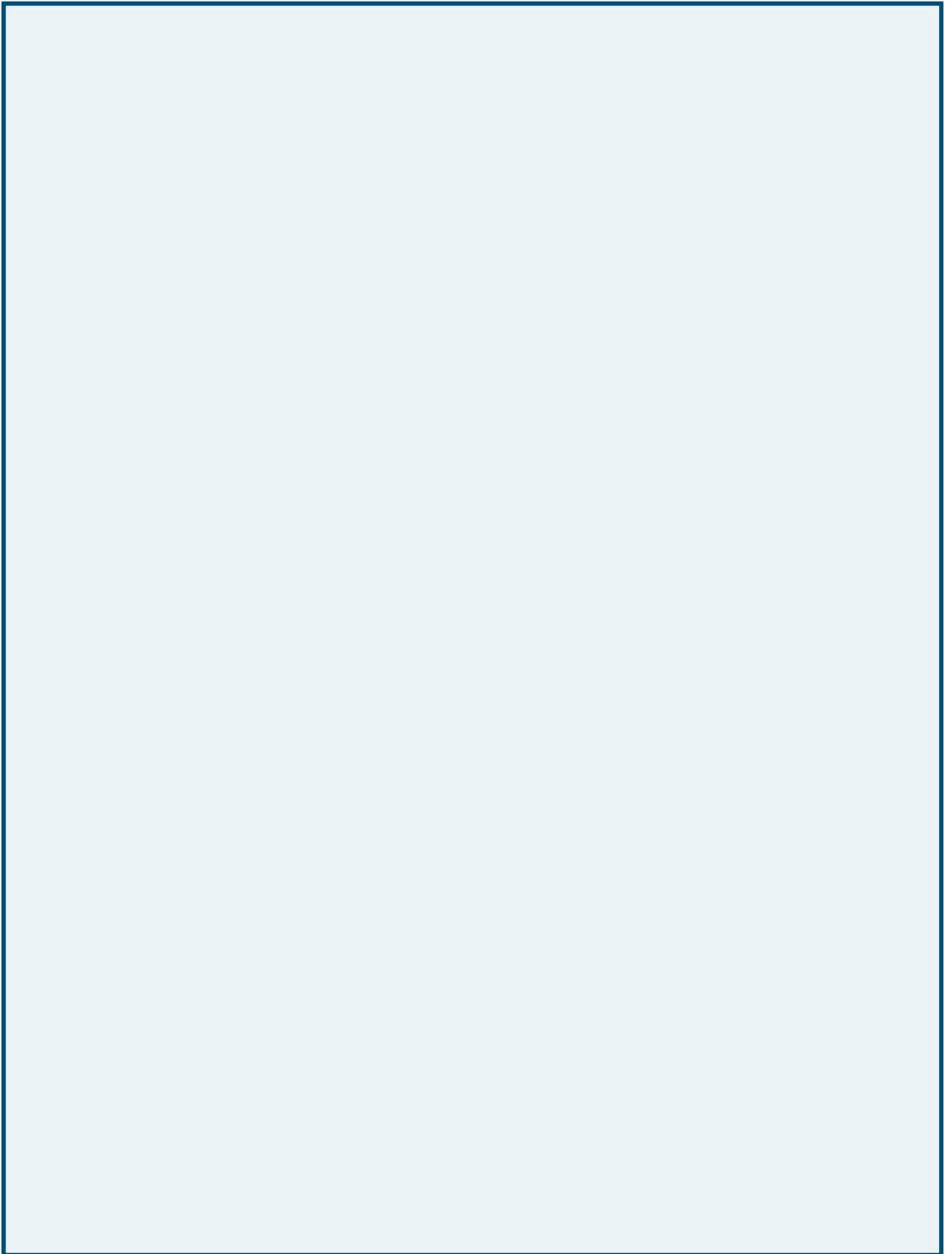


East Bayfront Neighborhood Plan

City of Erie, PA

Executive Summary and Recommendations—January 15, 2020



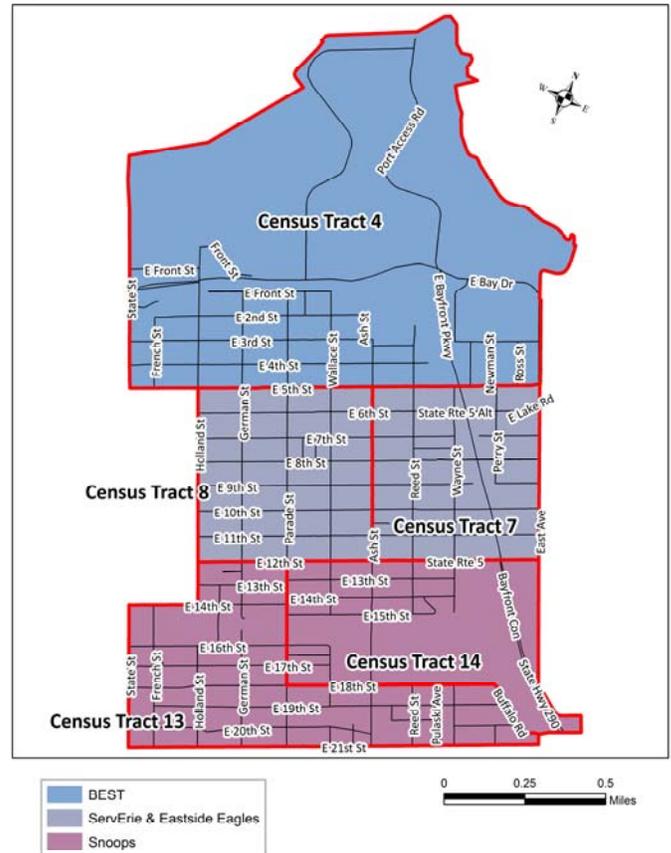
East Bayfront Neighborhood Plan : Executive Summary

The **purpose** of this plan is to further the recommendations of the City of Erie's Comprehensive Plan, *Erie Refocused*, and guide the revitalization of the East Bayfront neighborhood. Reliance on community input and direction from community partners is at the heart of this work and has resulted in meaningful, results driven recommendations. Figure 1 identifies the project boundaries.

The **methodology** of this plan was focused on heavy stakeholder engagement, door to door surveys, and direction from a steering committee composed of city staff and major nonprofit organizations that represent the neighborhood:

- Bayfront Eastside Taskforce (BEST) representing Census Tract 4
- ServErie & Eastside Eagles representing Census tracts 8 and 7
- Snoops representing Census tracts 13 and 14

Figure 1 East Bayfront Focus Area.



Throughout the summer of 2018, the city along with neighborhood organizations and residents conducted a **door-to-door survey** as part of the **Summer of Hope** initiative. This survey informed both the short and long term goals of the plan. **Key findings from the survey** include:

Top Neighborhood Priority:

29% of residents consider **less crime** as their top priority for the area; 20% want more activities for young people; 17% want better schools and education

Second Neighborhood Priority:

20% want to **make area safer/reduce crime** as their second priority; 17% want neighborhood cleanups/litter; 12% want more street lighting

Top Home Improvement:

“None” and “Other” were the most chosen responses for this question, which may be due to the high level of **renters** in the area. Besides this, 17% of residents need **window/door improvements**, 16% need roof improvements; 13% need façade/painting

Safety:

76% of residents said that they **do feel safe**

39% said **more foot and bike patrols** would make them feel safer; 28% said security cameras

Neighborhood Involvement:

80% said they are **not involved** in neighborhood activities

36% said they **do not know** when/where events are held

38% said they would like to participate in **neighborhood cleanups**

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The following **short term strategies** are steps the city can take immediately to begin addressing the resident's concerns.

Enhance street lighting—one of the resident's top concern was to add more lighting to the neighborhood, which could help reduce crime or the perception of crime. The city plans to partner with the Erie Innovation District's Secure Smart City Initiative to replace lights with more powerful LED lighting as well as conduct tree trimming to unblock current lighting from overgrown branches.

Porch Lights on Initiative—many cities around the country have partnered with local energy providers to install more energy efficient porch lights to their homes. This could help make residents feel safer at night both while they are inside and outside their homes.

Security cameras—Again teaming up with the Erie Innovation District's Secure Smart City Initiative, the city and its partners will help establish a stronger security camera presence in the area as part of the Secure Smart City efforts in order to avoid placing the burden on the individual property owners.

The following **long term strategies** are recommendations for the future development of the neighborhood in the hopes of beginning the process of alleviating the area of systemic issues that create disinvestment and blight in an area.

Park and Trail Network— The East Bayfront is home to wonderful parks on its North and South sides, however it lacks space for recreation and play within the area between E 6th Street and E 12th Street. Census Tracts 7 & 8. Pfeiffer Burleigh elementary school does provide a play area along 12th Street that is open to the public. This long term goal recommends connecting the parks in the North and South end of the neighborhood by creating a trail and park system through targeted demolition of highly distressed buildings. Workforce development opportunities will be sought to help with the entire process from demolition to park and green lot maintenance to ensure sustainability of the system.

Targeted Reinvestment and Blight Reduction— This strategy builds off of the recommendations of *Erie Refocused*, which calls for targeted demolition of highly distressed and blighted buildings while adding greenspace to the area. A redevelopment plan will be created that will take into consideration the needs of the residents that call this neighborhood home. This process will act to certify the area for redevelopment and address the steps needed for blight removal, as well as identify spaces that the City should create to help the neighborhood stabilize including affordable and market rate housing, greenspace, and other amenities that come to our attention through a community input process.

To help address more systemic issues facing those living in the neighborhood, the City will partner with UPMC, Primary Care Network, the Hamot Foundation and other stakeholders to complete a Community Health Census. This detailed survey of residents will help build a knowledge base and funding streams to deal with social and health related issues.

Enhance Parade Street Business Corridor— The Parade Street corridor has a rich history and a number of businesses that continue to flourish. This strategy identified the need for more support for those businesses through a corridor plan, façade grant program and developing a cultural heritage trail that tells the rich history of the area and will act as an attraction to the corridor. The trail development will be part of the New Horizon's initiative led by Erie Arts and Culture and will include public art and historic interpretation. Greening of Parade Street and surface parking as well as adding bike lanes will be part of an overall redesign plan for Parade Street.

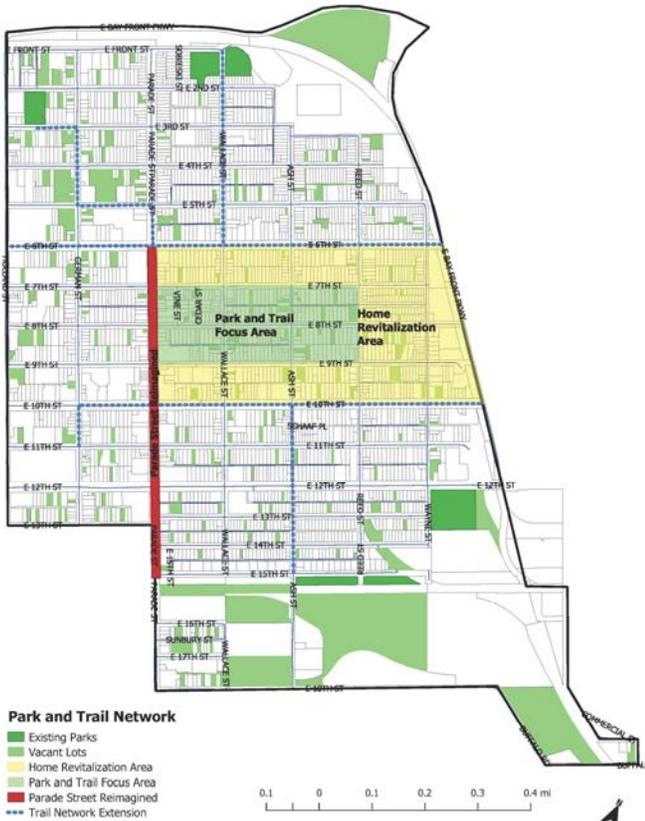
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Illustrations of the Long Term Recommendations for East Bayfront

Overall Long Term Plan for East Bayfront

Urban Park and Trail System Example

East Bayfront Neighborhood



Here is an example of a connected park and trail network in Champaign, IL. Like the proposed network in the East Bayfront, this trail and park run through developed areas of land (as seen in image above), yet allows for the movement of pedestrians and cyclists, large areas for green space and the opportunity for recreation (as seen in the site plan on the left). Source: Top Image: WENK: HNTF, "Boneyard Master Plan."



High Levels of Community Engagement drives decisions

Cultural Trail Idea for Parade Street

Based off of information gathered from the planning process, the planning team identified both short and long term strategies that will begin stabilizing the East Bayfront neighborhood. These goals align with the recommendations and principles indicated in *Erie Refocused*, which will also be discussed below.

Short Term Strategy Recommendations

Number One: Improve safety of residents

Enhance Street Lighting

The East Bayfront resident's number one priority for their neighborhood is to have less crime, yet the majority of them feel safe in their neighborhood. Again, this may be due to the fact that they are confident in their ability to take care of themselves by staying indoors at night or arming themselves with protection. Although crime is a complicated, long term issue that needs to be addressed, one way to help make residents feel safer at night is to improve the street lighting in the area. Many of the streets that run North-South do not have adequate lighting or are covered by overgrown trees. Therefore the first phase of implementing the East Bayfront neighborhood plan will be to work with the owner of the streetlights, Penelec, and replace these lights with more powerful LED lighting as well as conducting tree maintenance along the routes. Working with Penelec and the Erie Innovation District's Secure Smart City Initiative™ will help create better and more efficient™ lighting and security cameras throughout the project area.

Porch Lights On Initiative

Another strategy to help with increased lighting is to get the residents directly involved in a porch-lights-on initiative. Many municipalities such as Lancaster, PA, Flint, MI and Ogden, UT have partnered with their local utility provider to install energy efficient lights onto the porches of residential properties at a small cost to the residents. For example, in Ogden residents who participated in the program pay about 35 cents a month for automatic lighting. Additionally, according to the police chief, the target neighborhood has seen a 15.6 percent drop in Part I (major) crime.¹¹ Active neighborhood groups within the study area help with home improvement projects and typically have some level of dedicated funding for this effort. The study findings suggest that including porch lights and day light sensors as part of that program will help to implement this recommendation.

Security Cameras

28% of residents living in the East Bayfront neighborhood responded that adding more security cameras throughout the area would make them feel safer, making it the second highest option chosen next to more foot and bike patrols. Therefore, funding and grant dollars for installing security cameras should be a priority for residents who seek help with home improvement programs through our neighborhood organizations. In addition, the city will encourage businesses in the area to seek grant money to install security cameras, especially those near high residential areas.

The City is fortunate to be working closely with the newly created Erie Innovation District and their Secure Smart City™. This initiative will build a network through the Street Lighting grid and can help add security cameras throughout the area. This will allow a higher of level of security measures and oversight without the need for individual property owners to bare the cost of their own security cameras. The City will work with the Erie Innovation District to expand Secure Smart City efforts within areas like the East Bayfront neighborhood.

Number Two: Neighborhood Maintenance & Aesthetic

Mitigate litter problem

Many residents, organizations and businesses we spoke to named litter and garbage as their top issues to address in the neighborhood. In fact, next to reducing crime, addressing litter and having more neighborhood cleanups was the highest chosen street priority for residents (17% chose this as their top concern for their street). An excess of garbage can lead to neighborhood neglect, rodents, and uninviting odors. The Core Team indicated that there is a more pressing need for a concerted effort and schedule for daily clean up crews working throughout the area. However, the cost of hiring personnel for this effort could be out of reach for the City and its community partners. One solution could be to look at this need as a workforce development tool for those who are underemployed and live within the neighborhood. This idea coupled with the need for improved maintenance of the existing and newly proposed parks in the project area could be the beginnings of a solution that impacts not only neighborhood cleanliness but begins to build a pipeline for needed employment opportunities. Communities such as Albuquerque NM and their “There's a Better Way” initiative may provide a model that could be adopted by Erie. Another model is the Ambassador program utilized by the Downtown Cleveland Alliance focused on cleanliness and security of the downtown district. It is so popular, neighborhood groups have utilized their services for neighborhood cleanups.

In June 2018, the city also launched their large item pickup program which allows residents to dispose of up to three large, bulky items for free. If residents schedule a pickup, they are able to dispose of couches, chairs, desks, etc. conveniently. Since this is a new program, the city will continue to distribute information to residents so they know of its existence and utilize the program to avoid dumping around the area.

Long Term Strategy Recommendations

Number One: Park & Trail Network

A major concern established by residents during the Summer of Hope survey and in *Erie Refocused* is the need for more park space.

Figure 21 shows that there are parks and recreational facilities available within the edges of both the BEST and Snoops neighborhoods allowing for a quarter mile access to the majority of residents within those neighborhoods. On the other hand, the majority of this area is within a half mile or longer distance to these outdoor facilities. The under-served area does however, have Pfeiffer-Burleigh Elementary School located along its western edge, making it a central landmark for residents in the neighborhood and providing some open space. A long-term strategy will be to create a park and trail network that would eventually connect the existing parks along the northern and southern ends of the East Bayfront, with Pfeiffer-Burleigh to bring more connectivity and greenspace. This would also allow for a better use of vacant land from blight removal.

Benefits from a connected park network for this area could be numerous and include health and wellness opportunities as well as be a stabilizing factor for the neighborhood. It could provide more activities for the youth of the area, as well as be a meeting place for residents to come together, hold events and create community. Existing parks within the north and south portions of the neighborhood will be targeted for improvements. Fortunately, Roessler Park within the SNOOPS area has received significant funding for a new playground and pavilion. Nate Levy Park within the BEST area should be the next park for upgrades that are based on a

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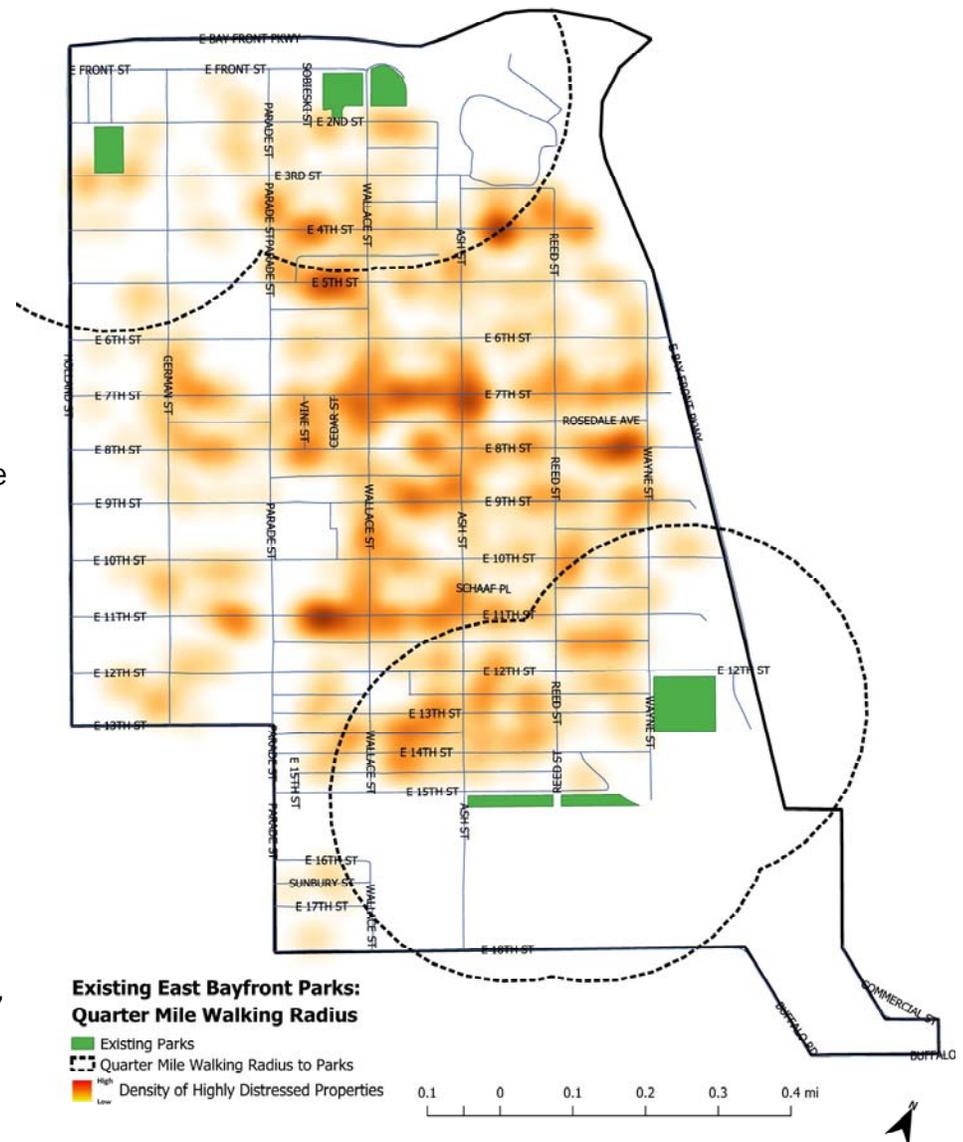


Figure 21: Parks in East Bayfront Neighborhood

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community supported plan for the park.

The process by which this system would be created is also important. *Erie Refocused* calls for targeted demolition of blighted properties in order to stave off crime, stop the spread of abandoned homes, and increase property values. Therefore, the city can identify the most distressed properties as a guide for the park's location. This removes blight, while providing greenspace for the residents which in turn creates community and helps increase the value of property. While performing targeted demolition and the creation of the park, workforce development opportunities should be sought for residents to be trained in construction, demolition and asbestos abatement as part of the process.

Once the park is finished, maintenance will also have to be provided. This could be incorporated into the workforce development initiative identified earlier and accomplished through a partnership with neighborhood organizations and workforce development initiatives so that residents will continue to have employment after the construction phase is completed. Groundworks is a program that could help



organize and train residents as part of this initiative.

Here is an example of a connected park and trail network in Champaign, IL. Like the proposed network in the East Bayfront, this trail and park run through developed areas of land (as seen in image above), yet allows for the movement of pedestrians and cyclists, large areas for green space and the opportunity for recreation (as seen in the site plan on the left).¹² Source: Landscape Architecture Foundation, "Boneyard Creek Restoration."

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Number Two: Targeted Housing Investment and Blight Reduction

Erie Refocused recommended that right-sizing, clean and green, and targeted rebuilding was necessary in order to stabilize the East Bayfront Neighborhood. Although all of the short and long terms strategies listed here address those ideas, the need for targeted acquisition and blight removal will be necessary to address the severe vacancy and abandonment that is occurring in this neighborhood. This will need to be cognizant and considerate to those who call this neighborhood their home while also addressing the need to strategically remove dilapidated buildings while improving existing housing. It is the goal of this work to bring those interests together into a plan that will improve the neighborhood for those who call it home now and in the future.

To do this, strategic acquisition, ERA redevelopment planning and certification which focuses on the most challenged properties will be necessary. This focused approach will help provide support for creating new community amenities, as well as enable new or improved mixed rate housing opportunities to exist that will continue to cultivate a sense of community for East Bayfront. Figure 22 identifies the area that contain the highest concentration of blighted properties within the planning area and subsequently where the creation of new greenspace is possible. This strategy will address both blight and reinvestment opportunities

Tools necessary to accomplish this approach include effective code enforcement, redevelopment planning with the City's Redevelopment Authority, Tax Increment Financing to help pay for parks, recreation amenities, Groundworks initiatives, Community Land Trusts and other creative techniques to spur needed investment

Creating a further refined Redevelopment Plan for this area will be necessary in order to support the most effective way to deal with blighted properties.

East Bayfront Neighborhood

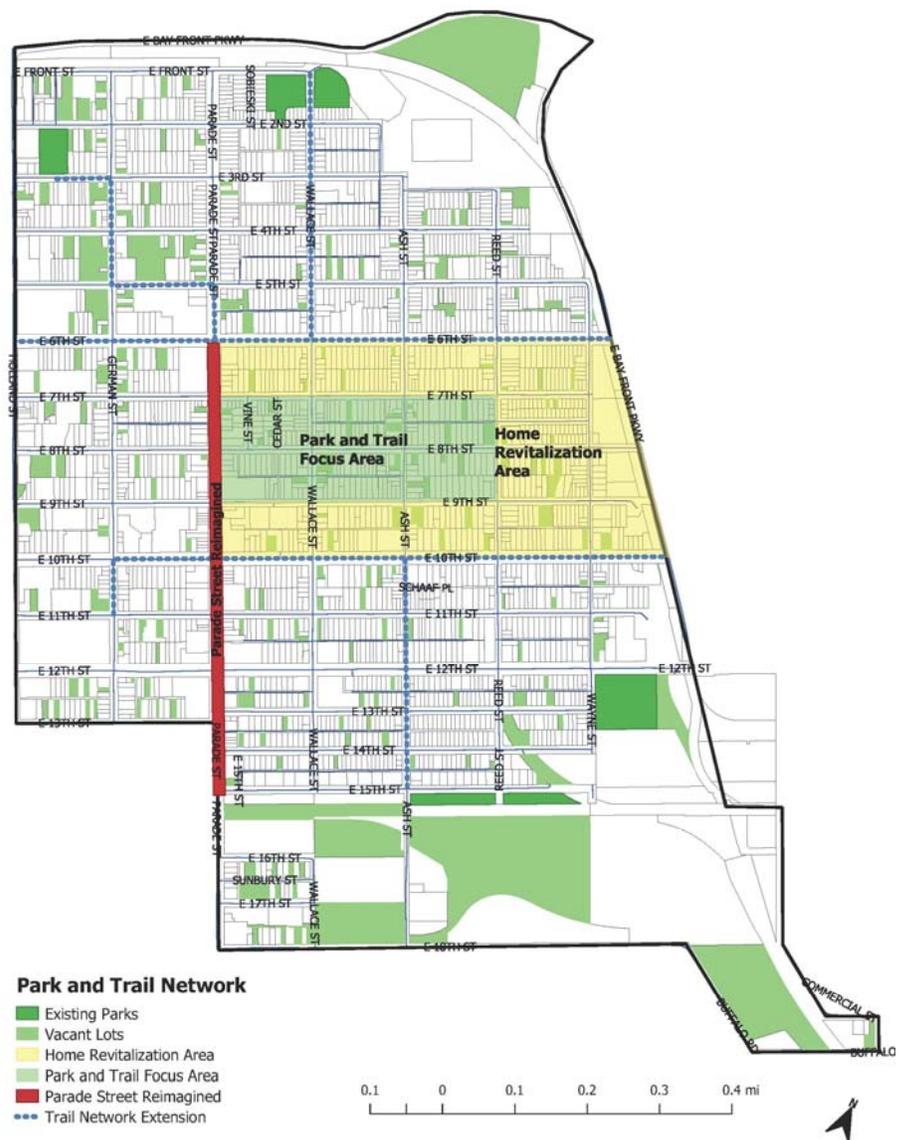


Figure 22: Long Term Plan for East Bayfront

Number Three: Enhance Parade Street Business Corridor

One of *Erie Refocused's* strategies for the East Bayfront area is to reinforce investment, including commercial rehabilitation, in the area. The Parade Street corridor has a number of established businesses including Kraus' Department Store, Denny's Ice Cream and New York Lunch which have been around for decades. In order to help stabilize this important and historic commercial corridor, focus will be placed on assistance with façade improvements and creating a cultural trail to help spur interest and increase potential customer base.

The City's Redevelopment Authority would be the most appropriate agency to support a focused façade program for this corridor. Funding for such a program could come from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority's Mission Main Street grant program. Or the Commonwealth's NPP program which can leverage funding from businesses within the project area to help enhance the entire corridor.

The Cultural Trail concept is one that has been discussed by a number of different NGOs and could be an appropriate enhancement to the Parade Street Corridor. With its rich history and cultural diversity, it is uniquely positioned to tell the story of Erie through public art and signage. The NGOs can work with Erie Arts and Culture's newly created New Horizon's project to plan and implement a cultural trail that connects people to their rich, diverse history as well as acts to increase awareness for the Parade Street corridor.

Another tool to help activate dormant or underutilized spaces along the Parade Street corridor is through a demand testing model created by an innovative planning firm, Yard and Company. They promote a concept of identifying unique spaces and using ways to draw people to places that have the potential to become community assets. We see this as a way to identify where potential exists, engage the local community to determine what they want and would support, while creating a strong sense of place for an important commercial corridor in the neighborhood.



Multiple stakeholders such as Emmaus Ministries and SafeNet voiced interests in incorporating place making initiatives such as signage or public art throughout the neighborhood as part of a Cultural Heritage Trail, such as the Civil Rights Heritage Trail in Birmingham, AL pictured above.

Action Plan

Short Term

Project	Lead Organization	Cost	Funding Source
Enhance street lighting	Penelec; Traffic Engineering Dept. working with Penelec	N/A will be completed as part of Penelec LED conversion program and/or Smart City	N/A
Porch lights on initiative	Support will be given to NGO partners	To be determined but City will focus support on Penelec LED conversion program	NAP/NPP, Renaissance Block Program
Tree maintenance	City of Erie—Arborist	To be determined	ECF Groundwork USA Renaissance Block Program
Install security cameras	Secure Smart City Initiative—EID and City	TBD as Secure Smart City grows	City and EID
Neighborhood cleanups— Neighborhood Ambassadors	City Planning/VISTA will work with local organization to build program	TBD	Local foundation funding Groundworks USA
Parks and Trail Network— 1) Identify and enhance safe routes to existing parks. 2) Focus improvements to BEST area park based on community input	City: BEST; SNOOPS: ServErie	\$65,000—Park Improvement \$125,000—Safe Route to Parks	Multi-Modal (PennDOT, DCED, Northwest) Safe Route to Parks

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Action Plan

Long Term

Project	Lead Organization	Cost	Funding Source
<p>Focused Housing improvement near blight remediation area</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Identify homes that have the most potential for rehabilitation and are adjacent to new or existing parks 2) Consider a Community Land Trust model to ensure long term maintenance and affordability 3) Acquire property and prioritize home improvement funding 	ERA; Erie Land Bank; ServErie	<p>Priority: 30 homes over 3 years</p> <p>15 by ERA or City Sources</p> <p>\$800,000</p> <p>15 by ServErie</p>	<p>Keystone Communities; CDBG; Opportunity Zone Funds</p> <p>HOME</p> <p>Renaissance Block Program</p>
<p>Blight reduction program</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Certify area according to Redevelopment Plan process 2) Acquire and demolish properties that are abandoned and/or distressed as a priority. Groups of 25 distressed properties should be considered a high priority. 	Erie Land Bank; ERA	\$1.1 million for acquisition and demolition	<p>CDBG</p> <p>ECF</p> <p>Erie County Land Bank; TIF;</p> <p>Keystone Communities</p>
<p>Park and Trail Network</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Certify area as a Redevelopment Planning Area 2) Hire Landscape Architect to work with community to plan park system 3) Apply for funding for park development through multiple sources 4) Consider TIF District as a way to help pay for new park 	City; ServErie,	\$2.5 million	<p>ECF</p> <p>Erie County Land Bank: TIF</p> <p>Keystone Communities</p> <p>Groundworks USA</p>
<p>Parade Street Enhancement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Begin business outreach for Parade Street 2) Create a redevelop and reimagine strategy for Parade Street businesses 3) Target planning funding for this work and begin coordinated implementation with business and community stakeholder 4) Utilize a Cultural Heritage Trail to tell the story of the community and to promote the corridor 	<p>B.E.S.T;</p> <p>ServErie</p> <p>SSJNN</p> <p>Erie Arts and Culture</p>	<p>Plan: \$70,000</p> <p>Improvements: TBD based on plan</p>	<p>Mission Main Street</p> <p>RCAP</p> <p>Keystone Communities</p>

