



USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.

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St. Louis-based Urban Strategies, Inc. and Housing Authority of the City of East St. Louis receive HUD Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant
(Grant - one of six awarded nationwide)

St. Louis-based Urban Strategies Inc. (USI) and the Housing Authority of the City of East St. Louis were recently awarded a \$350,000 HUD Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant. The U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded nearly \$5 million to six communities nationwide. These planning grants will help local leaders craft comprehensive, homegrown plans to revitalize and transform neighborhoods.

“USI and the Housing Authority, along with the City of East St. Louis, will work with local residents and a variety of community stakeholders – including nonprofits, faith-based organizations, institutions of higher education, supportive services agencies, businesses, and others – to create a forward-looking Transformation Plan,” said Esther Shin, president of USI. “Through this planning process, community members and stakeholders will identify local assets, discuss current challenges, and create a vision for the future. These efforts will create an integrated and holistic plan to revitalize Samuel Gompers Homes and the surrounding downtown community, improve neighborhood safety, and bolster education, health, and employment outcomes for families,” Shin added.

“We are looking forward to working closely with community members to develop a Transformation Plan that creates a community of “choice” - a safe, healthy, vibrant, thriving community for children, families and seniors. We are thrilled that HUD recognized the need to provide this investment that will allow us to begin planning for the transformation of the Gompers neighborhood.” said Mildred Motley, Executive Director of the Housing Authority of the City of East St. Louis.

Formerly an economic powerhouse, in recent decades Downtown East St. Louis has lost industry and population due to deindustrialization and railroad restructuring. Buildings that were once architectural gems now sit abandoned, and residential areas are characterized by substandard



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housing and vacant lots. Downtown East St. Louis also struggles with a dramatically high poverty rate of 82 percent.

This area, however, has neighborhood strengths that can create the foundation for change. Its proximity to the Mississippi River and the downtown St. Louis central business district, is an enduring asset. In recent years, the city has also established a TIF district to help attract new investment. A new \$8 million, 200-acre multi-modal transportation project to service the Port of East St. Louis is currently underway and is expected to stimulate business and economic development in the neighborhood. Long standing residents, community groups and local nonprofits also continue to invest in the community. Eastside Heart and Home recently completed 16 homeowner units and plans to produce more. The Christian Activity Center, another local nonprofit, has plans to develop a performance center and recreational area on land adjacent to Samuel Gompers Homes.

Key partners include Bi-State Development/Metro | Christian Activity Center | City of East St. Louis | City of East St. Louis Police Department | Comprehensive Behavioral Health Center | East Side Aligned | East Side Heart & Homes/Catholic Urban Programs | East St. Louis School District 189 | McCormack Barron Salazar | Southern Illinois University | Touchette Regional Hospital | United Way of Greater St. Louis

Established in 1940, the Housing Authority of the City of East St. Louis was the first housing authority created in the State of Illinois. As part of our mission we are dedicated to providing safe, decent and affordable housing that enhances the quality of life for all residents.

Urban Strategies, Inc. is a national nonprofit with extensive experience in implementing place-based human capital development strategies in communities that are undergoing comprehensive physical revitalization. Founded in 1978, USI supports communities while working with community partners to develop economic opportunities, cradle-to-college/career success, high quality health services and a range of comprehensive human service supports. They currently support transformation work in 30 communities in 15 cities around the country.