

# **Preparing for the Future:**

## ***Revitalizing the Brier Hill Neighborhood- U.S. Route 422 Corridor***

### **ACTION PLAN**

*Coordinated by Lien Forward Ohio and the City of Youngstown*



*Members of the National Honor Society at Struthers High School lent a hand to the Brier Hill-U.S. Route 422 Corridor in April with a trash collection that cleared 62 bags of debris from the neighborhood.*

**September 2009**

## Introduction and Background

The Brier Hill neighborhood was pivotal to the city of Youngstown's steel-making heritage and remains so today. The neighborhood grew up around the Brier Hill Works of Youngstown Sheet & Tube. A diverse mix of Irish, Italian and African American residents and business owners fueled the growth. That diversity still exists in the neighborhood despite significant population loss over the decades. Likewise, Brier Hill continues to be an important part of the city's economic engine as the home to V&M Star's pipe mill, which produces steel tubes for the oil and gas industry.

V&M Star has announced that its Youngstown operation is a finalist for an expansion with investment approaching \$1 billion. The investment would create approximately 400 jobs and secure the future of nearly 500 other positions. The high investment and job numbers moves the proposal to the front of economic development efforts for the city of Youngstown, Mahoning County and the state of Ohio.

V&M Star has suggested that improvement of the U.S. Route 422 corridor and the bordering Brier Hill neighborhood will be a consideration in the final decision on the expansion. The company has expressed its view that a pleasant surrounding neighborhood is important to its business interests regarding the recruiting of new employees and hosting visiting executives.

The city of Youngstown and Lien Forward Ohio believe the proposed economic development project and rehabilitation of the historic Brier Hill neighborhood each are vital to the city's future. Youngstown City Council members, the Mahoning County Treasurer and Lien Forward Ohio all are committed to helping Brier Hill and Route 422 corridor residents, businesses, churches and other organizations make suggested improvements happen in the neighborhood.

## Purpose of the Report

Brier Hill, foremost, belongs to the people who live, worship and do business in the neighborhood. To that end, Youngstown City Council, the Mahoning County Treasurer and Lien Forward Ohio first asked those stakeholders what improvements *they* wanted to see made to the neighborhood and the Route 422 corridor. Afternoon and evening meetings with stakeholders were held April 22 at Antioch Baptist Church and the meeting hall at The Sons. Those attending were surveyed to determine their priorities for improvements. A summary of responses is attached.

This report is intended to identify a vision and a set of goals for an improved Brier Hill/Route 422 corridor, based on guidance from neighborhood stakeholders. The report also is a blueprint for action that will identify the partners needed to create change in the neighborhood and outline a strategy for how those goals will be met.

Stakeholders had the opportunity to review the draft of this report and recommend changes. A second stakeholder meeting was June 22 at the meeting hall at The Sons, where recommended changes on the plan were discussed and later implemented. V&M Star officials also reviewed the draft report and made their suggestions in a meeting with city, county and Lien Forward Ohio officials on Sept. 3.

The city of Youngstown and Lien Forward Ohio based this final action plan based on all the input listed above.



## ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW AND PROFILE

- **Vision:** To return the U.S. Route 422 corridor to a condition suitable for business expansion and stabilize the adjoining Brier Hill neighborhood by creating improved property conditions that offer a higher quality of life for those who live, work and worship there.
- **Mission Statement:** The city of Youngstown, Lien Forward Ohio and its partners will assist in securing the expansion of V&M Star by providing and/or coordinating the resources needed to improve the appearance of the Brier Hill neighborhood and U.S. Route 422 corridor. We will empower the Brier Hill/Route 422 community to create understanding, cooperation and connections that create more positive relationships between neighbors and create a sense of community where people feel connected, safe and proud to live and work.

### Project Area:

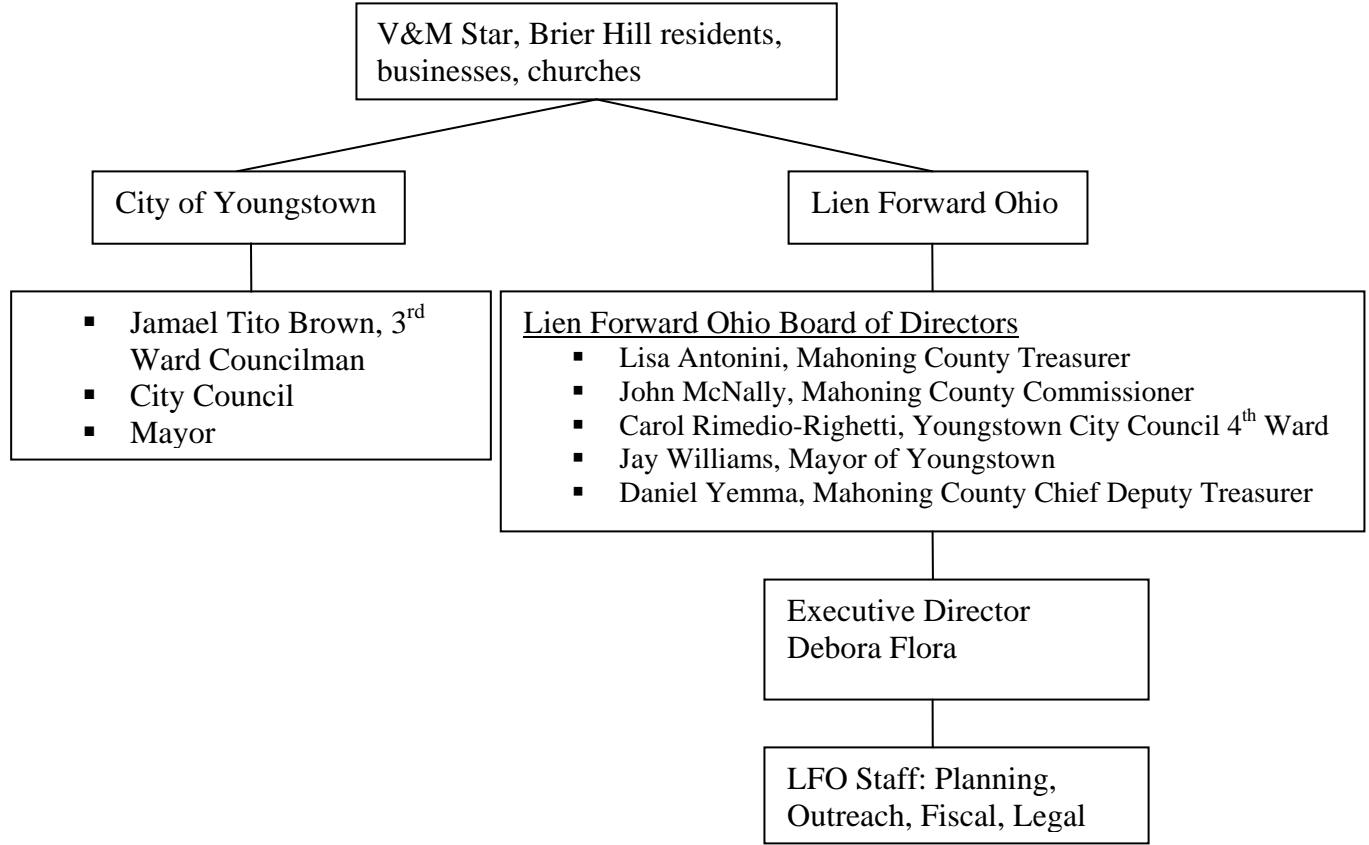
- North: Youngstown city line.
  - South: Worthington Street.
  - East: Rear lot lines of Dearborn Avenue, Victoria East & Highland Avenue.
  - West: West side of U.S. Route 422.
- **Goals:**
    - A. Remove blight.
    - B. Facilitate responsible new ownership of vacant, abandoned, tax-delinquent parcels.
    - C. Establish new green space.
    - D. Improve roads, curbs, sidewalks and lighting.
    - E. Reduce crime and improve safety.
- **Stakeholders:**
    - Brier Hill residents and property owners.
    - Members, staff and congregations of the Brier Hill religious organizations.
    - Brier Hill civic organizations.
    - Businesses, Youngstown Board of Education, unions and non-profit organizations operating in the Brier Hill/U.S. Route 422 corridor, Habitat for Humanity.
    - Building trades, contractors, real estate agents, utilities.
    - City of Youngstown government, Ohio Department of Transportation, Ohio State University Extension Service, Youngstown Metropolitan Housing Authority.
- **Core Values:**
    - Provide economic opportunity to residents by strengthening their job opportunities in the city and generating wealth for the greater Mahoning Valley.
    - Promote strong economic development efforts, retain human resources and reduce economic disparities.
    - Promote the cultural, racial, social and economic diversity in the Brier Hill neighborhood.
    - Be proactive in resolving issues and enhancing neighborhood assets.
    - Generate real-estate maintenance and development.
    - Encourage community empowerment.

- Create a compatible co-existence among residents, business and industry.
- Maintain a distinct identity for the Brier Hill neighborhood and strengthen the sense of place and community.

▪ **Governing Principles:**

- There will be no displacement of residents in occupied structures.
- Think regionally to compete globally.
- Promote and encourage extensive volunteer leadership as a catalyst for positive change.
- Include all stakeholders, drawing strength from a diverse neighborhood base.
- Promote faster, more efficient change using existing resources in new ways.
- Identify solutions to urban and environmental challenges with innovative green projects.

# Organizational Structure



Lisa Antonini



Jamael Tito Brown



John McNally



Carol Rimedio-Righetti



Jay Williams



Daniel Yemma

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM AND STRATEGY

## Goal A: Remove Blight

### Objectives:

1. Demolish condemned structures:
  - a. Determine which structures need to be razed within the project area by Sept. 1
  - b. Determine the city resources available to demolish structures by Oct. 1.
  - c. Create a demolition strategy and timeline by Nov. 1.
  - d. Demolish identified homes starting March 1, 2010.
2. Establish ongoing trash & tire cleanups:
  - a. Identify residents, churches and businesses willing to conduct trash, tire & litter cleanups by Aug. 1.
  - b. Designate an organization (a church?) to oversee a regular schedule of cleanups (spring, summer, fall?) and coordinate with the city on resources (bags, gloves, tire removal, etc.) by Sept. 1.
  - c. Schedule cleanups and the groups that will conduct them for fall 2009 & 2010 in time for a fall 2009 cleanup.
3. Remove dilapidated fencing along U.S. Route 422:
  - a. Contact/determine agency with jurisdiction over fencing (ODOT, city?) by Aug. 1.
  - b. Determine scope of fence removal by Sept. 1.
  - c. Request resources to remove structure by Oct. 1.
  - d. Removal of fencing start by Nov. 1.
4. Provide resources to assist with housing façade rehabilitation:
  - a. Identify residential structures needing work by Sept. 1.
  - b. Identify organizations with resources available to address façade issues by Oct. 1.
  - c. Determine which organization will coordinate the property owners in need and available resources by Nov. 1.
  - d. Begin improvements to selected structures by April 1, 2010.

**Participants:** Councilman, city of Youngstown, Youngstown Litter Control & Recycling, ODOT, residents, churches, businesses, housing organizations, Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative, Habitat for Humanity.

**Outcomes:** The elimination of nuisance structures such as condemned homes and the dilapidated fence lining U.S. Route 422 while maintaining the land and structures in the project area through exterior housing improvements and regular litter cleanup.

## **Goal B: Facilitate responsible new ownership of vacant, abandoned, tax-delinquent parcels.**

### **Objectives:**

1. Transfer title of vacant, abandoned, tax delinquent lots to neighboring property owners for improvement and ongoing maintenance:
  - a. Determine property owners interested in obtaining and maintaining vacant property and which properties would be appropriate for them to acquire by Aug. 1.
  - b. Hold Lien Forward Ohio workshop for interested clients by Sept 1.
  - c. Secure necessary funding to provide the lowest possible cost for acquisition by Sept. 1.
  - d. Begin the Lien Forward Ohio approval/legal process on 35 parcels with interested property owners by Sept. 15.

**Participants:** Lien Forward Ohio, Treasurer, residents, churches, businesses.

**Outcomes:** Guide interested parties through the Lien Forward Ohio property acquisition process for the lowest possible cost.

## **Goal C: Establish new greenspace**

### **Objectives:**

1. To provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and relaxation with close proximity to the urban population.
  - a. Determine locations for establishing green space within the neighborhood and on the U.S. Route 422 corridor by Sept. 1.
  - b. Determine which organizations will control, develop and maintain the new green space by Nov. 1, 2010.
  - c. Determine the needs and resources required for each location by Jan. 1, 2010.
  - d. Begin greening (cleanup, installing groundcover, etc.) the locations by May 1, 2010.

**Participants:** Lien Forward Ohio, residents, churches, businesses, civic organizations, non-profit organizations, City of Youngstown, Ohio State University Extension Service, state agencies.

**Outcomes:** A retreat for recreation and leisure that provides local flora and fauna and assists with storm water management which will benefit the overall health the neighborhood and increase property values.

**Goal D: Improve roads, curbs and lighting.**

**Objectives:**

1. Repair necessary roads, curbs and lighting in the neighborhood:
  - a. Determine which streets in the neighborhood need to be repaired or resurfaced, which streets need repaired or new curbing, and which segments of road need new lighting by Oct. 1.
  - b. Request resources from the city to make the outlined repairs by Nov. 1.
  - c. Start repairs by May 1, 2010.
2. Repair and/or resurface U.S. Route 422 from Worthington Street to the city line:
  - a. Determine the needs for street repair, curbing and lighting by Oct. 1.
  - b. Request resources from ODOT to make the outlined repairs by Nov. 1.
  - c. Start repairs by May 1, 2010.

**Participants:** Councilman, City, ODOT, residents, churches, businesses, Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative.

**Outcomes:** A refreshed and renewed set of roads, curbs, sidewalks and lighting in the Brier Hill neighborhood and the U.S. Route 422 corridor.

**Goal E: Reduce crime and improve safety.**

**Objectives:**

1. Reduce crime specific to the project area and improve the feeling of safety.
  - a. Identify the types of crime creating the most problems in the neighborhood by Oct. 1.
  - b. Request resources from the police department needed to reduce those types of crimes by Nov. 1.
  - c. Implement crime reduction tactics by Jan. 1, 2010 and reduce the number of instances of problematic crimes by 50 percent by July 1, 2010.

**Participants:** City, Councilman, Weed & Seed, Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative, residents, churches, businesses.

**Outcomes:** Reduce the instances in the types of crimes that affect the neighborhood the most so residents feel safer living in the Brier Hill neighborhood.

**ADDENDUM**

- ❖ Phase One Project Area map
- ❖ Phase Two Project Area map
- ❖ Feedback Summary – Brier Hill Neighborhood

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