

Project Abstract – Attachment 1

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Applicant Name: City of Erie
Title of Project: Little Italy Neighborhood Revitalization Project
Category 2: Enhancement Competition ID: BJA-2013-3474

1. Identification of Neighborhood: The target neighborhood is located on the City’s West side and is bounded to the north by 14th Street, the south by 21st Street, to the east by Sassafras Street and the west by Liberty Street (see attached map for reference). Little Italy is completely contained within the 16502 zip code.

2. Little Italy is not a Department of Education’s Promise Neighborhood, a Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Choice Neighborhood, a recipient of a Department of Health and Human Services’ Community Health Center Grant; nor a current recipient Department of the Treasury’s Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) funds. However, the Economic Development Corporation of Erie County, a local CDFI, has indicated a willingness to design programs to dedicate funding for micro-loans to the residents and businesses in this area. The details, as well as final funding amounts for the program, will be developed as part of the planning process.

3. Identification of Cross-Sector Partners: The partnership for the existing neighborhood program includes the City of Erie, Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network, Housing and Neighborhood Development Services, Erie Redevelopment Authority, District Attorney’s Office, Erie School District, Bethesda Neighborhood Center, St. Paul RC Church, St. Martin Center, Multicultural Resource Center, Erie Together, Trinity Center, Community Shelter Services, Erie County Adult and Juvenile Probation, District Justice Carney, ServErie, Gannon University, Mercyhurst University, Erie County Sherriff’s Department and Second Harvest Food Bank.

Building upon existing neighborhood successes and implementing new programming will require an expansion of the existing base of partners to include the Erie County Department of Health, Erie County Office of Drug & Alcohol Abuse, United Way of Erie, Stairways Behavioral Health, Erie County Office of Mental Health & Mental Retardation, PennState Center for Organizational Research and Evaluation CORE, Erie County Office of Children and Youth, Harborcreek Youth Services, Office of the United States Attorney, Western District of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State Police, Erie GAINS-Gannon University, and the Erie Neighborhood Watch Council.

This partnership spans many sectors to address crime, physical disorder, social economic status and resources as well as the collective efficacy of the neighborhood. Increasing the number of stakeholders currently engaged, will encourage a greater exchange of ideas and the ability to plan and collaborate on actions intended to increase safety and ensure a sustainable organization for long term coordination of strategies created to strengthen this neighborhood.

4. Existing Needs and Conditions: The Little Italy neighborhood has experienced significant changes over the past century. Italian immigrants began this neighborhood in the early 1900’s. After WWII, residents began moving to larger homes in newer portions of not only the City, but in the newly expanding suburban communities. By the 1980’s and 90’s, the housing stock was extremely deteriorated, absentee landlords dominated the neighborhood and more than 20% of

the families were below the poverty level. The 2000 census revealed that 76.1% of households in this area were considered low-moderate income. As would be expected, the neighborhood began to experience increased crime.

The Little Italy Neighborhood contains 37 blocks and comprises 1.51% of the geographic area of the City. While Little Italy is only 1.51% of the City, in 2012 this area saw 20% of all homicides and 14% of the total arsons. The incidence of rapes occurring in Little Italy in 2012 was 10% of the total for the City. While that percentage may not stand out at face value, it represents a 300% increase in rape between 2008 and 2012, while the incidences of rape citywide have decreased 31% over the same time period.

5. Goals of the project:

- a. Increase neighborhood empowerment, partnerships and leadership through increased representation of stakeholders in the neighborhood watch, as measured by increased attendance of residents, business, religious, school, social service, youth, and law enforcement partners.
- b. Increase a sense of neighborhood ownership and accountability as evidenced by the implementation of evidenced-based planning through the neighborhood organization/watch group, resulting in a more comprehensive neighborhood action plan.
- c. Decrease poverty rates and increase neighborhood awareness of existing service resources.
- d. Restore Little Italy to its original vitality and character by infusing new energy, capacity, homeownership options, and employment opportunities.
- e. Identify the factors leading to the increased level of crime in this small neighborhood. Create a data-driven strategy for the mitigation of each.
- f. Reduce the incidences of all Part 1 crime in the neighborhood, specifically concentrating on homicide, arson, and rape.
- g. Decrease citizens' fear of crime as measured through a community pre- and post-test survey.

6. Strategies to be used: The strategies to be implemented combine promising, tested and effective law enforcement efforts, evidence based prevention strategies, and a broad community collaboration. Using data and research unique to this neighborhood, the strategy focuses on reducing community disorganization and family conflict in the targeted area and reducing crime through neighborhood revitalization and targeted enforcement.

The planning phase will begin with an assessment of "Where is the neighborhood now?". This analysis will be driven by the Research Partner with input from residents, local businesses, all other stakeholders. A Neighborhood Concerns Index survey will be conducted and analyzed to identify the unique needs and perceptions within Little Italy. Data collection and analysis of the factors leading to the increased crime in Little Italy will be completed. This phase will also include an analysis of the participation and effectiveness of the existing Neighborhood Watch. Planning Phase 2 includes stakeholder responses to the question "Where do we want to be". This will include a review of the 2008 Elm Street Neighborhood Plan to determine if significant changes to the neighborhood have occurred requiring a revision to the Mission, Vision, Goals and Objectives. Once data has been collected and analyzed by the Research Partner, it will be presented to the stakeholders to identify detrimental factors in the neighborhood, develop strategies to address each and prioritize based upon anticipated funding.

Based upon past success of Erie's Weed and Seed program, as well as the early success of this neighborhood watch, anticipated strategies will include but not be limited to:

- Continued implementation of Little Italy's Elm Street Plan in the areas of physical

planning, economic development, image and community engagement.

- Increase capacity of the Neighborhood Watch expand the network of partnerships and participation within the Neighborhood Watch.
- Modeled after the effective Operation Ceasefire (Boston, MA), and studied Project Safe Neighborhoods initiatives (PSN Case Study 4), Erie will expand its Chronic Violent Offender Strategies through a collaborative effort by state, local, and federal law enforcement agencies.
- Utilizing a multi-disciplinary team of professionals, an intervention meeting will be scheduled with the selected violent juvenile and adult offenders to notify them of their status, identify for them the consequences of their continued behavior, let them know that they have been targeted for rigorous enforcement action, and primarily link them with a support network of social service providers, counselors, drug and alcohol services, employers, and local faith-based services. (PSN Case Study 2).
- An expanded use of the Gun Crime Working Group for cases in Little Italy; a ten member team will meet monthly to review all gun related incidents in Little Italy. (PSN Case Studies 1 & 3)
- Consistent Operation Peacekeeper program in Stockton, CA, the program will expand the use of the existing Blue Coats program used in other portions of the City of Erie. Blue Coats are trained African American men working as outreach workers who provide clear and credible messages about the consequences of violence, gun and gang activity; and provide mentoring, mediation, and conflict resolution guidance.
- Creation of a Youth Handgun Reduction Initiative Suppression and Abatement of Firearms in Erie – Erie Youth S.A.F.E. (DOJ-NIJS Research Report on Reducing Gun Violence in St. Louis through consent to search program). The Youth S.A.F.E. teams will include law enforcement and social service providers to provide family counseling services after a firearm is located and seized.
- Using effective strategies modeled after the Philadelphia *Foot Patrol* Program, the Erie Bureau of Police will increase its visibility through: deployment of a *Mobile Precinct* and targeted *Saturation Patrols* together with Erie County Detectives and Sheriffs Office; and through community-based *Foot and Bicycle Patrols*.
- Use Erie Together Family Action (FACT) and Dialogue to Action (DACT) Teams to assist the area low-income families, helping them to move toward self-sufficient and mentoring experiences for low-income families, helping them move toward self-sufficient.
- Expansion of the Truancy Prevention Program by Erie Police. Offer additional educational and enrichment programming to children K-8. By coordinating existing community assets, instructors will have the ability to implement reading and math programs weekly with additional programming in art, music, environment and cooking.

7. Length of the project: 36 months

8. Total amount of funding being requested: \$598,447

9. Identification of any other resources that will support this program: HUD CDBG and HOME project prioritization, Pennsylvania Department of Economic and Community Development (DCED Elm Street), DCED Neighborhood Partnership Program, DCED Neighborhood Assistance Program, CDFI Micro-loan program, City of Erie, County of Erie, Erie Community Foundation, United Way of Erie County, and Erie Together.