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Project Partners
I. Introduction

Brownfields Overview

Brownfields are defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as “real property(s), the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.” In addition to land, brownfields can also include buildings or structures that are known or perceived to be contaminated. Brownfields are different from “superfund sites,” which are contaminated sites requiring a long-term response to clean up. The federal government regulates cleanup and redevelopment of superfund sites.

Brownfields redevelopment often begins with a Phase I environmental site assessment to study land use history that may provide information about potential contaminants. This is sometimes followed, as needed, by a Phase II assessment that involves testing soil and/or water for contaminants. Depending on the findings, a Phase III might be required to safeguard public health from the effects of contaminants. This might include removal of some or all of the contaminated soil or may involve the addition of a protective layer of soil or other material.

Brownfields are typically abandoned, closed or under-used industrial or commercial facilities, such as an abandoned factory in a town’s former industrial sector or a closed commercial building or warehouse in a suburban setting. According to the EPA, there are presently over half a million brownfields in the United States. The redevelopment of brownfields has become an important public health issue. Typically, brownfields remain unused for decades because the cost of cleaning these sites can be very high and uncertain. Redevelopment of brownfields, however, provides the hope of creating jobs, expanding the tax base, and revitalizing the economies of local communities. Decontaminating brownfields reduces community health risks and creates opportunities for redevelopment activities that can improve housing and open space opportunities for communities that lack these assets. To promote redevelopment, federal, state, and local county or municipal programs exist to assist developers interested in cleaning up brownfield sites and redeveloping them for productive use.
Brownfields Area-Wide Plan

This EPA Brownfields Area-Wide Plan (EPA Brownfields AWP) is focused on the University Area Community (UAC), a neighborhood located in unincorporated Hillsborough County on the northern edge of the City of Tampa, Florida. The UAC is an underserved community characterized by low incomes, high unemployment and poverty rates, and disproportionately high levels of childhood morbidity compared to surrounding regions. The area is a mixture of residential and commercial properties, and contains many vacant lots, some of which are perceived by residents to be contaminated by environmental pollutants. Faculty and students from the University of South Florida (USF) worked together with this community and other stakeholders to develop a brownfields area-wide plan and implementation strategy for the neighborhood. The project builds on existing planning activities that the community has already developed for housing rehabilitation, new business creation, increased access to health services, and improved opportunities for recreation. The project focuses on brownfields that are a major impediment to these redevelopment considerations, particularly the Harvest Hope Park catalyst site. Project activities included community engagement, local capacity building for residents, an economic market analysis, and evaluation of existing planning documents along with social, health, and environmental data to determine the extent to which contamination will impact revitalization efforts.

Redevelopment of the catalyst site, Harvest Hope Park, responds directly to community concerns, as identified in the University Area CDC’s 2015 community needs-based assessment and 2016 walkability survey. Concerns voiced by residents include pollution of the property, contamination of the pond, and crime associated with the vacant lot. Development of the park will reduce threats to human and environmental health by providing a safe and healthy recreational area for children and other area residents (the majority are minority, low-income) along with community-supported agriculture that includes a community garden and kitchen facility for capacity building.

The Brownfields AWP project uses established social and environmental science methods to collect evidence on human and environmental health, quantify and assess the evidence, and then use these assessments to build models for better understanding threats to public health and the environment. Interviews with key stakeholders were used to understand the nuances of community engagement and stakeholder involvement at all levels of the project as well as inform us about challenges and opportunities associated with the redevelopment of the catalyst site and the overall Brownfields AWP area.

Stakeholder focus groups (workshops) served as a primary (but not the only) means of collecting information from residents about brownfields, perceptions of environmental challenges, and other pollution, contamination, and community and public health concerns. Environmental mapping, an important precursor to formal environmental impact assessments, allowed us to identify locations in the community that residents perceive to be polluted, contaminated, or otherwise difficult to
redevelop; this activity has also allowed us to examine extant and emerging environmental justice issues in the community. The social and health impact assessments (making use of ethnography, interviews, and archival/public documents research) allowed us to anticipate impacts on the community with regard to the redevelopment projects and determine how best to proceed with public consultation and the integration of technical expertise in the Brownfield AWP planning process. Finally, the economic market analysis informed us about community needs for businesses and services, how to prioritize those needs, and where such services might best be located for community members. In this way, the Brownfield AWP project supports evidence-informed decision making for positive policy development to improve the welfare of community residents, and especially sensitive populations (specifically, children, the elderly, minorities, and low-income residents).

Given previous success stories in Florida with regard to the reuse of brownfields as healthfields, we anticipate that our Brownfields AWP project, including redevelopment of the catalyst site, will lead directly to improvements in the following areas: increased greenspace (e.g., Harvest Hope Park will provide area residents with a ca. 7-acre outdoor recreational space that includes a freshwater pond); improved housing (e.g., many properties were constructed in the 1960s and contain asbestos and lead-based paint, which need to be remediated); critical infrastructures (e.g., the Planning Commission recently redesigned and improved the main thoroughfare in the neighborhood, 22nd Street, to accommodate smart growth practices such as improved water, sanitation, electricity, and transportation); and sustainable and equitable development (e.g., with the support of Hillsborough County Public Schools and the Children’s Home Society of Florida, Mort Elementary has recently been named a “Community School,” which provides students and their families with access to a food pantry, health and dental services, and mental health counseling at the school).

Project outcomes directly advance HUD-DOT-EPA Livability Principles by providing the following: 1) improved multimodal transportation (e.g., recent changes to the 22nd Street corridor by the Planning Commission that includes sidewalks, bike lanes, bus pullouts, and traffic calming design changes such as speed tables and textured pavements); 2) improved and affordable housing (as outlined above); 3) enhanced economic competitiveness (e.g., the TechHire grant recently awarded to the UACDC, Community School designation of Mort Elementary, access to training and education by the UACDC); and 4) support for communities (e.g., recycling Hope Harvest Park brownfield, land-banking for housing redevelopment by the UACDC).

This work aligns with recent initiatives to transform the City of Tampa into a health- and wellness-focused city through WELL Certification of metropolitan districts. With a comprehensive area-wide plan in place, we are now able to seek additional EPA funding opportunities for brownfields assessment and cleanup, environmental workforce development and job training, and targeted brownfields assessment assistance. With a brownfield area-wide plan in place, we also anticipate being able to apply for resources from the Community
Health Projects Related to Contamination at Brownfield/Land Reuse Sites program from the CDC Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR CHPs).

Aerial map of the project area.
## Project Advisory Committee

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Community History

The University Area Community (UAC) is an 864-acre underserved residential/commercial neighborhood located in unincorporated Hillsborough County on the northern edge of the City of Tampa, a 2015/Second Round HUD Promise Zone Finalist. The neighborhood is marked by vacant and abandoned lots polluted with solid waste, and is surrounded by numerous businesses that produce hazardous wastes. The heart of the community is a large brownfield (recently acquired by a community nonprofit, discussed below) that is perceived by residents to be contaminated. Roughly 75 percent of the approximately 10,500 residents in the neighborhood represent minority groups, primarily Hispanic (39 percent) and Black (33 percent), and 19 percent are U.S. Veterans (Table 1).

Pejoratively referred to as “suitcase city” by Tampa residents because of the perceived transient nature of the population (89 percent of the homes are rental properties), this community has been identified as “one of the most economically depressed neighborhoods in Florida.” Per capita median income has remained steady over the past several years at roughly $12,000, with 58 percent of residents below the 2015 Federal poverty level. Roughly 95-100% of K12 students in the UAC are eligible to receive free/reduced lunch (the primary elementary school, Mort Elementary, is a Title I School). Many residents struggle with lack of education (32 percent lack a high school education), lack of employment (the unemployment rate is almost twice that of the county), language

| Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Project Area (UAC) in Regional Context |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Characteristic  | UAC$^{1,2,3,4}$ | City$^{2,4}$ | County$^{2,4}$ | State$^{2,4}$ | Nation$^{2,4,5}$ |
| Population      | 10,532    | 351,006   | 1,229,226 | 18,991,634 | 314,107,084 |
| Per Capita Median Income | $12,230    | $25,513   | $27,062   | $25,187   | $53,482    |
| Percent Minority | 74%       | 40%       | 29%       | 26%       | 37%        |
| African American| 33%       | 27%       | 25%       | 16%       | 12%        |
| Hispanic        | 39%       | 24%       | 29%       | 23%       | 16%        |
| Age >65         | 8%        | 11%       | 12%       | 19%       | 7%         |
| Age <17         | 35%       | 24%       | 24%       | 21%       | 24%        |
| Unemployment    | 16%       | 11%       | 9%        | 11%       | 5%         |
| Poverty Rate    | 58%       | 15%       | 18%       | 10%       | 16%        |
| No HS Diploma   | 32%       | 9%        | 14%       | 14%       | 15%        |
| No Vehicle      | 22%       | 11%       | 7%        | 7%        | 9%         |
| Renter Occupied Housing | 89%       | 42%       | 35%       | 27%       | 31%        |

$^{1}$EPA EJScreen ACS Tool; $^{2}$U.S. Census 2010; $^{3}$FL Environmental Screening Tool (www. flaetat.org/est); $^{4}$2010-2014 American Community Survey; $^{5}$2016 Bureau of Labor Statistics
barriers (51 percent report speaking English “not well” or “not at all”), health problems (e.g., an infant from this neighborhood is twice as likely to die during the first year of life than any other area in Florida), and lack of access and mobility to goods and services (nearly 22% of residents lack access to a vehicle compared to 7% in the county).

In sum, social and economic challenges in this community, which are integrated with existing brownfields, have historically constrained efforts to initiate redevelopment of the UAC. Moreover, many of these problems have acute impacts on sensitive populations in the community, especially children, which represent 35% of the population (e.g., lack of educational and recreational opportunities and lack of access to transportation). The interconnectedness of the social, economic, and environmental problems hinders our efforts to attract State and Federal funding because most funding opportunities are project-based or issue-specific. The EPA’s Brownfields AWP program is ideal in this situation as it allows us to pursue a holistic planning process for the entire neighborhood that can take into account the integrated nature of the community’s challenges. Our Brownfields AWP project is the first centralized effort to address these interrelated structural problems through a stakeholder-engaged planning process, and provide for sustainable and equitable brownfields cleanup and redevelopment.

Historically, the UAC had one of the highest crime rates in Hillsborough County, but in the 1990s, the area received hundreds of thousands of dollars in Federal “weed and seed” grants to weed out violent crime and drug use and then seed social revitalization and economic redevelopment. In 1996, the District 1 Sheriff’s Office was opened on the site of a former crack house in the neighborhood. With attention to crime prevention, community residents worked with local law enforcement and crime watch and prevention programs, which reduced overall crime by 31 percent, violent crimes by 82 percent, and sex offenses by 34 percent.

In 1998, the University of South Florida Area Community Civic Association and several other community groups united to create the University Area Community Development Corporation (UACDC), a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing education and job skills training for local residents. The UACDC has also begun providing basic health screenings (the Florida Department of Health classifies the UAC as a “Health Professional Shortage Area” and a “Medically Underserved Area”) and has partnered with Feeding Tampa Bay, which offers a mobile food pantry (UAC residents miss 1.2 million meals each year). In 2002, the community was designated a State Enterprise Zone, which expired in 2015. This designation allowed tax credits and incentives to attract development and provided incentives to businesses that located on a brownfield site with a Brownfield Site Rehabilitation Agreement. The designation also supported the Brownfield Redevelopment Bonus Refund, in which approved applicants received tax refunds of up to $2,500 for each job created. Finally, in 2011 several major regional institutions, including the University of South Florida, founded the Tampa Innovation Alliance (TIA, or “!p”) with the primary goal of promoting economic redevelopment in the area. The TIA and UACDC, in partnership with other regional organizations, recently secured a
$3.8 million Federal TechHire Partnership grant to provide residents with training for technology-focused jobs.

All of these changes have been very positive for the community, and indicate significant potential for successful redevelopment. However, for redevelopment efforts to be sustainable over the long term, it is vitally important to engage in legitimate stakeholder involvement in the planning processes. Previous planning efforts involved a limited number of area residents through surveys and “town hall” style meetings. However, a needs-based assessment conducted by the UACDC in 2015 revealed that nearly 70 percent of respondents have never heard of the Tampa Innovation Alliance or other planning efforts. This suggests not only a lack of sustained and meaningful communication regarding planning, but also a lack of community participation. Our Brownfields AWP project aims to remedy this situation by initiating a focused and consistent effort to engage a diverse array of stakeholders, with the greater goal of developing a multivocal area plan for redevelopment.

With an engaged community, decreasing crime, and increasing resources for investment and development of the area, the UAC is poised for positive change. At the same time, as community-based organizations, public-private partnerships, and governmental agencies engage in redevelopment planning, it will be crucial to integrate these efforts across organizations. For example, the UACDC has created a neighborhood revitalization plan focused on health and housing; many local residences were constructed in the 1960s and are suspected to contain asbestos and lead-based paint. The Tampa Innovation Alliance is currently engaged in economic redevelopment planning for the UAC and surrounding area (“uptown”). In addition, the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission continues to pursue the goals (mostly infrastructure, including multi-modal transportation) of its 2001 University Area Community Plan.

While existing planning efforts include attention to health, housing, infrastructure, and economic development, none of these plans explicitly recognizes the interdependencies between these domains and environmental health. For instance, a recent analysis of Federal, State, and local records identifies numerous threats to environmental health and safety in the UAC, including the following: 18 biomedical waste facilities, 27 hazardous waste facilities, 34 large quantity generators of hazardous waste, 22 petroleum contamination monitoring sites, 33 storage tank contamination monitoring facilities (24 closed/inactive), 5 solid waste facilities, and 14 US EPA NPDES permit holders. In addition, there are currently 14 Florida Super Act Risk sites, mainly petroleum and dry-cleaning facilities investigated for possible contamination of groundwater and...
drinking wells. Most visible to residents, however, are numerous vacant lots in the neighborhood that community members perceive as contaminated, due to the presence of large amounts of solid waste including debris from nearby industry. Finally, area resolutions and executed BSRAs (Brownfield Site Rehabilitation Agreements) for this area document two large brownfield sites representing former industrial and manufacturing businesses that resulted in the deposition of arsenic (from pressure-treated wood) and lead (from piping and other infrastructure) into subsurface soils and sediments adjacent to multifamily residential zones. These brownfield sites occupy the northwest corner and south-central edge of the UAC and have been only partially remediated, although they recently received risk-based closure orders. The presence of these sites along with other forms of pollution in the UAC have created concerns by residents, especially regarding the safety of engaging in outdoor recreation and the ability to participate in community gardening. Overall, there are numerous and overlapping brownfields concerns in the community, and local residents are only variably aware of the health risks imposed by these sources of potential contamination.

The University Area Community encompasses approximately 864 acres (ca. 1.35 mi²) west of the University of South Florida, from Bearss Avenue on the north to Busch Boulevard on the south, and from Nebraska Avenue on the west to Bruce B. Downs Boulevard on the east. These streets are major, multilane corridors lined with businesses and other non-residential properties that effectively isolate and define this specific neighborhood. The residential area (part of a U.S. Census-designated place) is situated in a densely populated urban setting and is surrounded by established municipalities (Tampa on the south and east, Lutz on the north, and Carrollwood on the west), but is located in unincorporated Hillsborough County. In short, no municipality has been willing to incorporate this community, making the neighborhood an island in the middle of the Tampa metropolitan area with limited access to social, health, and utility services. Because of its boundedness and close proximity to Florida Interstate-275, the community has been plagued historically with various kinds of brownfields and related redevelopment challenges. For example, Nebraska Avenue used to serve as the primary thoroughfare to access downtown Tampa before the interstate was sited and, as a result, properties adjacent to this road are contaminated from many years of traffic with automobiles using leaded gasoline. In addition, access to fresh food, health services, and outdoor recreation is extremely curtailed. For these reasons, residents are disproportionately disadvantaged in terms of income,
education, critical infrastructures (water, energy, transportation), and social services. The City of Tampa, Hillsborough County, and the nearby University of South Florida all recognize this community for its significant social, economic, environmental, and health challenges.

The “brownfield” (CERCLA Section 101.39) catalyst site is a 6.82-acre parcel located in the center of the UAC, surrounded by single- and multi-family residential housing. The property (13704 N. 20th St. Tampa, FL 33613) contains one small (1100 sq. ft.), one-story masonry/concrete block commercial building (est. ca. 1961). The majority of the property is overgrown with trees, brush, shrubs, and grass. There is a large spring-fed pond in the northwest corner of the site, which has been formally designated as a “wetland conservation area” by the Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County, but it is not connected to any sole source aquifer. Records indicate that the site was private property from the 1960s-1980s, and served as a practice field for the Police Athletic League in the 1990s. The site is currently owned and managed by the University Area Community Development Corporation (UACDC), a key partner on this Brownfields AWP project.

In 2015, the UACDC conducted a needs-based assessment using printed, online, and walking surveys in the community, with 375 respondents. The assessment concluded that the primary needs identified by residents concerned environmental and human health. Community members
specifically wish to have access to a
recreational park in the neighborhood
(there currently are no places for children
or others to play outside of small apartment
complex grounds), especially one in which
they can develop a community garden and
gain access to healthy foods (the primary
grocery store serving this area recently
closed, leaving many residents with very
limited access to fresh foods). The catalyst
site was acquired from Hillsborough County
by the UACDC with the intent of
redeveloping the property for recreational
purposes; thus there is high reuse potential.
Once developed, this catalyst site will be
used for programming and capacity building
in the community. The UACDC has
constructed a small-scale garden in raised
beds on the property. The building onsite
has been redesigned to serve as a model
kitchen and is used to teach area residents
how to prepare healthy meals using
produce from the garden. Responding to
concerns from community residents, the
UACDC worked alongside the Brownfields
AWP project to establish a playground and
multi-purpose sports field on the property,
walking trails around the pond, and other
amenities. The development of this
property has high potential to spur
redevelopment in surrounding properties
(residences and vacant lots), which in turn
will play a key role in further
redevelopments to surrounding businesses,
local schools, and other commercial and
service-oriented properties. All of these
changes can positively impact job creation
for the area and therefore address concerns
regarding unemployment and poverty. In
many ways, area residents view Harvest
Hope Park as a keystone to redevelopment.

In 2014, Site Assessment Engineering, Inc.
of St. Petersburg, Florida conducted a Phase
I ESA of the catalyst site. The assessment
did not include any soil or water testing, but
identified several facilities within 200 yards
of the site that are recognized as RCRA SQG
sites (generating 1,200-12,000 kg of
hazardous waste per year), including 10
LUST (leaking underground storage tanks), 7
UST (underground storage tanks), and 4 AST
(aboveground storage tanks) sites. While
some facilities have removed or replaced
their USTs, several await remediation. In
addition, three historical auto stations and
two historical drycleaners were identified in
the area of impact as well as three DWM
contaminated sites.

Phase I

Task 1: Needs-based Assessment

We began by hosting a retreat of the
Brownfields AWP project partners. At this
retreat, we reviewed the results of the 2015
UACDC community needs-based
assessment, which formed the basis of the
initial development plans for the catalyst
site, and a 2016 walkability survey
conducted by the UACDC in partnership
with the Florida Department of Health and
the Hillsborough County Metropolitan
Planning Organization. We also discussed
the results of a demographic and
environmental GIS analysis of the project
area conducted by the Planning
Commission in 2016 along with output from
the EPA EJ screening tool. At subsequent
meetings, we reviewed existing
redevelopment plans, reports, and analyses
from the City of Tampa, Hillsborough
County, the Tampa Innovation Alliance, the
UACDC, and the Environmental Protection
Commission of Hillsborough County.
Task 2: Community Outreach

All of the discussions in Task 1 were summarized by the Project Manager and formed the basis of an executive summary and formal presentation about the Brownfields AWP project in a series of community meetings throughout this phase of the project to inform community members about the project and solicit feedback and engagement. These presentations were conducted by different project partners in coordination with the UACDC and took place at the UACDC and other key social locations in the community as well as at the monthly meetings of the UACDC Community Leaders Collective. We also worked with the UACDC’s Chief Operating Officer, who oversees the Community Outreach Committee, to go door to door in the project area to deliver information about the redevelopment and a calendar of events regarding the project, with the greater goal of encouraging engagement with project activities.

Task 3: Website and Social Media Development

We worked with Vistra, a strategic communications consulting firm (located adjacent to the project area), to develop a website (http://www.uacleanup.com) that is periodically updated with project findings, data, news, events, and resources for the community. The website and program progress dissemination collateral serve as important ways for the community and the broader public to stay informed about the project and to voice their opinions. Vistra maintains the website for the duration of the project and works with community members to generate content for multiple platforms, including social posts, website news, electronic newsletters, blogs, and other social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).

Task 4: Key-informant Interviews

During this phase, graduate students from the USF Department of Anthropology worked with the UACDC’s Community Outreach Committee to conduct semi-structured interviews with key informants representing multiple stakeholder groups in the community. These individuals were initially be identified by our project partners, and additional individuals in their social networks were recruited through referral sampling.

Information and community feedback was collected on the plans for brownfields redevelopment including the catalyst site and other local knowledge about the community relevant to the BF AWP project. Students also conducted ground-truthing of environmentally contaminated sites and collected contemporary data on land use to compare against Federal and State databases.
Task 5: Environmental Mapping and Social/Health Impact and Economic Market Assessments

During this phase, we worked with interested residents (identified during the interviews and/or as recommended by the UACDC) to conduct a brownfield/land reuse site mapping exercise throughout the community to identify isolated and linked brownfield sites. This effort was overseen by Cardno (a local environmental consulting firm) in association with the Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County, both project partners. We also conducted three rapid assessments, each overseen by a different project partner, while training local community residents. These studies included a social impact assessment (facilitated by BGW Associates, a local environmental justice consultancy in the UAC), a health impact assessment (facilitated by the Florida Department of Health), and an economic market assessment (facilitated by Hillsborough County Economic Development). At the conclusion of this phase, the Project Manager integrated and summarized the results of the interviews and assessments into a formal report. This report formed part of the redevelopment Plan and served as the basis for Phase II of the project.

Phase II
Task 6: Community-engaged Planning

During this phase of the project, we worked with students from the Urban and Regional Planning program in the USF School of Public Affairs to hold a community visioning workshop at the UACDC and other venues where we shared summary findings from Phase I. During the workshops, participants were asked to break out into thematic focus groups to discuss specific aspects of the redevelopment of the Brownfields AWP project area and catalyst site, including content/structure, accessibility, security, sustainability, and other important issues as identified by community members. We also used the workshops as an opportunity to build a Community Advisory Board for the project.

Task 7: Design Charrette

In addition to the workshops, we worked with the UACDC to hold a design charrette for elementary school students and their families in the project area. The charrette was organized by Kaboom! Playgrounds in collaboration with the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission, and allowed us to hear from parents and children about their views regarding redevelopment of the catalyst site and related brownfields.

All of this information was included with the results of Task 5 in an online GIS database http://hhcusf-usfaist.opendata.arcgis.com.
The data archive was created by the Digital Heritage and Humanities Collection of the USF Libraries and represents the main source of data for planning efforts.

Phase III
Task 8: Participatory Design

The next phase of the project resulted in more specific details regarding the redevelopment plan. In this phase, we convened the first meeting of the Community Advisory Board and discussed the outcomes of the community visioning workshops and design charrette. This meeting was also used to examine and prioritize strategies for the redevelopment efforts as well as subsequent development in the project area. A second meeting of this group discussed the challenges and opportunities for implementation of the plan as it developed. Finally, a third meeting convened to discuss the creation of the implementation action plan for the redevelopment of the entire project area. The Project Manager attended all meetings and provided answers to questions as needed. At the conclusion of these strategic planning meetings, the Project Manager created a summary report of findings used in the development of the redevelopment plan. This summary was shared with the Community Advisory Board for their review, and revisions were made as needed. The report was then made public via the website and other venues, and we requested comments and feedback from the community during a review period. During this time, we worked with LARA Design Architects to create schematics and renderings to accompany the report, which were used in the creation of the redevelopment plan.

Phase IV
Task 9: Final Report and Implementation Plan

For this final phase of the project, we established an Implementation Task Force, composed of the Project Manager, two USF graduate students, and UACDC staff members. This task force met twice. The first meeting discussed specific strategies for implementing the redevelopment of the UAC. At the second meeting, the task force prioritized the strategies discussed during the first meeting. The Project Manager organized all meetings, which were hosted at either the UACDC or Harvest Hope Center located at the catalyst site. At the conclusion of these meetings, the Project Manager composed a draft of the redevelopment plan and shared it with the Community Advisory Board, the Implementation Task Force, and the Florida Brownfields Association for feedback. The plan was then made public and we invited further community input. Once the plan was finalized, we held a community event at the UACDC Community Center to share the plan and install the final set of renderings at the catalyst site.
The final rendering of the catalyst site.
## Community Engagement at Harvest Hope Park 2017-2019

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Community Priorities

Community Needs Assessment Survey: Executive Summary

The University Area Community Development Corporation Inc. (University Area CDC) is a 501 (c) (3) public/private partnership whose primary focus is the redevelopment and sustainability of at-risk areas surrounding the Tampa campus of the University of South Florida. In 2017, the University Area CDC conducted a community survey as a follow-up to the 2015 University Area Community Survey. The purpose of the survey was to update community data in order to better inform future programming and initiatives. The survey specifically focused on residents located within the 33612 and 33613 zip codes. The survey collected data from the following categories: Demographics, Education, Employment, Transportation, Health & Well-Being, Children, Housing, and Community Safety. A summary of the analyzed results and recommendations are present below:

Results

- A large proportion of residents are single; a larger proportion have children.
- Veterans are a small, but present population in the community.
- Lack of transportation and lack of childcare are barriers to attaining higher education and/or better employment.
- The areas of family health that need improvement can more than likely be attributed to unhealthy diet and low levels of activity.
- Long travel distances from homes to schools limit children’s ability to participate in extra-curricular activities.
- Homeownership is extremely low in this community. Even if residents want to buy a home in the University Area, there are very few single-family homes available, and they are rarely for sale.
- A large portion of University Area residents rely on public transportation.
- There is some level of resident interaction and connection with police, but increased interaction will build a stronger sense of community.

“There are a lot of families that do not have access to a car. Transportation is an issue.”
Recommendations

- Whenever possible, provide childcare or supervised children’s activities at events and programs geared towards adults.
- Be more intentional in engaging the veteran population.
- Offer free or low-cost technical/trade courses in the community, with the option for childcare.
- Increase accessibility to the Harvest Hope Garden and implement a program that combines healthy eating with physical activity.
- Make connections with other schools attended by University Area youth.
- Create opportunities for homeownership in the University Area.
- Increase resident presence in public transportation decision making.
- Create opportunities for both youth and adults to interact and engage with law enforcement.

Student Research: Executive Summary

In 2014, the University Area Community Development Corporation, Inc. (University Area CDC) acquired a vacant property located within the University Area community from Hillsborough County with the intention to redevelop the property into a community park. The University Area CDC faced a variety of challenges throughout the redevelopment of the park, including potential contamination due to the historical use of the property and maintaining consistent community participation in redevelopment events. The following report highlights key findings and recommendations of a USF graduate student thesis on evaluating community engagement during the redevelopment process of the property.

Results

- The University Area Community (UAC) is an environmental justice community composed of a low-income, minority population plagued by poverty, high crime rates, and a lack of basic resources.
- Physical and social disorder found in the UAC contributes to the challenges of building community capacity within the community and between residents.
- Abandoned properties, pollution, and lack of infrastructure create real and perceived lack of safety and security resulting in less residents being present in the community and allowing for crime to flourish.
- The lack of community trust from residents to the University Area CDC contributes to the lack of
community engagement throughout the redevelopment process.

- There is a strained relationship between community residents and Hillsborough County Sherriff’s Office (HCSO) deputies.
- The lack of trust from community residents perpetuates insecurities and challenges the ability of the community to build community capacity in redeveloping the community.
- The University Area CDC is implementing skills and resources to address the key issues of impeding community capacity building through environmental redevelopment of blighted space within the community.
- The first phase of redeveloping the UAC is the redevelopment of Harvest Hope Park and has found that engaging residents at various levels has built the foundation for establishing community capacity.

Recommendations

- Increase the University Area CDC presence and communication beyond the initial area of Harvest Hope Park. Expand electronic communication with residents through multi-media platforms.
- Educate the community on environmental hazards present in the community. Provide training and education on activism and political actions to address those identified environmental hazards.
- Leverage university relationships to bridge the gap between the UAC and community stakeholders such as the University of South Florida, the University of Tampa, and other academic institutions.
- Engage new residents in new ways, such as providing fitness classes specifically for older populations.
- Build trust in the community by supporting safe spaces and events for residents to engage with University Area staff and HCSO deputies.
- Support community capacity building through identifying and nurturing community leaders, building social and organizational networks within the community, and building a sense of community power and cohesion.

“The property we live at, I feel like it is contaminated. We can’t drink our water there. You end up going to the hospital. The water is brown color.”
Environmental Conditions

Environmental Inventory: Executive Summary

Environmental consulting firm, Cardno, compiled an Environmental Inventory of the University Area, identifying approximately 450 properties of potential concern for contamination within a one-mile radius of the University Area (Appendix A). The majority of these sites are located along Nebraska, Fletcher, and Bearss avenues. Phase I ESAs conducted in other parts of the area would likely identify RECs (recognized environmental conditions) associated with historical land uses that have not been addressed or identified by public agencies, such as historical gas stations, auto repair facilities, and dry cleaners that closed prior to regulation.

Results

- **Metro Self Storage** (contaminant of concern: petroleum; active cleanup / FDEP Fac ID 54219482). Undergoing natural attenuation monitoring for dissolved phase VOC and SVOC impacts.
- **Sheppard Electric Co.** (contaminant of concern: petroleum; active cleanup / FDEP Fac ID 54224273). Approved for site rehabilitation completion order in January 2018 for petroleum release.
- **Super Kwik #206** (contaminant of concern: petroleum; active cleanup / FDEP Fac ID 54219573). A remedial action plan is being prepared with FDEP guidance to address a dissolved-phase petroleum plume that has been documented.
- **Sunoco #905-7019** (contaminant of concern: petroleum; active cleanup / FDEP Fac ID 54232484). This site is undergoing active remediation to address a substantial 1986 petroleum release.
- **Citgo - University** (contaminant of concern: petroleum; active cleanup / FDEP Fac ID 89624977). This site is undergoing post-active remediation natural attenuation monitoring of a release reported in 1987.
- **Handy Food Store #60** (contaminant of concern: petroleum; active cleanup / FDEP Fac ID 54232503). Approved for site rehabilitation completion order in January 2018 for petroleum release.
- **University Cleaners** (contaminant of concern: dry cleaning solvents; active cleanup / FDEP Fac ID 54227251, ERIC_4691). This site is about to undergo active remediation (via source removal) to address documented groundwater impacts.
- **Classic Cleaners** (contaminant of concern: dry cleaning solvents; active cleanup / FDEP Fac ID 54228317, ERIC_4750). This facility is a REC in relation to nearby apartment complex.
- **Bearss Quick Mart Inc.** (contaminant of concern: petroleum; active cleanup / FDEP Fac ID 54232413). This site is undergoing active monitoring for a dissolved-phase plume located just southeast of the dispenser islands.

Recommendations

- A list of recommended properties for future redevelopment are presented in Appendix B.
Economic Conditions

Economic Market Study: Executive Summary

In early 2018, WTL+a, a national real estate and economic development consulting firm based in Washington, DC, conducted an economic market study for the University Area (funded by Hillsborough County Economic Development). An economic market study identifies existing workplaces, such as commercial, industrial, and office workplaces and recommends future economic redevelopment opportunities in the community. The study recognized five potential redevelopment catalyst sites in the University Area for commercial, residential, and industrial use (Appendix C). A summary of key results and recommendations from the Economic Impact Assessment are presented below.

Results

- Population is expected to grow through 2022, adding almost 2,700 new residents in over 1,100 new households. Population growth is expected the most for ages 35-44, 65-74, and 75+.
- The average household income in 2017 was $37,400.
- Household income is expected to increase to more than $43,300 by 2022. In comparison, Hillsborough County is expected to increase to more than $86,800 by 2022.
- Households in the University Area spend an average of less than $9,100 per year on consumer retail goods. Households across Hillsborough County spend more than $17,900 per year.
- Retail spending among households in the University Area is over $153 million per year, compared to $9.46 billion per year for all of Hillsborough County.
- The three largest sectors generating demand for workplace real estate in the University Area are health services, retail trade, and other services, such as automotive repair and maintenance.
- Fewer than 1,000 employees work and live within the University Area.
- Underlying property values should be the first determinant in creating new private investments in the University Area.
- Some locations for potential development can benefit from the Federal incentive program Opportunity Zones Program. Other locations for potential development can benefit from Hillsborough County’s Redevelopment Initiative Program under site permitting assistance, office and industrial building assistance, catalyst project incentive program, and small business façade program.
- 25% of vacant office space would need to be leased before financing would be provided for new office building constructions.

Recommendations

- Identify retail buildings in the community that would qualify for the Small Business Façade Program.
- Identify and invest in sidewalk infrastructure to enhance pedestrian routes to commercial infrastructure.
- Support the redevelopment of the University Mall (“Uptown Tampa”).
• Prioritize one of catalyst sites for redevelopment of light industrial use and plan for long term development of a planned business park.
• Continue supporting research on long-term future hotel construction.
• Consider developing a guide for designing facades and signs within the community.
• Consider applying for remediation funding and incentives for the redevelopment of the recommended Catalyst Sites.

Social Conditions

Social Impact Assessment: Executive Summary

BGW Associates conducted a rapid Social Impact Assessment on the University Area in early 2018. A Social Impact Assessment identifies the intended and unintended social consequences of planned interventions. For the case of the University Area, BGW Associates analyzed the impacts of the redevelopment of Harvest Hope Park on the greater University Area Community. The overall conclusion of the assessment found that the University Area Community Development Corporation has created a foundation to address some of the historic and systemic challenges faced by the community. Below is a summary of key results and recommendations from the Social Impact Assessment.

Results
• The population of the University Area community has increased by nearly 20 percent between 1990 and 2016.
• 77 percent of households in the University Area struggle to meet their basic needs.
• 87 percent of households in the University Area are renter occupied.
• One in four households in the University Area had no vehicle available in 2016.
• The United States Department of Agriculture identifies the area as a food desert, or a community with low access to supermarkets.
• The University Area community is at greater risk for particulate matter, ozone, diesel particulate matter, air toxics cancer risk, traffic proximity and volume, superfund proximity, hazardous waste proximity, and wastewater discharge indicator compared to state averages.
• 68 percent of the population is comprised of ethnic and racial minorities.
• 71 percent live in low-income households.
• 12 percent of the population is linguistically isolated.

“You can’t walk down the road. You can’t ride a bike. Sidewalks are discontinuous.”
Recommendations

- Invest in communication and transportation infrastructure including wireless internet services and public transportation.
- Invest in access and mobility in relation to pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure.
- Continue exploring new opportunities to promote small business enterprises for increased employment of community residents.
- Monitor crime “hotspots” in the University Area to ensure crime does not move to other locations throughout the University Area with the development of Harvest Hope Park.
- Encourage and continue to support other organizations to develop recreation opportunities within the community, such as a community pool.
- Consider “green” solutions in developing stormwater management and waste management.
- Consider health impacts with new development projects.
- Develop and maintain coordination and communication efforts between planning agencies and the community for development projects.
- Support community engagement in identifying impacts of proposed development projects within the community.

Health Conditions

Health Impact Assessment: Executive Summary

From September to October 2017, the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County (DOH-Hillsborough) conducted a rapid Health Impact Assessment for the area surrounding Harvest Hope Park within the University Area. The purpose of the assessment was to determine the health impact of the proposed Area-Wide Plan on the community, specifically identifying harm to vulnerable community members. The following three health pathways were used to determine intermediate and long-term health outcomes: access to a community park, access to a community garden, and access to an active living system. Results and recommendations of the study are summarized below. A flowchart of the health assessment outcomes is available in Appendix E.
Results

- Access to a community park will likely increase health benefits.
- Risk of crime and crime-related incidents will likely decrease, with a moderate impact.
- Exposure to outdoor air pollutants and respiratory disease exacerbation will likely increase, with a low impact.
- Exposure to heat and heat-related illness will likely increase, with a low impact.
- Stress levels will likely decrease, with a moderate impact.
- Mental and physical health will likely increase, with a moderate impact.
- Access to a community garden will likely increase, with a significant positive impact.
- Access to fresh food and well-being will likely increase, with a moderate impact.
- Social engagement opportunities and access to an active living system will likely increase, with a moderate impact.
- Walkability and access to health care will likely increase, with a moderate to significant impact.
- Disruption with likely increase, with a low to moderate impact.
- Gentrification will likely increase, with a moderate to significant impact.

Recommendations

- Set the hours of the park use to ensure children are not in the park after dark.
- Develop an emergency protocol for the park.
- Incorporate activities for older adults in the use of the community center.
- Educate residents on how to reduce respiratory-related exacerbations due to allergens and increased exposure to air pollution.
- Provide ground covering and shade screens for park equipment and protection against heat.
- Encourage the University Area CDC and other local non-profit organizations to increase their assets in the community so they will have increased ability to address housing and other needs.
- Include shared lane markings and speed bumps around Harvest Hope Park, to indicate that bicyclists are also using the road.
- Install traffic control features (speed bumps, speed limit signs) around Harvest Hope Park.

“There is an issue with garbage. It is a public health hazard. There are times there are swarms of flies. These flies are known to spread diseases and we have children in the community.”
Community Development & Engagement

The University Area CDC’s Neighborhood Transformation Strategy focuses on a community development model that effectively supports University Area residents in a real and meaningful way. Our holistic approach is one that engages and empowers the community by including them in the process of creation, implementation, and management. We believe that we can grow our community, one block at a time, by empowering residents to become change agents to improve the social, economic, and environmental conditions. Our strategic direction is outlined in the following 10 initiatives.

1. Harvest Hope Park

In 2015, the University Area CDC conducted a needs-based assessment using printed, online, and walk-in surveys in the community, with 375 respondents. The assessment concluded that the primary needs identified by residents were environmental and human health. Community members specifically wish to have access to a recreational park in the neighborhood, especially one in which they can develop a community garden and gain access to healthy foods, since the primary grocery store serving this area recently closed, leaving many residents with less access to fresh foods. A neighborhood park would also allow residents the opportunity to engage with one another to form social bonds as well as provide a safe place for all University Area children, as there are no parks in this community. Establishing a catalyst site in the center of the University Area Community is critical in the redevelopment strategy of improving a community from the inside out.

"My family can’t wait to finally have a safe place where my kids can play and where I can meet other like-minded residents."

In the heart of the community sits 7 acres of land that the University Area CDC acquired from Hillsborough County for the intent to develop and build a community park. Harvest Hope Park is being built in four developmental phases, which began with land acquisition and will end with the expansion of a new Harvest Hope Center. The Harvest Hope Center will serve as the navigational hub to connect community residents with program and services. The development of the park is in Phase Two and currently has a well-established 33 bed organic community garden, harvest hope teaching kitchen and classroom, one acre pond, newly built community playground and five community art installations. Additional plans include building a walking
trail and multi-purpose sports field for community use through the UACDC’s Get Moving program, adult fitness area, dock, parking, lightning and fencing.

The development of this catalyst site has high potential to spur redevelopment in surrounding properties such as residences and vacant lots, which in turn will play a key role in further redevelopment to surrounding businesses, local schools, and other commercial and service-oriented properties. These changes can positively impact job creation in the area and help to address concerns about unemployment and poverty. In many ways, area residents view Harvest Hope Park as a keystone to redevelopment and a beacon of hope for community change. A critical component to the development is ensuring that residents feel a sense of ownership over the park, either through hands-on support or information sharing.

3. University Area Community Safety Action Plan

The University Area Community Safety Action Plan was developed in 2016 with over 30 community partners, businesses and residents who met consistently for 6 months giving input and holding focus groups, community night walks, safe design trainings with over 50 stakeholder interviews. The plan was designed to help reduce crime and improve perceptions of safety based on sound research and community and resident engagement. Building upon key property acquisitions, planned public improvements, community cleaning and safety initiatives, a variety of supportive services, and an expanding
community policing approach, this plan outlines a comprehensive series of integrated efforts.

4. University Area Leaders Collective

The University Area Leaders Collective (UALC) program is a consortium of no less than 50 established or developing leaders from the University Area Community as defined by the 33612 and 33613 zip codes. The goal of the UALC is to create a team of community residents that will serve as partner leaders in many of the UACDC initiatives including programming, internal committees, community engagement, surveying, public presentations, and co-facilitating community forums and focus groups. Residents that choose to take on a leadership role within the community will be supported through a series of marketable leadership trainings, staff support and leadership resources. With the goal of creating community, there will be bi-monthly UALC meetings where members can talk about issues impacting the UA and how to best respond to those issues. Often, residents may have similar challenges regarding community infrastructure, high crime, lack of transportation and education, fragmented opportunities to connect with their neighbors, and other issues but are never given the opportunity to build collective efficacy with one another. The UALC will create an environment where likeminded residents, in a group setting, can focus on real community issues that affect their ability to live a healthy and well-balanced life.

5. Community Outreach

The COC (Community Outreach Committee) is comprised of University Area CDC employees, partners and residents that are working on building bridges into the community through effective community engagement activities like Apartment Socials, Community Movie Nights, Poetry Nights and Family Events. The goal of the Community Outreach Committee is to better communicate services, supports and activities with residents of the community. Through the support of the COC over 59 community events were held this past year through the engagement activities listed above.
6. Harvest Hope Properties

The University Area CDC created Harvest Hope Properties, LLC as a real estate arm of the organization to aggressively pursue acquiring properties through the land banking program. Harvest Hope Properties will serve as the catalyst for community development and revitalization in the heart of the University Area. Through property acquisition, the community will inform what type of affordable housing is built and where. Affordable Housing is a key priority in the University Area Community and it all begins with land acquisition.

7. Land Banking Program

Land is one of the most important factors in local economic development and by viewing these properties as potential assets, rather than barriers to revitalization, land banking will provide a new way to reinvest in our neighborhoods. The University Area CDC’s concept aims to convert vacant properties that are contaminated or have been neglected by the open market into productive use, and thereby transforming neighborhood liabilities into assets. Since the program’s inception in 2016, 11 properties have been acquired within one mile of the catalyst site (Harvest Hope Park) and have been earmarked for affordable housing. Once a property has been acquired, a land banking sign is erected to show the community that we are growing our community, one block at a time.

8. Harvest Hope Cultural Campus

The mission of the Harvest Hope Cultural Campus is to serve as a navigational hub connecting community residents with six anchored partners who are providing direct programing and services through a holistic approach. Through the organizations land banking program, two contiguous lots across the street were purchased as phase I of this project. Phase II of this project is the purchase of two additional lots that house three commercial buildings. Phase III is the final phase of this project and will be the design, rehab, and programing of these commercial buildings to host a collective of community partners offering services to low income residents living in the University Area Community.

9. Community Infrastructure

The University Area CDC is working on sidewalks and lighting as well as well flooding and storm water challenges to improve the walkability and safety of residents. Current plans are to build sidewalks that will provide a safe route from Mort Elementary, to the Harvest Hope Park and back to the UACDC. With over $800,000 in funding already committed for sidewalks and over $200,000 committed for lighting, the UACDC plans to leverage these funds to create even bigger investment and impact for community change.
10. Partners Coalition via Collective Impact

The University Area CDC has attracted more than 180 businesses, nonprofits and government agencies to members of a comprehensive Partners Coalition. This group of colleagues are working together through the Neighborhood Transformation Strategy, bringing their varied wisdom, skills and resources to bear on the complex problem of poverty and on-set of gentrification in the University Area Community.

In the University Area CDC’s Partners Coalition, professionals working with people at the street level are strategizing with law enforcement, administrators, residents, funders and business owners to make decisions guiding responses to community needs, programming and distribution of funding. Community impact areas are identified by heat maps and an array of data mapping overlay to determine greatest need in the University Area Community. The goal is to concentrate on all areas at once, but with the strongest emphasis and the highest resources focused on critical areas. As we succeed in improving critical areas together, such as a healthcare system, our goal is to foster an environment that shifts from a very expensive (in lives and dollars) crisis to a cost-effective and life-saving preventive care.

Instead of reacting to community trends after the fact, the University Area CDC is building an agile, responsive coalition that can react to community needs in real time — a coalition that does not just react to community trends, but is positioned to guide community trends towards positive outcomes. The Partners Coalition is the engine that powers the cycle of transformation. Everyone from senior citizens to school children to infants will benefit from this new model of collaboration.

“This project represents hope and growth and a new beginning for this community.”
Properties subject to environmental regulation and recordkeeping in the project area.
Potential redevelopment sites identified by the environmental inventory.
## Potential Catalyst Redevelopment Sites Recommended by the Economic Market Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Address</th>
<th>Property Type</th>
<th>Redevelopment Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong> 1006 E. Bearss Ave.</td>
<td>Executive/Practice Golf Course (Undeveloped)</td>
<td>The site is designated as Mixed-Use and could accommodate housing and commercial uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong> 1201 E. 148th Ave.</td>
<td>Minerals Processing</td>
<td>The property is designated as industrial and could be assembled into a larger parcel with adjoining sites (catalyst site #4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong> 1003 E. 131st Avenue</td>
<td>Lumber Yard/Mill</td>
<td>The property is designated as industrial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong> 14806 N. 12th Ave.</td>
<td>Minerals Processing (Undeveloped)</td>
<td>The property is designated as industrial and could be assembled into a larger parcel with adjoining sites (catalyst site #2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong> 1410 E. 131st Ave.</td>
<td>Utility</td>
<td>The site is surrounded by residential uses, which enhance the site’s uses for mixed-density residential uses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix D

### Properties Acquired for Redevelopment in the Project Area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Address</th>
<th>Zip Code</th>
<th>Property Type</th>
<th>Redevelopment Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 1906 E. 138th Ave.</td>
<td>33613</td>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Sound and Safe Housing Project is a lease to purchase program where two modular homes will be built for two single mothers and their families. Program is fully funded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 1908 E. 138th Ave.</td>
<td>33613</td>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Single family housing for low income qualified residents. Partnerships and contractors have not been solidified to date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 1912 E. 138th Ave.</td>
<td>33613</td>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Single family housing for low income qualified residents. Partnerships and contractors have not been solidified to date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 1916 E. 138th Ave</td>
<td>33613</td>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Single family housing for low income qualified residents. Partnerships and contractors have not been solidified to date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 1918 E. 138th Ave</td>
<td>33613</td>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Single family housing for low income qualified residents. Partnerships and contractors have not been solidified to date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 13608 N. 20th St.</td>
<td>33613</td>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Future home of the Harvest Hope Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 13612 N. 20th St.</td>
<td>33613</td>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Harvest Hope Center to include classrooms, multi-use meeting space and staff offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 North 19th Street</td>
<td>33612</td>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Multi family or single family housing for low income residents below 80 AMI – new construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 North 19th Street</td>
<td>33612</td>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Multi family or single family housing for low income residents below 80 AMI – new construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 North 19th Street</td>
<td>33612</td>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Multi family or single family housing for low income residents below 80 AMI – new construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 13713 N. 20th St.</td>
<td>33613</td>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Modular single family housing for low income residents below 80 AMI - new construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 2253 E. Bearss Ave.</td>
<td>33613</td>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Coffee Shop Workforce Program, training residents in hospitality services and working with employers for job placement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Health Impact Assessment Outcomes Flowchart.