



Imagining Flint

For the first time in more than 50 years, the city of Flint, Michigan is working on a master plan to chart its vision for growth and development, supported by a \$1.75 million grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Dubbed [*Imagine Flint*](#), the plan highlights the importance of community and neighborhood involvement in informing public decision-making and recognizes the Building Neighborhood Capacity Program (BNCP) as a model that should be used for “establishing future planning areas and neighborhood plans.”

The involvement of BNCP staff and residents in the master planning process to date demonstrates the power of building bridges between neighborhood residents and city officials. From partnerships with artists to academics, BNCP in Flint is marshalling diverse sources of data about residents’ desires for the future and perspectives on the present. When combined with administrative data produced by city agencies, including cross-sector partners like the planners at *Imagine Flint*, public officials and neighborhood residents alike will have a richer picture of community challenges and opportunities that can be used to inform effective solutions.

From Artists ...

Residents in Ward 3 have seized opportunities to share their hopes for the future with city planners through an artists-in-residence program funded by the National Endowment of the Arts and coordinated by the Greater Flint Arts Council. Gary Johnson, the Ward 3 artist-in-residence, worked with Monica Frazier, BNCP site coordinator, to record residents’ vision for Flint in 20 years. The resulting [Public Service Announcements](#) (PSAs) captured residents’ aspirations for city planners and other officials and helped to identify priorities for the BNCP planning process. Three of the participants in the PSAs —Yashica Neal, Louise Clark and Sharae Rosborogh — are serving on the recently formed BNCP Flint Neighborhood Advisory Council.

[Kenyetta Dotson](#), director of WOW Outreach, an anchor partner in Ward 1, is another of the city’s artists-in-residence. Her project focuses on public safety, including using beautification projects to transform and reclaim public space. Her description of her project’s aim is to help residents to “not ignore the problem, but be actively involved in and part of the solution.” It gives voice to BNCP’s larger goal of engaging stakeholders throughout the city to work toward achieving better results for children, youth and families in two of Flint’s most disinvested communities.

...To Academics

Through a partnership with University of Michigan-Flint, BNCP is also fielding a neighborhood survey in the anchor zone areas of Wards [1](#) and [3](#) that will solicit input from residents on a diverse array of community issues. The data collected will help establish baselines for public perceptions related to neighborhood quality-of-life issues that can be used to track change over time. BNCP leaders will be paying particular attention to resident input on public safety, which has emerged as the focus for the first phase of BNCP’s revitalization efforts based on input from resident engagement exercises like the PSAs.