

# Reinvigorating Detroit:

a new collaboration aims to serve and preserve a community

**Providing new housing, healthcare and wellness options, an innovative collaboration between three Michigan nonprofits emerges in the right time and place to meet the needs of underserved older adults—and strengthen the community**

Once among the five largest cities in America, Detroit—the former center of the nation’s automotive industry—has dwindled in number since the Michigan city’s peak of 1.8 million in 1950.<sup>1,2</sup> The 2010 United States Census puts the current population at just under 714,000, a 25% drop from the 950,000-plus counted in the year 2000.<sup>3</sup> Mayor Dave Bing, who believes the 2010 census finding is inaccurate, says the City of Detroit will challenge that number, stressing its importance both to federal and state funding and to community services. “We are

in a fiscal crisis,” Bing admits, “and we have to fight for every dollar.”<sup>2</sup>

“Outmigration” to the suburbs has eroded Detroit’s tax base. Among the contributing factors are the city’s economic decline (due to the collapse of the automotive industry and the loss of factories and manufacturing jobs), plus a raft of resident concerns.<sup>1,2,3</sup> These include such things as safety, schools, services, taxes, and insurance and housing costs, according to local demographer Kurt Metzger.<sup>1,3</sup> Among Detroit’s older adults, concerns about decaying neighborhoods and inadequate housing and long-term care options have also caused people to leave.<sup>4</sup> And the mortgage crisis of recent years has further devastated the city.<sup>2</sup>

The Detroit of today is coming to terms with its new reality. Striving for stability, the city is working to stimulate its economy and reinvent itself for current

and future generations. It's also wrestling with how to improve services and deal with the blight of thousands upon thousands of abandoned buildings, vacant houses and empty lots of land.<sup>1</sup>

Community development is a key focus. Mayor Bing's "Detroit Works Project," for example, calls on Detroiters to create a shared vision for the Motor City's future and for stakeholders to partner and build up "one of the great American cities."<sup>5</sup>

Faced with "enormous challenges" in Detroit and southeast Michigan, community leaders, government, business and foundations show "an eagerness to work together to make a difference," notes the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, a permanent endowment dedicated to improving the region's quality of life.<sup>6</sup> The Community Foundation suggests that the impact of this leadership on Detroit's economy and quality of life can already be seen in the International Riverfront (which is taking on new life as a vibrant urban waterfront) and resurgent Downtown and Midtown areas. "Detroit's near-eastside neighborhoods are surrounded

by much of the city's new development and uniquely posed to benefit from it," the organization points out.<sup>6</sup>

Through its Detroit Neighborhood Fund, the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan has invested more than US\$14 million in the city's near eastside.<sup>6</sup> According to President Mariam Noland, these investments "complement and support" the East Jefferson Neighborhood Project (EJNP), a new collaboration to redevelop a near-eastside neighborhood, create jobs, and fill important healthcare and living needs for Detroit's older adults.

### **Bringing housing and health services to the community**

The EJNP, a private-public partnership, brings together Henry Ford Health System, Presbyterian Villages of Michigan, and United Methodist Retirement Communities—organizations with long histories of service—to provide housing and health services that support health, wellness and aging in place in the community. Scheduled to open in January 2013, the initial phase of the EJNP will offer affordable assisted living, the first time such an option will be available

in Detroit, according to the project partners.

Affordable assisted living provides below market-rate apartments with home care services, paid for by Medicaid, a government health insurance program for low-income Americans. For those of limited means who have exhausted their financial resources, affordable assisted living offers a much less expensive alternative to a nursing facility.

Phase I of the EJNP will also include a second location for Henry Ford Health System's Center for Senior Independence. The Center is part of PACE [Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly], a national program providing medical and social services to frail, low-income older adults with serious health problems. Henry Ford's Center for Senior Independence brings together all the care needed, including such things as occupational health and physical therapies and adult day care, to enable participants to remain independent in their homes and communities. This care is provided at the Center and an individual's home, as well as in the hospital or nursing facility, when necessary.

One of the largest healthcare systems in the United States, Henry Ford Health System is a national leader in clinical care, research and education. To bring the Center for Senior Independence to

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*An artist's rendering shows the East Jefferson Neighborhood Project in Detroit, Michigan. Rendering by Hooker DeJong Architects & Engineers*

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the EJNP, Henry Ford formed a joint venture with Presbyterian Villages of Michigan, developer of the overall project. Presbyterian Villages, a faith-based nonprofit serving older adults of all faiths, currently operates 24 senior living communities in Michigan, including six in Detroit. The Southfield-based organization is building the EJNP's affordable assisted-living component with United Methodist Retirement Communities and the National Affordable Housing Trust (a collaboration of the top five US providers of seniors housing). United Methodist, which owns and operates seniors housing in southeast Michigan, was one of just five organizations approved by the state government to pioneer affordable assisted living and the only one approved for a program in the City of Detroit. In the new collaboration, United Methodist will manage the EJNP's affordable assisted living. This program will be highly integrated with the PACE programs, sharing services and staffing to help lower the overall cost of services and ensure they are seamless.

Over the next few years, the EJNP collaborators plan to expand the development. This second phase will include affordable independent-living apart-

ments, a Green House® home for skilled nursing care, and a neighborhood café inspired by the Café Plus model originated by Mather LifeWays in Chicago, Illinois.

The Green House, a model developed by Eden Alternative founder Dr. Bill Thomas, is a self-contained residence that blends with other homes or apartments in the neighborhood. This program creates small intentional communities made up of staff and as many as 10 older adults per Green House to support the most positive experience of later life possible. At the same time, residents receive a full range of personal care and clinical services delivered in a warm, intimate setting. The whole environment is intended to enhance quality of life and support a focus “on living full and vibrant lives.”<sup>7</sup>

Mather's Café Plus also promotes quality of life and living well. This model brings together the neighborhood coffee house and the seniors center to serve and support adults ages 50 and older in the community. Featuring inviting colors and contemporary design, this street-level venue welcomes all ages into its café/restaurant and acts as a community hub and gathering place. The

café's “plus” for older adults is the wide range of wellness programs and activities, education, and resources available to them once there. Key to the center's programming is its focus on “interest-driven activities and programs.”<sup>8</sup>

Presbyterian Villages will sponsor and manage Phase II of the EJNP, with United Methodist as a possible collaborator. Ultimately, the entire project is expected to serve more than 750 older adults each year.

## Addressing a community's needs

The EJNP will be built in two vacant industrial buildings, both of historic value, located south of Jefferson Avenue in Detroit's Rivertown. In common with many other areas of the city, this waterfront neighborhood has a compelling need for affordable seniors housing and health services.<sup>4</sup>

In 2002, almost one in three residents over age 60 expressed concern about their housing and long-term care options in a city needs assessment by the Detroit Senior Citizens Department.<sup>4</sup> A 2011 Detroit Area Agency on Aging

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*The East Jefferson Neighborhood Project will bring new life to two deteriorating industrial buildings in Detroit's near eastside, as well as valuable investment in the area. Rendering by Hooker DeJong Architects & Engineers*

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report highlights the ongoing crisis in long-term care. According to this report, “Transforming Long-Term Care in Detroit,” 16 nursing facilities in the city closed their doors between 1997 and 2008, and no new construction is planned.<sup>9</sup> In addition, research shows that, in 2008 alone, about 3,000 Detroiters sought long-term care services outside the city, as city facilities were deemed “not effective” in meeting their needs.<sup>9</sup>

Earlier agency research found that older adults in Detroit had “poorer health status and greater per capita need for aging services than their nonurban counterparts.”<sup>4</sup> Moreover, 54.5% of the city’s older adults lived in federally designated Medically Underserved Areas.<sup>4</sup> “The result is that older adults are dying prematurely because of preventable

causes—illnesses that if found early enough, can be treated and the person’s life saved,” the researchers concluded. “Availability of and improved access to high-quality, cost-effective healthcare and supportive home and community-based services are needed.”<sup>4</sup> (See “Aging in the Motor City” on this page for more information.)

The EJNP is designed to address those needs. The project will also provide the kind of investment, jobs and improved quality of life that are so important to efforts to redevelop the area and revitalize the city.

To learn more about the East Jefferson Neighborhood Project, the International Council on Active Aging® (ICAA) asked Brian W. Carnaghi, senior vice president of finance and business de-

velopment at Presbyterian Villages of Michigan, to describe the development of this community resource.

**ICAA:** *What was the catalyst for this collaboration between Henry Ford Health System, Presbyterian Villages of Michigan and United Methodist Retirement Communities?*

**BWC:** The story emanates from the findings of a study sponsored by the Detroit Area Agency on Aging, titled “Dying Before Their Time,”<sup>4</sup> about an older Detroit population steeped in culture and significance in the region. What is unfolding in the collaboration is a blending of three mission-driven organizations with an average life span of

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## Aging in the Motor City

A 2002 City of Detroit needs assessment revealed some sobering findings about the needs and concerns of older adults living in the region. Of the more than 1,400 older Detroiters interviewed for this research, about 30% identified “poor housing options, deteriorating neighborhoods, and inadequate long-term care options” as concerns. Researchers found that these concerns contributed to people moving out to the suburbs and declines in the city’s older population.

Also revealed by the 2002 needs assessment was “a significant shortfall in providing support services” to individuals who needed them. The fact is, the city’s older-adult population grew needier over the prior decade (1990–2000), as studies conducted for the Detroit Area Agency on Aging (DAAA) showed. The researchers found that the poverty rate among

Detroit-area older adults was almost 25% (twice that of any other region in Michigan), while the distribution of age 60-plus individuals in the city skewed toward minorities and older age groups. The rate of reported disabilities was greater in the Detroit area as well.

A fuller picture emerged when findings from the city needs assessment were compiled with those of the DAAA’s research studies in the 2004 synopsis “Dying Before Their Time: The Startling Truth About Mortality and Detroit Area Seniors.” Detroit’s older-adult population had declined over the previous decade by 43,816 individuals. The researchers attributed this population loss to “outmigration, a smaller replacement cohort [people in their 50s moving into the 60-plus age group] and premature deaths.”

Researchers believed that accelerated mortality might account for almost

40% of this population loss. Individuals in their 50s were dying at a 122% higher rate in Detroit than in Michigan’s nonurban areas, while those ages 60–74 were dying at a 48% higher rate. The same pattern was seen in the state’s other urban areas, but to a lesser extent. These excess deaths, the researchers suggested, were associated with “poor access to care and delays in seeking care for chronic and other conditions by those who cannot afford healthcare.”

*The above information is drawn from the synopsis “Dying Before Their Time: The Startling Truth About Mortality and Detroit Area Seniors.” This 2004 report is based on research conducted for the Detroit Area Agency on Aging and on findings from a needs assessment commissioned by the City of Detroit Senior Citizens Department. The document is available online at [www.daaa1a.org/DAAA/media/DBTT%20Synopsis.pdf](http://www.daaa1a.org/DAAA/media/DBTT%20Synopsis.pdf).*

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## Resources

### Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan

[www.cfsem.org](http://www.cfsem.org)

### Detroit Area Agency on Aging: Dying Before Their Time report index

[www.daaa1a.org/DAAA/Dying+Before+Their+Time/DBTT\\_Report\\_Index.asp](http://www.daaa1a.org/DAAA/Dying+Before+Their+Time/DBTT_Report_Index.asp)

### Detroit Area Agency on Aging: Transforming Long-Term Care in Detroit

[www.daaa1a.org/DAAA/media/DAAA%20Nursing%20Home%20Report.Final%207-1-11\(5\).pdf](http://www.daaa1a.org/DAAA/media/DAAA%20Nursing%20Home%20Report.Final%207-1-11(5).pdf)

### The Green House Project

[www.thegreenhouseproject.org](http://www.thegreenhouseproject.org)

### Henry Ford Health System

[www.henryford.com](http://www.henryford.com)

### Henry Ford Health System: Center for Senior Independence

[www.henryford.com/body.cfm?id=51316](http://www.henryford.com/body.cfm?id=51316)

### Mather LifeWays: Cafés and more

[www.matherlifeways.com/iyc\\_inyourcommunity.asp](http://www.matherlifeways.com/iyc_inyourcommunity.asp)

### Presbyterian Villages of Michigan

[www.pvm.org](http://www.pvm.org)

### United Methodist Retirement Communities

[www.umrc.com](http://www.umrc.com)

### US Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services: Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly

[www.cms.gov/pace](http://www.cms.gov/pace)

80-plus years working within the City of Detroit to bring access to quality housing and healthcare to its residents. [Ed. For some findings and conclusions from “Dying Before Their Time,” refer to the sidebar on page 46.]

**ICAA:** *How did you assess community need in this area, and what did you find?*

**BWC:** The “Dying Before Their Time” research was the catalyst for the demand, along with numerous studies conducted for the PACE expansion, low-income housing, and affordable assisted living on the market and financial feasibility of the EJNP. These things, in conjunction with the development of a community-wide vision and strategy for long-term care services in the City of Detroit,<sup>9</sup> pointed to housing with services, PACE, and affordable assisted living as needs within the city.

**ICAA:** *Please describe the East Jefferson Neighborhood Project.*

**BWC:** The EJNP is a continuing care services community with several overarching goals. Among these goals are creating a community through a collaboration that can build neighborhood capacity for development, jobs, housing, wellness, and healthcare for a wide range of older adults in the area. Most elders served will be either transferred from more institutional nursing homes or avoiding a nursing home placement. So the project will also assist the State of Michigan in lowering its overall Medicaid expenditures.

Services provided by the EJNP are designed to be highly integrated, including:

- a broad transportation strategy
- PACE participants living within affordable assisted-living apartments
- students from nearby high schools serving internships in the project’s component areas

- nearby corporations providing volunteer services with the elders
- older generations guiding younger ones

An economic impact study of the area undertaken by the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan found that the first phase alone of the EJNP will have an estimated US\$278-million ripple effect in the Metropolitan Detroit area over 10 years. The entire development will further provide 180 new full-time jobs and a \$38-million investment in the neighborhood.

**ICAA:** *What are the development’s components? And how will these components support aging in place and quality of life for older adults?*

**BWC:** The EJNP’s five components include PACE, affordable assisted living, independent housing, Green Houses and a Mather-like café for active adults. The PACE program provides medical and social care to support older adults who are age-, income- and need-qualified to reside within their homes in the community. In the affordable assisted living, individuals live in apartments designed to accommodate dignity and respect for elders, while supporting them with activities of daily living. Green House nursing environments are designed to allow elders to grow at any point in their journey. And the wellness programming in the café, along with the creation of outdoor community gardens and pavilions for cultural events, will allow active adults, more dependent older adults, and young adults to mingle in the neighborhood.

**ICAA:** *Please tell us more about how the EJNP will foster health and wellness through activities and environments.*

**BWC:** The EJNP’s Mather-like café will offer a full range of wellness program-

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ming for the mind, body and spirit at hours conducive to the community. Following the lead of Mather LifeWays in establishing these community cafés, and numerous strong Michigan seniors center programs, the café will serve the entire neighborhood, but be careful to complement existing businesses in the area. In addition to rooftop gardens, the EJNP includes green spaces that will further provide gathering spaces in the neighborhood. These green spaces will assist elders with community gardening and accessing, through volunteer transport support, the blues and jazz offerings in the outdoor pavilion as well as winter ice skating. To an urban development such as EJNP, preserving green space for wellness and cultural programming is important, because it brings individuals of varied backgrounds and ages together and thereby builds community.

**ICAA:** *In your view, what value does the EJNP concept add in addressing community need?*

**BWC:** The EJNP preserves older adults' viability, vitality, and relevance in the community. It also builds community in the East Jefferson corridor through the relationships developed to support the project and the project to support the community.

The neighborhood will further benefit from the EJNP's economic impact, the addition of jobs in the area (including 180 full-time "new economy" jobs and more than 350 construction jobs), workers residing close to work, and the added security of having more individuals in the neighborhood. Businesses will profit from workers, families and visitors coming to the East Jefferson community, as well as community outreach by the development's partners to see how the EJNP can assist local businesses and organizations. In addition, the project's cultural and community programming will make the area more

lively, a benefit for those who live and work there. Finally, the community will be strengthened by the preservation of historically significant buildings and a design intent that supports the neighborhood's vernacular, or architectural style.

**ICAA:** *How is the EJNP development funded?*

**BWC:** EJNP Phase I, including the PACE and affordable assisted living, will be funded with 12 layers of financing. A \$2-million grant from the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan provided the catalyst for the project, enabling the partners to purchase the necessary property and begin planning and broader fundraising. The awarded amount—made possible through the Detroit Neighborhood Fund—spans two years for project development.

In addition to the Community Foundation grant, the collaboration has funding commitments for an initial \$24.6-million community investment. These include:

- financing from the State of Michigan, Wayne County and the City of Detroit (including HOME funds from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD])
- partner-contributed capital
- brownfield tax credits (for rehabilitating abandoned industrial buildings)
- other philanthropy
- federal appropriations
- low-income housing tax credits
- other forms of debt and equity financing

The additional funding for Phase II, a HUD 202 development, will ultimately bring 17 sources of financing to the \$38-million investment in the EJNP. The development is strongly supported by operating sources, including Michi-

gan State Housing Development Authority and Detroit Housing Commission Section 8 vouchers, Medicare and Medicaid, benevolence, and private pay to allow for strong sustainability.

**ICAA:** *In hard economic times, how did the EJNP collaborators successfully make the case for support?*

**BWC:** The case for support was largely driven by the following:

- the collaboration of the three partners
- the strengthening of the neighborhood
- the creation of jobs and internships for Detroiters
- the cost-effective measures to save Medicare and Medicaid funding by older adults avoiding nursing home institutional stays
- the overall economic impact in the Metropolitan Detroit region

Demonstrating the sustainability of the programming was also a contributing factor.

**ICAA:** *What would you say are the key challenges so far in creating the development, and how have the partners addressed them?*

**BWC:** Time and moving the project forward with a sense of urgency have been a key challenge. There are so many great initiatives in the City of Detroit that keeping advocates focused on the EJNP can be a challenge. But the partners are confident we will see the entire project through.

**ICAA:** *Finally, what do you think are the key lessons other organizations or developers could take away from the East Jefferson Neighborhood Project, and why?*

**BWC:** There are so many lessons. For a private-public partnership such as the EJNP, one of the key lessons is to

communicate often, timely, and with the appropriate amount of information with collaborators and supporters. Individuals and organizations want to assist and be advocates for the initiative, and they need to be informed and engaged. When building collaborations, keep the partners moving in the same direction. There will be times when certain partners will want to move in a different direction, or go it alone, and you need to bring folks back together around the overarching goals. It's important, however, to retain the flexibility to allow the vision and project to evolve into an even better outcome. Lastly, retain best-in-class advisors and consultants for your project, as their expertise and connections will ensure project success.☺

*The International Council on Active Aging® thanks Brian W. Carnaghi and Dawn Dyer Magretta, vice president of development and public affairs, at Presbyterian Villages of Michigan for their help with this article. For more information, visit [www.pvm.org](http://www.pvm.org).*

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