

Youth Are Our Priority: Supporting Boys and Young Men of Color in Flint

White House My Brother's Keeper Community Challenge

City of Flint Initial Report and Local Action Plan

Mayor Dayne Walling

May 2015

"But our work is not done when too many children live in crumbling neighborhoods, cycling through substandard schools, traumatized by daily violence. Our work is not done when working Americans of all races have seen their wages and incomes stagnate, even as corporate profits soar; when African-American unemployment is still twice as high as white unemployment; when income inequality, on the rise for decades, continues to hold back hardworking communities, especially communities of color. We've got unfinished work. And we know what to do."

President Barack Obama

September 28, 2014 speech to the Congressional Black Caucus

"We need to do more to offer opportunities to our young men of color all across the city, especially in north Flint. We all have to take on this responsibility. With the My Brother's Keeper initiative, we are committing to working together with our young men so they fulfill their potential."

Dayne Walling, Mayor of the City of Flint

Executive Summary

On September 30, 2014, the City of Flint accepted the White House My Brother's Keeper Challenge to improve the opportunities available to boys and young men of color. In the ensuing months, City staff, Flint residents, and community leaders met to discuss the challenges facing young men of color in Flint and to identify actions that can be taken to address those challenges. This report summarizes information collected through that process and provides recommendations for action.

The *Imagine Flint* Master Plan provides a strong foundation for this work. The plan offers a vision that emphasizes the importance of social equity and opportunities for youth. It also provides an extensive discussion of strategies and actions to turn that vision into a reality. In the year since the Master Plan was unanimously approved, many of those strategies have already kicked off, including the Flint and Genesee Literacy Network. The recommendations below identify some additional high-impact strategies that can help Flint's young men of color realize their full potential.

The six goals of My Brother's Keeper relate to nearly all aspects of life for boys and young men of color, from cradle to career:

1. Entering school ready to learn.
2. Reading at grade level by third grade.
3. Graduating from high school ready for college and career.
4. Having the opportunity to complete postsecondary education or training.
5. Successfully entering the workforce.
6. Keeping youth safe and giving them second chances.

Early childhood education stands out as one of the most important areas of focus. Research consistently shows that early childhood education investments have a huge impact on a young person's life trajectory and generate returns of approximately \$8 for every \$1 invested. In Flint and Genesee County, only 1% of childcare providers received the highest quality rating from the Great Start to Quality rating system. A top priority should be improving the availability of high quality pre-K education, and ensuring that Flint's youth are taking full advantage of those opportunities.

Third grade is widely regarded as the time when a young person transitions from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." Educators and service providers must work together to ensure that youth are on track at this critical developmental stage. Throughout the primary and secondary education years, it is important that young men of color have strong role models and comprehensive support throughout the community. We must improve the effectiveness, coordination, and scale of mentoring programs in Flint. More adults are needed to serve as mentors, both in formal programs and through informal mechanisms. We must also improve coordination between formal systems (such as schools) and informal systems (such as families and communities). And we must provide more safe places where youth can learn and develop after school, such as the Police Activities League, the Brownell-Holmes community education pilot, and the YMCA Safe Places after School program.

It is imperative that we address the public safety crisis affecting young men of color. The Flint Police Department must work with community partners to improve trust and create more community-led public safety efforts. We must also ensure that low-income families, such as those supported by the Flint Housing Commission, have opportunities for affordable housing in safe and vibrant neighborhoods.

Simply creating new programs or enhancing existing programs is not enough; there must be a sustained commitment, stronger partnerships, and a culture of accountability. The Flint and Genesee Literacy Network (Literacy Network) is a promising new effort that seeks to create this culture shift focused on literacy. The goals of the Literacy Network, including improving early childhood literacy and providing more youth with mentors and role models, align well with the goals of My Brother's Keeper. Organizations seeking to support young men of color in Flint should participate in the Literacy Network and build on that strong foundation.

This report provides in-depth analysis of the challenges in Flint, and presents many of the programs and partners already in place to help young men of color. It is important to recognize the assets already in place and the progress already being made. The City has made considerable progress on the implementation of the Imagine Flint Master Plan: through January 2015, 118 Master Plan strategies had been initiated, with an estimated value of \$15 million. Those strategies include the Literacy Network, the development of a Blight Elimination Plan, enhanced code enforcement, additional funding for demolition, and much more. Since embracing the My Brother's Keeper Challenge, the City has taken additional steps. The City hosted community meetings to engage with residents and to get their input about what My Brother's Keeper should be in Flint. The City convened a working group that provided valuable input to this report. And the City has committed to using Community Development Block Grant funding to support expanded mentoring programs, community facilities for youth, and ongoing support for the Literacy Network.

This report touches on a number of Federal, State, and local policies that affect young men of color (listed in the References section). To make further progress on this challenge and to consider the wider public policy changes that are needed, the Mayor will appoint a My Brother's Keeper Task Force. This Task Force will meet over the course of 2015 to identify policy changes that could help young men of color achieve their full potential. The Task Force should review the recommendations of this report, adjust as needed, and issue a report that will inform the final My Brother's Keeper Flint Action Plan.

The six MBK goals encompass nearly all aspects of life for boys and young men of color. It is clear that all six goals are incredibly important and interdependent, and the fact that Flint has embraced all six will lead to a more comprehensive approach. At the same time, we recognize that to move the needle on all six at once would require enormous effort and resources. This report focuses on a small number of realistic recommendations; and yet, My Brother's Keeper is a *call to action* for the whole community. All of us have ways in which we can better advance these goals. All of us must do our part and embrace "*the fierce urgency of now.*"

Section 1: Introduction

My Brother's Keeper: A Call to Action

In February 2014, President Obama launched the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiative to ensure that all youth, including boys and young men of color, have the opportunity to improve their life outcomes and overcome barriers to success.¹ President Obama recognized that, "[G]overnment can't play the only, or even the primary, role in the lives of our children. But what we can do is bring folks together, and that's what we're doing – philanthropies, business leaders, entrepreneurs, faith leaders, mayors, educators, and the youth themselves – to examine how we can ensure that our young men have the tools they need to achieve their full potential."² To carry this vision forward, the President issued the White House My Brother's Keeper Community Challenge, to ask civic leaders like mayors to publicly commit to implementing strategies that will ensure that all young people can succeed. The My Brother's Keeper Challenge is not a new program, but rather a call to action: a call to convene leaders, identify effective strategies, and work together to accomplish our shared goal of improving life outcomes for young people.

The MBK Challenge identifies six goals:

1. Getting a Healthy Start and Entering School Ready to Learn: All children should have a healthy start and enter school ready – cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally.
2. Reading at Grade Level by Third Grade: All children should be reading at grade level by age 8 – the age at which reading to learn becomes essential.
3. Graduating from High School Ready for College and Career: Every child should graduate from high school prepared for work or continued education.
4. Completing Postsecondary Education or Training: Every child should have the option to attend postsecondary education or receive formal training needed for quality jobs of today and tomorrow.
5. Successfully Entering the Workforce: Anyone who wants a job should be able to get a job that allows them to support themselves and their families.
6. Keeping Kids on Track and Giving Them Second Chances: All children should be safe from violent crime; and individuals who are confined should receive the education, training, and treatment they need for a second chance.

¹ Presidential Memorandum: Creating and Expanding Ladders of Opportunity for Boys and Young Men of Color, February 27, 2014.

(<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/02/27/presidential-memorandum-creating-and-expanding-ladders-opportunity-boys->).

² President Obama, speech to Congressional Black Caucus, September 28, 2014. (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/28/remarks-president-congressional-black-caucus-awards-dinner>)

White House MBK Task Force

The President established a My Brother's Keeper Task Force, and on May 28, 2014, that Task Force issued a Report to the President. That report explains the persistent opportunity gap faced by young men of color, providing the following statistics:

- 23.2% of Hispanics, 25.8% of Blacks, and 27% of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIAN) live in poverty, compared to 11.6% of White Americans.
- Black, American Indian, and Hispanic children are between six and nine times more likely than white children to live in areas of concentrated poverty. This compounds the effects of poverty, and further limits pathways to success.
- Roughly two-thirds of Black and one-third of Hispanic children live with only one parent. A father's absence increases the risk of their child dropping out of school. Blacks and Hispanics raised by single moms are 75 percent and 96 percent respectively more likely to drop out of school.
- During the summer months (June-August) of 2013, just 17% of Black teenage boys (ages 16-19) and 28% of Hispanic teenage boys were employed, compared to 34% of White teenage boys. Overall in 2013, half of young black men (ages 20-24) were employed, compared to over two-thirds of young white men. This employment gap persists as men get older.
- While only 6% of the overall population, Black males accounted for 43% of murder victims in 2011. Among youth ages 10 to 24, homicide is the leading cause of death for Black males and also among the leading causes of death for Hispanics, and AIANs.
- In 2012, Black males were 6 times more likely to be imprisoned than White males. Hispanic males were two and half times more likely.
- By the age of 3, children from low income families have heard on average 30 million fewer words than their higher income peers.

The causes of these disparate outcomes are certainly complicated and multi-faceted; but it is equally clear that there are systemic factors that lie beyond the control of any young person or family.

"Often there are systemic biases that treat young men and young boys of color in ways that are different than the way other young kids are treated as they go through the struggles of growing up. What the My Brother's Keeper initiative is intended to do is to be honest with ourselves. Honest with ourselves and recognize we are losing these kids. For those who don't understand the basic immorality of allowing that to happen...because these kids pay such a heavy price we also need to remind ourselves that our whole society pays a price; we are a lesser society when we allow this to happen."

Dan Kildee, United States Congress, MI-5th District

The MBK Task Force also made recommendations and offered guidance to help communities pursuing the MBK Challenge. In addition to the Report to the President, the MBK Task Force has offered several webinars to help local government leaders as they develop a MBK strategy. The following recommendations, drawn from those webinars, can help Flint's MBK effort be as effective as possible:

1. Shared responsibility and community participation. The White House insists that MBK must be more than just a project by City Hall – it must be embraced by the community. There must be a shared understanding and shared responsibility among a broad array of cross-disciplinary stakeholders. These stakeholders must all engage in the process of identifying needs, but more importantly they must all be a part of the solution.
2. Focus on best practices and evidence-based programs. Whether implementing a new program or seeking to improve and enhance existing programs, we must focus on what works. This report will provide a starting point for identifying promising programs and strategies based on existing research.
3. Develop a culture of continuous improvement. MBK efforts must be informed by data—for the baseline needs assessment, for identifying promising programs, and for measuring performance. Data provide an objective standard for measuring success.

The White House continues to provide information at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/my-brothers-keeper> on best practices and strategies to support young men of color. The Flint community – particularly leadership and staff for social service providers – should review the information from the White House to inform their work on an ongoing basis.

Imagine Flint

Even before the President issued the MBK Challenge, the residents and leaders of Flint recognized the importance of supporting the development of all youth. The *Imagine Flint* Master Plan was a comprehensive process that gave all residents of the city an opportunity to develop a vision for Flint – to imagine what Flint could be. This process lasted over two years and resulted in the unanimous adoption of the City's first official Master Plan in over 50 years.

The foundation of *Imagine Flint* is the "Vision and Guiding Principles" laid out in chapter 3. Among the guiding principles are several that directly relate to MBK and the persistent challenges for young men of color, including:

- **Weave social equity and sustainability into all we do.**
- **Human development is economic development.**
- **Leverage Flint's education and health institutions.**
- **Everybody must feel safe everywhere.**
- **Every person deserves a safe and healthy home and choice of housing.**
- **Quality of life is key to keeping our youth here.**
- **Youth are our priority.**
- **Strengthen intergenerational relationships.**
- **Healthy families raise healthy youth.**
- **Engage youth in civic life.**

As a result of the *Imagine Flint* Master Plan and its focus on improving quality of life, the City helped to launch the Flint and Genesee Literacy Network, using Community Development Block Grant funding and with strong partners in Mott Community College, the Mott Foundation, the Community Foundation of Greater Flint, and United Way of Genesee County. This partnership is off to a great start; they have

completed a comprehensive Community Literacy Plan and are now moving in to the implementation phase.

Imagine Flint, and the work that it has spurred, puts the City in perfect position to capitalize on the momentum of the President's My Brother's Keeper initiative. The vision of *Imagine Flint* mirrors the vision of My Brother's Keeper, and the extensive community engagement in the *Imagine Flint* process means that the residents and leaders of Flint are ready to take the next steps to support young men of color. Just as important is the fact that the *Imagine Flint* plan includes a comprehensive set of implementation recommendations: strategies, policies, and programs that the City should pursue to advance the master plan vision in areas from economic development and education to public safety. The Literacy Network is just one example of progress being made on the implementation of the Master Plan. In January 2015, the City's Department of Planning and Development reported progress on initiating 118 Master Plan implementation activities, with approximately \$15 million in related funding.

As a result of the *Imagine Flint* foundation, when President Obama issued the MBK challenge, Mayor Walling immediately accepted and Flint was recognized by a White House press release as one the first communities to take action. The City recognizes the importance of all six MBK goals and will continue to support efforts to make progress on all six. At the same time, these six goals are so comprehensive that it is necessary to focus on a few specific goals for short-term progress.

MBK Process

On November 12, Flint held its Local Action Summit with nearly 100 participants. The event was hosted by the North Flint Reinvestment Corporation at the future site of the Eagle's Nest Academy. The action summit brought together community leaders and Flint residents from various backgrounds to collaborate and discuss the issues facing young men of color and their families within the community.

To promote more in depth discussions on these issues, the participants were split into tables of seven with a group facilitator to direct conversation and take notes. Each participant received a packet of background materials that described the MBK initiative and the six MBK goals. The participants were then asked to identify which of the six goals for the initiative were most important to them and how we could go about implementing structured change in order to yield those outcomes. The tables were then given 25 minutes to brainstorm. In the end, after talking all of the points through, each table made a list of their top three focus areas. The lists created were then shared with the



Photo: Local Action Summit, November 12 at Eagle's Nest Academy. Credit: LC Cotton, North Flint Reinvestment Corporation

collective group. All of the participants were then asked to read through the lists and indicate (using stickers) which of the ideas shared from the other groups they agreed with as part of their personal top three. City staff collected all written notes from the event and set to work on synthesizing the information into key takeaways and recommendations.

One of the common refrains at the November 12 Local Action Summit was the need to hear from more youth; of the nearly 100 participants, only about a dozen were under age 18. As a result, several additional discussions have been held since then – some with City staff and some organized entirely by citizens committed to supporting the goals of MBK. On November 22, Joy Tabernacle Church hosted a MBK discussion targeted to youth. Approximately 30 people participated – most of them between the ages of 12 and 25 – and discussed what challenges they experience and what support they need. This meeting followed a similar format to the larger Local Action Summit, with small group discussions, report-out to the larger group, and identification of priorities.

Many other important meetings and forums have taken place in the past 6 months, due to the hard work and initiative of residents—in several cases, of Flint’s young men themselves. On December 12, 2014 a student at Mott Middle College brought together 25 of his classmates from Mott Middle and Hamady to share their perspective on what MBK should be in Flint. Another group called Eye of Souls has also forged their own path, developing a small working group to ensure that MBK builds momentum throughout the Flint community. On February 28, Foss Avenue Baptist Church and Brothers Battling Bloodshed held a “Man Up” forum to discuss how adult men of color can step up to help youth in the community succeed. And on April 2, 2015, students at Mott Community College held the Men of Color Empowerment Forum to discuss key challenges and opportunities around helping young men of color succeed academically through college. Speakers included current students and recent graduates who spoke of the keys to their own success, and ways to extend opportunities to more youth. These events are not just milestones in the MBK process -- *they are MBK in action.*



Photo: MBK Forum organized by Mott Middle College and Hamady High students, December 12 at Mott Community College. Source: Paul Joice

Finally, a working group of residents and community leaders came together in November, with support from the City and the White House Strong Cities, Strong Communities team. This working group reviewed information from community meetings and provided important input about programs and partners in Flint. The working group also discussed recommendations and provided valuable feedback on drafts of this report.

As laid out by President Obama's Challenge, a key step in the MBK process is the production of a Policy Review and Recommendations Report. This document serves as that report and positions the Flint community to implement a plan of action. With the release of this report, we move into the next phase of the MBK process: implementation. On May 13, Mott Community College will host a My Brother's Keeper Community Forum, at which the City and key partners will discuss this report, and share what they are doing to provide greater opportunities for young men of color.

Section 2: Young Men of Color in Flint

The ensuing sections present data and stories about the conditions in Flint, across several key domains. A common theme emerges: there are major challenges in Flint for people of all races, but particularly for youth and minorities. *However* many indicators have begun to trend in a positive direction. This information is essential, to understand where progress is being made (and why), where progress has been elusive (and why), and how we can ensure that positive changes affect all youth.

Basic Demographics

In 2013, the total population of Flint was estimated to be 99,758, of which 48.5% were male. Young men (under 30 years old) were 20% of the population (20,315 people). There were 5,272 young men age 15 to 24, an age sometimes referred to as “opportunity youth” and another 11,996 boys under age 15. The total population of youth and young adults in Flint – both boys and girls, age 24 and under – is 34,711. Of these, 20,451 are school-aged (5 to 19).

Nearly all residents of Flint identify as Black or African American alone (54,234 people), Hispanic (3,228 people), or White non-Hispanic (37,660 people).³ Data on race and age together are limited, but Table 1 shows the number of Black male youth in Flint, broken down by age group.

Table 1: Age of Black or African American alone males in Flint, 2013 American Community Survey

Age group	Number
Under 5 years	2,027
5 to 9 years	2,180
10 to 14 years	2,609
15 to 17 years	922
18 and 19 years	1,023
20 to 24 years	1,536
25 to 29 years	1,443
Total	11,740

Economic Context

Flint is a community struggling with many severe economic challenges. Overall, 41.4% of Flint residents live in poverty, a rate that is 2.6 times the national average (15.9%). Decades of population decline and urban disinvestment have left behind approximately 20,000 properties in need of blight elimination. The decline of the automotive industry has decimated the local economy and made it increasingly difficult for hard-working residents to find decent work. Between 2007 and 2011, the number of jobs held by Flint residents declined by 8,360 (U.S. Census Bureau LEHD Data). And as these challenges have persisted over the years, the City has struggled to maintain public services such as police and fire

³ The Census Bureau treats race and ethnicity independently. The 57,509 figure for Black/African-American includes individuals who are Hispanic; there are 53,996 people who are Black, non-Hispanic. For this report, the group “Black or African American” will typically include Hispanics, and will include only those identifying as Black or African American alone (excluding multiple race individuals). This is largely due to data limitations. The group “Hispanic” will include people of any race who identify as Hispanic. Thus, adding these groups together will result in double-counting. In contrast, Whites will typically be described as “White, non-Hispanic.”

presence. In 2012, Flint had the highest murder rate in the country among medium and large cities, and arson has plagued many neighborhoods (FBI Uniform Crime Statistics).

This presents an incredibly difficult context for all residents, but particularly for minorities such as Blacks and Hispanics. Table 2 presents key economic indicators for Flint, broken down by the three most common racial/ethnic groups in Flint. Blacks and Hispanics consistently fare worse than Flint's White, non-Hispanic residents, with one exception: Hispanics are more likely than Whites to be in the labor force and employed.⁴ Per capita income for Blacks in Flint is 63% lower than the per capita income for the United States as a whole (all races) and 34% lower than the per capita income for Blacks throughout the U.S.

Table 2: Economic Indicators for Flint, MI by race and ethnicity. American Community Survey 2011-2013.

	White, non-Hispanic	Black or African American	Hispanic, any race
Poverty Rate	34.50%	45.40%	42%
Per Capita Income	\$17,937	\$12,246	\$13,504
Median Household Income	\$29,043	\$21,703	\$27,420
Employed	43%	32.10%	53.20%
In the labor force	54.00%	46.50%	62.70%

These data paint a dismal picture, however conditions do appear to be improving slightly. According to the American Community Survey's 1-year estimates, in 2010, Flint had 59,654 working age residents (age 20 to 64), 41.2% of whom were employed. In 2011, there were 59,313 working age residents, 44% of whom were employed. In 2012, even though the City's population declined slightly, the number of working age residents actually increased to 60,371, and 47.4% of them were employed. In 2013, the working age population fell back to 58,970 but the employment rate declined minimally, to 46.4%. These data demonstrate some year-to-year variation that is sometimes slightly negative and sometimes slightly positive, but overall from 2010 to 2013 the employment rate increased by 5% and the working age population was fairly steady. These data cannot be broken down by both race and age, and the Hispanic population is too small to draw conclusions. But for Blacks (of all ages) the employment rate went from 33.8% in 2010, to 28.3% in 2011, 32.7% in 2012, and 35.6% in 2013. The employment rate for Blacks clearly lags the overall employment rate, but again we see a *positive trend* over the 2010 to 2013 period.

The data in the previous paragraph summarize the employment status of *Flint residents*. The Census Bureau's "On the Map" tool can also be used to analyze the jobs in Flint – regardless of the residence of the employee. These data indicate that, in 2011, there were 42,546 jobs in Flint. The vast majority of these jobs (35,184, or 82.7%) are held by people who don't live in Flint. On the other side of the same coin, 18,900 people live in Flint but are employed outside the City, which is 72% of the 26,262 employed residents of Flint. This indicates that there *are jobs in Flint* and that there are opportunities to better connect Flint residents to those employment opportunities.

⁴ This likely reflects the relative age of the two groups. The median age among Hispanics in Flint is 28.9 while the median age for non-Hispanic Whites is 42.2. Flint's White, non-Hispanic population includes far more people who are retired and therefore out of the labor force.

Census data on jobs and employment are limited for 2012 and 2013, and not available at all for 2014, but employers and economic development specialists in Flint and Genesee County can shine a light on some more recent trends. In particular, a common story heard around the Flint area is that there *are* jobs – but employers are having trouble finding qualified candidates. Indeed, this story is common not just in Flint, but throughout Michigan and the Midwest. This is partly a reflection of the transition of the American economy. Low-skill jobs have been under continual pressure from global competition and increased reliance on technology. At the same time, industries like health care and information technology have been strong, but require advanced education. Even the manufacturing industry is seeing a comeback, but the new jobs often require more advanced skills and understanding of sophisticated equipment.

According to Janice Karcher, Vice President of Economic Development for the Flint & Genesee Chamber of Commerce, the job picture is improving in the Flint area; and she points to the most recent unemployment figure for the Flint area, which has dropped significantly to 5.7 percent. “There are many jobs in Flint and Genesee County,” said Karcher. “In fact there are roughly 1,800 jobs that are located within 25 miles of the area, and they are posted on the State’s website miTalent.org. The positions range from entry level to high paying/skilled in industries such as manufacturing, design and production.” Karcher adds: “New jobs that are being created offer opportunities for those who are unemployed or underemployed to increase their earnings and benefits. The Flint & Genesee Chamber Economic Development team works closely with placement agencies, colleges and universities and other integral partners to make the proper training available to those who are interested. We also are increasing our efforts to get the word out about these jobs so more people are aware and can apply for the positions with confidence.”

While there are jobs available, the geography of the economy today makes it very difficult to access those jobs without reliable transportation. In 2013, 22.1% of Flint households had no vehicle available and another 48.8% had only one vehicle available. These households often must rely on public transportation or alternative methods to commute to work, and struggle to access jobs in the suburbs or nearby cities.

Educational Context

In today's economy, education is increasingly becoming the gateway to good jobs, as technological advances decrease the demand for manual labor and increase returns to individuals with advanced skills. Black and Hispanic adult males in Flint have lower educational attainment than White adult males, though Blacks and Whites in Flint both have lower educational attainment than their peers nationwide. In Flint, the percentage of males over age 25 with a bachelor's degree or higher is 7.2% for Blacks and 12.1% for non-Hispanic Whites. Nationwide, the comparable numbers are 16.4% and 33.2%, respectively. In Flint, the percentage of males over 25 with less than a high school diploma is 16.1% for Blacks and 17.4% for non-Hispanic Whites.⁵ Nationwide, the comparable numbers are 18.4% and 9%, respectively. Hispanic males in Flint are actually much more likely than their peers nationwide to have a high school diploma or higher (86% vs. 62%) but less likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher (4% vs. 13%).

Flint's youth attend schools throughout Genesee County, across multiple school districts. In 2013, there were 20,451 Flint residents aged 5-19 (a proxy for school-aged). At the close of the 2013-2014 school year, there were 6,726 students enrolled in Flint Community Schools, down from 40,000 at its peak enrollment. Enrollment declines in Flint Community Schools and the resulting building realignment plan create significant uncertainty facing parents and students. Flint youth today also attend Genesee Intermediate School District (GISD) schools (such as Mott Middle College), public charter schools (such as the International Academy of Flint, Linden Charter Academy, and Northridge Academy), and private schools (such as Powers Catholic High School).

In the realm of post-secondary education, Flint is fortunate to have several excellent colleges and universities; indeed, Flint is becoming a "college town." These institutions of higher learning are important members of the community in many ways, including providing jobs and investing in physical infrastructure, but their core purpose is educating. Several of these institutions have programs and scholarships specifically designed to provide greater access to minorities. Some programs, such as STAR at UM-Flint, specifically target young men of color (in the case of STAR, to help them pursue teaching careers). Yet there are still many obstacles that can derail a young person and knock them off the path towards a college degree, and the graduation rate for black males at these institutions can be improved.

Public Safety Context

In 2012, Flint was among the most dangerous cities in the country. The City's murder rate was 62 per 100,000 residents, more than 13 times the national average, and the City's overall violent crime rate was 2,730 per 100,000, more than 7 times the national average. Of the 63 murder victims in Flint in 2012, 48 were Black men, and 26 were Black boys *under the age of 25*. Young Black men were approximately 10% of Flint's population but over 40% of its murder victims. Flint is clearly failing on the MBK goal 6 to provide all youth the opportunity to grow up safe from violent crime.

In 2012, Flint's problem with property crime was much less severe than its violent crime level. Flint's overall property crime rate in 2012 was 5,554 per 100,000 – still far above the national average (2,859 per 100,000) but also far lower than cities including St. Louis (6,902), Detroit (5,792), and Cincinnati (6,135). Second, since 2012 the City has made remarkable progress in nearly all areas. Table 3 shows

⁵ It should be noted that these data are for males over the age of 25 currently living in Flint – not necessarily boys and young men who grew up in Flint – so it would not be correct to assume that White males and Black males growing up in Flint are equally likely to graduate high school.

crime data for Flint in 2012, 2013, and 2014. From 2012 to 2013, overall violent crime declined by 30% and overall property crime declined by 23%. The murder rate declined by 23%, and robbery and aggravated assault both declined by 33%. Preliminary data indicate these gains were sustained in 2014.

Table 3 – Flint crime rates, 2012-2014

	2012	2013	2014 (preliminary)*
Violent crime per 100,000	2,729.5	1,908.1	1,535.7
Murder per 100,000	62.0	48.0	30.2
Forcible rape per 100,000	106.3	145.1	106.5
Robbery per 100,000	662.2	447.3	321.6
Aggravated Assault per 100,000	1,899.0	1,267.7	1,079.4
Property crime per 100,000	5,554.4	4,263.5	4,168.8
Burglary per 100,000	2,931.2	1,942.1	1,731.7
Larceny per 100,000	2,171.6	2,001.2	2,005.0
Motor vehicle theft per 100,000	451.6	320.2	286.4
Arson per 100,000 *	222.4	110.1	145.7

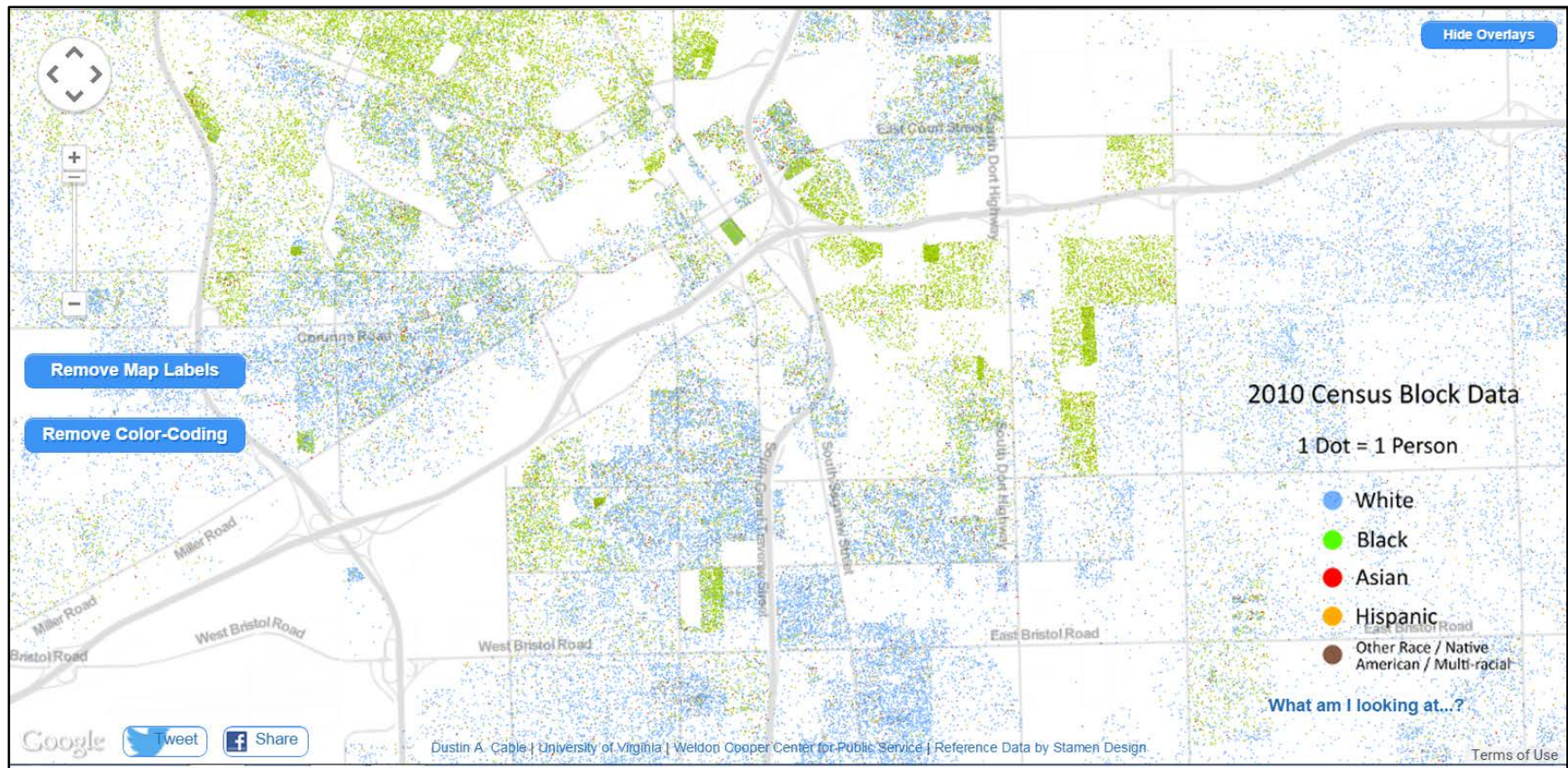
* 2014 numbers are based on information in FPD's crime blog (<http://cityofflintpd.blogspot.com/p/weekly-crime-summary-comparisons.html>) and assume a population of 99,500.

Segregation and Concentrated Poverty

A neighborhood (census tract) where 40% of people are below poverty level is typically considered to be “concentrated poverty.” Based on 2008-2012 American Community Survey data, 24 of the 40 residential census tracts in Flint are above the threshold for concentrated poverty. Sixty-three percent of Blacks in Flint live in a neighborhood with concentrated poverty, and 65% of Black males age 29 or younger live in concentrated poverty.

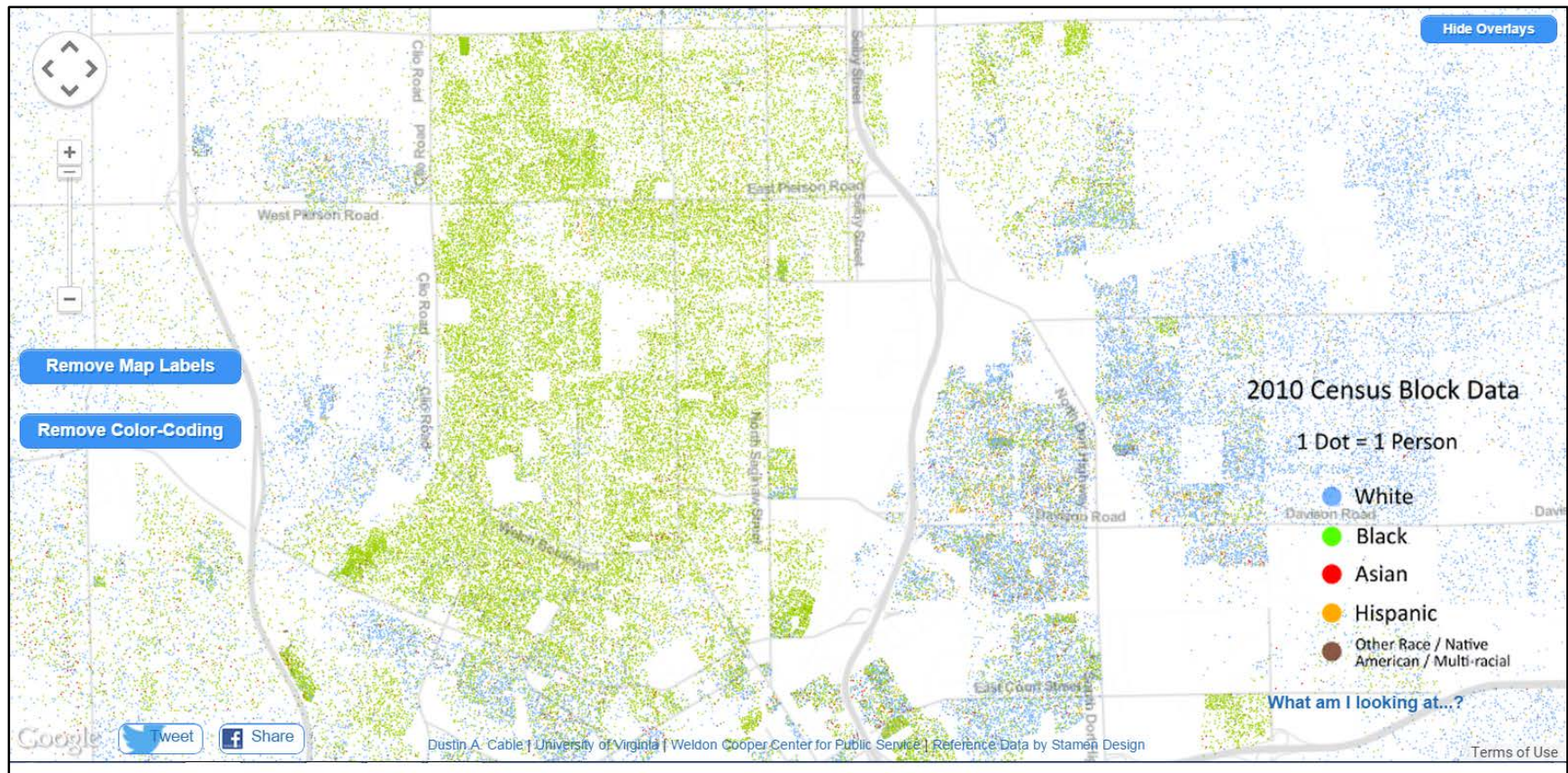
Based on a measure known as the dissimilarity index, Flint is one of the most segregated cities in the country, especially for Blacks and Whites. The Flint metro area ranks as the 19th most segregated out of all metro areas in the country. The Detroit metro area was the most segregated in the country with a black-white dissimilarity index of 79.6. The City of Flint is slightly less segregated than Genesee County as a whole, and segregation has been declining; however, it is still the second most segregated city in Michigan. Figure 1-3 illustrate the racial makeup of the City; each dot represents a person and dots are color-coded based on the person’s race and ethnicity. Figure 1 shows the southern half of Flint, including downtown and the neighborhoods just north of the Flint River. Figure 2 shows the northern half of Flint. Figure 3 shows the entire city and some surrounding areas. These maps can be further explored at <http://demographics.coopercenter.org/DotMap/index.html>.

Figure 1: Map of Race, South Flint



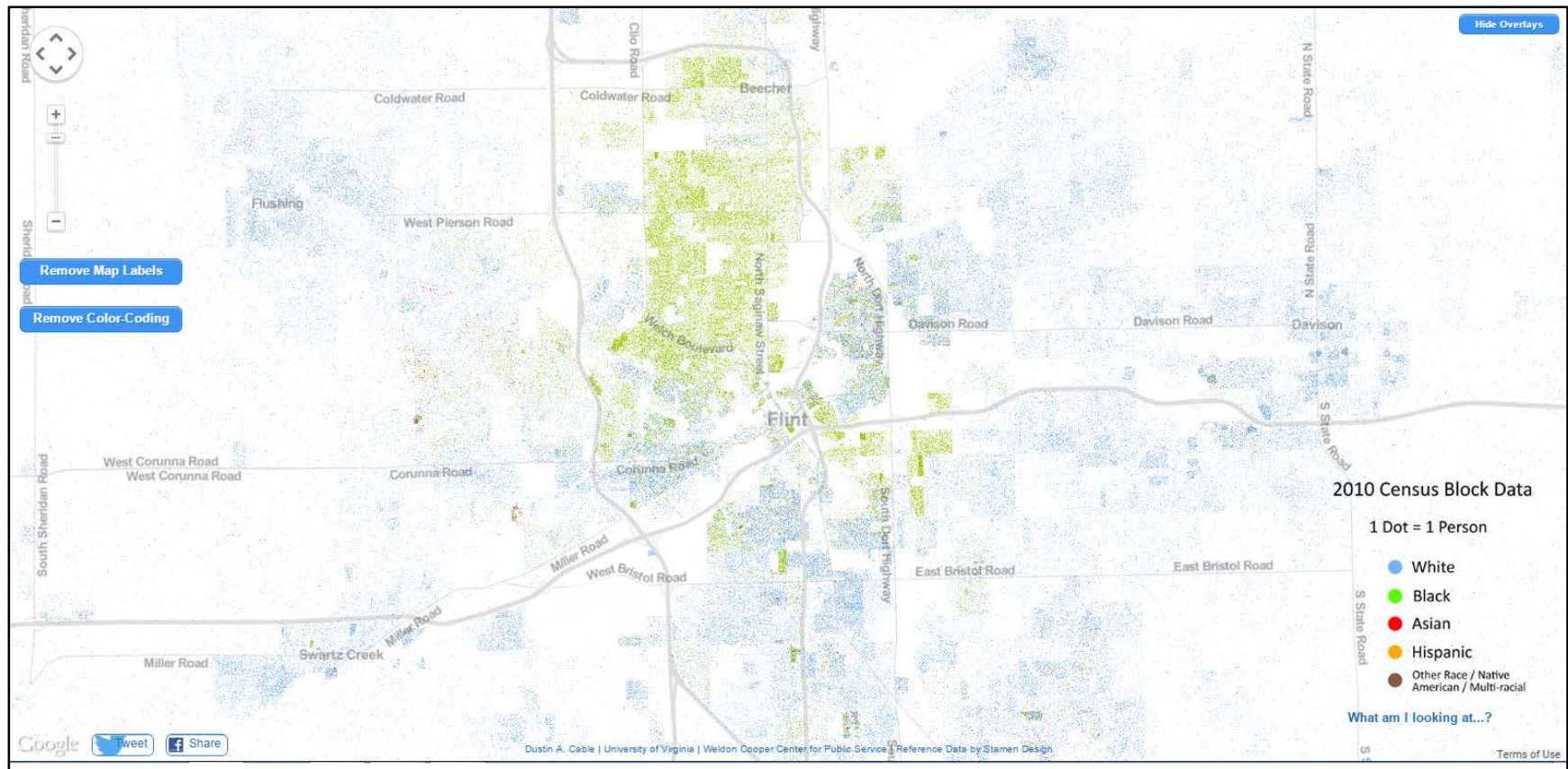
Source: Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia

Figure 2: Map of Race, North Flint



Source: Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia

Figure 3: Map of Race, Flint and Surrounding Areas



Source: Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia

These maps illustrate that Flint's north side, particularly north of Flushing Rd and west of Saginaw St, is almost exclusively Black. The east and south sides are considerably more diverse, although certain pockets are densely populated and almost exclusively Black. The areas surrounding Flint are more sparsely populated and almost exclusively White.

One of the most distressed parts of the City of Flint is the census tract at the southeast corner of the City, east of Dort Highway, south of Lippincott, and north of Atherton. In Figure 1, this area stands out for both the density of the population and the racial homogeneity. The poverty rate in this tract in the 2007-2011 period was a stunning 82%, and 78% of residents were Black. Even as crime rates have been declining for the City as a whole, violence has remained elevated in this neighborhood; in the first week of 2015, three murders occurred in or adjacent to the Atherton public housing complex. The City and Flint Police Department have assigned a new community safety officer to this neighborhood, to build a stronger partnership with residents and reduce crime. The City is also working with the Flint Housing Commission on the development of a Choice Neighborhoods transformation plan to better integrate affordable housing into the broader community.

In Their Words

Data are essential as a means of measuring and documenting conditions, but numbers don't tell the full story. To understand what it's really like to be a boy or young man of color in Flint, one must hear from the people of Flint: the youth, and the adults trying to support them.

On November 12, 2014, the City of Flint, in partnership with the North Flint Reinvestment Corporation, held its My Brother's Keeper Local Action Summit. Nearly 100 residents and leaders participated in the event. Participants were black, brown, and white. They came from all corners of the City. They included youth, parents, adults who grew up in Flint, and people who go to work every day as educators, judges, faith leaders, civic leaders, and managers of youth programs.

At the Summit, participants split up into groups of 6-8 people to have a candid discussion about the challenges faced by young men of color in Flint and to dig for solutions to better help them reach their full potential. Presented below are some key takeaways from the discussion that night:

1. Youth must be directly involved in the MBK process.
2. Youth are not getting an adequate education. The school system lacks the resources to support them. As they progress into adulthood, few youth have the skills required to be competitive for well-paying jobs.
3. To break the cycle of intergenerational poverty we must work to educate parents as well as youth. Youth need more positive role models, whether parents and family members, or neighbors, or mentors. All members of the community must take responsibility for supporting the development of youth. In addition, we must all work to change the mindset and expectations of the community; academic and professional excellence must become the norm, not the exception.
4. Both youth and adults in Flint struggle with limited transportation. Public transportation routes do not adequately serve all parts of the metropolitan area. Families that have a car still face the challenge of juggling the transportation needs of multiple family members--a very important issue in an age when more and more households rely on multiple jobs.

5. For many youth, their families have limited resources to provide for basic needs such as food and shelter, making it difficult for them to focus on learning.
6. In many neighborhoods, the lack of police presence and lack of positive engagement between police and residents is a major concern. Residents want their neighborhoods to be better served by Flint Police, but also see a need for residents themselves to work together to create a secure environment with more “eyes on the street.”

One major issue discussed by all groups was education; as a result of the struggles in Flint public schools and lack of access to higher education, the youth of Flint do not see themselves as well positioned for the jobs that are available in Flint. They have seen enrollment plummet in the Flint Community Schools, funding being severely cut, and school buildings closing. The schools that remain suffer with outdated textbooks and large class sizes. Students experience the consequences of these changes, and often stop going to school altogether.

In addition to improving formal education, many participants recognized the need to support youth development outside the classroom. In particular, many suggested a need to help parents, especially single parents, to better support their children -- not only financially but also educationally and emotionally. Many families in Flint are provided for by only one parent, often forcing that single parent to work multiple low-paying jobs. Furthermore, many parents have to spend an inordinate amount of time traveling to work due to limited public transit and the dispersed nature of the jobs in the Flint area. These challenges mean that parents have limited time to actively support their children’s development. Furthermore, limited resources make it difficult for some parents to provide for the basic needs of their children, which is a distraction that makes it difficult for kids to focus on learning.

Another challenge is that parents themselves may have limited education and employment experience, making it more difficult and less natural for them to help their children achieve success in school and the job market. Some participants focused on this challenge, suggesting that better education and jobs for parents would benefit youth. Others focused on the need to provide other positive role models, such as mentors. Many of Flint’s youth get caught up in the daily struggle to get by, and education takes a back seat. They need to interact with people with different backgrounds, to expose them to all the possible careers that might be available to them.

Another area of concern that many participants focused on was community relations and development. Several residents voiced concerns about leaving their homes at night because they do not feel safe. They feel that police don’t care about them because there are so few officers in the city that they cannot tend to every problem. Others thought that if there were stronger neighborhood connectivity they would be safer feeling that their neighbors would reach out and support them. Having a stronger relationship with your neighbors creates a sense of place and attachment. Many people also expressed a need to ensure that kids have safe routes to and from school, and safe places to spend time when they aren’t in school.

Finally, a common concern expressed by participants in the November 12 Local Action Summit was that there weren’t enough youth sharing their perspective; only about 10 of the 100 participants were under 20 years old. As a result, the City made a concerted effort to get more youth input. On November 22, Joy Tabernacle church hosted a MBK discussion specifically for boys and young men of color. Approximately 15 youth—as young as 10 years old and up to 20 years old—and 10 young adults participated. They shared their goals and aspirations, talked about what they need to do to achieve their goals, and talked about what support they need from parents, schools, and other community leaders.

Within the community of young people in Flint the main focus of concern was in the lack of a quality educational experience and opportunities. Specifically, the youth voiced a need for heightened security

within school grounds, additional after school and vocational programs, opportunities for critical thinking, and updated facilities and resources such as textbooks.

Because school is the place where youth spend most of their days, it is vital to keep them safe, engaged and actively learning in order to keep the students in attendance. According to the youth, school has become boring. The way that the material is being presented to students is not giving them an opportunity to engage themselves or to think critically, thus becoming uninteresting. In some cases, even if students do take an interest in learning, it becomes difficult for students to retain the information because there are often not enough materials and textbooks for every student or they do not have access to the resources they need after school hours.

Some participants reported that afterschool and extracurricular programs have been cut, such as field trips for students. With a lack of engagement within and outside of school youth say that their friends and peers often turn to gang activity to occupy their time. Gang violence has become a major issue in schools and is a cause of concern for many students and parents. Many parents have chosen to remove their children from the school system or transfer them elsewhere, causing the problems to worsen.

Profile: JaNel Jamerson, Director of the Flint and Genesee Literacy Network

JaNel Jamerson is a lifelong resident of Flint, MI and is a proud product of the Flint Community School District, having graduated from Flint Southwestern Academy. He was awarded the Wade H. McCree Jr. Incentive Scholarship and attended the University of Michigan-Flint, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in English and a Master of Arts in Education, specializing in Urban Education.

Growing up in Flint, JaNel's experience was similar to many of today's youth. His mom raised him and his two brothers without their father. She worked to support her family but struggled to find good paying jobs. They moved a lot, often living with extended family members. JaNel was blessed with intelligence and a family that stressed the importance of education, but even so he didn't always succeed in the classroom. In his junior year of high school, JaNel learned about the Alpha Esquire Leadership Program, and his life transformed. He met men who looked like him, who came from the same kind of place as him, who had gone to college and even graduate school, and gone on to be successful adults. Men such as Robert Matthews, now Dean of Workforce Development at Mott Community College, took him under their wing. College went from an abstract concept to a very concrete reality--from something that he *could* do to something that he *would* do.

Currently, Mr. Jamerson is the director of the Flint and Genesee Literacy Network. He is also active in the Flint Alumni Chapter of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and serves as a mentor in Alpha Esquire. Thinking about his own experience and ways to further increase opportunity for young men of color, he said "My Brother's Keeper speaks to a larger need, for a shift in the mindset that we instill into both youth and adults. Collectively, we must realize that the purpose of our personal advancement is to raise our "ceilings" so that they may one day be the "floors" for those that come behind us. That serves as a foundation for our families and communities, ultimately advancing a generation and creating a culture of mutual responsibility."

One resource that the youth mentioned that they utilize and enjoy is the skill center (now called the Genesee Career Institute). The skill center provides students with the opportunity to learn a variety of different trades to prepare for careers beyond high school. This facility is however shared with all of Genesee County and students complain that getting to and from the facility is difficult.

One remarkable aspect of the Joy Tabernacle discussion was the way many youth started by taking ownership of their own destiny; when asked what he needed to achieve his goals, 12-year old Ali didn't say he needed more help from teachers or parents, he said he needed to work hard and get good grades. This was echoed by many other boys and young men in elementary and middle school. They did not deflect responsibility by pointing the finger at others. They also displayed a remarkable optimism; even with all the obstacles in their way, they believe they will succeed.

On December 12, another youth-oriented MBK conversation was hosted by Mott Middle College. Approximately 25 students from Mott Middle College and Hamady Middle/High School shared their perspective on what MBK should be in Flint. The most remarkable thing about this discussion was the way it developed. A young man heard about the MBK process from his mentor (through Kettering University's Kagle Mentoring program) and decided to take the initiative and bring together his fellow students. He informed the City of his intentions but did not request that the City manage the process; he did it himself, with just a bit of support from his mentor and the Mott Middle College principal. The young men and women who came out were intelligent, hard-working, and clearly on the path towards successfully completing their high school education and beyond. They talked about what has helped them, and what more could be done. One common theme in this discussion was the need for physical places where young people can go after school to have fun, learn, and be safe. Another intriguing idea was to expand a Flint Community Schools program that incentivizes reading by capitalizing on students' competitive spirit.

These public meetings – those led by the City and those led by community members – allowed a broad cross-section of residents to share their story and to provide input about what Flint should do to better support youth. This report is meant to summarize that input; but inevitably some ideas will be lost through the process. Everyone who participated in those meetings must continue to speak up, to the City and their fellow residents, to ensure that their concerns are heard until they are addressed.

Section 3: Programs, Policies, and Partners in Flint

Even in the country's most successful cities, young men of color face a steep hill to climb to realize their full potential. With the economic challenges in Flint, this "hill" can seem like a mountain. But even the highest mountains can be scaled with skilled guides, clear trail maps, and proper equipment. Similarly, Flint's youth can thrive if they are given the support they need and deserve. With the challenges in Flint, it's easy to get discouraged, but we must not forget that Flint also has many assets, including extremely dedicated residents and leaders who have not lost hope and continue working to improve their community. This section will discuss many of the programs, policies, and partners that are already active supporting young men of color in Flint. This information should serve as a resource for members of the Flint community – youth, parents, and social service providers – to help connect boys and young men of color to available resources and to ensure that programs are coordinated and complementary. At the same time, it is not a comprehensive list of all programs and services in Flint; for that, **Resource Genesee's** "Community Source Book" and 2-1-1 service are essential resources.

Education

Flint is known as the birthplace of General Motors, but 80 years ago it was also the birthplace of the innovative community education model. For years, the Flint public school system was a model for educating youth and providing activity centers that anchored their neighborhoods. However, in recent years the Flint Community Schools have been struggled with declining enrollment and limited funding. Flint has a strong and growing higher education presence, with Kettering University, The University of Michigan Flint campus, Mott Community College, and Baker College. Nearly 30,000 students are enrolled at these four institutions.

Many schools and formal education initiatives support young men of color in Flint, including:

- **Flint Community Schools** is the primary public school district serving the City of Flint. FCS, in partnership with the **Crim Foundation** is implementing a reinvigorated community education program at Brownell Holmes STEM Academy. The community education pilot will seek to create a place where youth can continue their education beyond normal school hours and where people can come together in the evenings to learn, access needed services, and build a stronger community.
- **Michigan Education Corps** is an evidence-based literacy initiative administered by the Hope Network and includes Brownell Holmes STEM Academy. The initiative relies on Americorps members to provide intensive literacy tutoring during the school day.
- **Genesee Intermediate School District** provides support for all school districts in Genesee County and also administers some schools and programs.
- **Genesee Career Institute (formerly known as the Skill Center)** provides job training and certifications for high school juniors and seniors in Flint and Genesee County. Students must be fulfilling other academic requirements, so many students who have already fallen behind are unable to take advantage of the opportunities available. Other students may be unaware of opportunities there, or may not know how to take advantage.
- **Great Start** is an early childhood education program administered in Genesee County by the Genesee Intermediate School District and Genesee County Community Action Resource Department.
- **Youthquest** is an after-school program available at Flint Community Schools, administered by the Flint and Genesee Chamber of Commerce.

- **Other schools.** Throughout the state of Michigan, an open enrollment policy allows students considerable flexibility in choosing their school. Students can attend a public school in a district that they do not live in, but must first be released by their home district. This release is not required for a student to attend a public charter school. Many Flint students attend non-FCS schools like Northridge Academy, Linden Charter academy, and International Academy of Flint. Schools cannot refuse a student for reasons like academic performance or place of residence, but if a school is at capacity it may use a lottery or first-come-first-served method for assigning limited slots.

Other educational resources and organizations active in Flint include:

- **The Flint and Genesee Count Literacy Network** is a collaborative effort of many organizations in Flint and Genesee County focused on improving literacy among youth and adults. The Network includes action teams for early childhood, youth literacy, opportunity youth, and adult literacy. Through the Network, these organizations are creating a common agenda and establishing shared goals. The Network will continue to convene these groups, to measure performance, share best practices, and ensure accountability.
- **Flint STEAM Works** is a group that seeks to encourage young people of all races and backgrounds to pursue creative projects related to science, technology, engineering, art, and math.
- **Christ Enrichment Center** provides literacy training and tutoring for students and young adults.
- **Pre-College Programs** administered by the local colleges and universities help Flint youth learn about and prepare for post-secondary educational opportunities. UM-Flint offers a trio of programs united under the banner of Committed to Excellence (CEO); these include GEAR Up, Choosing to Succeed, and the Wade McCree Junior Incentive Program. These programs start as early as 6th grade, focus on students in Flint, Beecher, and Westwood Heights, and focus on first generation college students. At the end of the program, participants can receive a full tuition scholarship to UM-Flint. At Mott Community College, the federally funded Upward Bound program focuses on low income and first generation college students. At Kettering University, the Kagle Mentoring Program focuses on increasing the number of disadvantaged youth pursuing education in science, technology, engineering, and math. These programs are incredibly important and can be life-changing opportunities for young men who might not otherwise see college as a possibility for them.
- **Men of Tomorrow** provides cultural opportunities for boys and young men of color.
- **Smart Teachers as Role Models (STAR)** is a program at UM-Flint that encourages young black men to pursue careers in teaching. Students enter the education school as a cohort, which helps them support each other and overcome hurdles that discourage black men from becoming teachers.

Economic Development and Workforce Development

While the automotive and manufacturing industries drove Flint's economy to the heights of the 1960s, today the City is actively seeking to diversify its economy. Many organizations are working hard to support new business development. Just as importantly, many are seeking to ensure that the jobs of the future are available and accessible to the people currently living in Flint, including the boys and young men of color growing up here.

Programs and initiatives supporting workforce development in Flint include:

- **Metro Youthbuild** provides disadvantaged youth, ages 18-24, with education, job training, and employment opportunities.
- **The Flint/Genesee Job Corps Center** provides workforce training and academic instruction to pursue a high school diploma, GED, or other certifications. National evaluations have shown the Job Corps program to be effective in improving employment outcomes and wages for participants.
- **Flint and Genesee Chamber of Commerce Teenquest Program and Summer Youth Initiative** provide pre-employment training and job experience to help teens develop employment and leadership skills.
- **Flint STRIVE** provides job training and pre-employment services, such as helping youth prepare resumes, learn positive workplace behaviors, and develop other “soft skills” essential for gaining and sustaining employment.
- **Hispanic Technology and Community Center** is a community center on Flint’s east-side that provides residents with access to computers and the internet, and provides training and tutoring programs.
- **North Flint Reinvestment Corporation** is a community development corporation working in North Flint. In 2015 they plan to open a new charter school known as Eagle’s Nest Academy. They are also working in partnership with Habitat for Humanity to revitalize the Foss Avenue community.
- **Mott Community College Workforce Education Center** administers several programs focused on workforce development, including the Hispanic Technology and Community Center and Workforce Investment Act programs.
- **Michigan Works!** is a workforce development agency that administers Workforce Investment Act programs and other training initiatives.

Public Safety and Criminal Justice

As discussed in Section 2, Flint has struggled with public safety in recent years, but data from 2013 and 2014 indicate remarkable improvement. Possible explanations include the Flint Police Department’s strong partnership with federal law enforcement, FPD’s increased emphasis on community-oriented policing, demolition of thousands of abandoned buildings, and the hard work of many other partners, including those below:

- **Blue Badge Volunteer Corps** is an initiative led by the Flint Police Department that engages residents and community groups as volunteer support. Blue Badge volunteers supplement police resources by helping staff neighborhood service centers and supporting with crowd control for major events. A related effort, the **Citizens’ Radio Patrol**, encourages volunteers to keep an eye out for criminal activity in their neighborhood and promptly report incidents.
- **The Flint Youth Initiative (FYI)** is a joint effort of Big Brothers Big Sisters and the U.S. District Court that connects at-risk youth with mentors working primarily in government and criminal justice. FYI was launched in 2013-2014, and in 2014-2015 it was to be reinforced with a more structured curriculum and additional support from Big Brothers Big Sisters; however it has not yet launched more than halfway through the school year.
- **Operation Fresh Start** is an initiative of the City of Flint and Flint Police Department to cancel warrants and adjudicate charges for Flint residents with misdemeanor charges. So far nearly 300 Flint residents have taken advantage of the opportunity.

- **Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center** administers several programs (including Youth Empowerment Solutions and Fathers & Sons) focused on reducing the exposure to and effects of violence on youth.
- **Lifelines** is a joint effort between the City of Flint, Flint Police Department, and Flint Area Congregations Together (FACT). The program seeks to provide an alternative to sentencing for criminal suspects.
- **Byrne Criminal Justice** grant administered by the University Avenue Corridor Coalition is a US Department of Justice program that supports innovative crime reduction programs that take advantage of community engagement and improved environmental design.

Other/Cross-Cutting

There are many initiatives that don't fit cleanly into a single bucket; below are key programs and partners that cut across many different issue areas related to young men of color.

- **National and Community Service** programs include VISTA, AmeriCorps, and NCCC. These programs encourage volunteerism and community service. Flint has a strong tradition of national service, and there are many active service members currently working in Flint. The United Way has a staff person who works to coordinate national service members throughout Flint, many of whom work on programs that support boys and young men of color.
- **Big Brothers Big Sisters** runs several mentoring programs that provide 1-to-1 mentoring opportunities for Flint's youth. One of these programs focuses specifically on supporting youth with family in the criminal justice system. Another initiative, supported by the US Department of Labor, seeks to improve employment opportunities for youth through a comprehensive support structure including a mentor and other pre-employment services.
- **Haskell Center Police Activities League** is a joint effort between the Flint Police Department and the **Boys and Girls Club** that provides after-school activities and summer day camp for youth.
- **Building Neighborhood Capacity Program** is a US Department of Justice funded program to build community capacity and engagement in Wards 1 and 3.
- **Hurley Hospital Nurse-Family Partnership** is a new program where trained nurses do home visits to first-time mothers to help create a more nurturing environment for the newborn. This is an evidence-based program that can improve early childhood health and developmental outcomes, helping children enter school ready to learn.
- **Resource Genesee** provides a variety of social and human services for residents of Flint and Genesee County. One initiative they support is the **Genesee Coalition for Disconnected Youth**, which is a cross-sector partnership of organizations serving youth aged 16-24 who are homeless,

The Flint Police Activities League (PAL) seeks to promote good citizenship in youth, by cultivating and improving moral and civic standards through greater positive communication between the police and community. PAL provides youth with fun after-school and summer activities, and offers youth opportunities for recreation and athletics. PAL is a non-profit organization independent of the Flint Police Department, but it is led by Officer Jesse Carpenter of FPD, and many other Flint Police officers are involved in PAL activities. This engagement between youth and police is central to PAL, and is meant to build a stronger, more trusting relationship between police and the community. PAL operates out of the Haskell Youth Center, which had been vacant and unused before PAL came in 2009. The City of Flint supports PAL with Community Development Block Grant funds. Many other community partners support the work of PAL, including the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Flint, the Crim Fitness Foundation, and the Ruth Mott Foundation.

in foster care, involved in the justice system, or dropped out of school. **REMIX** is another important initiative of Resource Genesee, which seeks to provide disconnected youth with information about programs and opportunities that can help them succeed.

- **Priority Children** provides several programs focused on youth, primarily related to providing a safe and healthy environment for youth.
- **Pan-Hellenic Council** is an association of local alumni chapters of African-American fraternities. Several fraternities provide mentoring, scholarships, and other initiatives to help African-American boys and young men grow into responsible adults and pursue higher education. For example, Alpha Esquire, Gamma Delta Kudos, and Kappa Leadership League are youth groups for black males in high school. Students learn public speaking, etiquette, professionalism, and other life skills. The men that volunteer to lead these programs provide youth with a vision of what they can become, and they provide the support needed to realize the vision.
- **YMCA Safe Places After-School Program** is a free summer and after school program for youth in grades 1-12. The program was launched in 2013 and in its first year served 200 kids at two sites (Second Chance Church at 1950 Burr Boulevard and Community Outreach for Family and Youth Center at 1015 Carpenter Rd).
- **Genesee County Parks Summer Playground Program** provides a fun and safe environment for kids during the summer (June 22-August 27, 2015). Recently, the Genesee County Parks Department established a partnership with the City of Flint, and programming will be offered in Max Brandon and McKinley Parks within the city.
- **SAGE (Safe and Active Genesee for Everyone) Partnership**, led by the Crim, helps to promote fitness and activity throughout Genesee County. One area of focus is the development of complete streets and safe routes to school. In March, the City of Flint and Crim foundation were awarded a Safe Routes to School grant to improve walking conditions around Potter Elementary School and International Academy of Flint.
- **Local churches.** There are so many churches and religious groups in Flint that they couldn't possibly all be listed here; but that doesn't detract from their importance, particularly in supporting young men of color. Their after school programs, youth groups, Bible study groups, and the sense of community that they create can be incredibly significant for youth. **Flint Area Congregations Together (FACT)** is a partnership of 25 faith communities in Genesee County focused on encouraging and directing community organizing and activism.
- **Local foundations.** Flint is home to the **CS Mott Foundation**, **Ruth Mott Foundation**, the **Crim Fitness Foundation**, and **The Community Foundation of Greater Flint**, all of which dedicate funding to essential local initiatives across a variety of issue areas (including many of the programs listed above). These foundations have been a powerful stabilizing force keeping Flint afloat through hard times. They must be part of the MBK conversation: not just funding new initiatives but also demanding accountability and effectiveness from existing programs, and helping to spread best practices.

Section 4: Unmet Needs and Best Practices

This section of the report serves two purposes: 1) to review the needs discussed in Section 2 and the existing efforts documented in Section 3, and identify gaps; and 2) to present best practices and evidence-based strategies that might be implemented in Flint.

Gaps and Unmet Needs

Section 2 established that youth in Flint face many challenges that impede them as they try to grow and achieve their full potential. Section 3 described programs that already exist in Flint. It appears that there are gaps (where a need is going unmet entirely) and other areas where existing programs could be improved or better utilized. It is also clear that there is insufficient communication, with many programs and organizations working very hard, but independently and often unaware of potential partners.

There is a clear need to improve the educational experience that Flint's youth have in the classroom, from pre-K through high school graduation. Youth and adults alike expressed concern about the struggles of Flint Community Schools, but only about 30% of Flint's youth attend Flint Community Schools. All schools in Flint and Genesee County should continue to seek improved educational outcomes, but we must also look beyond the classroom experience for other solutions.

Many residents – particularly youth – prioritized a need for safe places for kids to go after school, where they can learn, play, and interact with positive role models. This is the explicit purpose of several active programs, including the YMCA Safe Places After School program, the Police Activities League, Youth Empowerment Solutions, and Flint Community Schools YouthQuest after-school program. In addition, the community education pilot at Brownell Holmes is meant to provide a community gathering place for both youth and adults. These initiatives address a priority need, but they may be insufficient – not enough spaces, not convenient enough, or not known to enough people. Transportation is commonly cited as a challenge--even the after-school programs located at schools have limited transportation options to get kids home. Furthermore, these programs must balance between providing an environment that is fun enough to attract youth while also providing enriching activities. The Police Activities League has been mentioned by many as a success story; youth enjoy their time there, and its activities help them build positive relationships with each other and with the law enforcement community.

Job preparation is another priority need identified by many community members. Again, there are several programs that focus on helping young people prepare for careers. In particular, the Genesee Career Institute, the Teenquest program, and Youthbuild are important assets already available to Flint youth. As with safe places after school, these programs may need to be better promoted to Flint youth, or they may need to be expanded.

Many residents expressed a need for more and better mentoring to provide positive role models for youth. At the same time, it is evident that there are already numerous mentoring programs active in Flint. There are two ways that these programs can more effectively meet the needs of Flint's youth. The first is simply to recruit more mentors. It is incumbent upon all Flint residents to take a role in supporting youth development, the same way Flint's residents have made a remarkable commitment of their own time to blight elimination and participation in the Master Plan process. The second is for mentoring organizations to work as partners rather than competitors and to incorporate best practices.

Public safety is a concern for nearly all residents of Flint, and despite recent improvements, Flint still has public safety challenges – particularly for young black men. Residents on Flint's north side, which is predominantly black, feel like the police don't give their neighborhoods enough attention. They feel like

there needs to be a stronger and more trusting relationship with the police. Recent events in Ferguson, Missouri, New York City, and Charleston, South Carolina, where police officers killed unarmed black men, have shined a light on the importance of the way police interact with citizens. The Flint Police Department in recent years has embraced the community-oriented policing model, and has made significant efforts to make police officers more accessible and more engaged with the community. These efforts are extremely promising, and must be sustained to address the deficit of trust that has accumulated over many years. In the same vein, the police rely on citizens to provide evidence that allows for effective criminal investigations. Residents must partner with the police to make their neighborhoods safer and must take advantage of efforts like Crime Stoppers, an anonymous tip line (1-800-SPEAK-UP; 1-800-773-2587).

Section 2 discussed the fact that Flint continues to have some very segregated neighborhoods, and that some of the neighborhoods with the greatest economic and criminal distress are also neighborhoods that are predominantly Black. This situation is unacceptable; young Black boys growing up in these neighborhoods are confronted by violence and poverty in the earliest years of their life. The City must seek to help boys and young men of color grow up in safer neighborhoods. This should be done both by improving public safety in high crime neighborhoods and by helping more families move to neighborhoods that are already safe.

Best Practices and Evidence-Based Strategies

For any given challenge, it is not enough to simply have a program; that program must *work*. The most effective programs have in common a focus on performance and measuring results. Programs in Flint should establish consensus-driven, outcome-oriented goals and constantly strive to measure and improve performance. At the same time, it is necessary to monitor and learn from strategies and programs that have been proven to work elsewhere. Below are several promising initiatives that could inform strategies in Flint.

We start with early childhood education, for several reasons. First, it was a common theme in community outreach sessions—we must get kids started on the right track. Second, it makes sense that the first two MBK goals—entering school ready to learn and reading at grade level in third grade—form the foundation for everything else. It is often said that the first few years of school children are “learning to read” and after 3rd grade they are “reading to learn.” If a child is already falling behind by third grade, all subsequent goals become much more difficult to achieve. Finally, research has shown that effective early childhood education can have an incredible impact on a person’s educational and life trajectory. According to a recent report from the White House Council of Economic Advisers, early childhood education programs improve educational outcomes for participating youth, increase their earning potential as adults, reduce their involvement with the criminal justice system, and increase the employment rate for their mothers. Altogether, every \$1 spent on early childhood education produces approximately \$8.60 in benefits to society.⁶ In Flint, there are 157 early childhood education centers participating in the Great Start to Quality rating system, but only 2 are rated in the highest quality category.⁷

⁶ This is an estimate based on many studies. Some studies have shown significantly higher benefits. For example, a report from The PEW Center on the States indicates that each dollar invested in early childhood education yields a return of \$10.

⁷ Flint & Genesee Literacy Needs & Services Assessment. 2014.

Another education initiative with demonstrated success is a literacy initiative known as the Minnesota Reading Corps. The Minnesota Reading Corps delivers evidence-based literacy tutoring to approximately 21,000 students per year at 142 Pre-K sites and 323 K-3 sites.⁸ HOPE Network has launched a similar initiative – the Michigan Education Corps – throughout Michigan and is active in Flint at the Brownell Holmes STEM Academy. This is a promising new initiative that incorporates strategies that have been proven to work. It is also undergoing a rigorous evaluation in partnership with the University of Michigan’s Ford School of Public Policy.

Continuing with education, there is a growing body of research suggesting that it takes a *comprehensive, coordinated approach* to break the cycle of poverty and poor educational outcomes. We can’t simply send kids to school for 7 hours a day and assume that’s enough for them to learn. There must be a vision for *collective impact*, with many different partners coming together to focus on specific goals. A few examples of best practices in collective impact include the Strive Partnership in Cincinnati and the Pathways to Education program in Toronto.

Under the Strive Partnership, leaders of local government, public schools, foundations, and social service agencies work together to ensure that kids are being supported along the education continuum, from “cradle to career”. The defining characteristics of the Strive Partnership is its focus on performance measurement; the collaborating entities agreed on a single set of goals, and created an infrastructure to share data and measure progress. Strive also creates a structure for cross-sector engagement and continuous communication. Participating organizations are grouped into networks by type of activity, such as those involved with early childhood education, and meet on a regular basis to discuss progress and learn from each other. The Strive partnership is widely praised, including by the White House My Brother’s Keeper Task Force. Fortunately, the model of the Strive Partnership is already being used to inform a promising new initiative in Flint: the Flint and Genesee Literacy Basic Skills Network (Literacy Network, for short). The Literacy Network has brought together dozens of different organizations working to improve literacy and basic skills. They are already actively working to identify shared goals and develop the infrastructure to measure progress. The Literacy Network has created working groups around each of its goals and will continue to convene those groups to hold each other accountable. This is a step in the right direction and must be actively supported by all organizations working to improve educational opportunity for Flint’s youth.

In contrast to the Strive Partnership, which is concerned primarily with the coordination of *organizations*, the Pathways to Education program is concerned with the coordination of *programs*. Pathways focuses primarily on high school aged youth and takes a place-based approach—that is, the program is focused specifically on youth living in one public housing development. Pathways uses a multi-faceted approach that combines tutoring, mentoring, financial support, and counseling from a “student-parent support worker” (SPSW) who provides information and helps guide the student on a wide range of issues. The SPSW is the core of Pathways; they meet at least twice a month with each student, communicate regularly with parents, work closely with schools to monitor absenteeism and grades, and coordinate the other three components of Pathways. Each SPSW is responsible for approximately 50 students. The Pathways tutoring program is mandatory (at least twice a week), takes place in the evening, and relies on volunteer tutors. Mentoring is a group activity rather than 1-on-1 and is meant to foster social and group work skills. These group mentoring activities take place every two weeks. The final pillar of Pathways is financial; students receive public transportation tickets and school supplies, which help them with their education and provide an immediate incentive. Receipt of these incentives is conditional upon good attendance and participants report that the incentives have a strong

⁸ Evaluation Report 2011-12. <https://minnesotareadingcorps.org/about/evaluation-reports>

effect on keeping them in school. Students who complete the program also receive a scholarship of up to \$4,000 for post-secondary education. Research on the program suggests that it increases graduation rates of participants by 20 percentage points and increases post-secondary enrollment by 16 percentage points. The program costs approximately \$4,700 per student per year. In Michigan, the Department of Human Services has created a program called Pathways to Potential, which shares some characteristics of Pathways to Education--in particular, the use of "success coaches" to work with children in a role like that of a counselor. However, Flint schools have only one success coach each, which is nowhere close to the 50:1 ratio of Pathways to Education.

Another strategy for helping young men of color lies outside the standard classroom-based educational system: apprenticeships. According to Tom Perez, US Secretary of Labor, "Hands-on apprenticeships, where workers earn and learn at the same time, are a proven path to good, secure middle-class jobs." Some studies suggest that apprentices see their lifetime earnings increase by as much as \$300,000 compared to their peers. Research also suggests that employers benefit as well – getting \$1.47 in benefits for every \$1 invested. In spite of this evidence, apprenticeships are rare in the United States; only 375,000 people across the United States were participating in apprenticeship programs in 2014. The United States would need 6 times as many apprentices to be on the same level as Great Britain and 16 times as many to match Germany. The federal government recognizes the need to provide more apprenticeships and recently made available \$100 million in new funding to support American Apprenticeship Grants.

Another promising evidence-based strategy is the Becoming a Man (BAM) program in Chicago, which is focused on violence prevention among high school males. BAM helps these young men develop social-cognitive skills to better control their emotions and resolve conflict without resorting to violence. BAM provides in school and after school programs such as group counseling, mentoring, and sports. Each session is built around a lesson designed to help participating youth develop a specific skill, such as learning to read social cues and interpret the intentions of others. A rigorous evaluation by researchers at the University of Chicago demonstrated that BAM reduces participants' violent crime arrests by 44% and significantly increases school engagement. The cost of BAM is approximately \$1,100 per participant but researchers estimate benefits of \$49,000 to \$119,000 per participant in the form of increased earnings and taxes paid, reductions in costs borne by victims of crime, and reduced reliance on public services (including jails and welfare programs). BAM strongly supports the My Brother's Keeper initiative and is expanding to additional schools in Chicago. While they have not expressed an intention to expand beyond Chicago, the strategies used by B.A.M could inform similar efforts in Flint, such as programs administered by the Youth Violence Prevention Center or any of the mentoring programs active in Flint.

Finally, it is important to recognize the fact that many young men of color in Flint are growing up in segregated neighborhoods with concentrated poverty—and furthermore, that they often live in public or assisted housing. In recent years, public housing sites in other cities have been transformed as part of comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategies. In 2010 the Obama administration created the Choice Neighborhoods initiative to transform distressed neighborhoods with public or assisted housing. The Obama administration has created similar programs focused on education (Promise Neighborhoods) and criminal justice (the Byrne initiative, which Flint recently received funding under). In Flint, several public housing complexes sit in the most distressed parts of the City; in particular, River Park and Atherton. These complexes have seen more than their share of violent crime, have incredibly high vacancy rates because many people refuse to live there (even with subsidized rents), and the residents are almost exclusively Black. The injustice of this situation has been underscored by the fact that in the first week of 2015 Atherton was the site of three murders, including a 19 year old young man and his mother. The City must break the cycle of violence in these communities to give the kids there a chance

to succeed. Fortunately, on January 16, 2015, The City of Flint and Flint Housing Commission were awarded a Choice Neighborhoods planning grant for Atherton. The City and FHC must work together to rebuild these communities to better integrate them into the rest of the city, or provide residents with an alternative in a safer neighborhood.

Section 5: Initial Action Plan for Flint

There is much work to be done to increase opportunities available to boys and young men of color. Many implementation strategies from the *Imagine Flint* Master Plan, such as the Literacy Network, are already under way and are relevant to the MBK goals. MBK can reinforce the importance of ongoing efforts, and it must also inspire us to do more. Below are new actions – many of which were identified in the Master Plan – that can be taken by the City and other community partners, including foundations, social service agencies, and businesses. These action items will help Flint’s youth develop 21st century *skills*, be *safe* from violent crime, and utilize *service* to accomplish the goals of MBK.

Skills

1. All stakeholders should ensure broad and active participation in the Flint and Genesee Literacy Network, which has already established a strong collaboration around education of all youth in Flint.
2. Flint Community Schools should continue with the pilot community education initiative at Brownell-Holmes as a successful model for providing a safe and supportive environment for youth and adults. This pilot should include family literacy and adult learning programming with workforce development, GED courses, ESL courses, and vocational training. It should be extended to additional sites throughout the City and other groups that provide safe, fun, educational after-school activities should also be reviewed to identify resources for expansion at new sites.
3. Area colleges and universities should build on their existing work to help connect Flint’s youth to higher education opportunities through pre-college prep and scholarships. These colleges and universities should also ensure that students, particularly young men of color, succeed once enrolled.
4. Area employers and non-profit organizations should expand summer youth employment opportunities, internships, and apprenticeships—particularly in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Safety

1. The Flint Police Department, residents, and community organizations such as churches should work in partnership to engage youth as volunteers in citizen-led public safety efforts like crime watches and radio patrols.
2. The City, Flint Police Department, and other partners will convene a youth summit to discuss issues related to safety and law enforcement, and to strengthen the relationship between the law enforcement community and young men.
3. Expand the role of neighborhood service centers (formerly police mini-stations), including the staffing of assigned community policing personnel to each location and the incorporation of service centers into other programs such as mediation and conflict resolution services.
4. The City of Flint should work with the SAGE coalition and schools to create safe walk to school routes, and ensure they are serviced by a complete sidewalk network and defined pedestrian crossings.
5. The Flint Housing Commission should take an active role in helping its residents access opportunity. In particular, FHC staff should work with responsible landlords to ensure that residents are able to use housing choice vouchers to lease units in safe neighborhoods. FHC should also review data on neighborhood conditions, and use that information to help residents decide where to live.

Service

1. Link Flint's youth with opportunities for national service programs such as AmeriCorps, particularly those for service in the Flint community. These positions provide a small stipend and funds for education expenses, but more importantly they provide exciting developmental opportunities and inspire a lifetime of service.
2. Encourage more adults to serve as mentors for at-risk children, in coordination with local non-profit organizations such as churches, and Big Brothers Big Sisters.
3. Ensure that service programs and members in Flint are working in concert with the MBK's goals and partners.

In addition to the actions above, the Mayor will create a **MBK Task Force** composed of residents and community leaders. This Task force would be challenged to review this report and to focus specifically on identifying policy changes that could be implemented by a variety of partners to eliminate or overcome barriers that limit boys and young men of color. This Task Force will provide a structure to ensure that people continue to come together, collaborate, and hold each other accountable. The Task Force would monitor progress on the overall MBK goals and issue a report to the community by January 31, 2016 with further recommendations for action.

The Flint MBK Task Force will have the direct responsibility to coordinate and convene partners. The Task Force should lead the community in pursuit of the many ideas and goals discussed throughout this report. In particular, the Task Force should work with the community to:

- Ensure that organizations work as partners rather than competitors.
- Encourage all members of the community to engage, volunteer, and be part of the solution.
- Reinforce expectations that programs rely on best practices and produce measurable results.
- Improve the quality of early childhood education, and encourage parents to take advantage of formal early childhood education opportunities.
- Increase coordination of the many organizations and systems that support youth – particularly families, schools, and social service providers.
- Ensure that young men of color and the groups that serve them are aware of and promoting opportunities related to workforce development.
- Work with the City and Flint Police Department to develop a comprehensive strategy to prevent at-risk youth from criminal activity.
- Develop a program and funding mechanism that allows all of Flint's children to attend a public college or university for free, similar to the Kalamazoo Promise or a Promise Zone.

Flint already has many remarkable individuals and organizations, every day committing themselves to supporting youth. Under the banner of My Brother's Keeper, we can do more, and do it better. Just as importantly, we can demonstrate results and share our successes. As President Obama said: **We've got unfinished work. And we know what to do.**

References and Resources

President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. 2015. *Interim Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

The Hidden Crisis: Improving the Life Chances of Genesee County's Most Vulnerable Youth. Available at <http://hiddencrisis.org/viewreport.asp>. Accessed May 4, 2015.

My Brother's Keeper Task Force Report to the President. May 2014. Available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/053014_mbk_report.pdf. Accessed May 4, 2015.

My Brother's Keeper Task Force One-Year Progress Report to the President. February 27, 2015. Available at <http://go.wh.gov/mADKdo>. Accessed May 4, 2015.

Building Place-Based Initiatives for Boys and Men of Color and Vulnerable Populations: A Community Planning Guide. PolicyLink. 2015. Available at http://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/pl_brief_bmocguide_magcloud.pdf. Accessed May 4, 2015.

Understanding the Environmental Contexts of Boys and Young Men of Color. The Urban Institute. February 2015. Available at <http://www.urban.org/research/publication/understanding-environmental-contexts-boys-and-young-men-color>. Accessed May 4, 2015.

Promoting Healthy Families and Communities for Boys and Young Men of Color. The Urban Institute. February 2015. Available at <http://www.urban.org/research/publication/promoting-healthy-families-and-communities-boys-and-young-men-color>. Accessed May 4, 2015.

Reducing Harms to Boys and Young Men of Color from Criminal Justice System Involvement. February 2015. Available at <http://www.urban.org/research/publication/reducing-harms-boys-and-young-men-color-criminal-justice-system-involvement>. Accessed May 4, 2015.

Evaluating Student Performance in Pathways to Education. Oreopoulos, Philip, et al. January 2015. Available at http://www.cdhowe.org/pdf/E-Brief_203.pdf. Accessed May 4, 2015.

Becoming a Man (BAM) Sports Edition: Research Brief. University of Chicago Crime Lab. July 2012. Available at <https://crimelab.uchicago.edu/page/becoming-man-bam-sports-edition-findings>. Accessed May 4, 2015.

Literacy Assessment for Flint & Genesee County. Flint & Genesee Literacy and Basic Skills Network. October 2014. Available at <http://flintandgenesee-literacy.weebly.com/publications.html>. Accessed May 4, 2015.

Additional resources available at <http://www.agmconnect.org/resources-tools/resources-and-opportunity-boys-men-color>. Accessed May 4, 2015.