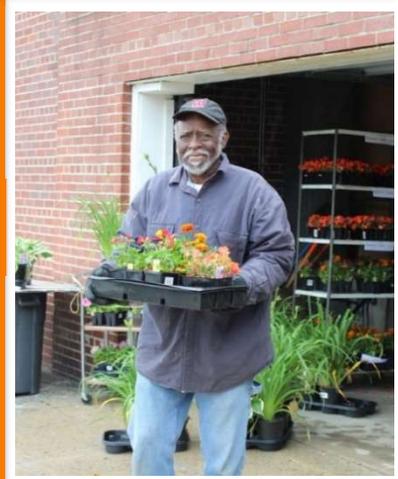




AMANI REVITALIZATION PLAN 2017



Prepared by Dominican Center
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Alicia Skeeter, Richard Diaz, and Pepper Ray
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INTRODUCTION

The Amani neighborhood is located just minutes north of downtown Milwaukee and is home to 8,369 people. Amani means “peace” in the Swahili language. It is an apt name for a neighborhood in which many residents are likely descendants of an African nation in which Swahili is spoken. It is also a significant name for a community that has been and continues to be deemed one of the most violent in Milwaukee. Peace is what Amani residents want; the peace that signals a healthy and strong community for its residents.

The purpose of the Amani Neighborhood Revitalization Plan is to provide a resident-informed path to an improved quality of life. It identifies a range of actions that can help realize a vision for future investment and development in Amani. Amani United, a network of residents and other community stakeholders, organizational partners, and public and private funders influenced the plan by coming together to use their collective resources on behalf of and informed by the neighborhood. An elected board of residents facilitates a meeting each month where ideas are shared to drive change for the community. Amani United has become a recognized and respected voice of the Amani community, ensuring that residents and partners uphold the shared values of the neighborhood.

Over the last two decades, four different community development/revitalization plans have been crafted for Amani.¹ The four plans were reviewed for insight into the commonalities and changes overtime.

Diverse planning methods were used to gather resident input, consistent with Building Neighborhood Capacity Program principles, which promote and support resident input and leadership at all levels of community decision making.² This plan builds upon neighborhood sets and

Common Themes In Past Amani Plans:

- **Challenges.** Education, affordable housing, youth development, crime/safety, economic development, and joblessness.
- **Goals To Improve.** Amani housing stock, the unemployment rate, the supply of decent, affordable, and safe housing, and participation in crime prevention and safety programs.
- **Shared Results.** Quality housing, positive changes in neighborhood perception, youth involvement in community planning, and residents’ voices at decision tables with agencies, public officials, and the greater community.

Planning Methods to Gather Resident Input

- **Survey.** In April 2015, Housing Resources, Incorporated conducted the Community Impact Measurement Project. The project evaluated the neighborhood for quality and affordable housing, desirable neighborhood services/amenities, and resident engagement and confidence. 253 resident surveys were completed with the help of resident volunteers who were trained in the data collection process.

¹The four plans referenced are the Strategic Plan for Area Number 9 in 2000, the Caring Community Plan of 2009, the Amani Neighborhood Action Plan of 2012 and the 2014 draft BNCP Revitalization Plan

²The Building Neighborhood Capacity Program was launched in 2012 by the Obama Administration to catalyze community-driven change in neighborhoods that have historically faced barriers to revitalization. The Dominican Center for Women serves as the neighborhood partner organization or “anchor” for Amani. Through 2016, BNCP was funded by both local and federal sources, including the Northwestern Mutual Foundation, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and the U.S. Departments of Justice, Education, Housing and Urban Development—with additional support from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Zilber Family Foundation, the City of Milwaukee and a host of neighborhood organizations and cross-sector partners. Federal funding ends at the close of 2016, but residents and partners at both the neighborhood- and city-level in Milwaukee are committed to sustaining the program and working to implement this plan.

residents' hopes for the future to provide a path to reunite Amani residents and reestablish Amani as a welcoming neighborhood with opportunities for all.

ABOUT AMANI UNITED

Vision

- We are Amani United, a diverse group of residents determined to move forward toward a healthy and sustainable community.

Our Vision Is Guided By These Values

- **Integrity.** We are committed to our word and to the betterment of our community.
- **Accountability.** We, the people of this community, hold ourselves, our families, our neighbors, our elected officials, our community organizations, and our institutions accountable for the development, safety, and sustainability of our community.
- **Strong Relationships.** We want to develop collaborative partnerships that support and advocate for resident leadership.
- **Truth.** We are individuals who are not afraid to stand up for the truth or for any form of injustice our community may face.
- **Commitment.** We are dedicated to the development of our community. We commit our time and focus to the improvement of our neighborhood.

To Achieve Our Vision, We Will Fulfill Our Goals

- Increase collective efficacy and community peace.
- Improve Amani housing conditions and stimulate Amani economic development.
- Nurture and support family well-being and lifelong learning.

Planning Methods to Gather Resident Input

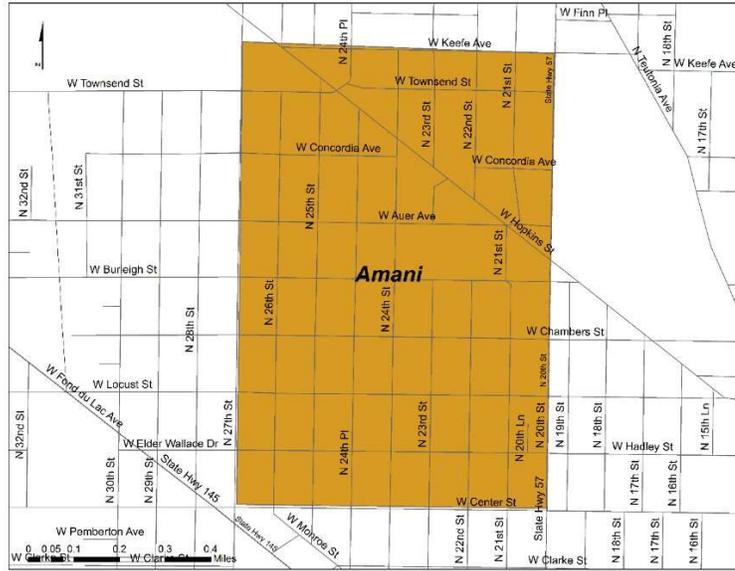
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- **Community Input Sessions.** BNCP staff hosted three community input sessions in August 2014, April 2015, and July 2015. Residents were asked: What got us here? What does a successful Amani look like? What will get us there? What is driving you?
- **Monthly Neighborhood Meetings.** The planning process built upon existing neighborhood structures: Dominican Center's First Saturday Amani Action Group, a monthly meeting of homeowners and residents interested in Amani revitalization; AMANI United, a monthly meeting of residents and partners; and Auer Avenue Community School.
- **Door-To-Door Campaigns/ Canvassing.** Door-to-door campaigns were utilized to get information to residents about meetings, activities, and community resources.
- **Neighborhood Activities.** Block parties, back to school events, and community celebrations such as the opening of Moody Park were all intentional activities to build relationships between BNCP staff and residents to further understand and develop Amani neighborhood priorities.

AMANI—PAST AND PRESENT

The Milwaukee neighborhood boundaries for Amani are not consistent in city documents. The recorded Amani boundaries for the Building Neighborhood Capacity Program are Keefe Avenue to Center and 20th to 27th Streets.

According to Milwaukee journalist John Gurda,³ the neighborhood currently known as Amani was given its name by Project Respect⁴ in 1997 when the city divided the north side into smaller neighborhoods to create a sense of community for residents.



The name can be seen as signaling both an admonition to and plea for a community that has been characterized as having been among the least safe and least resourced neighborhoods in Milwaukee—a distinction that earned it a place in the Obama Administration’s Building Neighborhood Capacity Program (BNCP).⁵

Understanding Amani’s history of differing fortunes over the years requires analyzing how racial and economic segregation combined to restrict opportunity. Amani’s residents are 92% African- American compared to 39% citywide. Today, over half (52%) of Amani residents live below the poverty line. Over a third of residents ages 20 to 64 (35%) are unemployed and actively seeking employment compared to 12% citywide. These statistics were not always the case. Over time, both national and local dynamics have shaped residents’ access to opportunity.

Between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries, the neighborhood thrived as industrial development attracted workers to Milwaukee. Manufacturing growth along the 30th Street corridor was typified by the A.O. Smith Company, a manufacturer of automobile frames, who at one time employed over 300 engineers in its research building alone. Manufacturing in Milwaukee reached its peak in the 1960s, but declined for decades thereafter as more and more companies left the city, taking high quality jobs with them.

The federal housing practice that segregated neighborhoods by race (using red lines on a map to designate black communities) limited both African Americans’ mobility (by concentrating them geographically on the city’s north side) and wealth (through devaluing their property).

³ Gurda, John. Milwaukee – City of Neighborhoods. Historic Milwaukee, Inc. 2015.

⁴ An organization that originally used basketball as a way to keep kids from the streets

⁵ As previously noted, the BNCP is an initiative of the Obama Administration’s neighborhood revitalization program, which provided financial and technical support to enhance the capacity of severely distressed neighborhoods to engage in a process with partners at the neighborhood and cross sector levels to develop revitalization plans. Since 2012, the BNCP has played a supporting role in coalescing residents and partners to work together on behalf of neighborhood development in Milwaukee’s Amani, Metcalfe Park and Muskego Way-Clarke Square-Historic Mitchell neighborhoods. As BNCP exits the partnership at the end of this year, this plan is testimony to the emergence of a partnership and program that has emerged as a strong advocate for Amani and an important player in citywide development

Once thriving and vibrant centers of neighborhood commerce and social interaction during the 1970s quickly fell victim to significant disinvestment, public policy (development of an interstate through the neighborhood), rising crime, and high vacancy rates as companies downsized or closed their doors. The national War on Drugs campaign began at the same time as Milwaukee's economic decline.⁶

In 1997, A.O. Smith, the largest remaining employer of neighborhood residents, sold its automotive division to Tower Automotive, which closed down in 2006. Soon thereafter, the country's 2008 financial meltdown and Great Recession led to massive job loss and foreclosures, leaving those who could least afford to weather the storm to bear the worst loss of employment, income, and wealth.

Today, Amani residents face many economic and educational barriers. Median earnings for Amani residents are \$19,636 compared to \$27,285 citywide. About one-third (35% of males and 30% of females) ages 18 to 24 in Amani have no high school diploma or equivalent compared to 21% of males and 13% of females citywide. A statistic even more alarming is the age bracket of 25 to 34, where less than 1% of males (.8%) and 6% of females (5.7%) have a bachelor's degree or higher. A large percentage of Amani residents who are employed work in service occupations (median earnings \$16,062), 42% compared to 24% citywide, and lack the training and education, because of the poor quality of schools and absence of training programs in the neighborhood, to qualify for higher-paying jobs.

In an economy where two wage earners are often needed to make ends meet, 51.6% of households in Amani are headed by single parents, slightly higher than double the citywide rate of 28.3%. Many residents struggle to cover the cost of food, housing, and other basic needs. Over two-thirds (69%) of occupied housing units in Amani are rented, compared to 57% citywide. Yet, rental costs are higher in Amani than in other areas of the city. The most common monthly rental rate is between \$1,000 and \$1,249, which is higher than the city's most common rental rate of \$800 and \$899.

Despite these challenges, or perhaps because of them, many Amani residents believe in the potential for change; that if they work with each other and partnership with neighborhood organizations and city-level stakeholders, they can bring attention to the policies and practices that hold back progress—while simultaneously coming together as neighbors for mutual support. Building upon a history of community action in Amani and through BNCP, residents and partners are developing the capacity to achieve the results residents desire and address the issues that plague the community. Residents and partners are excited about recent signs of progress and success in the neighborhood, facilitated through the creation of Amani United, BNCP efforts, and support of community partners.

⁶ Gurda. Op Cit.

DEVELOPING A FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE

Located at 2470 W. Locust Street, the Dominican Center for Women is a well-respected institution in Amani, with a history of providing adult education/GED programs, home ownership assistance, and supporting resident action and choice in matters that concern their neighborhood and lives. BNCP was seen as a natural fit for a place that sought to support resident decision-making and involvement in the programs run by the Center.

Prior to the onset of BNCP, two resident groups had already formed. One group of primarily older homeowners met the first Saturday of each month at the Dominican Center. The other group, ACAG (Amani Community Advisory Group), was formed by Children's Hospital to focus on the resources needed to sustain and support a family clinic and the needs of children and their caregivers. ACAG met on the second Tuesday of each month. Each group discussed a proposal to develop a neighborhood association to enable residents to access resources for home ownership and to develop neighbor relationships. Through a discernment process, the two groups combined to form Amani United.

BNCP site coordinators and organizers, through their canvassing activities, were disturbed to find great numbers of people in the neighborhood who did not recognize "Amani" as the name of the place where they lived, along with apathy and social distance among residents who kept to themselves or to their blocks. In response, a number of activities were engaged to support resident connectedness, cohesion, and ownership of their neighborhood, including civic engagement training, block-by-block street mobilization efforts, prayer vigils, family gatherings, a Taste of Amani event, and finally, a neighborhood branding campaign.

THE "I AM AMANI" CAMPAIGN

The "I AM AMANI" campaign of 2014 was a resident mobilization effort to promote a more positive neighborhood identity. Previously, many people in Amani identified themselves by the block they lived on, but had not identified themselves as being a part of a larger community. Through the "I AM AMANI" campaign, the theme of unifying as a neighborhood began.



Community members took on the task of promoting the "I Am Amani" movement. The campaign provided t-shirts and yard signs to residents in a public declaration of one unified neighborhood. A city hall event, which residents attended en masse with Amani signs to advocate for their community's needs, cemented the name of the neighborhood and its residents in the public's mind and in turn, attracted attention from civic, philanthropic, and neighborhood partners.

The campaign also energized previously uninvolved residents, who together with the existing groups, decided to come together as one group. This led to the development of the vision and values statement for the Amani neighborhood and a resident-led space where important neighborhood issues could be discussed, decisions made, and resources identified and garnered.

Over time, Amani United has become the go-to space for organizational and funding partners to learn about residents' needs and to work together with them to develop responsive programs. Each year, elections are held to select the resident officers of Amani United.

The group has been recognized for a number of accomplishments achieved through this work, including the following activities:

- **Moody Park Revitalization.** Residents worked together with Milwaukee County Parks and COA in the design and decision-making of a \$2 million neighborhood park renovation. More than 500 people commemorated the opening of the New Moody Park on August 20, 2015. This event culminated a more than twelve year neighborhood effort to revitalize this cherished park.



- **Neighborhood Beautification Projects and Block Watches.** Community gardens, neighborhood clean-ups, and painting of boarded up homes through the Painting with Purpose project have helped improve the look of Amani. Block watch groups have been created to help maintain the look and safety of the neighborhood.
- **Nonprofit Center's 2015 Excellence for Community Organizing.** With support from the Dominican Center, Amani community organizing efforts were honored with the 2015 Nonprofit Center Excellence Award. With the foundation created through these efforts, residents and partners are committed to building upon the positive momentum underway and developing the resources needed for plan implementation.

The following are some of the organizational assets that this plan builds upon:

- **Dominican Center.** The Dominican Center, located at 2470 W. Locust Street, works with Amani residents and partners to build a better future. The Dominican Center offers adult basic education/GED classes, support with home repairs, and space for residents to come together to solve problems affecting the neighborhood. The Dominican Center believes Amani residents are experts in their own lives and therefore integral to every decision made for the Amani community.
- **Amani Community Advisory Group (ACAG).** In 2011, a Children's Hospital of Wisconsin initiative, in partnership with the COA Goldin Center, started to discover the needs of the community through focus sessions. This eventually led to a new family clinic arriving in Amani late 2013. ACAG and the First Saturday Group merged to become Amani United.
- **Amani United.** Amani United is a partnership among residents, community stakeholders and neighborhood partners and is governed by an elected board of residents. As a collective, Amani United has become the voice of the Amani community to ensure that shared values of the community are upheld by resident leaders and members and that residents and partners develop a coordinated voice to address neighborhood concerns. The group meets monthly at the COA Goldin Center, 2320 W. Burleigh Street.
- **COA Goldin Center.** Located at 2320 W. Burleigh Street, the center provides youth development, early childhood education (The Burke Center), after-school programs, and family support services (The Ethel Nutis Gill Family Resource Center). It also coordinates

the publishing process and printing of the Amani United neighborhood newsletter. Nova School, an alternative Milwaukee Public School, is also housed at the COA Goldin Center.

- **Children’s Hospital Primary Clinic.** Located within the COA Goldin Center at 2320 W. Burleigh Street, the clinic provides primary care services to children from birth to adulthood and their caregivers. The clinic is managed by nurse practitioners from Marquette University. Services include annual physicals, sports physicals, immunizations, and same day appointments for urgent care.
- **Auer Avenue School.** One of four Milwaukee Public community schools, Auer Avenue School offers a standards-based curriculum implementing the Community Schools model, an engaging curriculum, a positive learning environment, and an after-school Community Learning Center (CLC) program with academic support and recreational activities. Auer Avenue, located at 2319 W. Auer Avenue, is transforming the way schools interact with students, families, and the surrounding community to better support the whole child.
- **Bethesda Baptist Church.** Located at 2909 N. Locust Street, Bethesda Baptist Church offers community family meals, developmental programs for youth, an annual community cookout/ resource fair for the Amani community, and a welcoming atmosphere for worship and Bible study.
- **Gwen T. Jackson Early Childhood and Elementary School.** Located at 2121 W. Hadley Street, Gwen T. Jackson is a Milwaukee Public School that offers positive behavioral interventions and support to decrease disruptions and suspensions and increase achievement and makes a “Student Achievement Guarantee in Education.” Staff members are dedicated to developing human potential.
- **Wisconsin Black Historical Society/Museum.** Located at 2620 W. Center Street, the museum preserves the history of African Americans in Wisconsin. Tours and exhibits highlighting African American history in Wisconsin, as well as workshops and presentations, are provided. The building is a host site for community meetings and social events and a learning center for youth and adults.

NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PRIORITIES

Priority One: Neighborhood Safety

From the beginning partners identified a connection between resident engagement and the development of a safe and peaceful neighborhood. Staff and residents at the Dominican Center for Women, the neighborhood anchor organization for BNCP, agreed that specific safety issues— including crime and violence—needed to be addressed head on. However, in identifying the root causes of these challenges, they also lifted up the need to better understand and respond to the barriers that prevented people who lived and worked in Amani from coming together for mutual support and collective action. They also emphasized the importance of bringing people together to hold each other, community organizations, elected officials, and other city institutions accountable for the safety, development, and sustainability of Amani.

⁷The edges of Amani’s boundaries are considered to be 20th Street and Keefe to 27th Street and Keefe; and 20th, 21st, 22nd, 25th, and Locust to Center.

As described previously in the plan, this emphasis on community building is rooted in trust and relationships that contributed to the development of neighborhood groups such as Amani United, the First Saturday Group, the Amani Safety Team, and Friends of Moody Park. These groups each engaged between 4 and 20 residents during regular meetings and up to 90 residents in the past year alone and mobilized residents and partners to work together to make progress on community priorities. Four neighborhood block watches in Amani also proved to be opportunities for resident involvement that are focused on keeping their neighborhood safe.



While these existing groups are strong assets to build upon, there is a need to continue to increase and diversify participation—with a particular emphasis on engaging residents who are currently not represented—including youth and young adults (ages 15–30), renters, and those living on the edges of Amani’s boundaries.⁷ There is also a need to build bridges between resident groups who do not currently interact, such as youth/young adults and their elders. In Amani, 23% of residents are between the ages of 10 and 24, while 18.6% are over the age of 55. While Amani remains predominantly African-American, it is also notable that the percentage has declined from 97.2% in 2000 to 92.1% in 2014, which increases the need for residents to learn how to bridge differences with neighbors from other cultures and backgrounds.

When discussing safety issues in the neighborhood, adults frequently name the youth as the “problem” and emphasize the importance of providing them with safe spaces to gather, mentors, and jobs as important solutions. But what do the youth name as the “problem” in their community? Amani youth are also residents, and they should have the opportunity to speak for themselves, which will require paying particular attention to youth organizing and leadership development.

Providing opportunities for **all** residents to participate in the decisions that affect their lives is key to creating a safer neighborhood. To do so will require coming together with partners—at both the neighborhood and city levels—and working in new ways across differences in race, class, and power. Residents and partners alike need support and training as they take on new roles and responsibilities, from building trust and resolving conflicts to understanding and addressing racism and violence.

The people who live and work in Amani must also increase their voice and build power through civic participation, from increasing voting and registration rates to attending public meetings. To accomplish this forward movement requires understanding the fundamentals, such as who can vote, how to vote, as well as the backgrounds of individual candidates and policy issues facing Amani.

⁸ A community prosecutor is an assistant district attorney who works directly in Milwaukee’s communities and is housed in each of the seven Milwaukee police district stations. The focus is on proactive crime-prevention law enforcement model to increase in quality of life in Milwaukee neighborhoods.

⁹ Safe and Sound’s mission is to unite residents, youth, law enforcement and community resources to build safe and empowered neighborhoods. It was founded with the theory that improvements in public safety require the combination of law enforcement, community organizing, and youth development.

¹⁰ For instance, looking at NPS area 9 which overlaps with parts of the Amani neighborhood boundaries, there were over double the number of assaults per 1000 residents in the neighborhood compared to citywide: 36.22 compared to 15.46. This ratio was roughly the same for burglaries: 20.45 per 1000 residents in NPS area 9 compared to only 10.28 per 1000 residents citywide.

Voter participation soared during the Obama years, but decreased in off-year elections:

- In 2008 and 2012, years in which President Obama was on the ballot, 99.5% and 82.4% of registered voters cast their vote.
- In the 2010 and 2014 elections, only 59.9% and 61.2% of those registered voted, respectively.
- Between 2010 and 2014, the number of Amani residents registered to vote dropped from 5,740 to 5,221.

In addition to these long-term and ongoing efforts, residents want action on specific safety challenges, which will require coming together with partners including District 5 of the Milwaukee Police Department, the Community Prosecution Unit,⁸ Safe and Sound,⁹ and Amani's Aldermen. According to the Community Impact Measurement Project administered in Amani, 57% of those surveyed identified "crime and crime-promoting behaviors" as the thing they liked least about the neighborhood, including examples such as people using or selling drugs, gun violence, and lack of police presence. In addition, residential focus groups highlighted additional safety concerns: illegal and problematic behavior around corner stores, and speeding around 23rd and Auer Avenue.

According to data from the Milwaukee Police department, between 2012 and 2014, there was 31.5% reduction in crime in Milwaukee's Amani neighborhood compared to a 9.7% decrease citywide. While this trend is encouraging, crime rates in Amani remain significantly elevated over the rest of the city.¹⁰

Neighborhood Safety Strategies

Foster Positive Communication and Relationships Between Neighbors.

- Support and encourage neighbors getting to know each other on their blocks.
- Hold neighborhood celebrations and activities on key blocks in the neighborhood, both to honor blocks where residents have been active in past activities and to engage those blocks where residents have not participated in our activities and/or connected with each other.
- Partner with residents, Safe and Sound, District 5, and Aldermen to add block watch clubs where needed.
- Use Moody Park and other open space, including empty lots, as community space to bring neighbors together.
- Offer programming in Moody Park, including activities focused on sports, education, social activities, music events, celebrations, and safety.
- Hold community building events in empty lots to get neighbors acquainted with each other and provide resources and information about other ways to get involved in the neighborhood.
- Hold community building events, such as an annual Neighborhood Day that brings together all of Amani.

Provide Resident and Partner Leadership Development and Training Opportunities.

- Increase and diversify resident participation in Amani United, including holding annual elections for the resident board and exploring the costs and benefits of pursuing 501(c)3 designation as a nonprofit organization.
- Increase resident membership in the Safety Team, First Saturday Group, and Friends of Moody Park.
- Provide leadership development and training for members of Amani United, Friends of Moody Park, Amani Safety Team, the First Saturday Group, and other community partnerships and resident groups, including a focus on topics such as board structure, decision-making, facilitation, conflict resolution, program development, and financial management.
- Work with residents to better understand what leadership development and training opportunities they would like to access, such as conflict resolution and safety, and work with partners to help provide it.

Encourage Youth Participation And Leadership Development.

- Hire a youth organizer to spearhead youth participation (ages 14 to 24) and leadership development activities.
- Provide opportunities for adult residents and youth to develop relationships by, for instance, holding local events to nurture intergenerational relationships and mentoring.
- Partner youth with senior citizens to help with minor home projects.
- Provide quarterly events for youth and seniors to enjoy an activity at Moody Park.
- Cultivate youth-led community action groups and connect them with Amani United to identify opportunities to work together.

Foster Civic Engagement in Amani.

- Provide opportunities to learn about the political process and civic engagement.
- Provide training on how to navigate city government.
- Hold candidate forums and/or invite candidates to speak at Amani United meetings.
- Increase access to voter education, including who is eligible to vote, how to register, and where and how to vote.
- Conduct "Get out the Vote" activities.
- Connect neighbors to neighbors to encourage each other to go to the polls and assist those who need help getting to the polls to vote.
- Engage residents to canvass blocks around their homes and encourage neighbors to vote.
- Increase resident participation in public meetings (e.g., aldermanic meetings, housing meetings, and city planning meetings).

¹¹ Rental rates stayed consistent between 2010 and 2014. The most common monthly mortgage cost for owner-occupied housing was actually the same as the most common monthly rent: \$1,000 to \$1,249.

¹² A University of Wisconsin Madison 2013 report, Wisconsin's Mass Incarceration of African American Males: Workforce Challenges for 2013, states "prison time is the most serious barrier to employment, making ex-offender populations the most difficult to place and sustain full-time employment." <https://www4.uwm.edu/eti/2013/BlackImprisonment.pdf>

Work with Residents and Partners to Address Public Safety Concerns.

- Work with the Milwaukee Police Department, Safe and Sound, and the Community Prosecution Unit to help residents report suspicious/nuisance activities.
- Work with residents, Safe and Sound, and the Community Prosecution Unit to monitor local convenience stores with a focus on what's sold in stores and whether owners are positively contributing to the neighborhood (i.e., supporting community events and addressing loitering and other negative activities).
- Work with residents, Safe and Sound, District 5, and Aldermen/women to slow traffic down on local streets.

Priority Two: Housing and Economic Development

Improving housing conditions and increasing economic development in Amani are key strategies to enhance economic security and opportunity for residents. At the individual level, many residents live in poor, unaffordable housing conditions leading to frequent moves and making it more difficult to save. The most common rental rate in Amani is more than doubled between 2000 and 2010: rising from \$450 to \$499 in 2000 to \$1,000 to \$1,249 in 2010.¹¹ Renters, in particular, are at high risk of eviction and often face little recourse when landlords fail to monitor their properties or do not respond to repairs and safety issues.

At the same time, over one third (35%) of Amani residents in the labor market are unemployed, with even greater rates for groups such as residents with criminal records and parents with children under six years of age.¹² Strikingly, male residents in Amani who are actively searching for a job have much higher rates of unemployment than woman: 45.7% compared to 27.5%. For those residents who lack jobs altogether or are employed in jobs with low wages or inconsistent hours, meeting basic needs can become a daily challenge and climbing the economic ladder becomes out of reach.

At the community level, Amani residents view improving housing quality and reducing neighborhood blight as a way to reduce crime, attract economic development and improve the quality of life for all.¹³ When BNCP started, residents noted that boarded-up houses were a safety issue as they sometimes served as the sites of drug deals, sexual assaults, and fires. High unemployment meant that residents of all ages were idle and often resorted to illegal activity to make ends meet. They noted that economic development was important, not only to improve the services and supports available in the community for residents—including access to healthy food and fair financial services—but also to increase the number and quality of jobs available in the community.

When it comes to housing issues, residents often feel they lack a voice in decision-making and policy development, i.e. when developers who get city tax credits grant funding. To rehab city-owned houses or build new on city-owned lots, the community has no say in the design or locations of the projects, and long term Amani renters are not given preference to buy new homes. Residents also feel that scattered site development in the neighborhood leaves gaps

¹³The total number of parcels within the Amani neighborhood is 1,979. As of April 2016, there were 232 city-owned vacant lots for boundaries Center to Keefe, 20th to 27th. There were 30 vacant structures pending demolition in various levels of priority, of which 19 are listed as city-owned. There were 26 pending bank foreclosures, 204 properties were 1 year tax delinquent, and 259 properties were 2+ years tax delinquent. There were 101 city-owned improved properties (19 pending demolition) (75 are vacant; 26 are occupied) and 188 vacant buildings in total.

in blocks unaddressed and would like more attention to the areas around new builds and rehabbed properties (e.g., new curbs, porches, landscaping, sidewalk, and fence repairs). Resident input on these housing issues will require more resident participation in city planning and development meetings.

Commercial development and small businesses are also needed to provide employment and wealth-building opportunities to Amani residents. To make sure new jobs benefit all residents requires increasing access to workforce development and skills training that leads to job placement, particularly for those with barriers to employment such as criminal records. There is also a need to better integrate adult and workforce development offerings to provide job readiness training and placement services for adults and summer jobs and mentorship positions at local corporations and nonprofits for promising youth. Starting their own businesses is of particular interest to many residents, who would benefit from access to training on topics such as business plan development, financial management, and better connections to entrepreneurship resources/funding.

Housing and Economic Development Strategies

Improve Neighborhood Conditions Related to Housing and Blight.

- Partner with Safe and Sound and the City Housing Authority to create neighborhood standards for landlords and tenants.
- Increase resident participation in the city's development and planning discussions.
- Ensure that housing development in Amani is informed by resident voice, including promoting new and rehabbed housing initiatives to include block by block vs. scattered sites development.
- Advocate for effective responses to vacant lots and houses, including keeping blighted properties safe and secure and making them available to residents for purchase.

Enhance Workforce Development and Job Placement Opportunities.

- Increase resident participation in the city's economic development planning discussions.
- Advocate that workforce development programs incorporate opportunities for training and education, including financial literacy.
- Promote job placement that includes people with criminal records.
- Connect Amani adult learning centers with workforce development organizations Employ Milwaukee and RiverWorks.¹⁴

¹⁴ Employ Milwaukee is the workforce development board serving Milwaukee County. It is part of the public workforce system made up of federal, state and local offices that support economic expansion and develop the talent of Milwaukee County's workforce. River Works is a resident-business partnership focused on developing an expanding business base, a skilled labor force, and thriving families and neighborhoods.

¹⁵ NIDC works with city departments, community-based agencies, financial institutions, developers, local foundations, and most importantly, residents, to improve Milwaukee's neighborhoods. NLI is a free and in-depth ten-month leadership development program for leaders engaged – or planning to engage – in the community.

¹⁶ http://www.communityschools.org/aboutschools/what_is_a_community_school.aspx

Support Neighborhood Entrepreneurship and Community-Owned Businesses.

- Seek funding to solicit and support Amani resident entrepreneurial ventures and small businesses initiatives in the neighborhood.
- Connect resident entrepreneurs to Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation (NIDC) grants, cross sector small grants and Neighborhood Leadership Institute (NLI) training.¹⁵

Priority Three: Education and Family Well-Being

The Amani residents hope to attract and retain young families in the neighborhood while ensuring that older residents can still call Amani home. To address this desire, the plan calls for building healthy partnerships with community organizations, local schools, churches, and parks to support access to community resources and a variety of family enrichment activities. Residents believe that education and family well-being are closely linked to quality schools for children and youth. Opportunities for lifelong learning develop self-esteem, highlight Amani talents, and ensure individual and community success.

Five of the six schools in and near Amani are elementary schools, with the exception of NOVA, which is a combined elementary and secondary school. As of 2014, Gwen T. Jackson was the only school to meet expectations on the Milwaukee Public School (MPS) Score Card.

In 2015, Auer Ave became a Community School, with an “integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement, [which] leads to improved student learning, stronger families, and healthier communities.”¹⁶ The community has supported Auer in their efforts because residents attended Auer and do not want to see any school in the neighborhood close. Members of Amani United joined the community advisory council at Auer Avenue School to participate in planning and programming for the school to promote active parent engagement in their child’s learning and to provide a range of family supports and opportunities in partnership with the school administration.

COA Youth and Family Center is another critical Amani partner organization whose mission is to help Milwaukee children, teens, and families reach their greatest potential through a continuum of educational, recreational and social work programs. COA helps to connect Amani residents with information about community resources and partners with Amani United to produce and distribute a community newsletter. COA, in turn, benefits from Amani United’s community outreach and resident engagement activities. Local churches are other potential resources for help to provide positive summer activities for local children.

Schools and partner organizations like the Dominican Center for Women and COA to better connect Amani residents with services, supports and opportunities. Residents have far-ranging needs, from legal issues (e.g., related to landlord and tenant disputes, debt collections, payday loans, etc.) to health care (insurance, preventative care, diabetes management, mental health, and drug and alcohol abuse, etc.), to a range of literacy and employment challenges. Many organizations and partners exist to fill these needs, but residents often lack information about how to access the services and supports that are available.

When it comes to family well-being, residents have expressed a particular need to support youth and families who have been the victims of violence or have experienced other forms of loss, stress, and trauma. Developing partnerships between organizations that have experience addressing trauma, such as Project Ujima at the Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin and/or local university’s social work programs, and Auer Avenue Community School and NOVA middle school could bring more resources to Amani to meet youth needs. For instance, Project Ujima provides crisis intervention and case management, social and emotional support, youth development and mentoring, and mental health and medical services to youth victims of violence who come to the emergency room. Building upon that model, a neighborhood-based program could bring these services and supports directly to local schools.

Education and Family Well-Being Strategies

Deepen Partnerships with Neighborhood Organizations Focused on Education and Family Well-Being.

- Support Auer Avenue School in promoting community school concept in Amani.
- Support COA in promoting family and youth summer camps for Amani, the Burke Early Education Center, and parenting classes.
- Encourage local churches to offer summer activities for kids in the community such as art and reading camps.

Connect Residents and Families with the Services and Supports They Need

- Hold regular resources fairs that provide information on:
 - Job opportunities
 - Adult education, literacy and computer class opportunities
 - Free legal aid help and information
 - Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (ADOA) prevention programs
- Hold health fairs that provide:
 - Immunizations
 - Blood pressure checks
 - Health insurance information

Connect Youth with Support to Address Loss, Stress, and Trauma

- Develop partnerships between local schools and programs like the Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin’s Project Ujima to stop the cycle of violent crimes through crisis intervention, case management, and social and emotional support for youth victims of violence.
- Work with local college and universities’ supervised clinical social work practicum students to offer support groups in local schools to address loss, stress and trauma.

CONCLUSION

The Amani neighborhood, over time, has been overwhelmed by a concentration of problems caused by those who did not live in the neighborhood. These have included redlining; city policies of disinvestment in neighborhoods of color; an increase in crime caused by the lack of resources and absence of opportunity; mass incarceration driven by restrictive justice policies that punished poor people of color much more harshly than it did others; the war on drugs; and the housing market collapse—a result of sub-prime and predatory lenders targeting the lower income poor families, which caused a rise in foreclosures as homeowners defaulted on their homes. These policies and decisions have contributed to the loss of long-term Amani neighborhood residents who historically played an important role in maintaining stability, and finally again to the underemployment, job scarcity, and further loss of an economic infrastructure in the community that the neighborhood faces today.

These issues have consistently been raised by the voice of Amani residents over the years through the development of four previous plans and are now echoed and expanded upon in this current version. This Amani Neighborhood Action Plan provides a rationale to conclude that the following areas of focus are particularly important to Amani's revitalization in combination with the other strategies outlined in the plan:

- **Active Youth Engagement.** The most important source of change in any neighborhood is the engagement of all residents. Demographics show that the Amani neighborhood is a community of young people. Without their voice in planning for their community any plan for revitalization would represent less than half of neighborhood residents. The perfect time for youth to be engaged in creating new possibilities for the direction of their neighborhood is while they are searching for personal direction. Actively engaging the neighborhood's youth in neighborhood revitalization would provide personal development for the youth, bridge the generation gap and increase collective efficacy and community pride.
- **Public Safety and Family Well-Being.** The Amani neighborhood has a history of crime, which has affected the neighborhood's perception of safety, its marketability, and residents' ability to connect as a community. The perception of Amani as a dangerous place is held among Amani residents as well as throughout the city and impacts decisions about where to live, shop, and locate commercial business. It also affects overall community marketability, cohesion, and family well-being.
- **Housing as a Major Key to Neighborhood Stability.** Where there are foreclosures and vacant properties, you will find health risks and opportunities for crime within a neighborhood. Scattered throughout Amani neighborhoods are numerous boarded-up and vacant homes. Boarded-up and abandoned properties in a neighborhood lead to arson, numerous safety violations, and decreases in property values of neighboring lots and in marketability for the community. The Amani neighborhood could decrease blight and increase family well-being and neighborhood confidence by rehabilitating foreclosed and vacant homes.
- **Commercial and Economic Development.** A neighborhood with the capacity to be sustainable is one that is able to support local business development, as well as employment opportunities for its residents. Many of the challenges that affect Amani residents stem from resource deprivation which affects both day-to-day life and longer-term access to opportunity.

The above are the four ingredients that, collectively, we believe are essential to Amani's revitalization. Multiple factors over time have created today's Amani, requiring decades of action and inaction. Replacing this with a more forward thinking vision will also take time. As a collective, Amani United has made important beginning steps in each of these areas over the past four years. Important resources have been garnered, especially within our safety priority. We will need to lean on our partnership to ensure that we are able to aggressively incorporate the other areas of our vision and mission.

Accomplish means two things: Amani will be made a safer, healthier community; and residents and resource partners will work together on a development process to continue and sustain positive change.

Before Building Neighborhood Capacity, the Amani residents wanted to schedule a conversation with their Alderman. Residents questioned the Alderman about the fact that Amani seemed to be a place where others came to dump trash, where the city resettled sex predators and felons, and was a place where the city did not attend to city-owned boarded-up and abandoned buildings. His response to their question was that Amani was the "area of least resistance" in the city.

The work accomplished in the neighborhood over the past four years and the existence of this plan for moving forward are evidence that the title of "least resistance" is no longer the case in Amani, and has been replaced by a positive movement for change.

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Dominican Center

2470 West Locust Street
Milwaukee, WI 532016

414-444-9930

www.dominican-center.org

The Dominican Center works with Amani residents and partners to build a better future.