



Equitable Workforce Strategy Plan

A report on equity-oriented job placement partners and programs geared toward small urban manufacturing and industrial companies in the Mass Ave Brookside Industrial Corridor transferable to the broader Indianapolis community

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Plan 2020
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Executive Summary

As Indianapolis seeks to embrace and elevate its manufacturing roots and potential through a series of coordinated efforts to revitalize urban industrial districts, a need to create a more defined and equitable pipeline for employment in manufacturing is necessary. Many of the neighborhoods which once housed workers for industrial areas now struggle with vacancy, crime, unemployment and other social barriers which prevent residents in these urban areas from achieving self-sustainability. Although proximity to jobs in manufacturing and industrial facilities seems like an opportunity for individuals who are unemployed or underemployed, a skills-gap often prevents them from meeting the human capital needs of the employers resulting in high-turnover and low-satisfaction in the quality of applicants. The skills-gap is two-fold in that both the hard and soft skills desired by employers are not always present in the candidates seeking positions. The source of the skills-gap is in-part traceable but also equally elusive as the components align from deficiencies and changes in educational, vocational, and social systems furthering historic inequities in society. A burden falls on employers to hire more effectively to improve their organizational capacity, and a burden falls on individuals to be more effective employees to improve their quality of life and career potential. There are systems and resources in place to address the needs in Marion County, but the utilization of the systems may be low, and the systems themselves may not be appropriate, efficient or accessible to those who need them most.

The Plan2020 CityCorps Fellowship program has provided the opportunity to dive into this issue to understand the particular challenges faced by existing businesses in order to not only address those challenges but to prepare for a growth in jobs stemming from newly targeted economic development efforts. The Fellowship process acknowledges the wealth of data and best practices existing in this field and incorporates community partners that specifically tend to work with individuals who would stand to benefit most equitably-oriented strategies and programs. Of the many discussions had and articles read, the importance of providing services beyond and in addition to job preparation and placement is key to retention within those jobs. The certifications and educational pathways are available, but for the hardest-to-serve candidates, those opportunities are not enough to counteract the challenges they face which ultimately create challenges for employers. By exposing employers to Workforce Development Partners in through regular engagement opportunities, the employer-led dialogue can drive program development within that network and position employers, partners and potential employees to achieve more equitable outcomes in designated urban manufacturing and industrial areas.

Equitable Innovation Economies: How the Indianapolis Pilot Program provides an impetus for creative thinking about workforce development

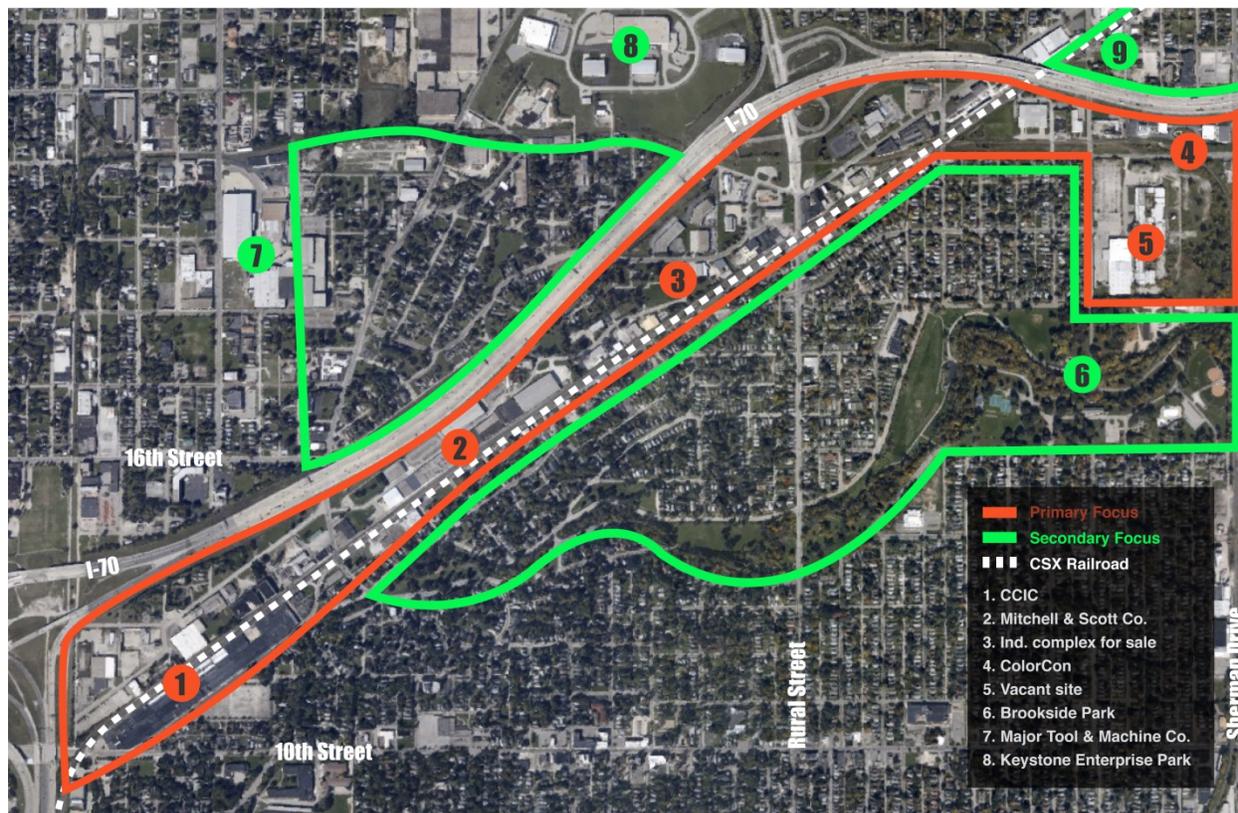
As urban centers throughout the country plan for their futures by identifying economic development priorities, it is crucial that those priorities include measures that are inclusive in their design and equitable in their impact to local communities as so often the outcomes of economic success are absorbed at the top of the socioeconomic totem pole. Indianapolis is one of four U.S. cities participating in an effort organized by the Pratt Institute and the Urban Manufacturing Alliance to incorporate policy mechanisms and partnerships which are specifically aimed at supporting equitable economic development. The Equitable Innovation Economies Initiative, launched in 2014, helps cities collaboratively design and implement new programs to create jobs and increase economic opportunity within their innovation and manufacturing sectors for underserved communities.

Indianapolis LISC, Plan 2020, the Indy Chamber and the Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development have joined forces to support the Equitable Innovation Economies pilot program in Indianapolis. Although only now in the formative stage, this effort stands to involve national leaders with Indianapolis stakeholders to develop a framework appropriate for the local context of industrial reuse and economic development that provides opportunities and positive impacts for all strata of the community. As economic development sits hand in hand with business growth, job opportunities and workforce development are an important consideration.

While many existing businesses in urban legacy industrial districts are not part of the innovation sector, which is typically thought to include high tech and entrepreneurial companies, there is potential to grow and attract those types of companies. With an abundance of underutilized and vacant buildings in many of Indianapolis' legacy industrial districts, exists an opportunity to creatively strategize the adaptive reuse of urban industrial buildings as homes for tech companies, entrepreneurial centers, makerspaces and modern advanced manufacturers. Indianapolis, unlike some other large cities, has an abundance of space available for a relatively low cost which is attractive to the start-up and entrepreneurial community who may often be operating on a limited budget.

Deeply rooted, traditional manufacturers in these legacy industrial areas with the potential to be juxtaposed with high tech and entrepreneurial manufacturing and services create an auger for unique workforce, B2B, and adaptive opportunities to grow. Traditional manufacturers who have relied on the same production techniques for decades may find that the opportunity to incorporate new technologies, such as 3D printing, into their processes may allow them to be more versatile and relevant in an evolving marketplace. Likewise, start-ups and experimental businesses may find that working alongside industry experts who have sustained their share of trial and error, may provide guidance and mentorship in the development of their businesses.

Mass Avenue Brookside Industrial Corridor: An Employment Opportunity Area



The Mass Ave Brookside Industrial Corridor comprises 500+ acres of urban industrial property northeast of downtown Indianapolis. This Corridor, bound to the north by I-70 and the south by Mass Avenue and Brookside, stretches from 10th Street up to Sherman Drive. The corridor is challenged by aging infrastructure, deteriorating buildings and environmental contamination, but has the benefit of interstate access, visibility, proximity to downtown and access to potential labor in nearby neighborhoods.

The Corridor has the benefit of a LISC FOCUS designation for which resources will be set aside to assist and grow existing businesses, attract new business, address infrastructure needs, and build community assets. This benefit is amplified by the newly federally designated IndyEast Promise Zone which encompasses the area. Many of the existing businesses are manufacturers, B2B services, or other light industrial companies which tend to range from 5-75 employees. With tremendous redevelopment potential for vacant properties, of which there are many in the area, the likely number of employees to be seen at new companies is in a similar range due to the size of available properties. For companies of this size, identifying, hiring and retaining employees presents a particular challenge as there may not resources dedicated to HR staff or other sophisticated hiring procedures. For many hiring exists as an on-going and primary challenge.

Hiring Needs and Challenges for Small Urban Manufacturers

- Many small urban manufacturers or industrial companies have low-skill and low-wage positions which are not attractive to job seekers and lead to consistent turnover.
- Low-wage and low-skill jobs tend to attract workers with limited dedication, inconsistent employment history or criminal backgrounds. These individuals tend to be lacking in soft skills and their tenure in a position is short term before moving on.
- For employers who have consciously decided to hire individuals in work release, reentry programs or otherwise engaged in the criminal justice system, many have closed the door on that pipeline due to negative experiences.
- Low-wage and low-skill jobs tend to be filled individuals without consistent transportation. Even when employees are a good fit for the job, they don't have a good way to get to the job.
- For manufacturing and industrial jobs on strict production and shift change schedules, flexibility for child care or family needs is very limited.
- Small companies do not always have the capacity to have human resources staff with specific dedication to hiring. Hiring is one of just many tasks that are an ongoing burden to company leadership.
- Lack of human resource staff tends to correspond with a lack of knowledge about the variety of workforce development partners and programs available. Limited time prevents the companies for engaging new partners in the effort and they tend to stick to their existing methods, even if they aren't working out well.
- Job openings in small companies equates to a large loss in productive capacity. The need to fill the job quickly leads to companies hiring the first candidate rather than the best candidate.
- Urban companies that have been in their current location for decades, tend to carry over perceptions and historical background regarding the nearby neighborhoods that may have evolved and no-longer be accurate. The negative attitudes regarding the demographics of nearby neighborhoods leads to hesitation about hiring individuals from those neighborhoods.
- Companies are seeing their older workforce retiring who had developed a skillset over decades. The ability to replace those employees is difficult and will present a larger challenge in the coming years and baby boomers leave the workforce.
- Manufacturers who struggle with their training and retaining their existing workforce struggle with conceptualizing how to fill increased needs that will come along with expansions.

Strategies for Equitable Manufacturing Job Placement

- Create capacity for a non-profit community development or city to have a staff person dedicated to meeting and understanding the needs of companies in particular areas.
- Focus the efforts of those staff in areas that have been designated by LISC, DMD or other partners for economic development or industrial revitalization.
- Collect information on the basic requirements to be employed at each of the companies in the designated area including educational background, certifications, physical abilities, criminal background, etc.
- Unite the business community in these designated areas on a regular basis to have an employer-led discuss the current status of employment in their companies to find out what is working and what is not and to pair them with appropriate resources to fill the gaps. Include representatives from the proposed Workforce Development Partners in this plan at the meeting to provide on the spot resources and people to engage, rather than simply giving the company attendees informational packets or email referrals.
- Create case studies and conduct employer interviews capturing success stories of companies who have worked with the proposed Workforce Development Partners in this plan to share with other companies so that the success and opportunities speak for themselves.
- Engage companies annually in Manufacturing Day to promote industrial and manufacturing careers, expose job seekers to factories in their area, and promote their image within the community.
- Identify a list of employers within half a mile of existing and planned bus routes in urban manufacturing districts. Prioritize employment opportunities at these employers for individuals without stable transportation.
- Work with Centers for Working Families as they develop new training programs to adopt programs and certification that are in demand with employers in the designated areas.
- Engage community partners in the pursuit of federal, state, local and private foundation grant dollars to creating matching funds for training, to create capacity for Workforce Development Partners, and programs targeted toward veterans, minorities, ex-offenders and other disadvantaged individuals in support of continued equitable inclusion in job placement.
- Secure funding for staff at local non-profits or Workforce Development Partners to act as transitions managers for newly place staff to ensure that their training and preparation for jobs translates to retention. The individuals will act as a resource for new employees who might encounter unanticipated challenges with transportation, childcare, etc. and act as mediator between employers and employees to mitigate confrontation or confusion as both parties adjust to each other.
- Create a network of employers who refer job candidates to one other when there may not be a need in their specific company at that time.

Workforce Development Partners

While job seekers are present and employment pathways are needed throughout all strata of society, the ability to focus on equitable opportunity creation that incorporates individuals typically untouched by economic development initiatives is better met by certain workforce development organizations and partners than others.

Centers for Working Families

There is a strong existing framework of community development corporations and community centers in Indianapolis that provide a suite of services to residents in urban communities aimed at addressing quality of life issues, building financial literacy, and enabling families to sustainably provide for themselves. One element of that is job readiness, training and job placement. The Centers for Working Families (CWF) historically housed within LISC, have now shifted under the purview of the United Way of Central Indiana. This network of Centers, imbedded within community centers throughout Indianapolis, provide clients with soft skills training, interview preparation, resume building assistance, and job placement services. While these offerings build a foundation needed to get through most employers' doors, many of the Centers have recognized that more is needed to provide their clients with a competitive advantage and have incorporated trade certification programs and other industry recognized trainings that provide a foundation for stackable and transferable credentials that are needed within the job market. The incorporation of these hard skills programs makes these CWFs ideal partners for small urban manufacturers or industrial companies.

Unlike many traditional staffing and workforce development agencies, the CWFs, who also provide those services, are imbedded into the community in which their clients live and are likely to continue to touch their lives beyond their involvement in helping clients prepare for and secure employment. Many of their clients struggle with deeply social and structural barriers such as family instability, lack of transportation, criminal involvement, low educational levels and other issues often associated with poverty. When clients take advantage of the employment pathways provided by the CWFs, they are also involving themselves in a network of holistic services that can address these other issues.

As Indianapolis LISC focuses on the economic revitalization of legacy industrial areas such as the Mass Ave Brookside Corridor, supporting existing businesses in these areas and preparing for the needs of new businesses is a primary objective of which employment is a primary pillar. The CWFs are an ideal partner in this objective as they serve the underserved, are bolstering their capacity to offer competitive training and certifications, and are geographically close to the many of the companies in the area. As transportation is one of the largest barriers to getting a keeping a job for low income individuals, finding job opportunities within a close proximity to those individuals should be a priority to support job retention upon placement. The Edna Martin Christian Center, the John H. Boner Community Center both within 2 miles of the Corridor, and Southeast Community Services within 4 miles of the Corridor, each house a Center for Working Families. The primary clientele and catchment area for these Centers are likely to be the job seekers within the closest proximity to this industrial area.

Historically, neighborhoods near industrial areas served as worker housing, but as jobs and businesses left these areas, so changed the status of the individuals who lived in these neighborhoods. With a refocus on elevating the economic potential of legacy industrial areas after years of stagnation and disinvestment, revisiting the concept of housing and workplace proximity should be looked at for not only the barriers to transportation it lessens, but for the cohesiveness it can bring to urban communities. There is a resurgent trend for many white collar workers to move back into the downtown areas they once vacated for the suburbs to be near the business centers in which they work. Although clients at CWFs may not be in a position to move closer to employers, instead finding work in industrial business districts near where they already live may provide a similar convenience of proximity that other types of workers are seeking.

Employ Indy

Employ Indy is Marion County's local workforce investment board providing expertise, identifying tools, and prioritizing resources to develop, create or find the best talent needed to power the Marion County Economy. The organization provides pre-screening services, on-the-job training, assessment testing and industry and labor trend reporting. EmployIndy's Although available funding for Employ Indy's programs changes their offerings over time, one of their programs are especially well suited to manufacturing and industrial job seekers.

PowerTrain Indy provides funding for businesses in downtown Indianapolis and the immediate surrounding area to develop customized and on-the-job training to ensure workers have the right skills and are ready for hire. This on-the-job training allows employees to have an immersive training experience within the company that has agreed to hire them. This program also alleviates a majority of the cost of training an employer would traditional incur on their own. For employers who don't have the capacity to implement their own on the job-training program independently, this is a prime opportunity. Although the program has seen success, funding for PowerTrain will expire this year if another source does not replace it.

Exodus Refugee

Exodus Refugee Immigration works with refugees — worldwide victims of persecution, injustice and war — to establish self-sufficient lives in freedom and sanctuary for themselves and their families in Indiana. Exodus' clients, legal immigrants to the U.S. with the right to work upon entry, are a demographic of the population for whom the effects of economic prosperity may not be felt without intentional equitable involvement. Legal or illegal, immigrants represent a growing constituency in the available U.S. workforce and intentional incorporation of this group into workforce strategies will be important for the future. For many of Exodus' clients who are refugees, the life they escaped in their country of origin was unsafe, uncertain and provided little hope of security for themselves or their families. While the safety and relatively security provided to them upon resettlement in Indiana through Exodus is an amazing opportunity for them, it is important that the support and pathways provided to them as they move through this life changing transition are not such that they simply get by, but eventually prosper. This goal is not only important for the individuals but also for the community in which they are entering so as to not create an undue burden on social services.

In addition to finding the refugees a home, putting their children in schools and providing them a series of immersive workshops to acquaint them with American life, Exodus places individuals of working age with employers throughout the city. Although this demographic has certain barriers that employers might initially be inclined to worry about including language and lack of a driver's license, Exodus provides transportation for individuals without cars or who aren't on bus lines and will place on-site translators in workplaces as individuals evolve their own language skills. The refugees, with a wide array of backgrounds, bring skillsets, endurance and different ways of thinking into the diversity of a workplace which for some employers is an attractive asset.

Educational Institutions

Youth are the job-seekers of tomorrow and preparing them and exposing them to manufacturing and industrial careers while still in high school give them a leg up upon entering the job market. Although shop classes and training programs geared to manufacturing-oriented careers have widely exited the high school curriculum over the last two decades, many schools are slowly starting to reintegrate these opportunities for their students. The most impactful of these programs incorporate credentials and dual credits that transfer to collegiate institutions or provide apprentice or internship opportunities. By successfully placing students on a career path that they are well suited for and supported in, problems with their long term employment stability may be preempted.

Small Urban Manufacturing and Industrial Partners in the Mass Ave Brookside Industrial Corridor

The ultimate partner in the workforce development pipeline is the employer and to understand their current hiring practices and to propose new options requires meetings and relationship building which takes time. For many small companies, finding time to meet with outside guests to discuss development strategies is one of many burdens placed on the executive staff that tends to be delayed. To understand the potential for change that a workforce development strategy aimed at equitable outcomes can have, looking at employers in a defined area, here the Mass Ave Brookside Industrial Corridor is helpful. Below is a list of employers who have been recently engaged in a workforce development discussion and through limited success, perpetual turnover, and general apathy toward their current methods, are interested, but in some cases hesitant, about exploring new job placement and workforce development opportunities. Several have already engaged with the Workforce Development Partners listed in this document and have seen successful job placements during the early stages of the initiative.

On Tray Meal Systems
 McNamara
 Stickle Steam Specialties
 D2 Land and Water
 Lloyd's of Indiana
 Hackett Publishing
 Colorcon
 Chisholm Millworks
 Interstate Castings
 Horning Roofing
 Major Tool and Machine
 Circle City Industries
 Crane 1 Services

In addition to the companies who have been engaged and are ready to explore new methods, are many other companies who have been difficult to formally connect with or who have been responsive, but have yet to meet for formal workforce development discussions.

Mervis Plastics
 Heritage Recycling
 Indiana Wholesale
 Litho Press
 Mitchell and Scott
 Machinery Mart
 Circle City Heat Treating
 Paciv USA
 International Paper
 Old World Masonry

Capital Machines
Hoosier Gasket
Klincher Locknut
Miller Veneers
Powers and Sons Construction
J.L. Walters and Associates

This list of companies represents the manufacturing and industrial partners in just one of many urban industrial districts in Indianapolis. With business attraction and economic development efforts focus on this area, the dozens of vacant and underutilized buildings in the area will house additional companies with their own hiring needs. As community development corporations, LISC, DMD and other Equitable Innovation Economies and Plan 2020 partners focus their efforts on other industrial districts, new manufacturing and industrial partners in need of employment resources will be identified.

**Mass Ave Brookside Industrial Corridor
Equitable Workforce Development Partnership
2015**

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") outlines the commitments of the Riley Area Development Corporation (RADC) and the John H. Boner Community Center's Center for Working Families (JHBCC CWF) to implement a community and employer-driven equitable workforce development program for the Mass Ave Brookside Industrial Corridor (the Corridor). The Corridor is a LISC Fostering Urban Commercial Strategies (FOCUS) district for which a Program Manager will be funded by LISC for a minimum of three years who will act as the primary business liaison and program developer for the Corridor. This program will align with the Workforce Development objectives of the Near Eastside Quality of Life Plan (QOL) and with the business development objectives for the Corridor. The JHBCC serves neighborhoods adjacent to the southern portion of the Corridor which presents the opportunity for neighborhood resident job-seekers to find employment in close proximity to their homes.

RADC Commitments

RADC shall distribute an employer needs survey to companies in the Corridor to identify skillsets and minimum requirements needed for employment in the company. The survey results will be shared with JHBCC CWF.

RADC shall convene a quarterly Mass Ave Brookside Corridor company roundtable at which employers will have the opportunity to meet with JHBCC CWF staff to discuss employment needs, opportunities and tailored training programs.

RADC shall report job placement numbers and wages to LISC and program partners on a quarterly basis.

RADC shall share ongoing job opportunities with JHBCC CWF as they present themselves.

RADC shall explore and pursue grant opportunities to implement workforce development and employer-led training opportunities for which JHBCC CWF and Corridor companies will be partners.

JHBCC CWF Commitments

JHBCC CWF shall work to ensure that program outcomes align with the QOL objectives.

JHBCC CWF shall identify, screen, train and generally prepare candidates for Corridor companies.

JHBCC CWF shall attend quarterly company roundtable events during which they will have the opportunity to discuss employment needs, opportunities and tailored training programs.

JHBCC CWF shall explore and pursue grant opportunities to implement workforce development and employer-led training opportunities for which RADC and Corridor companies will be partners.

JHBCC CWF shall provide job candidates with services through their program and services including Case Management, Work Supports, Financial Coaching, Financial Education and Asset development to assist with the stability of the individual beyond job placement.

JHBCC CWF shall work with RADC and Corridor companies as they develop and open the Near Eastside Career Opportunity Center which will embed education, training and certification programs within the community to provide access and supportive services to adults who are interested in developing the skills needed in high demand job markets

Signatures

Emily Scott

RADC Program Manager

8/13/15

Date

John Boner

John H. Boner Community Center
Chief Operating Officer

8/12/15

Date

**Mass Ave Brookside Industrial Corridor
Equitable Workforce Development Partnership
2015**

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") outlines the commitments of the Riley Area Development Corporation (RADC) and Exodus Refugee to implement a community and employer-driven equitable workforce development program for the Mass Ave Brookside Industrial Corridor (the Corridor). The Corridor is a LISC Fostering Urban Commercial Strategies (FOCUS) district for which a Program Manager will be funded by LISC for a minimum of three years who will act as the primary business liaison and program developer for the Corridor. This program will align with the Workforce Development objectives of the Martindale Brightwood Quality of Life Plan (QOL) and with the business development objectives for the Corridor. The Martindale Brightwood neighborhood is adjacent to the northern portion of the Corridor which presents the opportunity for neighborhood resident job-seekers to find employment in close proximity to their homes.

RADC Commitments

RADC shall distribute an employer needs survey to companies in the Corridor to identify skillsets and minimum requirements needed for employment in the company. The survey results will be shared with EXODUS REFUGEE.

RADC shall convene a quarterly Mass Ave Brookside Corridor company roundtable at which employers will have the opportunity to meet with EXODUS REFUGEE staff to discuss employment needs, opportunities and tailored training programs.

RADC shall report job placement numbers and wages to LISC and program partners on a quarterly basis.

RADC shall share ongoing job opportunities with EXODUS REFUGEE as they present themselves.

RADC shall explore and pursue grant opportunities to implement workforce development and employer-led training opportunities for which EXODUS REFUGEE and Corridor companies will be partners.

EXODUS REFUGEE Commitments

EXODUS REFUGEE shall identify, screen, train and generally prepare candidates for Corridor companies.

EXODUS REFUGEE shall attend quarterly company roundtable events during which they will have the opportunity to discuss employment needs, opportunities and tailored training programs.

EXODUS REFUGEE shall explore and pursue grant opportunities to implement workforce development and employer-led training opportunities for which RADC and Corridor companies will be partners.

Signatures

Emily Cott

RADC Program Manager

8/12/15

Date

B

EXODUS REFUGEE

8/12/15

Date

**Mass Ave Brookside Industrial Corridor
Equitable Workforce Development Partnership
2015**

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") outlines the commitments of the Riley Area Development Corporation (RADC) and Southeast Community Services Center for Working Families (SECS CWF) to implement a community and employer-driven equitable workforce development program for the Mass Ave Brookside Industrial Corridor (the Corridor). The Corridor is a LISC Fostering Urban Commercial Strategies (FOCUS) district for which a Program Manager will be funded by LISC for a minimum of three years who will act as the primary business liaison and program developer for the Corridor. This program will align with the Workforce Development objectives of the Southeast Neighborhood Quality of Life Plan (QOL) and with the business development objectives for the Corridor.

RADC Commitments

RADC shall distribute an employer needs survey to companies in the Corridor to identify skillsets and minimum requirements needed for employment in the company. The survey results will be shared with SECS CWF.

RADC shall convene a quarterly Mass Ave Brookside Corridor company roundtable at which employers will have the opportunity to meet with SECS CWF staff to discuss employment needs, opportunities and tailored training programs.

RADC shall report job placement numbers and wages to LISC and program partners on a quarterly basis.

RADC shall share ongoing job opportunities with SECS CWF as they present themselves.

RADC shall explore and pursue grant opportunities to implement workforce development and employer-led training opportunities for which SECS CWF and Corridor companies will be partners.

SECS CWF Commitments

The SECS CWF Career Developer will work with RADC to identify and establish partnerships with high growth employment sectors and employers for the purpose of connecting network customers to employment opportunities, and fine-tune the employment pipeline to improve access, support, and retention.

SECS CWF shall work to ensure that program outcomes align with the QOL objectives.

SECS CWF shall identify, screen, train and generally prepare candidates for Corridor companies.

SECS CWF shall attend quarterly company roundtable events during which they will have the opportunity to discuss employment needs, opportunities and tailored training programs.

SECS CWF shall explore and pursue grant opportunities to implement workforce development and employer-led training opportunities for which RADC and Corridor companies will be partners.

Signatures

Emily Scott
RADC Program Manager

8/12/2015
Date

Tera Garcia
Southeast Community Services - CWF

8/12/2015
Date