

The PARC Initiative: A Multianchor Approach to Community Engagement and Development

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Abstract

There is broad recognition that anchor institutions—universities, hospitals, and other locally embedded organizations—can leverage their economic and human resources to revitalize and empower distressed neighborhoods. In Milwaukee, five anchor institutions, including Marquette University, collaborated with residents, city officials, and other stakeholders to transform the seven neighborhoods surrounding their campuses. The Promoting Assets and Reducing Crime (PARC) initiative is an innovative, data-driven, and place-based model of community collaboration to address neighborhood challenges. Over the last 3 years, PARC has helped stimulate economic development, enhance housing stock, improve public safety, and strengthen neighborhood connections in the city's Near West Side. In this article, we detail how PARC was established, the role of the university in this multianchor partnership, and how the initiative PARC integrates data and community input to inform and evaluate its work. The PARC initiative demonstrates promise as an effective model of university engagement in neighborhood revitalization efforts.

Keywords: anchor institutions, neighborhood revitalization, crime, public safety, economic development

Universities have long capitalized on their human, physical, and financial resources to address pressing social problems in their communities. From the mid-1800s through the early 1900s, the federal government created land-grant universities to expand educational access and improve livelihoods in rural America (McDowell, 2001). The popularization of the Wisconsin Idea—the notion that university resources should be applied to solve problems and address the well-being of people in the state—further advanced what many in American higher education consider community engagement (Butin, 2007). By the 1990s, many urban colleges and universities found themselves surrounded by deteriorating and declining neighborhoods, as suburbanization, capital flight, and the loss of manufacturing jobs hollowed out the urban middle class, concentrated urban poverty (Wilson, 1987), and brought the economic

gains that African Americans had achieved during the civil rights era to a grinding halt in many cities (Sharkey, 2013). It has now been more than 20 years since the Kellogg Commission (1999) called on colleges and universities to focus on “urban revitalization and community renewal comparable in its own way to our rural development efforts in the last century” (p. 10). Over the last 2 decades, urban colleges and universities have invested their resources in neighborhood revitalization efforts, broadening their educational missions and targeting strategies to address the needs of their adjacent neighborhoods (Ehlenz, 2017; Rodin, 2007).

There is now broad recognition that anchor institutions, including universities, hospitals, and other locally embedded organizations, can leverage their economic and human resources to revitalize and empower distressed urban neighborhoods (for a review, see Dubb & Howard, 2012).

Researchers have documented the place-based strategies of anchors, such as universities' investments in physical infrastructure, public safety, and other amenities (Adams, 2003; Ehlenz, 2017; Rodin, 2007; Taylor & Luter, 2013). Other studies highlight the ways that anchors can build trusting relationships with community partners and develop coalitions that can be mobilized to address neighborhood challenges (Cantor et al., 2013; Harris & Pickron-Davis, 2013). At the same time, however, universities have also been urged to more actively pursue strategies that "better the long-term welfare of the community in which they reside" (Dubb et al., 2013, p. v), particularly given growing concerns about urban inequality and gentrification (see, e.g., Smith, 2008).

Milwaukee's Near West Side is home to five anchor institutions, including Marquette University. In 2014, the five anchors joined together to form the Near West Side Partners (NWSP), a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for those who live, work, and visit in the community. In 2015, NWSP launched the PARC initiative, a multiyear collaboration between the anchors, residents, city leaders, and other stakeholders to "promote assets" and "reduce crime" in the area. In just under 4 years, the initiative has attracted 37 new businesses, improved public safety, increased university and community engagement, and won several awards for its unique collaborative model. In this article, we detail how the initiative was established, the role of the university in this multianchor partnership, and how the initiative has integrated data and community input to inform and evaluate its work. We also discuss how these efforts have enhanced experiential learning opportunities for students and advanced the mission of the university.

Milwaukee's Near West Side

Milwaukee's Near West Side is home to over 28,000 residents, 10,000 of whom are students at Marquette University. The area, also referred to as the "neighborhood of neighborhoods," includes seven distinct neighborhoods directly west of Milwaukee's downtown business district. At its height, the seven neighborhoods that constitute the Near West Side were home to historic single and duplex family homes, multifamily buildings, schools, places of worship, and

major employers, including seven hospitals, a medical school, two universities, industry giants like Harley-Davidson and Miller Brewing, dozens of nonprofit institutions, and hundreds of small businesses. Most houses were owner occupied and residents walked to work. Its proximity to downtown made the Near West Side a prime location for residential and commercial development.

Like many older industrial cities throughout the United States, Milwaukee experienced an economic downturn in its manufacturing base, resulting in the loss of family-sustaining jobs and the exodus of major employers from the city. Families moved to the suburbs to follow the jobs, and housing values declined. Between 1970 and 1990, many institutions closed or moved to the suburbs, including six hospitals, a medical college, and a university. The neighborhoods were hard hit: There was a dramatic decline in the walk-to-work residential population, massive vacancies in the multiunit buildings, and a decline in homeownership. These changes also impacted the small business climate, leading to the closure of neighborhood grocery stores, restaurants, and other amenities. With the loss of institutional employers, a declining residential population, a growing number of absentee landlords, and a reduction in resident incomes, violent crime rose dramatically in the 1980s-1990s, prompting Marquette University to launch a neighborhood revitalization initiative focused on reducing blight and crime on the campus and in the surrounding area. From 1990 to 1996, Marquette's Campus Circle Project, in collaboration with the City of Milwaukee, helped stabilize the area. In 1992, a business improvement district was created to focus on neighborhood improvements in a portion of the Near West Side. Though such early efforts helped stabilize conditions, particularly in the immediate campus area, the Near West Side continues to face challenges. Poverty rates remain higher in the Near West Side compared to the city average. Commercial corridors are plagued by vacant storefronts, and the Near West Side has struggled to attract and retain small businesses. Much of the existing housing stock needs repairs and restoration—a far cry from its former grandeur. And in the years before the launch of PARC, residents and employees remained concerned about elevated rates of crime and violence (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Near West Side Boundaries Part I Crime
January 1–December 31, 2007–2014**

Crime categories	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Homicide	5	4	2	6	3	5	5	8
Rape	29	22	30	17	29	26	24	20
Robbery	243	185	176	154	180	199	204	200
Aggravated assault	203	185	177	157	146	201	193	234
Burglary	218	215	220	212	276	278	251	218
Theft	1025	870	851	923	856	649	594	539
Auto theft	472	372	282	240	224	269	175	205
Arson	10	12	8	7	4	7	11	7
Total violent crime	480	396	385	334	358	431	426	462
Total property crime	1725	1469	1361	1382	1360	1203	1031	969

Table 2. Demographics of the Near West Side and the City of Milwaukee

	Near West Side		City of Milwaukee	
Total population	28,501		594,833	
White, non-Hispanic	10,572	37.1%	266,339	44.8%
African American or Black, non-Hispanic	11,429	40.1%	237,769	40.0%
American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic	123	0.4%	4,695	0.8%
Asian, non-Hispanic	3,087	10.8%	20,851	3.5%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic	23	0.1%	241	<0.1%
Some other race, non-Hispanic	31	0.1%	44,650	7.5%
Two or more races, non-Hispanic	1,128	4.0%	20,288	3.4%
Hispanic or Latino	2,108	7.4%	103,007	17.3%

Note: Data for the Near West Side come from the American Community Survey 5-year population estimates from 2009 to 2013. Data for City of Milwaukee come from the 2010 Census.

Today, the Near West Side reflects the city's racial and economic diversity (see Table 2). There are a variety of housing options, including single family homes, duplexes, large multifamily complexes, apartments, and historic mansions. About 86% of housing units are renter-occupied, and subsidized or assisted units account for nearly one fifth of the area's housing stock. There are 2,412 site-based low-income housing units in the area. The Historic Concordia Neighborhood, one of the seven Near West Side communities, is Wisconsin's only neighborhood on the National Register of Historic Places.

There is also a wide array of assets across the seven neighborhoods, including K-12 schools, places of worship, nonprofits, cultural venues, historic buildings, government and social service agencies, a university, and one hospital. There are four parks, and the area is conveniently located in close proximity to the Menomonee Valley, which includes the Hank Aaron Trail and opportunities for biking, jogging, and canoeing. Over 350 employers are located in the Near West Side and nearly 29,000 employees work in the community. The major employers include five anchor institutions that have a long history and strong presence in the

community. Marquette University is located in the southeastern corner of this “neighborhood of neighborhoods.”

Near West Side Partners

In 2014, after 7 years of decreasing overall crime and increased collaboration between the police department and the anchor institutions’ private security operations, the Near West Side experienced an increase in violence and property crimes. Of concern was a significant increase in homicides and aggravated assaults coupled with the persistent issues of domestic violence and auto theft.

These concerns escalated in midsummer 2014 when a bullet went through an occupied conference room of one of the anchor institutions. This crisis prompted a meeting between Marquette University’s new president, Dr. Michael Lovell, and Harley-Davidson’s then-president and CEO, Keith Wandell, to discuss neighborhood safety. These leaders quickly concluded that engaging other long-standing anchors, as well as large area employers, was critical to addressing the neighborhood’s challenges. The following fall, after a presidential inaugural address in which he committed himself to deeper, more meaningful neighborhood partnership, Dr. Lovell, along with Keith Wandell, convened 18 CEOs from the Near West Side. Out of that gathering a nonprofit organization emerged: the Near West Side Partners. A comprehensive approach to community issues was developed using strengths of the anchors; NWSP’s “anchor mission” galvanized institutional economic power while partnering with the community to mutually benefit the long-term well-being of the entire neighborhood.

NWSP is funded through the support of five anchor institutions. The NWSP’s mission is to revitalize and sustain Milwaukee’s Near West Side as a thriving residential and business corridor through a collaborative effort to improve housing, promote economic development, unify neighborhood identity and branding, and provide greater safety for residents and businesses. In 2015, NWSP launched the Promoting Assets and Reducing Crime (PARC) initiative, an IRB-approved community-based participatory research project. The initiative is NWSP’s model for facilitating change and capturing the input of neighborhood stakeholders.

Marquette University

Marquette University is a Catholic, Jesuit institution in the urban heart of Milwaukee. Throughout its 135-year history, Marquette University has remained steadfast in its mission “to develop men and women who will dedicate their lives to the service of others, actively entering into the struggle for a more just society” (Marquette University, n.d., “Service”). The university’s mission is shaped by four foundational pillars—excellence, faith, leadership, and service—that guide Marquette University’s decisions and activities. An ethos of service runs deep in the self-understanding of Marquette University’s 11,400 undergraduate and graduate students and throughout the University’s 12 separate colleges and schools. Students and graduates of bachelor’s, master’s, doctoral, and professional degree programs carry forth a commitment to building a better world that links alumni across generations.

Beyond its clear missional commitment, Marquette University has embedded civic engagement in its strategic plan, designating “social responsibility through community engagement” as one of six themes, and ensuring it is appropriately costewarded through oversight by the vice president of public affairs and the executive director of community engagement. Marquette University’s mission and strategic plan, which are well publicized and familiar to students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends, make clear that the university’s purpose is inextricably tied to engagement within the Milwaukee community and the wider world.

Marquette University’s commitment to engagement is cocurricular. It includes a strong commitment to applied research, teaching, and service. This commitment to maintaining academic rigor while simultaneously addressing pressing social realities is embodied in the Marquette University Center for Peacemaking—an academic research and program center housed within the College of Arts and Sciences. The Center for Peacemaking’s programs and activities contribute to a combination of the three foci of peacemaking at the university: instruction, research, and community engagement. For the last 10 years, the Center for Peacemaking’s primary research initiatives have included youth violence, economic development, international development, nonviolence, and community-based peacemaking. The Center for Peacemaking leads

the PARC project. The director of the Center is the principal investigator of the project.

Promoting Assets and Reducing Crime (PARC) Initiative

PARC is designed as a 4.5-year initiative of NWSP. Currently in its 4th year, PARC takes a two-pronged approach to neighborhood improvement by simultaneously promoting the area's assets and working to improve public safety. To accomplish these goals, PARC convenes researchers, university staff, community members, businesses, city departments, and nonprofit organizations to leverage resources; it also uses practices to facilitate systemic and sustainable community change. The anticipated outcomes of PARC as outlined in NWSP's strategic plan are summarized in Table 3.

The promoting assets component of PARC is a multifaceted campaign to change both perceptions and the environment of the Near West Side. This effort focuses on strengthening existing residential organizations, addressing the underlying dynamics that lead to violence, attracting high quality commercial businesses, improving the housing stock, and linking the seven neighborhoods.

The crime reduction aspect of the initiative focuses on using data-driven interventions to address problem places, incidences of crime, and sexual assault. At the core of the crime reduction strategy is the Community

Prosecution Unit, a collaborative team of law enforcement, city and community resources, and social service agencies that focus on a confined geographic area and implement targeted interventions addressing the root cause of problems. Interventions are designed to be specific to each issue.

Choosing the PARC Strategy

Prior to the implementation of the initiative, NWS anchor representatives traveled to Indianapolis, Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, and Chapel Hill to learn about the successes and challenges of other anchor partnerships. These experiences, combined with in-depth research on community-based safety strategies, asset-based community organizing, and community prosecution, informed the PARC initiative. Table 4 provides a summary of the projects and models that were examined and the goals of each.

The urban revitalization models employed by Chicago, Indianapolis, Detroit, and other areas of Milwaukee informed PARC's commercial corridor revitalization and business recruitment strategies. The Cardiff Model for Violence Prevention informed the PARC team's use of data integration strategies. The Milwaukee Byrne Grant from the U.S. Department of Justice inspired the Near West Side team to pursue the community prosecution model for crime reduction. An important lesson from the Byrne Grant model was to pursue systemic solutions that include both addressing the immedi-

Table 3. PARC Goals

1. Decrease overall crime, fear, and disorder;	7. Reconstruct Wisconsin Avenue to restore Milwaukee's main street to its former grandeur;
2. Develop pedestrian-focused amenities;	8. Increase owner-occupied housing and employee walk-to-work programs;
3. Address catalytic projects from the City of Milwaukee Near West Side Area 2004 plan and work on Near West Side 2.0 plan;	9. Increase workforce opportunities for Near West Side residents;
4. Establish grocery stores offering fresh produce and quality food;	10. Strengthen residential associations among Near West Side neighborhoods;
5. Establish new restaurants and improved retail corridors to promote small businesses;	11. Establish brand identity of the Near West Side so it reflects the brand of its key anchors and stakeholders;
6. Develop 35th Street as "iconic way"; 27th and Vliet Streets as thriving commercial corridors;	12. Secure recognition of NWSP's PARC initiative as a national model for community redevelopment.

Table 4. Anchor Partnership Projects and Models

Location	Model	Synopsis
Indianapolis, Indiana	LISC Indianapolis Super Bowl Legacy Initiative	A holistic approach to neighborhood revitalization attracted \$150 million in public and private investment in Indianapolis's Near East Side neighborhood. Efforts focused on renovating housing, attracting local businesses, diversifying retail, and strong resident communication.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	University of Pennsylvania West Philadelphia Initiative	University-led town and gown model to revitalize West Philadelphia's retail districts, improve quality of life for residents, and improve the community's educational capacity. This model focuses on the role of anchor institutions in urban renewal at the neighborhood level.
Chicago, Illinois	MacArthur Foundation funding partnerships Loyola University Lake Shore Community Partner	McArthur Foundation and the Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives partnered to address issues of violence in Englewood by bringing in a Whole Foods to create jobs and spark affordable housing. Loyola University Chicago's Lake Shore Community Partners is a university-led effort to improve quality of life for residents in the two communities surrounding Loyola through economic and social efforts. Key components include student-run businesses in the community and resident-submitted proposals for projects and initiatives.
Detroit, Michigan	Fitzgerald Neighborhood Project, Detroit Future City, Live6 Detroit, and Detroit Mercy's work around community engagement and social innovation	Ongoing learning effort for comprehensive community revitalization, housing stabilization, communication, and resident mobilization to enhance quality of life and economic opportunities.
Chapel Hill, North Carolina	Marian Cheek Jackson Center for Saving and Making History	A community-led model dedicated to strengthening and preserving the historically Black communities surrounding the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This model combined documenting local history with community, nonprofit, faith-based, and university partnerships to pursue creative community-first development.
Cardiff, Wales	Cardiff Violence Prevention Model	Multisector approach to combining police and hospital data to map where violence occurs. This model encourages information sharing to create collaborative place-based approaches to violence prevention.
Milwaukee, Wisconsin	Menomonee Valley Partners	Public-private partnership that transformed Wisconsin's largest brownfield into an attractive business, recreation, and employment destination. Menomonee Valley Partners leveraged anchor partnerships, local, state, and federal support, and community engagement.

ate issue and creating a long-term solution so that problem locations become areas of productive use for the community. The Menomonee Valley Partners served as a model of public-private partnerships for urban renewal, environmental remediation, and economic development. Conscious of gentrification concerns, the team examined the Marian Cheek Jackson Center for Saving and Making History, which has focused on resident retention located in the Chapel Hill neighborhood near the University of North Carolina. Team members also examined case studies of resident engagement efforts from across the country to devise an engagement strategy that would be sensitive to the unequal power dynamics that can often arise in economically and racially diverse neighborhoods (Fung, 2004).

PARC took time to develop. The relatively lengthy time frame (about 14 months) turned out to be advantageous. PARC team members had time and space to learn from one another and from each of the anchor institutions. As a result, all were able to better understand each partner's priorities. The prep time spent visiting and researching other initiatives also strengthened

collaboration, trust, and communication among individuals who had not previously worked together.

Components of the PARC Initiative

PARC is designed to support NWSP's mission to revitalize and sustain the Near West Side as a thriving business and residential corridor. It is a collaborative effort, with four focus areas: economic development, public safety, housing, and neighborhood identity. The initiative is implemented by a team divided into four groups: Asset Promotion, Crime Reduction, Community Organizing, and Data and Research (see Figure 1).

Each of these groups is led by two cochairs. One cochair for each group is selected based upon community representation. Three of the four community representation cochairs are Near West Side residents, and the fourth community representative is a PARC staff member focused on resident engagement. The remaining four cochairs are representatives from different anchor institutions. Crafting these constituencies was intentional, with the goal of ensuring a truly representative community and

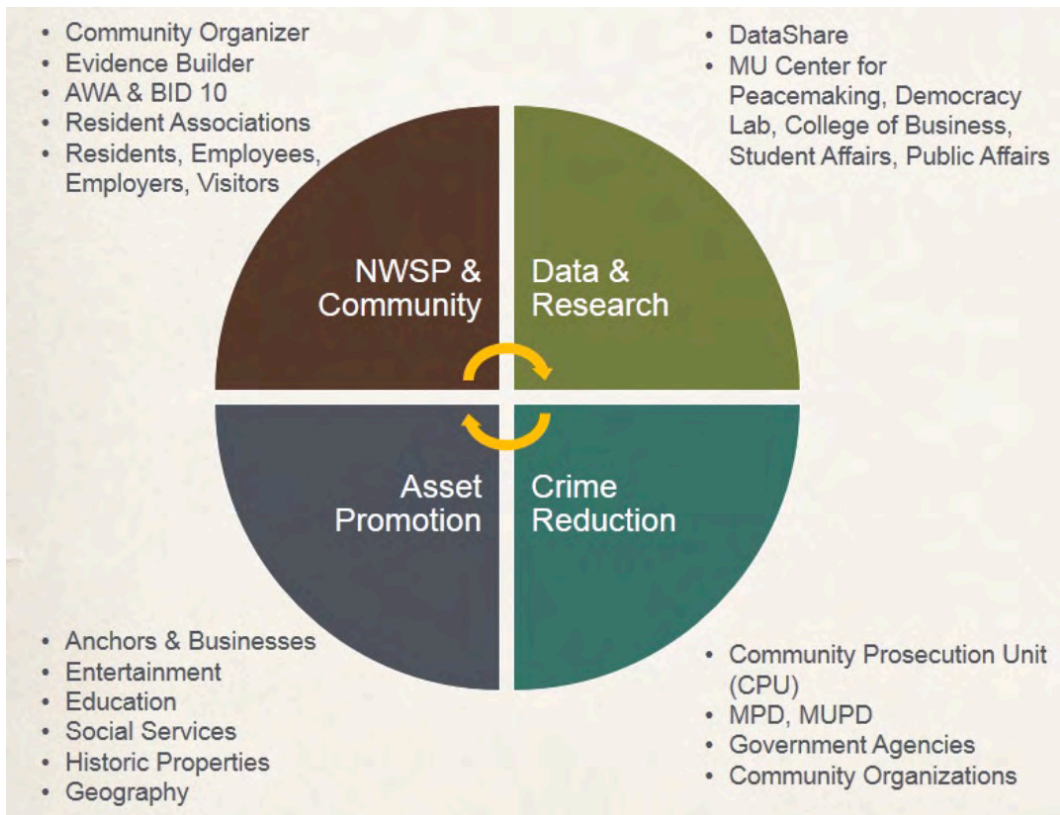


Figure 1. PARC Partners and Focus Areas

anchor partnership rather than being driven by the university or a single anchor partner. The members of the four groups—Asset Promotion, Crime Reduction, Community Organizing, and Data and Research—include employees of anchor institutions, area businesses, nonprofits, and local government, as well as residents.

The Asset Promotion group is led by a full-time community outreach specialist who is a Near West Side resident. The group also includes undergraduate and graduate students to assist in resident and employee engagement. PARC provides partial funding for a team that focuses on commercial corridor activation, community events, and housing initiatives. Together, the group leads neighborhood interventions that stimulate economic and housing development and, critically, help promote collective efficacy among residents (Bandura, 2000; Sampson, 2012; Sampson et al., 1997). Additionally, PARC employs a communication firm to ensure that residents, stakeholders, and the wider community are aware of and invited to participate in the transformation taking place in the Near West Side.

The Community Prosecution Unit is composed of a full-time assistant district attorney and full-time Community Prosecution Unit coordinator who both work daily with the Milwaukee Police Department, key government agencies, and community-based organizations to pursue strategies to reduce crime, prevent domestic violence, and improve the quality of life within the Near West Side. The Community Prosecution Unit is supplemented by Near West Side Ambassadors—two residents who are employed to patrol the Near West Side to report blight and crime, connect residents and businesses to safety information, and act as additional sets of eyes and ears in the seven neighborhoods.

Data and research are central to PARC. Data collection and evaluation of PARC initiatives is conducted by the data team, which is coled by a Marquette University faculty member who leads an academic research center and is a Near West Side resident. The other coleader of the data team is a faculty member who directs Marquette University Democracy Lab and whose primary connection to the community is as a Near West Side anchor employee. The members of the data team include researchers from DataShare and Marquette University Democracy Lab. DataShare, a research group

housed at a local medical college, integrates and geocodes multiple data sources from across the community to inform the design of interventions and measure impact. PARC employs a part-time representative of DataShare to assist with crime reduction strategies. The Democracy Lab, directed by a political science professor, conducts annual surveys of residents, students, and employees. The Democracy Lab also provides recommendations for interventions related to neighborhood engagement and collective efficacy, and conducts impact evaluations of these efforts. Additionally, the PARC initiative employs undergraduate and graduate students to help with resident engagement activities and evaluation.

The entire PARC team meets weekly to identify problems, analyze data, and evaluate successes or failures. To ensure accountability, oversight, and effective management, the PARC team provides a monthly update to the board of NWSP and provides updates at the monthly meeting of all seven neighborhoods.

Marquette University's Involvement

PARC is housed within the Marquette University Center for Peacemaking and coled by representatives of the Office of Community Engagement, the Office of Public Affairs, and the Office of Research and Innovation. PARC provides an opportunity for community-based participatory research and a multitude of informal learning and service opportunities for students. Marquette University provides approximately 20% of the funding for PARC. The other 80% is provided by the other anchor institutions. Additionally, funding is secured through private donations, government grants, and foundation support. To date, over 1,200 students, 26 departments, and more than 50 faculty members from across campus have been involved in the partnership. Additional labor is provided by over 50 employees of Near West Side anchor institutions, businesses, and nonprofits. Furthermore, the partnership has been featured at several local and national conferences. Some highlights of students' participation in—and contributions to—PARC include

- Graduate and undergraduate students in the Economics Department compiling and evaluating commercial and residential real estate data, which have been used to attract

new businesses and market vacant homes.

- Peace studies students conducting public awareness campaigns to prevent domestic violence and sexual assault.
- Political science students conducting surveys of residents, employees, and their fellow students, and implementing impact studies of community engagement efforts.
- History students engaging in research on place-making and the history of the Near West Side.
- Criminology faculty and students studying eviction rates in the Near West Side.
- Business faculty and students organizing charrettes and business competitions to revitalize vacant storefronts and attract new businesses.
- Students from the Marquette University Student Government attending local landlord compacts to learn more about the concerns and efforts of local property owners/managers.
- Students across all disciplines contributing to neighborhood cleanups and participating in efforts to increase sexual violence awareness in the community.
- Several of the anchor institutions and local nonprofits creating internships for students.

Through such efforts, the PARC initiative provides students with practical opportunities to use their discipline-specific knowledge to address pressing social issues. The partnership has also created opportunities for productive discussions about how anchors, residents, students, and employees can contribute to building a stronger, healthier community. It is important to note that although the university plays a prominent role, each anchor institution and resident makes significant contributions to the initiative. The structure of PARC described above includes employee and resident representation and engagement at every level. This structure distributes both the labor and the power within the organization to ensure no single anchor is the primary driver. The

fact that nearly 25% of the individuals employed through PARC are residents and that the initiative hosts numerous resident volunteers helps ensure this is truly a community project.

PARC's Targeted Approach to Community Change

NWSP staff, the NWSP board, and PARC team members worked together to create the PARC model, drawing on components from other neighborhood improvement models as described above. PARC's process for change has four steps: (1) identifying goals; (2) gathering data and benchmarking conditions; (3) designing collaborative interventions; and (4) evaluating impact to inform future interventions (see PARC model, Figure 2).

Over the past 4 years, the initiative has used the PARC model to improve living conditions in the Near West Side by focusing on specific, place-based goals (Figure 2, center). PARC uses resident, student, and employee input to identify pressing neighborhood problems and opportunities. Surveys, focus groups, resident meetings, complaints, and frequent resident interactions inform the PARC initiative's priorities.

Once goals have been set, the PARC team takes a data-driven approach to better understand the issues at hand. PARC team members identify and talk to key stakeholders and residents, collect data and benchmark conditions, and (where appropriate) analyze legal and policy systems that pose barriers to change (Figure 2, upper right quadrant).

One of the unique components of PARC is collecting, synthesizing, and integrating data sets from a variety of sources to create a more holistic understanding of community conditions. DataShare, one of PARC's key partners, takes the lead role in analyzing data and creating data visualizations to help inform and evaluate interventions. DataShare draws upon a wide array of information to provide a holistic picture of community well-being, from crime statistics and real estate transactions to asset maps and community engagement indicators (see Table 5). In this way, DataShare acts as a "local data intermediary," helping to make "data that are often confidential and indecipherable to the public" accessible and useful to local stakeholders (Lawyue & Pettit, 2016, para. 4). Each year the PARC

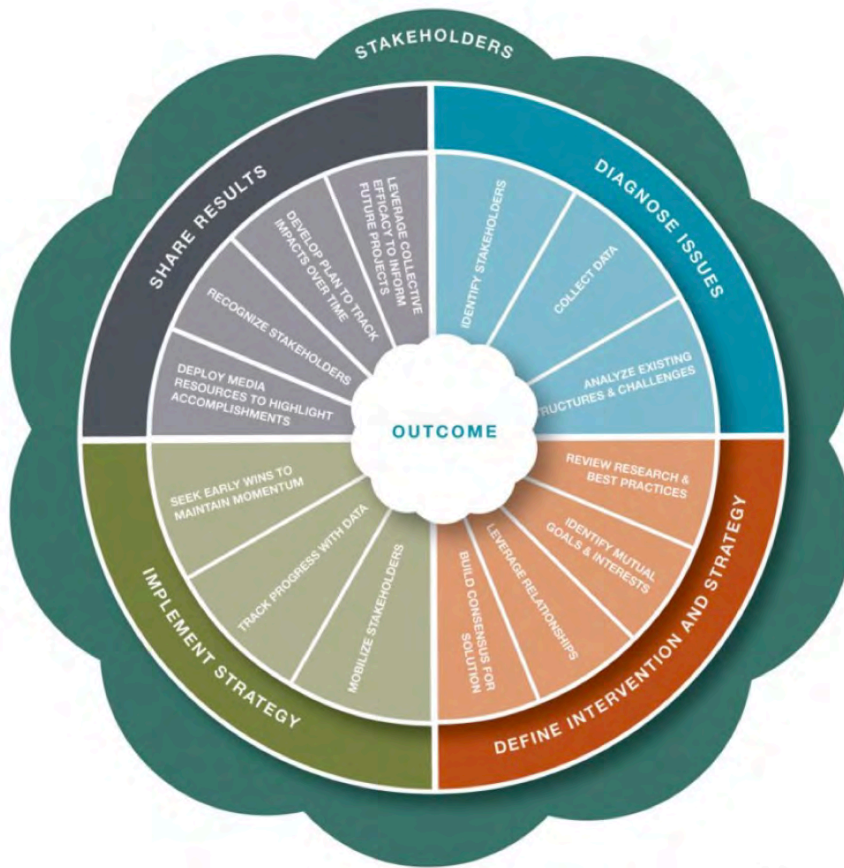


Figure 2. The PARC Model

team conducts a commercial corridor audit to provide a more detailed assessment of vacancies and integrates this data with additional property information from the city; they also regularly complete crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) surveys to identify public safety improvements to the built environment (Crowe, 2000). Democracy Lab conducts community surveys each year to better understand neighborhood perceptions, community concerns, and the issues that matter most to residents, students, and employees. Finally, the PARC team maps community events and meetings to assess resident engagement efforts.

This information is then used to identify opportunities for action. Interventions are data-informed and goal-oriented, draw on best practices from other place-based models, and leverage existing assets and relationships in the community (Figure 2, lower right quadrant). Interventions are implemented by a PARC team who works

collaboratively with residents and other key stakeholders.

PARC is a complex project seeking to accomplish the 12 goals outlined in Table 3. Data are collected to track progress and evaluate results, and the team often seeks early wins to help mobilize stakeholders, build collective efficacy, and maintain momentum (Figure 2, lower left quadrant). The evaluation of PARC interventions is conducted by a data team composed of faculty from criminology, business, political science, and sociology. The data team also includes representatives from DataShare, law enforcement, residents, and the principal investigator. The PARC data team utilizes quantitative and qualitative methods to answer specific research questions and evaluate the impact of PARC. Results are then shared broadly with stakeholders and help inform future projects (Figure 2, upper left quadrant). Media resources are also used to highlight accomplishments and recognize stakeholders.

Table 5. Data Elements Collected to Inform PARC Interventions

Data source	Type of data
Health Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immunizations • Blood lead levels • Communicable diseases • Births
Milwaukee Police Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrests • Incidents • Shotspotter
District attorney data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pretrial services • Milwaukee Circuit Court
Publicly available city data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property records • Building inspector requests and violations • Evictions • Foreclosures • Vacancies • Licenses • Real estate transactions • Census data (e.g., household income, homeownership rates, demographic profiles)
Near West Side Partners data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident meetings • Number of businesses • PARC-developed intervention and public incident data

Interventions and Findings

Examples of Success for PARC

Before we describe the myriad interventions that have been implemented over the past 4 years, we first briefly discuss two examples that help illustrate how the PARC model has been used to achieve the initiative's goals. The first comes from an early win in the PARC initiative: the launching of a lighting and camera installation initiative. The second is drawn from an impact study of PARC's community engagement efforts. Both examples follow the model outlined in Figure 2.

Addressing Lighting to Improve Perceptions and Public Safety. Every year, residents and employees are surveyed about their perceptions of the neighborhood and what they think could improve the quality of life in the Near West Side. To ensure that the survey draws from a broad cross-section of the community, PARC students canvass every block in the Near West Side (see Figure 3). The need for improved lighting was one of the top aesthetic and safety concerns identified by residents and employees in the Near West Side. The PARC team used

Harley-Davidson's light meters to measure the foot-candles (a unit commonly used to measure light levels) in various outdoor spaces. The light measurements confirmed the resident-identified need for improved lighting and that many spaces did not meet the Illuminating Engineering Society recommendations for the appropriate foot-candle levels to adequately illuminate neighborhood areas for safety.

PARC team members brought their expertise to the table to expand upon and fine-tune the idea. They researched possible solutions, spoke with architects and safety experts, and ultimately proposed a subsidized lighting program to respond to the community-identified need. Drawing on research documenting the crime reduction benefits of enhanced lighting (see, e.g., Chalfin et al., 2019) and best practices for crime prevention through environmental design, the finalized program articulated three goals: (1) highlight the diverse architectural styles throughout the Near West Side, (2) create a visible message that improvements were taking place in the community, and (3) illuminate areas to increase perceptions of safety.

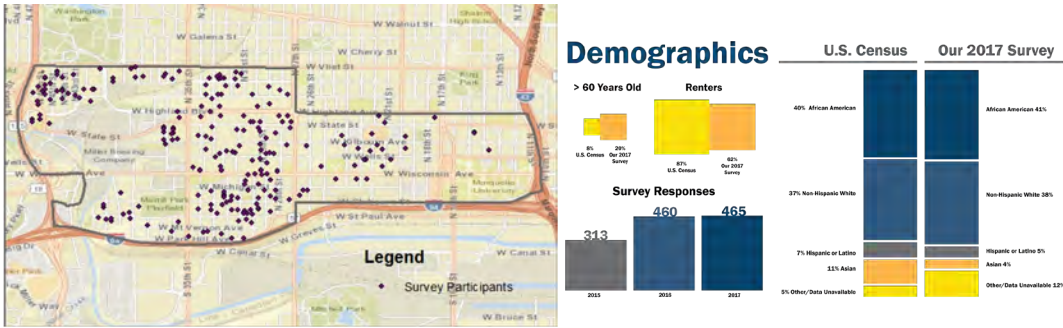


Figure 3. Resident Survey and U.S. Census Data

Next, PARC team members identified a target area for the lighting project and camera installation, using crime reports, input from residents, a nighttime lighting audit of the Near West Side to identify areas that fell short of illumination levels recommended by the Illuminating Engineering Society, and police calls for service. The targeted neighborhood, Concordia, has a diverse mix of homes and apartment complexes, both of which benefit from enhanced lighting; it is also part of the primary transportation route for employees at the anchor institutions. The program subsidized the purchase of porch and architectural lighting for owner-occupied homes. Enhanced lighting was purchased to illuminate building exteriors and parking lots at larger, multiunit apartment buildings to deter loitering and other unwanted behavior.

NWSP leveraged its relationship with area businesses to raise money to offset the cost of light and camera installation. A grant from the city and NWSP supported a cost-sharing program in which property owners paid approximately one quarter of the cost of light installation. A local nonprofit arranged for discounted camera installations in apartment buildings that had a disproportionate share of police calls for service. A local lighting supplier who was a vendor for an anchor institution agreed to provide the light fixtures at a discounted price.

Although the Concordia neighborhood seemed an ideal fit to pilot this program, an unexpected obstacle emerged because of its national historic designation, which required that the Historic Preservation Commission first approve any changes to the exterior of buildings in the neighborhood. In an attempt to ensure the historic

designation was not a deterrent for participants, PARC staff conducted a survey of the neighborhood with staff members from the Historic Preservation Commission. After compiling a complete listing of light fixtures that matched the historic character and archetype of the neighborhood, PARC team members distributed a lighting guide to each residence in the neighborhood and solicited resident applications. By the end of the project, lights had been installed on 21 properties and cameras on 11. Community members who lived on blocks where lights were installed reported that the lighting increased perceptions of safety and improved the neighborhood aesthetic.

Impact Evaluation of Community Outreach Efforts. The Neighborhood of Neighborhoods (NeON) community meetings are a tool for residents to stay connected, learn about what is happening in the community, and voice concerns and ideas about neighborhood developments. These meetings are held monthly at the same place and time and draw an average of about 50 residents. The venue provides an opportunity for residents to inform and improve local decisions by communicating views that might go unheard otherwise (Fung, 2007).

Local civic engagement, however, has declined significantly over the last several decades (Sinclair-Chapman et al., 2009), reflecting a deep socioeconomic divide (Verba et al., 1995). Community meetings, for example, tend to engage an unrepresentative subset of residents, such as long-time residents, relatively advantaged homeowners, and those who already vote in local elections (see, e.g., Einstein et al., 2019). Consistent with this research, data on monthly attendance showed that the NeON meetings

tended to engage the same residents, that some neighborhoods were consistently underrepresented, and that lower income renters were noticeably absent.

Drawing on research suggesting that personal invitations can increase civic participation (Gerber et al., 2008; Hock et al., 2013), faculty and students from Democracy Lab designed a field experiment to test whether such outreach could increase and diversify participation at NeON meetings. In the first impact study, residents were randomly assigned to receive a postcard inviting them to the upcoming NeON meeting. Random assignment to treatment ensured that any observed difference in attendance between the two groups could be attributable to the outreach. Mailing postcards to a random sample of residents yielded an additional eight attendees, the majority of whom were renters, suggesting that the outreach helped diversify participation. Though this was a statistically significant difference between the treatment and control groups, it was a substantively small treatment effect (less than half a percentage point bump in participation), particularly given the cost of the intervention.

In a subsequent study, students randomly assigned residents to receive a text message in advance of the NeON meeting. As before, those who were randomly assigned to receive an invitation—in this case via text message—were more likely to attend the meeting than those who were not. What is more, the treatment effect was more than double the size of the first study (a 2 percentage point increase in attendance). In a third study, students randomly assigned residents with equal probability to one of three groups: (1) phone call invitation, (2) text message invitation, and (3) control group (no invitation). Outreach increased attendance at the NeON meeting, but there was no statistically significant difference between the response to a message delivered personally over the phone or impersonally via text message. Attendance was higher in the phone call (6.2 percentage point increase, $p < 0.05$) and text message (4.5 percentage point increase, $p = 0.12$) groups compared to the control group. The PARC team now regularly sends text messages to residents about important community events, including the NeON meeting, and has worked to expand its resident contact database.

As a follow-up to these outreach stud-

ies, PARC team members conducted focus groups with lower income renters on the Near West Side to identify other venues for residents to voice their concerns and ideas. In response to these discussions, several renters have worked with PARC team members to form a resident tenant council. Together, these community outreach efforts help ensure that PARC's work is responsive to community interests and concerns.

The Broader Suite of Interventions

The two examples discussed above (regarding lighting and NeON meeting attendance) are different in type and scale. But though the particulars of the intervention may vary, PARC uses a similar strategy to develop interventions and assess progress toward meeting the 12 goals outlined in NWSP's strategic plan (Table 3). In the paragraphs that follow, we briefly describe the suite of interventions that have been implemented to date.

Housing. Since the launch of PARC, owner occupancy has risen in the Near West Side by approximately 4%. The PARC team worked to achieve this goal through five primary interventions:

- *Good Neighbor Designation Program* recognizes properties that go above and beyond minimal state and local requirements to provide good quality, safe housing for tenants. Although 52 properties have been awarded the designation, 27 other properties were inspected and not granted the designation.
- *Near West Side home tours* invite employees of the Near West side's anchor institutions to come and see firsthand the available housing stock in the Near West Side and the neighborhoods' diverse set of assets. Additionally, NWSP and PARC have supported a decades-old resident-led tour of homes that allows visitors to view homes of existing residents and meet potential neighbors.
- *Housing resource fairs* showcase the city's immense and often underutilized housing resources; these are available to new and existing homeowners and renters. Some of the resources on display at the fair include information on loans and financial assistance, home repairs,

counseling, materials and tools, and energy and weatherization programs.

- NWSP helped host *Block Build* in 2017, where PARC partnered with an organization called Revitalize Milwaukee to repair homes in the Miller Valley neighborhood in the Near West Side. The comprehensive day of service saw hundreds of volunteers provide free home repairs to eight houses.
- *Live, Work, Play* is a housing incentive that provides down payment and rental grants to employees of Near West Side businesses who would like to live in the Near West Side. The homeowner incentive program provides funding to help prospective homeowners purchase homes they will occupy as their primary residence. Forgivable down payment incentives of \$3,000 are available to assist eligible homebuyers with the purchase of homes in the seven Near West Side neighborhoods. Homebuyer participants will receive both financial and technical assistance as part of the program. For employees not yet ready to buy, the Live, Work, Play rental incentive provides employees of Near West Side businesses a \$500 rental incentive when they sign a lease with any certified Good Neighbor landlord.

Safety. The Near West Side contains pockets of high crime density. The PARC team and the Community Prosecution Unit focused on these specific geographies as high priority areas. Comparing the 5 years before (2010–2014) and after (2015–2019) the launch of PARC, total offenses for crimes against persons and property have dropped more in the Near West Side (down 21.4%) compared to the city average for the same time period (down 10.9%). The PARC team employed several interventions that likely contributed to the crime decrease:

- *The closing of 27th Street tobacco shop* occurred in 2016. Residents, anchor institutions, local and governmental officials, law enforcement, trade associations, and tobacco shop business neighbors worked collaboratively to close the problematic tobacco shop that was a frequent

site of violence and police calls for service. NWSP worked closely with a bipartisan group of legislators to change state law so that tobacco licenses can now be denied to applicants who have a track record of not operating their business responsibly. After the demolition of the tobacco shop, the land was transformed into a temporary parking lot for a children's center next door. This children's center is planning to build out a new child care facility on the property.

- In pursuing *receivership of nuisance properties*, the PARC team worked with law enforcement to identify locations that were consistent sites of violence, crime, and disorder for several years. If the property owners were unwilling to change their management strategies to ensure safety on their property, the PARC team worked with the city to place the properties in receivership and ensure residents were offered housing within the neighborhood.
- The *Community Prosecution Unit (CPU)* addresses the environmental factors that can lead to crime. The team, an assistant district attorney, a Community Prosecution Unit coordinator, and the Near West Side Ambassadors engage residents, landlords, and businesses to implement crime reduction strategies. To date, the CPU has also performed over 100 crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) surveys to ensure the physical environment is conducive to safety.
- The *Near West Side Waypoint* acts as the central location for the CPU team, as well as a meeting location for community members and police officers to strategize on community safety.
- *Security personnel* was an intervention identified by residents, employees, and students that would improve safety. In response, each anchor expanded the boundary patrolled by their security personnel to include more of the residential and commercial areas surrounding their campuses. This expansion improved safety, increased com-

munication, and helped build trust.

- *Near West Side Ambassador Program* consists of two full-time security professionals. These ambassadors spend their days patrolling the neighborhoods to provide a greater sense of safety and security for the Near West Side businesses and residents. These daily interactions provide insight into problem properties and ongoing nuisances to neighborhood vitality.
- *Blight reporting* occurs once a week. Litter was the top concern raised by residents in the first community survey in 2016. In response to these community concerns, PARC team members worked with residents to design a blight reporting program. PARC representatives canvass areas of the Near West Side and report incidents of blight to the city's Department of Neighborhood Services. These blight reports include incidents of graffiti, trash, potholes, and building code violations. To date, 570 reported incidents of blight have been resolved by the Department of Neighborhood Services.
- *Neighborhood cleanups* address the persistent litter problem in the Near West Side. The PARC team organizes neighborhood associations and groups of Marquette University students to complete neighborhood-wide cleanups.

Commercial Corridor. Since the launch of PARC, 37 new businesses have opened in the Near West Side. The PARC team has implemented several key interventions to activate commercial corridors:

- Two local *grocery stores* catering to the needs of Near West Side residents opened in what was previously a food desert (Economic Research Service, 2019) to increase access to fresh produce, eggs, and seafood. In 2017, NWSP revived a *farmers market* during the summer months in the Near West Side.
- *Rev-Up MKE*, a *Shark-Tank*-style competition, is held annually in the Near West Side and helps businesses open or relocate in the Near West Side. The competition, judged

by lead business professionals in the area, offers a \$10,000 grand prize to the winner as well as over \$25,000 of in-kind services; one year of free computer power, storage space, and internet bandwidth; and free marketing and advertising from NWSP. The competition has resulted in over six locations opening or relocating in the Near West Side; many of the businesses have hired residents.

- A *design charrette* brought together residents, architects, developers, city officials, funders, and business owners to reimagine the Near West Side and brainstorm “big ideas” for the revitalization of the neighborhood. The ideas developed at the charrette were incorporated into the 27th Street redevelopment plan later enacted by the city.
- The *Mobile Design Box* transformed a vacant storefront in a commercial corridor to a space that builds community by showcasing the work of local artists and entrepreneurs in a series of pop-up galleries.
- *Good Business Standards* were created by the District Attorney's Office and NWSP to provide baseline business practices and standards for responsible business operators in the Near West Side.

Neighborhood Identity and Branding. Since surveying began in 2015, there has been a 19% increase in the share of residents reporting a positive perception of the Near West Side. There has also been an increase in the number of engagement efforts.

- Once a month NWSP hosts a *Neighborhood of Neighborhoods (NeON)* resident meeting. The meeting provides residents with updates on crime, community events, and redevelopment efforts throughout the Near West Side. It is also a venue for residents to express their concerns and ideas to NWSP, local officials, and other community stakeholders.
- NWSP hosts a number of *signature events* throughout the year, including neighborhood movie nights, cleanups, and holiday celebrations. These events help build a sense

of community and link the seven neighborhoods to one another.

- *Employee engagement sessions* forge relationships between employees of the Near West Side and their workplace community. These sessions provide information about the work being done in the community, as well as highlight the area's rich collection of assets that employees can utilize.
- Students recently formed *CAMPus Impact*, an organization that seeks to help change students' perceptions of the Near West Side by connecting students to volunteer opportunities in the community and encouraging them to support neighborhood businesses.
- The PARC team has given numerous presentations at community meetings and academic conferences. Partnering with a communications firm, NWSP actively works to increase *public awareness* of the Near West Side's assets and ongoing development efforts through high-profile media coverage.

Discussion

In this article we have detailed the work of a multianchor initiative in Milwaukee and identified several promising practices for university engagement in neighborhood revitalization efforts. To date, the PARC initiative has focused on four key areas: economic development, public safety, housing, and neighborhood identity and branding. At the outset, PARC researched other initiatives and projects, integrating best practices that fit the Near West Side's needs and the anchor institutions' capacities and missions. PARC's model guides each intervention and provides an accountability framework that is used to communicate results to the broader public and inform the initiative's ongoing work. With the initiative heading into its fourth year, the evidence to date suggests that PARC has been particularly effective in a short period of time.

Residents, anchor institutions, area businesses, nonprofits, and all levels of government—city, county, state, federal, and tribal—have demonstrated their commitment to PARC and played influential roles supporting the success of the Near West

Side. The partnership has been strengthened and will continue. Recently, each of the anchor institutions renewed their financial support of PARC for another 3 years. This investment is an affirmation of the successes to date and an invitation to do more. After reviewing data benchmarked against conditions from when the initiative began, the PARC team has outlined the following next steps:

- Continue efforts to improve housing conditions for all residents. One notable addition to the existing housing strategy is to more fully engage public housing residents and ensure public housing is preserved in the Near West Side. In order to accomplish this, the PARC team has secured a \$1,300,000 HUD Choice Neighborhood Planning grant to preserve 250 units of senior and disabled public housing.
- Continue implementing a safety strategy utilizing the community prosecution model detailed earlier. The group also is forming a homeless intervention team with the goal of finding permanent housing for residents experiencing a housing crisis. This multisector approach attempts to understand the challenges individuals face and connect them to resources to improve their safety, health, and well-being.
- Remain focused on commercial corridor efforts to attract a vibrant mix of amenities and retain the businesses that are in the Near West Side. The PARC team is expanding its façade grants program, pursuing traffic-calming measures to slow traffic, and transforming vacant lots on commercial corridors into productive uses such as parks, outdoor dining, and pop-up markets.
- Improve the health of the Near West Side through creation of a health working team. This team's charge will be to drive racial equity and inclusion while improving social determinants of health.
- Continue and strengthen program evaluation by adding faculty in criminology and health science to the data team and leveraging the longitudinal data that have been

collected since the launch of PARC to conduct a panel study of residents' perceptions of the Near West Side.

Each of these components can be replicated by other universities and partnerships, but four additional points are worth noting. First, having institutional leadership support at the highest level matters. The commitment expressed by the university president and respective anchor CEOs created momentum. For faculty, it also gave incentive and encouragement to engage in community-based research.

Second, the initiative has been successful because of the resources dedicated to these projects. Anchor institutions not only provided funding, but also committed individuals who have been involved in the day-to-day operations of the PARC initiative. Critically, all five anchor institutions provided similar levels of funding, and the funds were committed over multiple years. The decision not to have a primary funder helped ensure no single anchor institution had more power and influence over the initiative and each anchor was invested in the project's success. The stability of a multiyear secured budget has allowed the PARC team to focus on implementing interventions as part of a long-term strategic plan, rather than as short-term, disjointed projects.

Third, community collaboration and communication have been integral to PARC's successes. The PARC team takes advantage of formal venues for community input, including neighborhood meetings and employee engagement sessions. These ef-

forts have increased resident and employee participation in several of PARC's projects. PARC team members have also studied these engagement efforts, looking for opportunities to deepen and diversify relationships with community stakeholders.

Finally, PARC did not start out with any predetermined plans for interventions. Instead, considerable time was spent listening to the concerns and suggestions of residents and employees. Community input and data were then used to design and implement interventions. Similarly, community and data have played critical roles in evaluation of the PARC initiative.

Conclusion

In 2015, stakeholders in Milwaukee made a major commitment to improve the Near West Side. The PARC initiative represents a concentrated effort by Marquette University and the partnering anchor institutions to revitalize and sustain the Near West Side as a thriving residential and business community. The involvement of more than 1,200 students, 26 departments, and 50 faculty members demonstrates the deep commitment to this initiative. NWSP and the PARC initiative were established as long-term projects to improve the quality of life for those who live and work in the community; however, even in the short term, initial results suggest that the initiative is on track to meet the goals outlined in the strategic plan. Importantly, we argue that the PARC initiative is a model of how to develop multianchor strategies that are responsive and accountable to the concerns and interests of residents.



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