

Annual HUD Secretary's Opportunity and Empowerment Award: Ebeid Neighborhood Promise Initiative, Toledo, Ohio

Regina C. Gray

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

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The American Planning Association (APA) was established in the late 1970s with the central mission to create great communities for all through effective planning, education, and advocacy. Since its inception, the organization has fostered partnerships with national, state, and local entities committed to a similar vision. For more than two decades, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the APA have co-sponsored the HUD Secretary's Opportunity and Empowerment Award, which recognizes communities that adopt creative and effective strategies for improving the quality of life for area residents. In their submissions, nominees discuss the role of planners throughout the process and how the submission actively engaged with residents, the public, and partnering organizations. Nominees are required to address how their project, plan, or proposal incorporates innovative approaches to problemsolving; how it achieves measurable results; and how those results might be replicated in communities similarly situated. This year, a jury of industry professionals selected the Ebeid Neighborhood Promise Initiative and its partner organization, ProMedica, as the award recipient.

The UpTown neighborhood is an old exurb nestled between historic Downtown Toledo and the Old West End community. UpTown residents face a number of challenges: disinvestment in commercial corridors; lack of infrastructure to support a grocery store; clusters of subsidized housing with few supportive services; high rates of unemployment, poverty, and homelessness; and poor health conditions. Although UpTown is a diverse community, the vast majority of the residents are renters, many are low-skilled workers, and the prospects for educational attainment are limited. Those challenges were documented in the UpTown neighborhood master plan. Local planners called for a holistic, "all-in" strategy focused entirely on improving the community's socioeconomic determinants of health.

ProMedica, a mission-based organization in upper northwest Ohio, teamed with philanthropist Russell Ebeid to establish the Ebeid Neighborhood Promise Initiative (ENP). The initiative reflects a 10-year, \$50 million commitment to improve health outcomes, provide stable housing, and expand access to educational and employment opportunities. Although the program is relatively young, ENP has demonstrated remarkable progress toward building a socially and economically sustainable community. Using existing community plans, a robust and creative placemaking strategy, unique partnerships, and innovative funding models, ENP demonstrates that it is possible to build on the existing community landscape and create a more welcoming environment for all who live there.

Planning

The planning award category requires that nominees explain how their submission addresses a real-world challenge in the community, as identified by an existing comprehensive, regional, or neighborhood plan. Applicants must describe the role of planners in working with local decisionmakers, partnering organizations, and the public in achieving success from implementation and beyond. In the spirit that this award represents, submissions must demonstrate how the community engaged and empowered residents throughout the process.

The Ebeid Neighborhood Program is a place-based initiative that reflects two decades of planning activities that have resulted in a shift toward improving the conditions of the UpTown neighborhood. ProMedica's model envisions a comprehensive approach to planning that centers on the social determinants of health. In the earliest phase, ProMedica and its partners instituted a series of signature programs meant to empower residents by improving access to quality housing, health care, job training, employment opportunities, education, and small business enterprise. The strategy entailed creating a one-stop-shop at a facility that offers a range of supportive services for residents seeking opportunities for a better life. The ProMedica Ebeid Institute, pictured below,



Source: ProMedica

The ProMedica Ebeid Institute is an all-in-one community hub that houses the market and provides job training, education, health screenings, family planning, and financial and housing counseling.

serves residents by increasing access to healthy food, delivering nutritional education, and offering job training, among other programs and cultural events.

Partner organizations, including the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and AmeriCorps, worked with residents to identify community needs and priorities. For instance, ProMedica health providers surveyed residents and found that among their biggest concerns was food insecurity. In 2015, the institute opened Market on the

Green, a nonprofit co-op that offers a variety of healthy, affordable food options. The market targets area residents for onsite job training. ProMedica and partners expanded access through a mobile market that delivers food to seniors and people with disabilities and offers online ordering, delivery, and pickup. A community garden adjacent to the facility provides fresh produce for the store.

Investment capital of \$86.7 million was deployed for housing at all income levels. To expand and preserve affordable housing, ENP offers loans of up to \$7,500 to residents looking to purchase or renovate units in designated Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program properties that have reached the end of their 15-year compliance period. To combat blight, the ENP community revitalization program incentivizes builders by offering up to \$40,000 per unit¹ to renovate vacant properties. A new mixed-income housing development called Village on the Green offers a variety of housing types, such as garden-style or high-rise. Education and training programs are also available onsite, targeted to residents who either work at the grocery co-op or are searching for jobs in the medical field. Those programs include housing counseling, financial literacy, mentorship, and coaching.

Results

The second award category requires that applicants clearly describe how the project, plan, or initiative achieves goals through measurable outcomes. Examples include the number of jobs created and retained, improvement in education outcomes (for example, graduation rates), or data showing a reduction in crime or poverty. The following examples of outcomes are reported from ProMedica's recent report, *Embracing an Anchor Mission: ProMedica's All-In Strategy* (Oostra, Zuckerman, and Parker, 2018).

Health

- ENP partners invested \$600,000 annually to hire at least one school nurse for every public elementary school in Toledo.
- To address food insecurity, about 2,600 meals were provided to low-income persons and families who were screened for acute or severe hunger, and 600 pre-packaged meals were delivered to food clinics (Oostra, Zuckerman, and Parker, 2018: 24–5).
- Together with Mercy Health, the University of Toledo Medical Center, and the Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio, ENP created Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB. This program used medical home teams to screen 20,000 pregnant mothers. Of those screened—
 - Sixty-nine percent were referred to additional services, including the Pathway HUB and a home visiting program.
 - Women enrolled for more than 90 days in the program had a 90-percent rate of healthy birth outcomes.

¹ The program is part of a ProMedica-LISC and Key Bank initiative, which allows former renters to borrow between \$30,000–40,000 per unit to make necessary renovations. The program infuses LIHTC program tax credit funds, local bonds, and other sources to encourage a path to homeownership (Oostra, Zuckerman, and Parker, 2018: 42–43).

- Those who enrolled in the program for more than 90 days had lower rates of low-birth-weight deliveries than the state or county average (Oostra, Zuckerman, and Parker, 2018: 36). African-American mothers tend to have higher rates of low birth weight and infant mortality than do White mothers.

Housing²

- ENP created 178 units of new affordable housing in the UpTown neighborhood.
- Individuals who receive housing and financial counseling have witnessed an 89-percent increase in net income.
- A 300-unit housing development was created to house seniors and persons with disabilities.

Education

- Fifty-two percent of enrollees in the ProMedica Ebeid Institute financial counseling program have engaged with a financial coach at least once a month.
- Participants in the program achieved a 25-percent increase in net income and a 17-percent increase in credit score.
- Three hundred individuals received free tax preparation, receiving \$510,000 in federal tax savings and \$200,000 in Earned Income Tax Credit (Oostra, Zuckerman, and Parker, 2018: 30).

Employment³

- Between 2017 and 2019, 55 percent of Ebeid job trainee participants obtained employment after 12 months, with 39 percent employed by ProMedica.
- Forty-two former job trainees achieved full-time employment.

Innovation

The third category challenges nominees to convince jurors that their project is innovative or advances a new, effective way of solving a community's problems. APA and HUD jurors were most impressed with how the ENP and ProMedica collaboration worked to implement a long-term, sustainable plan of investment for the UpTown community. Partnering with LISC, the collaborative established an investment portfolio that includes a business incubator program for small, minority- and women-owned businesses and more than \$45 million devoted to capital improvement projects along the downtown corridor (ProMedica, 2018). According to the most recent annual report, the initiative has invested nearly \$90 million for housing, commercial, and public infrastructure. To further diversify its investment portfolio, the partnership offers microloans of up to \$3 million to small banking institutions to support job creation, new or existing businesses, and other

² See Oostra, Zuckerman, and Parker (2018), page 42.

³ See Oostra, Zuckerman, and Parker (2018), page 34.

community programs. The funds are replenished as long as the bank demonstrates a continued commitment to expanding services and opportunities for the town residents.⁴

Equity

Nominees must explain how their submission advances social equity throughout the planning process. They must clearly describe how historically underrepresented groups were empowered by these efforts, leading to improved life outcomes. The ProMedica Ebeid Institute facility provides free financial coaching and has served more than 1,000 individuals by offering financial counseling and job training to neighborhood residents. The job training program provides 12 months of training on technical and soft skills, plus an additional 4 hours per week of GED (general educational development) classes, vocational training, digital literacy training, or other development opportunities. Once a participant graduates from the program, he or she is paired with a “job navigator” to assist in the search. The program has met with some success, connecting more than one-half of program graduates with viable employment options. Residents are connected with a social worker, or “neighborhood navigator,” to address health and wellness, homelessness prevention, motherhood preparation, and childhood development. A new walking trail designated for seniors promotes physical activity and beautification projects.



Source: ProMedica

Arts and afterschool programs are offered to area residents at the ProMedica Ebeid Institute.

⁴ See Oostra, Zuckerman, and Parker (2018), page 38. The partners use certificates of deposit through the Certificate of Deposit Account Registry Service to invest in local banks while maintaining protection of the original deposits through Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation insurance. The banks are then required to use funds to invest in the community by offering valuable job training skills, expanding after school programs, and encouraging homeownership, among other activities. To ensure long-term commitment, lending institutions are also required to report on measurable outcomes, such as the number of residents served by their programs.

Transferability

The fifth and final award category asks award nominees to explain how, and to what extent, their submission serves as a model for other localities working to address similar challenges. To satisfy this requirement, the response should describe prescriptive measures that communities should employ to achieve success over time. The ProMedica model has been replicated in other local jurisdictions adjacent to Toledo and in the neighboring state of Michigan. In 2017, with a new neighborhood plan underway and various planning efforts in adjacent neighborhoods taking place, ProMedica, LISC, and other stakeholders brought all neighborhood activity under the ENP umbrella for continued—but greater—implementation efforts to take place, with an additional focus on improving health outcomes in the neighborhood. Beyond that, ProMedica and its partners continue to expand the program to other jurisdictions that seek to improve community outcomes through a health and wellness lens.

The HUD Secretary's award recipients were recognized in a virtual celebration on the APA Facebook page earlier this year: <https://www.facebook.com/login.php?next=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fwatchparty%2F2453728664939060%2F>. To learn more about the HUD Secretary's Opportunity and Empowerment Award, visit HUD User: https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/pdf/hud_583_2015.pdf.

Author

Regina C. Gray is the Director of the Affordable Housing Research and Technology Division in the Office of Policy Development and Research of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

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