since the reorganization, Metro West has dramatically increased its capacity for each of these core service areas, but what makes Metro West special—and the real catalyst that paved the way for the Dream Neighborhood project—are its efforts in housing development. The organization together with two other neighboring councilmen to reorganize the three aforementioned CDCs. They came under the operation of a fourth nonprofit, the Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization (DSCDO), a CDC with extensive history and demonstrated success in providing affordable housing, rehabilitation, and commercial development in that neighborhood north of Stockyard and Clark-Fulton. In July of 2010, DSCDO opened a new satellite office within the Clark-Fulton area that employed staff from the previously distinct CDCs. The combined groups thus formed the Stockyard, Clark-Fulton & Brooklyn Centre (SCFBC) Community Development Office, renamed the Metro West Community Development Office in 2016.

Map 6: The extent of local vacancy—the neighborhood has approximately 162 vacant and condemned structures within the Dream Neighborhood around the Newcomers Academy (center, dark blue). Source: The Office of Councilman Brian Cummins and Metro West CDO
THE DREAM NEIGHBORHOOD COMES TO LIFE

offers critical home repair and improvement, rehabilitation, and help for resident owners who wish to avoid building code infractions. Instead of straight demolitions, DSCDO and Metro West operations have enabled more rehabilitation of vacant houses in Stockyard and Clark-Fulton. Between 2011 and 2015 alone, Metro West facilitated the rehabilitation of 178 vacant houses in the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods. Rehabilitation allows future residents to move into the area and facilitates future growth, especially for residents who need affordable housing.

All of Metro West’s economic development initiatives complement and run parallel to the Dream Neighborhood’s mission. The CDC works with property owners to rehab existing spaces and move in small businesses. Along existing low-density commercial corridors like Clark and Fulton Avenues and West 25th Street, Metro West and area residents would like to see more walkability and diversified foot traffic. As of now, these thoroughfares host cell phone stores, mechanic shops, and beauty parlors. Neighborhood residents live far from grocery stores on the western side of Stockyard, and other retail sits beyond the highways that effectively cut off access to pedestrians.

To remedy these challenges, Metro West sees a role for cultural place-making along the lines of International Village’s branding strategies. Collectively, Stockyard and Clark-Fulton have 90,000 square feet of available commercial space. Increasing access to city funds and encouraging small business loans and entrepreneurship could generate renewed investment in the form of international grocers, restaurants, and clothiers, and could also draw in investment from commercial markets similar to wealthier real estate developers. Community members and Metro West leaders see the CDC playing a vital role in mixed-use development that ensures equity—housing affordability, access to start-up capital, and financial training—and opportunity for all. By focusing on these core housing and economic activities and supplementing efforts at greening vacant lots, Metro West created the crucial mechanism needed to make an idea like the Dream Neighborhood come together.

Councilmen Cimperman realized the unique potential of the neighborhood surrounding the Thomas Jefferson International Newcomers Academy. He saw the strength and value of existing residents—native-born and immigrants—and knew the beneficial impacts refugees could have on the area. He, Councilman Cummins, and their close contacts within the International Village Block Club, the Newcomers Academy, US Together and the Refugee Services Collaborative, Mustard Seed Development, and Metro West maneuvered to present their ideas to residents, city officials, and other stakeholders: match refugee resettlement with affordable, rehabilitated housing in Stockyard and Clark-Fulton; welcome and integrate newcomers through welcome wagons, shared community gardens and cookouts; provide services and education through Thomas Jefferson and the local agencies; prepare refugees for the numerous manufacturing and entrepreneurial jobs available in and around Stockyard and Clark-Fulton; and see the successful integration and revitalization of a Rust Belt neighborhood on Cleveland’s West Side.

Since the fall of 2014, when all of the pieces finally came together, Councilman Cimperman and his fellow organizers gave more than 12 presentations at public meetings—some of which hosted crowds of more than a hundred people—
and answered questions about the process. They spoke to block clubs and neighborhood associations, disseminated information through the public library and school systems, advocated for the project with local political leaders and agencies, gave tours of the Newcomers Academy, and engaged in monthly meetings with the Refugee Services Collaborative. The Cleveland Plain Dealer and newspapers from all over covered the project, and everyone publically embraced the idea. The Dream Neighborhood began modestly—leaders set a goal of 20 homes rehabilitated and 20 refugee households resettled by the end of 2016—and the councilmen sought funds from the city to aid in rehabilitation and small business development. They requested additional funds to renovate the nearby Clark Avenue Recreation Center to serve as another civic space for refugee learning and integration. Because the city views rehabilitation more skeptically—the process can be more expensive and considerably more risky—organizers emphasized the streamlined, successful Metro West process that relies upon Cuyahoga Land Reutilization Corporation, local resettlement agency, and small developer partnerships. Just as the CDC reorganization in Detroit Shoreway, Stockyard, Clark-Fulton, and Brooklyn Centre simply reapplied robust existing resources, the beauty of the Dream Neighborhood plan lay in its simplicity: no one needed to reinvent the wheel—all of the component resources to revitalize Stockyard and Clark-Fulton and better serve resettled refugees already existed. The process would require hard work, determination, and creativity, but organizers had plenty of drive.
Though simple, the entire Dream Neighborhood process encompasses a series of complex steps necessary to bring refugees to the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods; provide them with homes, jobs, and support services; and ensure their success in completely new cultural contexts.

### 3.1 Refugee Resettlement in Cleveland

The refugee resettlement process consists of many complicated steps handled by several federal agencies. First, before coming into the country, refugees must register with either the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or the US Embassy in their home countries or countries of displacement; initial screening funnels through these offices and then refers to the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). After primary interviews, the US Embassy and State Department compiles a case file. The Department of Homeland Security – US Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) then takes over. USCIS handles subsequent interviews, screening, and security of refugee applicants to the United States. Subsequently, USCIS refers “passing” applicants to the State Department’s Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), which directs processing and placement. Some nationalities require even more screening at this point, usually conducted by the FBI, CIA, or similar investigative and intelligence agencies. After PRM finalizes paperwork, refugees receive medical screening, treatment, and a travel loan that covers airfare but which refugees must pay back to the International Organization of Migration (IOM) via the US government after six months in country.

PRM distributes funds to nine voluntary agencies and their affiliates—as mentioned, in Cleveland these are Catholic Charities Migration and Refugee Services, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, and US Together—to provide for refugee household goods, furnishings, toiletries, and anything else they need; these allocations must last households until they can enroll in federal social service programs, which usually takes 30 to 90 days. Cleveland affiliate volunteers greet refugees at airports and take them to their resettlement communities. Thereafter, the Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) transitions refugees to host communities, distributes interim cash payments used for living costs in the first month or so, and refers refugee households to the local agencies and any other area social services that then take up case work, education, and employment services. In essence, these organizations take on sponsorship of a refugee household or family for the first year of their resettlement in the US, thereby supplementing ORR funds. This sponsorship commitment can be up to $8,000 depending on local cost of living and available resources. The government gives successfully placed refugees documentation of legal residence within the country, and refugees must apply for adjustment of that status to “legal permanent resident” after 12 months in country. After five years of residence, refugees can obtain
American citizenship status. The whole process involves many people, limited funds, and a lot of time. The screening and security step, for example, is so detailed that prospective refugees wait an average of 18 to 24 months—and often much longer—from the time that they apply for refugee status to admission or denial of entry to the US.

### 3.2 Housing Acquisition and Rehabilitation: The Cuyahoga Land Bank and Metro West

Once refugees arrive in the US, they need immediate short-term—and, ideally, long-term—accommodations. Local resettlement agencies can move them into suitably sized rental houses or apartment units with knowledgeable, culturally sensitive, trustworthy landlords at reasonable monthly rents. In this phase of the process, the Cuyahoga Land Reutilization Corporation, or Cuyahoga Land Bank, transfers previously acquired low- to no-cost property to its partner, Metro West, to provide these affordable homes, and Metro West partners with the resettlement agencies to find landlords who want to rent to refugees.

Some overlap exists between the Land Bank and Metro West—both organizations acquire blighted property—but only the Land Bank has state-sanctioned acquisition powers. Senate Bill 353, passed in January of 2009, created provisions that make land banking in the State of Ohio a model for the rest of the country. Recognizing the value of regional integration and planning, SB 353 allowed the creation of land banks only at the county level, and the Cuyahoga Land Bank became the first authorized pilot project. Legislators in favor of the bill placed special emphasis on reform of the tax foreclosure process. Instead of the slow, bureaucratic structures that previously regulated foreclosure and delinquency, designated tax-foreclosed property transferred directly to newly formed County Land Reutilization Corporations (CLRCs)—quasi-governmental corporations that could operate within private market structures. This provision dramatically streamlined foreclosure and tax delinquency and increased the efficiency of property disposition. SB 353 also “[g]ranted CLRCs the power to extinguish all public liens, enhancing the possibility of clear, insurable title.” Lastly, the legislation provided dedicated funding for CLRCs so that they could continue their important work without the hassle of renegotiating annual contracts. In addition to start up funding from federal and state grants, CLRCs receive funds from the Delinquent Tax and Assessment Collection (DTAC) and County Land Reutilization Fund—both created by SB 353—which generate capital through “excess penalties and interest generated by collected delinquent taxes”. The Cuyahoga Land Bank acquires 80 to 100 properties a month and serves the entire City of Cleveland. Rather than holding these properties like a typical bank, a land bank disposes of them as quickly as possible, either through rehabilitation and resale or demolition and subsequent conveyance of empty lots.

As of 2014, the Cuyahoga Land Bank held 1,156 properties in its inventory; acquired an average of 744 properties annually between 2009 and 2013; and disposed of—through sales, transfers, or exchanges—an average of 509 properties per year over the same time period. The bank celebrated a major milestone recently: over 5,000 demolitions. Because of the scale of vacant land and abandonment in the city, the Land Bank demolishes the majority of its acquisitions,
or about 60 percent. As a percentage of total property sales, about 40 percent of structures are sold to owner-occupants. Since its inception, the Cuyahoga Land Bank has sold 687 total structures and transferred 1,832 vacant lots. Its links to federal, state, and county funds enable a roughly $27 million operating budget, and property sales and recouped demolition costs account for nearly $2.7 million of this sum.

In its first full year, the Cuyahoga Land Bank formed relationships with the government-sponsored organization Fannie Mae, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and several financial institutions to acquire hundreds of real estate-owned (REO, i.e., tax-foreclosed) properties. On bankrolls these low value properties represent liabilities, sit passive, and can fall into disrepair. These organizations donate the properties to Cuyahoga and provide funds to demolish blighted homes. In so doing, they potentially increase surrounding property values and lending opportunities. Additionally, the Land Bank acquires tax delinquent properties but restricts this mechanism to vacant—that is, unoccupied—houses and other structures. While demolition is most common, the Bank sells properties as-is or rehabilitates when feasible.

In this regard, the Cuyahoga Land Bank’s Deed-In-Escrow Program helps the Dream Neighborhood project tremendously: it disposes of property to potential buyers who agree to provide needed rehabilitation. After an open and transparent inspection, the Bank determines and sets fair repair costs and conditions that a buyer must meet in order to receive title or deed to the house—that is, unoccupied—houses and other structures. While demolition is most common, the Bank sells properties as-is or rehabilitates when feasible.

Just as the Cuyahoga Land Bank receives low- and no-cost housing stock from its financial partners, Metro West receives properties donated from the Land Bank. With 11,000 properties in the Metro West service area and another 17,000 in Detroit Shoreway, the Land Bank recognizes the valuable work CDCs do to address the effects of vacancy and blight. By donating to Metro West, both organizations can collectively rehabilitate and convey titles more quickly and efficiently than if the Cuyahoga Land Bank worked alone. In this way, Metro West serves the same functions as the Land Bank: property acquisition comes from donations or tax foreclosures, inspections take place, Metro West issues requests for proposals (RFPs) for houses that need work—usually consisting of explanations of anticipated use, specified work to be done, and financial information of the buyers—and then the
organization selects a qualified buyer/rehabber. The acquisition process takes eight months to two years for a tax-foreclosed property—even with the expedited land bank legislation—the bidding process takes about two weeks, and then rehabilitation takes time on top of that. Dream Neighborhood advocates must be careful in this aspect of their work because federal law mandates that housing be available to anyone. Housing in Stockyard and Clark-Fulton is widely available to the public, and native residents do move there. But, by selecting bidders who are open if not completely favorable to renting to refugees, Metro West can cultivate an environment in which the developers, landlords, and tenants that come to the neighborhood support the resettlement initiative. Metro West has several trusted, small-scale, local developers, but none more so than Mustard Seed Development.

Mustard Seed Development acquires properties from Metro West at deeply discounted prices—some for as little as $5,000—because of the important relationship-building work they do on top of rehabilitating houses. Essentially, Mustard Seed and its owners believe in the Dream Neighborhood and want to play a part in its fruition. Since Metro West began its rehab work in earnest, the small contracting firm has proven its worth to the project: from purchase to start and completion, the rehabilitation process takes them only a month and a half. It could take more or less time depending on how many projects the firm has under contract at any given moment and whether all the work goes smoothly. Optimally, the crew can sustain work on two or three houses simultaneously. Sometimes Mustard Seed can rehab a house in less than a month, but this is rare. Delays can happen—sometimes inspectors cannot make appointments, slowing the already complex electrical or plumbing work required to get units up to code. In these cases, the owners reschedule crewmembers to other projects so that they can avoid complete stoppages.

The high level of property transfer from Metro West to Mustard Seed proves their beneficial working relationship. As of January 2017, the firm had seven total units in the pipeline and closed on another single-family house despite usual winter construction lulls. Additionally, Metro West wanted the developers to close on another five units by February, which would give them enough work until mid-summer. According to the principal owner, Mustard Seed has reached the point where it can operate continuously; they have far more houses than they even have time to rehabilitate. Part of this challenge comes from the firm’s minor capacity for specialty work: owners cycle in specialists—often for mechanicals, drywall, or carpentry—in order to keep the work moving. This sub-contracting makes project completion more efficient and more economical. Once houses are ready, local resettlement agencies can rent units and move in refugees. A two bedroom, single-family home regularly rents for about $600 per month; a double rents for $550 with another $100 per month for each additional bedroom.
In their public outreach, Dream Neighborhood organizers emphasize some 850 manufacturing jobs in close proximity to the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods. Over time, job developers from the three resettlement agencies in Cleveland established connections with a number of companies in the area and can now funnel refugees to those employers. Agency developers constantly search for other employment sources, but with the number of refugees resettled in Cleveland’s western suburbs, their efforts must be effective. Manufacturing presents opportunities for refugees with relatively low levels of English fluency: with the help of trainers and translators from local agencies who can accompany their clients to the job site for interviews and initial orientation, refugees who enter the manufacturing industry can swiftly gain proficiency with little cost to employers. Within five to ten miles of Stockyard, textile companies like US Cotton, National Safety Apparel, and Tradex International already employ dozens of refugees.100 Alumalloy Metal Castings, a foundry in Avon Lake west of the city, makes engine parts, wall configurations, and other structural molds. These companies appreciate the tangible and intangible assets new arrivals bring—determination, diligence, and experience—and resettlement agencies fill jobs quickly, cutting down on costly advertising and efficiency losses. Significantly, many employers have more success hiring refugees than they do hiring general population employees because there is less turnover.

Although many refugees come to the US with prior education and degrees from their countries of origin, they often cannot get those degrees or other credentials recognized by American employers within their work sectors of choice. One important task for resettlement agencies, then, includes assessing job skills, conducting necessary job training, and placing refugees with employers that match skills with needs. Out of necessity, most refugees find jobs and start working within four to six months of arrival. They receive 90 days worth of government funding assistance distributed through the local agencies, then wages and/or public assistance must sustain households after that period. Lack of English language competency can complicate this process, but refugees frequently fill food or hotel accommodation service sector jobs where labor depends less on language ability. Refugees with high levels of English competency find it easier to gain jobs, which is one reason refugee resettlement programs focus so much on English acquisition. Over several conversations, Dream Neighborhood organizers reiterated the fact that refugees often fill jobs native-born residents do not take. Several immigrant-owned restaurants and grocery stores have hired refugees, and local microbreweries in the neighborhoods—notably Platform—recently have found success with refugee hires.

Refugee Services Collaborative members and Metro West push the immigrant- and refugee-owned businesses angle. For established restaurants, grocers, and smaller bodegas, existing immigrant- and refugee-owners are very likely to hire other immigrants and refugees, especially if there is a geographic or cultural connection. In a conversation during the fall of 2016, the economic development director at Metro West Community Development Organization underlined her efforts to connect newcomers with entrepreneurship opportunities offered by the city, foundations, and nonprofit partners.
The City of Cleveland recently increased their investment with the Economic and Community Development Institute (ECDI)—a nonprofit originally started with funds from Jewish Family Services and ORR—from $100,000 to $150,000, thus expanding the Cuyahoga County Microenterprise Loan Program and opportunities for refugees to seek small business capital loans. Through this program, refugees and immigrants in the Dream Neighborhood who want to start their own businesses can receive start-up funding, training, and technical assistance. Additionally, Councilman Cummins’ office started its own matching fund initiative for immigrant and refugee start-up businesses: any Ward 14 owners who invest in storefront and exterior property improvements can receive up to $5,000 in additional funds. Organizers hope that these available funds will incentivize new refugee and immigrant entrepreneurship and revitalize existing low-density commercial corridors.

In addition to everything the Thomas Jefferson International Newcomers Academy provides to refugee and immigrant children (see Figure 8), Dream Neighborhood partners supplement these educational services with language tutoring outside of work hours, housing information and training, and financial workshops. As explained in discussions with a US Together manager, unless a refugee has gainful employment, in order to receive government supports like the supplementary nutritional assistance program (SNAP), the State of Ohio requires refugees to fulfill six hours of English language instruction a day. The academy provides some instruction after school hours through its Welcoming Center, and each resettlement agency also conducts classes out of their individual offices. Because its East Side offices can be difficult to access for some refugees, US Together sends some tutors and case managers to individual refugee households for instruction or, through the Refugee Services Collaborative, refers refugees to other nonprofits that provide instruction. A partnership with John Carroll University now allows for greater flexibility and support for refugees of varying English language abilities.

US Together and other Refugee Services Collaborative nonprofits also offer housing information, financial literacy, and technical assistance for newcomers. Housing and financial matters can be complex for fluent- and native-speakers of English, so all of these processes become that much harder for refugees. Instructing refugees how to use the mail system and computers, open bank accounts and direct deposit, sign checks and pay bills, and fill out applications and paperwork of all kinds make a real impact. One committee within the Collaborative started a portal for trusted landlords so that resettlement agencies have a quick way of identifying available units. Another committee offers information to refugee tenants about their rights, responsibilities, and further opportunities through the Cleveland Tenants Organization, which advocates for fair housing and renters rights.

Conversely, cultural competency can play a big role for receiving organizations and communities. For US Together, instructing landlords and employers about cultural barriers is equally necessary. These educational services collectively increase refugees’ abilities to achieve self-sufficiency and, with help from welcoming and culturally sensitive neighborhoods, eventually
reach integration. Without such supports, refugee transitions to the US would be impossible, and the Dream Neighborhood could not exist.
In addition to the small business loans provided through the City of Cleveland and ECDI, the Planning Commission and City Council approved a number of projects for the area in and around the Dream Neighborhood project, and they have also incorporated the Dream Neighborhood into its forthcoming Cleveland 2020 comprehensive plan. City officials from the mayor to city council and all the departments in between publicly support the Dream Neighborhood and cheer its progress. In a fall 2016 conversation, the Planning Commission Director praised the initiative as an example of a shift to asset-based, grassroots community planning and development and a response to historic disinvestment. Desires for quality homes and neighborhoods now accompany calls for greater access, diversity, and place-based opportunity. He further underlined the city’s desire to address racism and classism—referencing one particular community wealth-building project outlined below—and considered the commission’s role to encourage neighborhoods as places where people can grow and learn from each other—essentially re-centering planning around people. As a disciple of Norman Krumholtz, the director affirmed planning as a field that should address not just structures but systemic deficiencies. Through affordable housing and complete neighborhoods, the city can meet the needs of its residents and embrace diversity and creativity that enhances instead of detracts from established communities. In his estimation, the following plans accomplish this re-centering and complement investment in the aging housing stock and future refugee residents of Stockyard and Clark-Fulton.

4.1 MetroHealth Transformation

The MetroHealth System, which serves Cleveland and Cuyahoga County as a nonprofit, public hospital system, has its main campus on Scranton Road just off of West 25th Street and within walking distance of the Clark-Fulton neighborhood (see Map 7). In 2004, the hospital finished construction on and opened the Critical Care Pavilion for emergency services and expanded it in 2016, but the hospital needs new facilities for its main healthcare operations—the two central towers were built in 1972 and need critical repairs that would cost as much as $418 million. After a financial overhaul in 2013-2014, the MetroHealth System has come out of consecutive deficits and is now on solid, sustainable financial footing. Rather than investing nearly half a billion dollars on renovations, the board and CEO want to finance new construction of 75 percent of the main campus with loans totaling $1.3 billion. As a public system, Cuyahoga County taxpayers give the hospital some funding, but hospital directors state that the new construction will not require tax increases or significant public funding.

Though the system lies just outside Clark-Fulton, it nonetheless serves as an important public health and economic anchor for the area. The main campus currently employs 6,000 people, and since the financial overhaul, the hospital has experienced a 67,000 patient increase. Current preliminary plans call for an open,
streamlined, more efficient campus footprint of 650,000 square feet, or just over half the size of the current million square foot campus. Such new construction and service would mean related investments throughout the area. One Congolese former Mustard Seed crewmember and friend of the founders pursued training as a nurse and now works at the hospital. Education of this kind coupled with MetroHealth’s transformation could open up more jobs for refugees.

4.2 The West 25th Street Corridor Plan

The West 25th Street Corridor Plan actually consists of several larger capital investments by Cleveland companies—Lutheran Hospital, Voss Industries, Nestlé’s L.J. Minor Factory, the Great Lakes Brewery Company, the Cleveland
Metroparks Zoo, the West Side Market, and MetroHealth System—including an expansion and redevelopment of the anchor MetroHealth Medical Center southeast of the Clark-Fulton neighborhood. The rationale for the corridor plan comes from these capital plans. As with the Dream Neighborhood, city leaders tout the pre-existing resources and assets of the companies. The fact that the timing of their capital projects roughly coincides presents an opportunity for the city to invest in residential and commercial development, rehabilitation of existing buildings, and a plethora of infrastructure enhancement. Moreover, based on the participatory nature of the planning process and highly intentional partnerships with CDCs, foundations, and other nonprofits, the collective investment is meant to bolster and expand community wealth for residents living on or near the corridor. West 25th Street runs north to south from Ohio City to Old Brooklyn, bounds the east side of Clark-Fulton, and passes through Brooklyn Centre (see Maps 7 and 8). This project creates a cohesive vision linking the neighborhoods, private companies, and community stakeholders.

The entire plan contains revitalization and economic development components—for both residential and commercial properties—increased public service provision, and infrastructure improvements. Public-private partnerships comprise NPI, the Cleveland City Planning Commission, Cleveland City Council, five CDCs, the Northeast Ohio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (RTA), the Ohio Department of Transportation, and the private corporations previously mentioned. Additionally, NPI contracted Kent State University’s Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative and the Democracy Collaborative to oversee urban design features and community wealth-building partnerships, respectively. Together, these partners will rehabilitate and redevelop some of the blighted and vacant residential and commercial structures—mixed-use loft construction is already underway—along West 25th Street; connect residents with workforce housing, training, and wealth-building initiatives; increase public park and green spaces along the corridor; and improve accessibility through the development of a dedicated bus lane, bike lanes, sharrows, and pedestrian crossings. Much of the focus also pertains to aesthetic place-making, branding, and walkability: West 25th Street re-pavement operations began in 2015, and the City of Cleveland Services Department started efforts to mitigate unsightly utility lines and poles. The plan calls for street trees, planters, neighborhood site location signs, public art, benches, bus shelters and increased stops, paths linking cyclists to the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail, decorative lighting, on-street parking, and a dedicated branding strategy to unite neighborhoods along the corridor (see Figure 9 below).

Figure 9: A proposed emblem for neighborhood branding strategies along the West 25th Street Corridor
Source: City of Cleveland Planning Commission
Map 8: Neighborhood zones affected by the West 25th Street Corridor Plan
Source: City of Cleveland Planning Commission
Public-private partnerships also fuel the effort to turn culturally distinct parts of Clark-Fulton into a place-making project that emphasizes the Hispanic identity of an area called La Villa Hispana. In addition to the Hispanic Business Center and Hispanic Alliance, many La Villa partners also come together for the West 25th Street Corridor initiative, including the Northeast Ohio Chamber of Commerce, MetroHealth System, and Metro West CDO. La Villa Hispana encompasses the blocks east of the Dream Neighborhood, from Fulton Road on the west to West 25th Street on the east and I-90 on the north to Meyer Avenue on the south. The neighborhood hosts 9,000 Latinx residents, so place-making strategies aim to install public art, murals, flags, and gathering spaces that reflect and celebrate that character. A plan released by organizers at the beginning of 2017 lays out three primary elements—community engagement, economic development, and arts and culture—divided into eight subsequent parts: support of new and existing businesses, improvement of streetscape and aesthetics, promotion of arts and culture, assurance of safety, development of catalytic real estate projects, marketing of La Villa Hispana, grassroots community engagement, and resident economic empowerment. Segments of La Villa Hispana suffer from the same vacancy issues as the Dream Neighborhood—especially for commercial spaces along Clark Avenue and West 25th Street—and organizers believe these strategies will help alleviate associated challenges and encourage revitalization.

In 2015, the city released a plan for Clark Avenue, which runs east to west and bisects the Clark-Fulton neighborhood, which parallels plans for West 25th Street and La Villa (see Map 7 above). In it, the city calls for street and pedestrian improvements, traffic calming measures, and place-making approaches. The city references the Dream Neighborhood in the plan:

The Stockyard neighborhood is already seeing interest in managed, pedestrian-friendly redevelopment, through the recently-instituted Pedestrian Retail Overlay zoning from West 41st Street to 56th Street, and through the recent proposal by Councilman Cimperman for the creation of the Dream Neighborhood. The area’s pedestrian-scale commercial area, [Metro West]’s aggressive home rehabilitation program, Thomas Jefferson [International Newcomers Academy], and the Clark Recreation Center create a welcoming environment for many of the 635 international refugees that Cleveland receives each year.

La Villa Hispana also receives attention: “From West 25th to Fulton Road, the foundation for La Villa Hispana, a district intended to celebrate the Latino cultures of its residents and business owners, has already been established. This district has a well-established commercial stock, and has started to express its identity through some public art.” Each section of the Clark Avenue plan calls for pavement improvements, site furnishings and public art, lighting and utilities, and landscaping on top of the pedestrian, bicycle, and parking infrastructure proposed along the length of the street. These investments, though not directly tied to the Dream Neighborhood, would nonetheless amplify the Dream Neighborhood’s impact if they achieve their stated goals.
With all of this momentum, Dream Neighborhood organizers announced an official pilot project for 2016: rehabilitate 20 homes and resettle 20 refugee families. Unfortunately, that seemingly modest pilot project goal now seems wildly optimistic. As of January 2017, local developers had rehabbed only seven units in three buildings—one two-unit, one four-unit, and a single-family house. This outcome has been somewhat disappointing to organizers, but it is understandable under the circumstances. Financial realities hold cities and nonprofits back, private investment is not always forthcoming, and the local and national political climates complicated an idea that relies heavily on community engagement and goodwill. Furthermore, housing and storefront revitalization and refugee resettlement processes are incredibly complex and fickle to begin with.

Likewise, the city failed to subsidize housing rehabilitation for local contractors. Dream Neighborhood organizers approached the city multiple times to garner investments so that local developers could scale-up their operations and rehab more homes. Mustard Seed Development asked for $30,000 to $40,000 per house to supplement their existing contract work, but city officials declined. Some organizers interviewed for this project speculated that the city had its own priorities or preferred not to grant funds to a specific developer. Cleveland issued some public grants for lead abatement work, and Mustard Seed applied for one and decided to hold a house till the grant came through, but red tape held up the process. Eventually, Mustard Seed stopped looking for public funds. Thus, the level of development in International Village never grew beyond private and for-profit transactions, and the market there still cannot support such approaches, so the Dream Neighborhood sees very slow progress from small, goodhearted firms like Mustard Seed Development. The firm’s owners would like to hire more refugees and rehab more properties, but their small-scale business model and the local housing market cannot sustain anything more without an injection of outside funds. Councilman Cimperman and a manager
at US Together approached the city’s economic development department to procure workforce development funds so that Mustard Seed could hire and train more refugees, but this too proved unsuccessful. Perhaps this failure resulted from the department’s desire to increase ECDI funds in lieu of more direct support for the Dream Neighborhood plan.

The new and unproven nature of the plan gives people pause. In theory it sounds reasonable and laudable, but the risk-reward calculus that proves a beneficial and financially feasible outcome might still be years away. Convincing private realtors and the City of Cleveland to invest now has been particularly challenging. Many organizers point to the need for more supportive data to demonstrate the high likelihood of positive results for neighborhood revitalization (i.e., increasing property values) and refugee resettlement. For now, the humanitarian rationale is only so motivating divided from the quantitatively unproven revitalization component.

The city has increased its contributions to ECDI, which allocates hundreds of thousands of dollars to existing small businesses and start-ups every year. Over the last few years, the allotment tripled, from $50,000 to $150,000. However, some Dream Neighborhood organizers expressed frustration that immigrants and refugees have 1) not taken significant advantage of these funds over the last three years, and 2) that the funds are available citywide. ECDI offers free workshops and some classes for pay, and resettlement agencies give some business start-up education, but for refugees that have just arrived and are struggling with English and other barriers, trying to jump through small business hurdles can be overwhelming. In addition, seeing that some organizers discourage early homeownership because of the financial risks involved for newcomers, starting an enterprise would be at least as risky. From the city’s perspective, a desire for equal access and opportunity to business capital loans makes sense, but those funds do nothing to directly target or help refugees within the Dream Neighborhood. Moving the project forward requires concentrated action from and resources for operators within Stockyard and Clark-Fulton.

### 5.2 Political Challenges at the Local and National Level

Cleveland has long been a bastion for progressive planning and values, but its residents have experienced decades of decline and disinvestment. When nonprofit leaders and city officials introduce proposals that seem to concentrate resources on other populations—populations that have not been in Cleveland for years and are not local—xenophobia and defensiveness can set in. For any who doubt the existence of this phenomenon and similar patterns across the Rust Belt, look no further than the 2016 US Presidential Election, in which the Republican candidate—running on a nativist, public safety platform—beat a Democrat in the traditionally Democratic, blue-collar strongholds of Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

The vast majority of attendees at public meetings for the Dream Neighborhood understand the importance of revitalization and the value and opportunity refugees put forward to help effect that revitalization. Nevertheless, others asked why the project centered on non-Americans. Why refugees and not veterans or senior citizens? In the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods, where aging residents need critical home repair
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programs and relief so that they can age in place, the Dream Neighborhood efforts seem unfair. Other residents worry about displacement. The city has concentrated inspection areas, and CDCs run educational outreach programs to help with code enforcement issues, but these programs often involve lengthy complaint processes from the time a resident lodges a complaint to the time the city resolves it. Metro West’s partnership with one suburban church to create a small-scale critical repair endeavor has reduced tensions somewhat, but these pressures make advancement of the Dream Neighborhood vision more difficult. Anecdotally speaking, one Metro West director brought up perceived apathy from the longtime African American community on the near-West Side. These residents rhetorically supported the project, but they expressed little interest or active disinterest in helping to realize its fruition. Such exchanges may be evidence of underlying racial tensions between black and immigrant communities seen in other cities across the US. Sufficed to say, Dream Neighborhood organizers have recognized this pushback and resolve to connect and work with existing residents more closely, increase receptivity to the challenges of local communities, and find ways forward.

Notwithstanding this renewed commitment, many nonprofit organizers suggest that the city councilmen who first advanced the Dream Neighborhood now focus more intently on other projects. Joe Cimperman, for instance, resigned from the Cleveland City Council to take a job as president of Global Cleveland, an economic development nonprofit that promotes growth through immigrant entrepreneurship and welcoming initiatives. Ostensibly, this work coincides with many of the goals of the Dream Neighborhood, but now Cimperman no longer enjoys the same kind of access he did as a councilman to lobby the plan with the city or his former council colleagues. Cimperman’s replacement has other projects and priorities, so the Dream Neighborhood sits idle in terms of city guidance. According to one organizer, Councilman Cummins deeply supports the Dream Neighborhood, endorses it wholeheartedly, and publicizes the idea far and wide, but he too prioritizes other projects, such as La Villa Hispana and the West 25th Street Corridor Plan. Everyone involved underlines the mutual benefits between the city’s catalytic projects in Clark-Fulton, yet focus on immigrant place-making does not add crucial supports to refugee resettlement. Sadly, the Dream Neighborhood no longer has an official city advocate. Insofar as public outreach extends to other city councilmembers, the likelihood of persuading them to take up the Dream Neighborhood cause and expend precious political capital to acquire city funds seems even more remote.

Other Dream Neighborhood observers and stakeholders reveal frustration and discontent over Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson’s cagey, noncommittal statements about the city’s support of immigrants and his specific endorsement of the Dream Neighborhood. Over the past three years, the mayor and city council have refused to support an initiative brought by resettlement agency staff that would make Cleveland a “welcoming city” under the umbrella of the nonprofit Welcoming America. In order for cities to receive specific grant funding and economic programming—city-to-city exchanges and other learning and growth opportunities—a city must join the nonprofit and take a number of steps to better support and integrate immigrants. These steps include laying the groundwork for long-term integration of immigrants through local plans, committing to institutional strategies of immigrant
social and economic inclusion, using immigrant-friendly media messaging, and ensuring native-born and immigrant unity through leadership and government policy. These steps are certainly not easy, but Welcoming America provides a wealth of support and guidance. In fact, Akron, Cincinnati, Columbus, Dayton, and Toledo are all members. Why would Cleveland refuse these opportunities if it truly supports its immigrant and refugee residents? Welcoming America advocates personally wrote letters to the mayor, councilmembers, and anyone else they could think of to convince local decision-makers of the importance of the steps, to no avail. According to one resettlement agency, Cleveland is the only Ohio city that settles refugees but is not recognized as welcoming.

Juxtaposed with this refusal to support welcoming status for the City of Cleveland, the mayor and city council’s endorsement of the Dream Neighborhood seems rather odd. Then again, the city does not directly support the plan with any financial backing—that comes from existing private development, CDC and land bank housing programs, and local nonprofit resettlement agencies. Perhaps tacit endorsement of the project avoids critical publicity that might otherwise result from rejecting such a humanitarian revitalization effort.

Given Cleveland’s incredibly low proportion of foreign-born residents—4.8 percent, or less than half of the national average of 13 percent—one critic suggests that the mayor intentionally forgoes immigrant-friendly policies and uses the Dream Neighborhood and La Villa projects as smokescreens to deflect greater calls for immigration attraction and integration strategies. Other Rust Belt cities qualify for and gladly accept the welcoming label, and their immigrant populations rise far above Cleveland’s. No doubt this is correlation and not causation, but the possible connection raises important questions: how does Cleveland’s growth in foreign-born residents compare to other Rust Belt cities, and how might the city better attract this demographic? Perhaps the mayor does not see the value in attracting immigrants that other Rust Belt officials see. Since Cleveland’s immigrants make up a smaller proportion of residents, maybe the mayor is making a conscious decision to concentrate his efforts with larger groups of existing voters. Politically, this could be plausible in the context of some native residents upset over the attention granted to the Dream Neighborhood. If Mayor Jackson worries over a disruption of traditional voting blocs caused by newcomers with different needs—perceived as conflicting with native-residents in a zero-sum narrative—that could explain his unwillingness to collaborate with Welcoming America and the tendency to rebuff calls to directly fund the Dream Neighborhood. If this critique accurately describes his thinking, the strategy would be extremely shortsighted in light of Cleveland’s still shrinking population. Either way, the fact remains that the Dream Neighborhood receives scant support from the city.

Besides the intricate local politics, the national political climate threatens to negate the Dream Neighborhood’s modest successes. Donald Trump’s election to the White House and subsequent executive orders to discourage immigration and curtail the refugee resettlement program from several majority Muslim countries make local refugee resettlement far more challenging. Budget allocations from the State Department and other funders could decrease, and many resettlement agency staff in Cleveland worry over what will happen to their positions
and organizations in the future. Uncertainty is not especially conducive to work that requires such sustained energy and emotional strength. In conversation with Joe Cimperman in March of 2017, the former councilman said the Dream Neighborhood and its partners could be entering famine times.

5.3 Challenges to Community and Refugee Support Structures

One of the biggest challenges for the Dream Neighborhood comes from its scalability and relative newness. So far, US Together is the only resettlement agency committed to moving refugees into rehabilitated houses in the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods. Catholic Charities settles a lot of refugees in the Detroit Shoreway neighborhood and Lakewood suburb; MRS’ director views the Dream Neighborhood skeptically. In an interview with Cleveland Magazine in December of 2016, he discussed the challenges of resettling refugees: “We need something with traction—we don’t need an idea or a concept, we need a house. It’s not like we can hit the pause button and develop an area or a different resource and have six months to get that up and going. No, the arrivals are here.”

Metro West and US Together have sometimes struggled with contractors who cannot finish rehabs before clients need to move in, but this is rare. Similarly, USCIR ran into difficulties with housing rehabilitation in other parts of Cleveland: the “Discovering Home” project, a renovation initiative based in three separate areas around Cuyahoga County, seems to be stalled. [USCIR] received and renovated six properties from the Cuyahoga County Land Bank. With homes in Cleveland, Lakewood, and South Euclid, the project is designed to help stem the foreclosure problem by filling vacant homes, primarily with refugees, first as renters and then as homeowners.

Yet only two of the properties have been purchased by USCRI-Cleveland’s clients. The last time USCRI-Cleveland received a new property from the land bank was July 2013.

What causes this delay? Why have the other resettlement agencies not committed to the Dream Neighborhood? One US Together manager suggests that the project has not reached the point of scalability. It is so glacial that the other agencies fear an inability to move in refugees when they finally reach Cleveland. The same manager points to a lack of trusted local developers. If more developers than just Mustard Seed committed to rehabbing 30 properties this year, there would be no need to fear housing shortages or delays. Once the neighborhood can get over this hump, so to speak, Dream Neighborhood organizers would have a much better case to push for expedited resources from the city. They call it a snowball effect: with more contractors, more homes would be available for move-in. With more move-ins, more community connections form, vacancy goes down, more residents mow their lawns, crime goes down, and property values go up. Still, the situation is chicken and egg: funds from the city would enable more renovations, and more developers could translate into more funds. Which comes first, if at all? Mustard Seed cannot get the neighborhood over the hump by themselves, and too many homes remain vacant to see any exponential development effects. Perhaps USCIR ran into trouble because its properties were spread throughout the city. With a real commitment
from all three resettlement agencies in a more concentrated location, that force could attract enough developers to form a critical mass for the Dream Neighborhood.

The strongest component of the Dream Neighborhood, Metro West’s housing program, might be too much for new refugees to bear given their unfamiliarity with English and cultural norms. Staff at Metro West say that is one of the reasons refugees rent homes instead of owning. Yes, homeownership is one of the best ways to build wealth, but they explain that it would be irresponsible to encourage homeownership for people so foreign to the system. In the wake of the foreclosure crisis, predatory lenders and others took advantage of native-born citizens with full English fluency and the benefit of decades living in country. Refugees who would become homeowners often do not realize the legal and financial ramifications of owning a home—hidden costs can make it detrimental financially, and language and cultural barriers would only magnify these costs.

In some cases, people simply do not like the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods. For refugees potentially dealing with PTSD and other psychological and physical stressors, outward safety and comfort is all-important. Sometimes the seemingly littlest sign of discomfort—a stray cat, the wrong shade of blue, a creaky door hinge—can be an insurmountable trigger that prevents an otherwise good housing match. Many partners appreciate the Dream Neighborhood organizers’ accomplishments in putting together a great plan, but they take a wait-and-see approach. Since the housing renovation piece has not yet achieved scalability, they continue to wait. Mustard Seed Development owners corroborate this skepticism and note that some resettlement agencies intentionally refrain from resettling refugees in inner-city neighborhoods because of safety concerns. Still, the West Side has cheaper rents, more buses, and more services in general. As other Cleveland neighborhoods become saturated and rents go up, the Dream Neighborhood may eventually become a more viable space for refugee resettlement.

Many of the manufacturing jobs promoted in public meetings exist in theory, but employers have not yet solidly committed. Some resettlement staff thought partnerships would be forthcoming because of Global Cleveland’s role in the Refugee Services Collaborative or because of public support from the city, and some employers verbally committed, but that light commitment has not translated into refugee hires. US Together and the other agencies have an “in” with a few manufacturers on the West Side near Stockyard, but these connections took years to develop. A lot of companies avoid hiring refugees because they assume the newcomers will need work visa sponsorships and handholding. Sometimes the lack of hiring can be a language issue, or managers will want to run private credit checks that turn up newly issued social security cards that strike them as fraudulent. As a result, all of the refugee resettlement agencies use the same employers they always have; none have received increases in job development capacity. At Mustard Seed, refugee crewmembers share their experiences waiting to hear from agencies about job placements. They rue the slow pace of the process, but they also discuss the hard work of agency staff members striving to support them. They recognize that the nonprofits do not own the hiring companies and cannot make demands of whom to employ.

For some time, organizers discussed the possibility of providing wraparound refugee services at the Clark Recreation Center only six
blocks west of Thomas Jefferson, but this now seems unlikely. US Together tried to advocate for the rec center’s renovation in part to locate a new West Side office that could host refugee workshops and English language classes. Though the idea made it to public meetings, the rehab never happened. According to one interview subject, another project less than a mile north of that spot, the newly renovated Michael J. Zone Recreation Center and Park, probably discouraged what city council may have viewed as a redundant investment. This seems logical: if the city can encourage wider attendance at the Zone Rec Center without having to renovate another building, it saves taxpayers money that can then be distributed more widely. Families and youths in the Detroit Shoreway neighborhood can now have fun with new sports fields, courts, and a splash park. Residents of Stockyard and Clark-Fulton can use the space, too, except that I-90 creates a visible if not completely physical barrier preventing wider use, particularly if one does not have a car.

Although Thomas Jefferson International Newcomers Academy fills some of this services gap, it cannot educate adult refugees like it does younger students. English classes only operate on certain days and only in the evenings. This schedule helps refugees who work standard hours, but it does not come close to meeting the six-hour language instruction requirement for refugees who have not yet found employment. Since the Clark Rec Center does not provide English classes, refugees must find instruction farther afield. According to US Together staff, the school creates the principal impetus for settling refugees in International Village. Without this anchor institution, the Dream Neighborhood would not exist. At the same time, many refugee families prefer to live close to where they work. If they cannot obtain a job on the West Side, they might have to commute long distances, which makes achieving self-sufficiency harder. Even if they do resettle on the West Side, in Stockyard or Clark-Fulton, working a job across the city or in another neighborhood requires more time and effort, not to mention the ability to navigate public transportation. Aside from this, because children younger than high school attend the Academy for no more than two years, some refugee families might relocate away from the school once their children integrate to mainstream public schools.

Transportation around Cleveland generally serves refugees well—it is inexpensive and relatively convenient to move around the West Side, Mayfield, Little Italy, and Case Western in University Circle (see Map 9). However, getting from one side of the city to the other takes time and significant coordination. Resettlement agencies prefer to place refugees near their own offices, like MRS’ in Detroit Shoreway or US Together’s on the East Side. Near Thomas Jefferson Academy is also desirable, but this can cause lengthy commutes to refugee resettlement offices. From working a job to adult language education and schooling for refugee children, family members rush all over the city. Older Academy students might also work jobs to supplement their family’s income. Between school, work, and commuting, sleep becomes less important. Clearly, even with increased information sharing between providers since the founding of the Refugee Services Collaborative, no streamlined process really exists. Especially for refugees placed in International Village by US
Together, there is no dedicated place to see case managers or address walk-ins—refugees have to call, and the agency conducts far more home visits, which create additional time and budget constraints. Buses run from International Village to Public Square basically 24 hours a day, but buses on the East Side only run very early and very late, and no convenient bus stops connect the US Together office to its clients on the West Side. More buses and different routes could alleviate this problem, but the city says demand is not there. Such statements marginalize refugees who absolutely would use the buses but would not call the city to register their requests for more service.

The International Newcomers Academy has its own challenges trying to educate and integrate students from all over the world. Some of these difficulties are predictable—negotiating cultural differences in an urban American setting, helping students deal with the psychological impacts of fleeing persecution—while others are decidedly less so. The principal at Thomas Jefferson does not know how many refugee children she will have enrolled from one year to the next, and new arrivals show up monthly. This makes curriculum and personalized educational goals much harder to plan, not to mention staffing decisions. The city allocates funding for a certain number of multilingual classroom aides; if a refugee student comes to Cleveland speaking a language the school does not have staff for, administrators must scramble to find adequate alternatives. The two-year policy complicates the process,
too. Everyone at the school, from teachers and administrators to students and their parents, likens the school to one big family. For all that the school does to keep families a part of the community and bring back former students for events, such turnover can be emotionally draining for all involved.

Integration is perhaps the biggest challenge, and impressions on the ground place the bulk of this responsibility squarely on resettlement agencies. Some agency staff acknowledge that city endorsement only goes so far, and even a city councilperson can only do so much. Thus, resettlement workers and community development organizers must ban together to accomplish the Dream Neighborhood vision. Realizing this vision is ground-level work that necessitates welcoming and supporting refugees while simultaneously engaging longtime residents to ensure their inclusion in the process. Since US Together is the sole agency currently resettling families in the International Village area—as yet only seven—and it started this process in the winter of 2015, many refugees have not gotten an opportunity to see welcoming wagons, experience block parties, or plant fruits and vegetables in community gardens. As weather turns cold, opportunities for these events dwindle. These crucial integration activities will aid in the process and slowly cultivate relationships; they just are not yet at that tipping point. A story recounted by a Mustard Seed Development owner proves instructive: during one rehab process in International Village, a longtime resident in the neighborhood would come around to criticize the crew and its work. She said that they are giving jobs and homes to non-Americans. The owner tried to explain the home’s blighted conditions; he described the vacancy problem and how he obtained the house from Metro West. “I’m just trying to improve the neighborhood,” he said. Months later, after seeing the home’s transformation, she approached the crew and apologized. She recognized the firm’s contribution to the neighborhood. Indeed, these and similar anecdotes demonstrate the gradual but nonetheless vital importance of the organizers’ grassroots work.

### 5.4 Next Steps

Throughout the interviews conducted for this case study, an underlying optimism shown through all of the challenges and difficulties. Stakeholders talked about “next year” as if the necessary forces would finally coalesce to bring the over-the-hump, snowballing, tipping point momentum that would mean Dream Neighborhood success. Organizers of the project—many lifelong Cleveland residents themselves—talk of the progress the city has made from the height of the foreclosure crisis, not to mention the days when outsiders sarcastically referred to Cleveland as the “mistake on the lake.” To expand this progress to Stockyard and Clark-Fulton and to really make refugees a bigger part of this progress, organizers must identify needs and barriers. Executive orders at the federal level, like curtailment of the Syrian refugee resettlement program, certainly qualify. However, as a US Together staff person said, the agencies have plenty to keep them busy if they can rally support with the State Department for resettlement of refugees from elsewhere: thousands of people in Rwanda and Tanzania seek relocation.

Similarly, Metro West leaders spoke of future endeavors in a practical, focused manner. Rather than discounting refugee homeownership outright, some lease to own agreements could benefit refugees after five years or so, once families get a handle on the English language, work, and
financial processes. After all, starting businesses and buying homes are the best ways to invest and develop wealth. Training refugee households starting after the third year in country—through financial management, investment, or loan application workshops—would go a long way to show newcomers that they can plan for years into the future instead of just worrying about tomorrow.

Consideration of the future also went hand-in-hand with a kind of conspiratorial, us against the world attitude that feels refreshingly familiar in Rust Belt cities. A small group of organizers from Metro West, US Together, and the Mustard Seed Development crew have taken primary responsibility for the project. Though other partners might provide logistical support, further services, or information sharing, the small cadre has embraced a roguish mentality that reveals a great deal of passion and mutual trust. The city, whether welcoming or not, does not provide direct funds, so the nonprofit and CDC organizations involved with the Dream Neighborhood must collaborate and do the best they can to make it work on their own.

Organizers at US Together remain hopeful that Councilman Cummins will come through and impel a city commitment to renovate the Clark Rec Center. It could serve as a community rallying point and resource, especially for low-income residents too poor to even join the local YMCA. US Together and other providers could teach English there, and families could find more accessible childcare and fitness and recreational outlets. As mentioned, the Clark Rec Center could host US Together’s West Side satellite office, which would alleviate the difficulties refugees encounter riding buses across town as well as the agency’s budget pressures that come from conducting so many home visits. One manager discussed a rent-sharing idea that would partner US Together with nonprofits that provide services to Spanish-speakers. Clientele for both providers would benefit from English-language workshops and general resource sharing. A US Together office in a renovated Clark Rec Center could be the first step in the creation of a one-stop immigrant and refugee welcoming center, one that unifies and integrates services under one roof, with all of the benefits and advantages that entails.

Not all interview subjects for this case study knew what their next steps would be, but they approached the question with introspection and a high level of dedication to the Dream Neighborhood process. Ultimately, they indicated a true belief that the process would work and committed to continue that process, however slow it might be. A principal US Together contact said she would meet with other potential new landlords and try to find more people like the crew from Mustard Seed Development. More adept rehabbers leads to a greater quantity of homes rehabbed, rented out, and moved into. More people in the neighborhood will provide more leverage to approach city officials or alternative investors. Organizers affirm the need for wraparound services for families—particularly education and housing. They want to keep moving families with kids into the neighborhood because of the inspiring and effective work of the Thomas Jefferson Newcomers Academy.

While all organizers admitted that they heard low levels of native-resident criticism of the Dream Neighborhood initiative, most doubled down on the need for greater connection and communication with these residents. In some cases, organizers perceived an exchange, even a negative one, as an opportunity to share ideas and promote the benefits of the project. As recounted by an organizer with Mustard Seed Development,
before someone meets drastically different people, it is easy to “other” them based on media images or stereotypes and think that “those people” receive preferential treatment for resources or opportunities or both. But when people see the results of the Dream Neighborhood process and meet the refugees, all of the common “othering” prejudices tend to fall away.

As with US Together, Mustard Seed slowly chips away at the vacancy problems on the West Side. The firm still does things the way they have always done them, and nothing really has changed. If fellow Dream Neighborhood partners decided to call it quits, Mustard Seed would too—they could concentrate development in more profitable neighborhoods. Nevertheless, the firm’s owners appreciate all of the trying work Metro West and US Together do to pave the way for Mustard Seed home rehabilitation. Without this work, the firm would have to pay significantly more in upfront housing costs, and reliable refugee tenants would not be readily available to move in. One owner sums up the situation succinctly: there is a lot of talk from a lot of people but not a whole lot of action. If not for Metro West and US Together, the Dream Neighborhood would not even have gotten to where it is: without houses, there would be no where for refugees to live, and without good refugee tenants, there would still be empty houses. These organizations put a lot of energy into keeping things moving. The firm still wants some kind of grant or job training subsidy from the city—this would make the Dream Neighborhood a real jobs solution for local refugees in addition to the housing process—but for now, the crew seems content to be one big piece of a mutually beneficial partnership that helps, slowly but surely, to revitalize the Stockyard and Clark-Fulton neighborhoods.

Finally, in an interview with Joe Cimperman, the former councilman sounded as bullish as ever on the subject of the Dream Neighborhood and its future success. Although he granted the challenges caused by changes to refugee resettlement and local housing funding, he explained the rise in private individual donations to Global Cleveland and the abundance of people wishful to volunteer and learn more about refugees and immigrants. The famine times notwithstanding, political challenges could be opportunities. If Metro West, US Together, and members of the Refugee Services Collaborative can survive in this climate, they will be in a much better position moving forward. Moreover, Cimperman praised the related neighborhood investments funded by the city—MetroHealth expansion, West 25th Street, Clark Avenue, and La Villa Hispana. Even though these projects might not qualify as direct support of the Dream Neighborhood, they are absolutely complementary and beneficial to all of the work by project organizers. Perhaps most importantly, the primary advocate of the Dream Neighborhood at Metro West moved to a new position at the CDO in February of 2017. Henceforth, the new Metro West Director of the International Village will be able to concentrate his energies and available resources to the Dream Neighborhood and its nearest surroundings.
While not an exhaustive compilation or survey of case studies, this section provides interested parties an introduction to other Rust Belt towns and cities that have experienced decline but also have turned to refugee resettlement as a way of serving humanitarian purposes and revitalizing blighted and declining areas. Beyond the United States, cities in the Netherlands, Germany, and Italy also contribute important knowledge to these mutual endeavors. Given proximity to Syria and spillover violence in other Middle Eastern countries, European Union member states play a different but invaluable role as a critical support to millions of refugees in immediate need. Although no city, neighborhood, or project is completely alike given unique cultural, social, and governmental contexts, such parallels can disseminate information about what has worked and what has not under those particular circumstances, contributing to cross-pollination and the development of individualized solutions. These and other resettlement cases raise more questions than answers, but questions give rise to discussions, and discussions can lead to lasting solutions.

As with Cleveland, human relationships undergird the redevelopment of homes. Messiah Lutheran became the church of choice for dozens of newly resettled Bhutanese refugees to the Tower Grove East neighborhood, and when church leaders discovered their new congregants’ tenuous housing situations—refugee households often comprise several extended family members and suffer from high rent burdens, poor housing, or under-housing—they planned the renovation project. As the church explains on its website, the project will transform a dozen boarded up and abandoned properties in our neighborhood into fully rehabbed historic properties. These properties will serve as affordable homes for refugees from our community. We will take what was a burden on our community, and make it an asset. We will provide a beautiful, affordable, healthy, and safe home that was not previously accessible to these families.

St. Louis, another Rust Belt city that has lost significant population and manufacturing sector jobs since World War II, recently witnessed the planning for a large-scale renovation project in the city’s Tower Grove East and Fox Park neighborhoods. The project differs from the Dream Neighborhood in that it consists solely of multi-family homes, and the principal driver is actually a church: the Messiah Lutheran Church of St. Louis. In 2014, the church partnered with Rise, a local nonprofit developer, several other nonprofit affiliates, E.M. Harris Construction, and architecture firm Wagstaff Urban Werks, to renovate 12 multi-unit buildings—mostly two- and four-family structures with one larger nine-unit. These historic buildings now sit vacant, but the church and its partners hope they become refugee housing upon project completion.
Funding for the roughly $8 million initiative comes from extensive federal and state Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), historic building tax credits, CDBG funds, and more traditional bonds and loans. In all, developer partners will provide 45 units for refugees already in the neighborhood and new arrivals. The units range from one to three bedrooms, or 800 to 1,120 square feet of space, from $550 to $800 per month.\(^{121}\)

Additionally, these St. Louis neighborhoods can rely on a school like Thomas Jefferson. Just miles from the Tower Grove East and Fox Park neighborhoods, Mason Elementary School is swiftly becoming a school of choice for residents who desire a diverse, engaged community curriculum for their preschool and elementary-aged children. In part this is because of Mason’s large immigrant and refugee population. Out of some 400 students, 120 come from outside the US.\(^{122}\) Mason serves as the closest English language-learning school, so it must integrate students from different backgrounds and find ways of exploring and affirming many cultures.

Given St. Louis’ historic welcoming policies over the last two decades, the Bhutanese refugee housing project will likely prove popular in the neighborhood and throughout the city. Since the 1990s, St. Louis resettled some 9,000 Bosnian refugees stemming from the Balkan conflict.\(^{123}\) Over the last two decades, the Bosnian population in the city swelled to 70,000—one of the largest in the US—as refugees became home and business owners.\(^{124}\) If the Bhutanese refugees can integrate similarly, St. Louis’ revitalization will have mutually benefitted refugees and native-residents alike, just as the Cleveland Dream Neighborhood seeks to do.

In contrast, Utica, New York constitutes a much smaller population than either Cleveland or St. Louis, but its disproportionate foreign-born population makes the town notable for its ability to welcome refugees. The city’s 100,000 population as of 1960 has since dwindled to 62,000 due to Rust Belt effects: factory closures, job loss, and subsequent population decline. But that 62,000 figure is actually higher than it was a decade earlier. As a result of refugee resettlement from Bosnia, Somalia, Burma, and Vietnam, Utica grew in the 1990s for the first time in a long time. According to US Census data, the foreign-born population increased proportionally from 13.4 percent in 2009 to 18.9 percent as of 2015.\(^{125}\) More recent estimates indicate that one in four Utica residents is a refugee.\(^{126}\)

Thanks to the dedicated work of Utica’s mayor and the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees, refugees continue to come to Utica, and they tend to stay rather than opting for larger cities like New York City. As in St. Louis, refugees start their own businesses and purchase homes. Over the last decade, 61 Somali refugees resettled in Utica ballooned into 2,000.\(^{127}\) This influx of labor has allowed smaller industrial firms to stay in business. Chobani, the popular maker of Greek-style yogurt, operates its plant outside the city. The company relies heavily on immigrant and refugee labor living in Utica. Other small business-owning refugees opt for construction and contract work so they can rehabilitate homes to help future newcomers. According to staff at the Mohawk Resource Center, there is an ethic of support and obligation that drives refugees and welcoming native residents.\(^{128}\)

Likewise, refugees resettled in Buffalo, New York, have helped to develop the city’s West Side from an area of vacant houses to a vibrant district filled with immigrant- and refugee-owned enterprises. As with Utica, Buffalo’s foreign-born population
has increased over the last 15 years even as its native-born population continues to decline. Since 2006, Buffalo's foreign-born population increased 95 percent. Though Buffalo has not quite reached the point where it is no longer shrinking, Erie County—Buffalo's corresponding region—reached that milestone in 2014 largely because of immigration and refugee resettlement. As many as 10,000 refugees have come to Buffalo since 2003, and most of them hail from Burma, Somalia, or Bhutan.

City officials and refugee resettlement organizers agree that refugees have improved property values on the West and East Sides of Buffalo, where few would previously invest. Collectively, refugees have created the successful West Side Bazaar, which hosts ethnic grocery stores, restaurants, clothing, and gift shops. These urban amenities underline Buffalo as a secondary as well as a primary market for refugee resettlement: families separated by push factors abroad now seek reunification, and many refugees resettled to distant parts of the US want to come to Buffalo to be with family.

Although this presents an opportunity for city officials, it can also be problematic. Housing costs have slowly increased over the years, and many West Side homes now cost too much for coverage with resettlement allowances alone. Resettlement agencies look to the East Side where housing costs are slightly lower and housing more abundant, but this only delays the problem. At the University of Buffalo, one architecture professor has discussed the possibility of using historic rehabilitation tax credits to fix homes and move in refugees for low monthly rents or construct inexpensive prefab homes on vacant lots. Compared with Cleveland or St. Louis, Buffalo does not have the advantages of an anchor school to fall back on.

Despite these similarities, Cleveland's Dream Neighborhood project constitutes a much more organized, targeted approach to refugee resettlement and revitalization. St. Louis, Utica, and Buffalo may be experiencing the beneficial effects of refugee-centered economic development, but it evolved more coincidentally than the highly intentional partnerships between Dream Neighborhood operators. If they can persuade Cleveland's political leadership and native residents to directly endorse and back the project—as appears to be the case in Utica and Buffalo—the plan could move beyond fits and starts.

6.2 Resettlement in Europe: The Need for Refugees in the Netherlands, Germany, and Italy

In Amsterdam, Netherlands, two housing corporations partnered to create Startblok Riekerhaven, a cooperative investment that houses young refugees with young native-Dutch citizens. Amsterdam does not have the same kind of challenge with shrinking as American Rust Belt cities do, but pressure and obligation to accept refugees places strain on Dutch business and political leaders, and the city struggles to provide affordable housing to residents of all kinds. To alleviate some of this strain, the two housing businesses—De Key and Socius—came together to plan an integrated campus that would co-mingle refugees and native-Dutch. In large, prefab dormitories outside the city center, people age 28 or younger share communal spaces in an effort to boost language and leadership skills through the brilliance of shared experiences. Of the 550 residents of Startblok Riekerhaven, half are refugees and half are native-Dutch. These young people live in pseudo-private spaces—no
families can live in Riekerhaven—where they often must share kitchen and bathroom spaces. Some young people attend local universities or work nearby, while others have not yet received training and job placement. The companies hand selected tenants from a pool of applicants who expressed a desire to meet new people, learn about new cultures, integrate, and share in difference. Leases last for up to five years.

Shared activities promote mutual learning and bonding between refugee and native residents. De Key and Socius also select resident leaders to organize community events—soccer games, movie nights, holiday gatherings—to encourage integration. Refugee and native residents each pay the same for their units, and they all have an opportunity to lead in the community. Through engaged community activity, residents learn from each other, develop friendships, and live affordably.

Germany faces an incredible challenge due to its proximity to the Middle East and Africa, where refugees have left en masse due to war and violence. A disproportionate number of those refugees resettle in Berlin and Hamburg—nearly 80,000 in Berlin for 2015 alone. Like Amsterdam, these cities do not need refugees to stem population decline, but they do have an abundance of jobs and a need for affordable housing.

Two recent solutions have leaders in Berlin issuing federal grants for prefab housing and renovation of existing, unused non-residential spaces. Some of Berlin's prefab designs have garnered international attention for quality architecture; they mimic regular apartment spaces with fiberglass construction. The re-appropriated vacant buildings can take the form of commercial buildings, vacant government airports, or military barracks left over from the end of the Cold War (see Figure 10). In a partnership between the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Hamburg’s HafenCity University, the City Science Lab provides an opportunity for residents to identify ideal locations for refugee housing based on a number of factors, such as building codes and zoning bylaws. This important piece of online community engagement technology gives existing residents some say in where they want refugees resettled, thereby alleviating some of the tension that that decision can bring.

Civil society networks in both Berlin and Hamburg have been able to take advantage of increased volunteerism. This capacity has particular relevance for Dream Neighborhood organizers, who should mobilize volunteers newly committed to refugee resettlement and support of existing refugees since announcements of the tapering of the US program. Nonprofit and non-governmental organizations receive applications for their own structured tasks, but even smaller organizations have formed with online presences to direct and match volunteers who would like to tutor, teach, drive, and accompany refugees on a variety of tasks made more difficult because of language and cultural barriers.

Hamburg has had more success with this than Berlin, but both cities strive to coordinate and unify delivery of refugee resettlement services. This kind of effort not only ensures efficiency and swift, straightforward service delivery for refugees, but it can also aid in easing tensions between native residents and newcomers. When refugees receive basic necessities and the training they require to move forward, they are more able to integrate with native-born residents and start providing for their households. As shown in the
Cleveland model, disparate services can create stress for refugees and their caseworkers, cost more in the provision of services over the long run, and allow some refugees to slip through the cracks. The Refugee Services Collaborative parallels this work in Germany and should intensify its efforts to break down silos between interrelated but nonetheless separate service providers. The Templehof Reception Center in Figure 10 serves as a one-stop service hub; Dream Neighborhood organizers would do well to consider a smaller-scale center in the Stockyard or Clark-Fulton neighborhood.

In Italy’s Calabria region, economic depression has left small towns with fractions of their peak populations. Satriano neared 4,000 people in the 1960s but has since declined to only 25 percent of that peak over the last 50 years. A 60 percent youth unemployment rate sent most workers packing for more prosperous lives in northern Italy, where jobs seem more plentiful. This left mostly elderly residents in towns like Satriano and Riace. If these places cannot attract workers to run businesses and provide services, more shops will close and the municipalities will become ghost towns. Significantly, all of the residents of these towns and their mayors think refugee resettlement is a real possibility to reverse the long ebb.

An abundance of vacant homes and shops are ready for move-in, and some jobs are available picking olives and other fruits for local farms or earning public salaries street sweeping. However, as a rule, still few jobs exist, and small communities like those in southern Italy provide few real services. Large cities have public transportation networks and the resources of refugee resettlement agencies, which offer language instruction, vocational and basic skills trainings, and job placements. Local leaders fear refugees will leave to the UK, Germany, or northern Italy.

Nonetheless, mayors and longtime residents also believe in their welcoming spirit and the charm of small communities. They hope young refugees will want to settle down to start families in large homes and open up shops. Some 21 refugees have already come to Satriano since 2014, and the native residents of the town have started to renovate homes, offered to provide carpooling

Figure 10: The German government converted Templehof Airport into a massive welcoming center to accommodate the number of refugees coming into the Berlin Source: The New York Times
through a service that the senior residents use themselves, and receive newcomers in town-wide celebrations.137

Villages also operate community trusts shared between native residents and newcomers. These trusts allow for some integration services, such as Italian language classes, funding for temporary jobs, and help with asylum applications. The European Union has supplemented funds like these in the past, and the Italian government maintains a national network of 382 towns and cities across Italy named SPRAR—the Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers—that supports modest integration initiatives.
As with all communities that resettle refugees, there are some who ascribe to a zero-sum mentality about the needs of existing native-born residents versus the needs of newcomers. Why devote resources and attention to them? But this “us” versus “them” dichotomy actually prevents greater community-building and resource development. Resettlement of refugees in Cleveland and other Rust Belt cities is not zero-sum; if carried out carefully, it is mutually beneficial to all. The relationships described in this Dream Neighborhood case study all but prove this claim. Though success or failure of the initiative cannot easily be determined based on only one year and 12 interviews, everything contained herein suggests the former more than the latter. As Mustard Seed crewmembers, US Together staffers, Thomas Jefferson teachers, and many residents have explained, the relationships they have developed change lives. Working together, these individuals have become more than the sum of their work; they have changed minds and changed their own minds, displaying the power of diversity, integration, and shared experiences to develop strong working relationships and even friendships. Mutual reliance turns to mutual trust, and trust dispels stereotypes. Success for the Dream Neighborhood and for Cleveland and other Rust Belt cities that choose to resettle refugees will not come easy given all of the barriers described above, but with perseverance, belief in the work, and adherence to some of the following recommendations, these places will achieve their goals.

1. Ensure that refugees are not merely used as a means to an end: they must be supported and welcomed as human beings with their own needs, thoughts, feelings, identities, and interests;

2. Integrate not only specialized refugee services, but also city services that must provide for all residents regardless of national origin—doing so helps to advance integration goals and guards against the zero-sum mentality;

3. Build solidarity. Dream Neighborhood organizers already promote the process through tours of International Village and the Thomas Jefferson International Newcomers Academy in addition to advocating for the project at public meetings. Expand this work. Identify key community members and gain their buy-in. Empower their leadership and allow them to be Dream Neighborhood ambassadors with their neighbors and friends. Moreover, partner with other municipalities to explore what they are doing and share information. The Welcoming Economies, Welcoming America, and Cities of Migration networks provide a wealth of practices and strategies to advance Rust Belt revitalization through immigration and resettlement;

4. Advocate for refugee resettlement and the needs of disinvested residents at the local level. Despite investment in infrastructure and other capital projects, the city can do more to directly improve Dream Neighborhood outcomes. Leaving grant funding from Welcoming America on the table makes little
5. At the same time, the Clark Avenue, 25th Street Corridor, and La Villa Hispana projects are absolutely complementary to the Dream Neighborhood and should be treated as such. The city can do more to integrate Dream Neighborhood plans into existing documents, legitimize those plans on behalf of stakeholders, and make immigrants and refugees in Stockyard and Clark-Fulton part of the community wealth-building partnership spearheaded by the Democracy Collaborative;

6. Encourage and engage in further partnerships. The zero-sum mentality can affect service providers and their affiliates no less so than native-born residents. Build the capacity of the Refugee Services Collaborative so that that partnership becomes deeper and more meaningful to the mission of supporting and resettling refugees. Instead of merely sharing information to coordinate services, integrate those services. Consider revenue sharing or mutual funding streams that might allow a one-stop services center that would streamline refugee outreach, increase efficiency, and ultimately enable better outcomes for more households. If US Together can find support for such a center, their ability to resettle refugees as part of the Dream Neighborhood project would increase exponentially. For another example of integrated service centers like the Templehof reception facility, look at the Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada;

7. Consider LIHTC and historic housing construction tax credits at the federal and state levels. St. Louis, Utica, and Buffalo appear to be gaining traction in this regard;

8. The Dream Neighborhood has always been about building relationships and expanding the positive effects of diversity. Everything organizers say about vacancy and refugee resettlement is true: these processes are mutually beneficial opportunities. Project leaders must continue their outreach into the community, win hearts and minds, and rely on established relationships to drive home the importance and potential of new connections. As Thomas Jefferson International Newcomers Academy seeks new partnerships with employers to begin high school internship programs and access community learning resources, Dream Neighborhood stakeholders can look for job placements that tap into those same relationships;

9. Leverage the political environment and famine times to organize volunteerism into greater supports for refugees as well as political advocacy for the Dream Neighborhood at every level—local, state, and federal; and

10. Finally, keep going. The Dream Neighborhood processes do work, and while they may seem small now, the work accomplished thus far has had tremendous impact for many.

From Mustard Seed’s supportive work crew to welcoming local native-born residents and the inspiring children and families at Thomas Jefferson, the Dream Neighborhood can be a shining model of refugee resettlement support and revitalization for host communities. If the dedicated staff at US Together, Metro West, and Mustard Seed Development are any indication—not to mention their deep working relationships—the Dream Neighborhood will succeed despite the setbacks of its first year.
ENDNOTES


3 Ibid.


5 Ibid.


10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.


17 Ibid.


22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.


27 Ibid.


30 Ibid.


32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.


37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.


42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.


45 Ibid.


50 Ibid.


52 Ibid.
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66 Ibid.


68 Ibid.


70 Ibid.


72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.


93 Ibid.

94 Ibid.


98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.


109 Ibid.


111 These results may prove misleading because of the actual geographical boundaries of the Dream Neighborhood—some organizers explained that the project had expanded and therefore had slightly better success in terms of number of rehabs and families resettled, but either way, the pilot fell short of its goal.


116 Ibid.


ENDNOTES


127 Ibid.


130 http://buffalonews.com/2017/03/02/viewpoints-refugees-powering-buffalos-revitalization/

131 http://www.npr.org/2015/12/02/458007064/resettled-refugees-help-to-bring-buffalo-back


134 Ibid.


136 Ibid.

137 Ibid.

138 See https://issbc.org for more information about the Vancouver Welcoming Center.
## Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACS</td>
<td>American Community Survey (US Census Bureau compiled)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDBG</td>
<td>Community Development Block Grant, issued by federal and state governments</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDC</td>
<td>Community Development Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDO</td>
<td>Community Development Organization (equivalent to a CDC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLRC</td>
<td>County Land Reutilization Corporation (a land bank)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSCDO</td>
<td>Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECDI</td>
<td>Economic and Community Development Institute that provides small business loans to refugees and immigrants</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>FBI</td>
<td>Federal Bureau of Investigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GED</td>
<td>General Education Development degree, a high school equivalent</td>
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<tr>
<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization of Migration, a non-governmental organization affiliated with the United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISC</td>
<td>International Services Center (former name for USCRI) resettlement agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIHTC</td>
<td>Low-Income Housing Tax Credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>LISC</td>
<td>Local Initiatives Support Corporation, a national nonprofit housing corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MRS</td>
<td>Migration and Refugee Services (Catholic Charities) resettlement agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPI</td>
<td>Neighborhood Progress, Inc., a national nonprofit corporation that builds the capacity of local CDCs</td>
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<tr>
<td>ORR</td>
<td>Office of Refugee Resettlement, a division of the Department of Health and Human Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRM</td>
<td>Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration, a division of the US State Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</td>
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<tr>
<td>REO</td>
<td>Real-Estate Owned (i.e., tax-foreclosed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>RFP</td>
<td>Request for Proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSC</td>
<td>Refugee Services Collaborative of Greater Cleveland</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTA</td>
<td>Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCFBCDO</td>
<td>Stockyard, Clark-Fulton &amp; Brooklyn Centre Community Development Organization, the previous name of Metro West Community Development Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIOP</td>
<td>Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, a curriculum used with refugee students learning English</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNAP</td>
<td>Supplementary Nutritional Assistance Program (i.e., food stamps)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPA</td>
<td>Statistical Planning Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPRAR</td>
<td>The Italian-language acronym for Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers</td>
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<tr>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td>Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>USCCB</td>
<td>United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, one of the nine major voluntary agencies that resettles refugees through local affiliate partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>USCIS</td>
<td>United States Citizen and Immigration Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>USCRI</td>
<td>United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants resettlement agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>USRAP</td>
<td>United States Refugee Admissions Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UST</td>
<td>US Together refugee resettlement agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volag</td>
<td>A Voluntary Agency that partners with local affiliates to resettle Refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WE</td>
<td>Welcoming Economies (the Welcoming Economies Global Network)</td>
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