

NEWS RELEASE

## UB Planners Win International Award for East Side Development Work

University-community-business-school partnership aims to regenerate neighborhoods

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BUFFALO, N.Y. -- The University at Buffalo East Side Neighborhood Transformation Partnership (ESNTP), a 2-year-old, university-assisted approach to the regeneration of Buffalo's Fruit Belt and Martin Luther King, Jr., Park communities, has received the 2008 Outstanding Program Award from the international Community Development Society.

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The society provides leadership to professionals and citizens in several countries across the spectrum of community development and UB won the award for an "outstanding program utilizing the principles of good practice as adopted by the society."

The award will be presented in June at the Awards Banquet of the 2008 Community Development Society Conference in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Members of the winning team are from the Center for Urban Studies in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning in the UB School of Architecture and Planning.

They are Henry L. Taylor, Ph.D., center director and professor; Robert Silverman, Ph.D., associate professor; Kelly Patterson, Ph.D., assistant professor; Jacqueline Hall, ESNTP project administrative officer; Jeff Kujawa, assistant director, and Frida Ferrer, program coordinator.

"This award is an important milestone for the ESNTP and UB," says Silverman. "It puts us on the international stage as an incubator for models to revitalize distressed inner-city neighborhoods."

The ESNTP was created in 2006 with a Community Outreach Partnership Center grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development and represents a significant partnership between UB and two of the most disadvantaged communities in Buffalo's inner-city.

The goal of the three-year project is to halt the decline of these neighborhoods and to transform them into desirable places to live, work and raise a family. Its second goal is to construct a model of neighborhood regeneration that can be applied to neighborhoods locally and across the nation.

The ESNTP encourages community development initiatives in the target neighborhoods in the areas of: housing, economic development and education. It also advocates for sustained, campus-wide engagement in Buffalo's African-American community.

The partnership has three principal interactive projects that link K-8 education with housing rehabilitation and commercial corridor regeneration:

First, it partners with the Fruit Belt's Futures Academy (School 37); the King Urban Life Center, which houses a charter school in the Martin Luther King, Jr., Park neighborhood, and the Locust Street Art School. Together they involve students in neighborhood planning and improvement through the Futures Cities Computer Modeling program, the Fruit Belt Community Garden, the Annual Fruit Belt Neighborhood Clean-A-Thon and the Community Public Art Project.

Second, ESNTTP housing activities, headed by Silverman and Patterson, build the capacity of local community-based organizations, from block clubs to faith-based organizations and advocacy groups and assist them in their efforts to address the affordable housing needs of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park and Fruit Belt neighborhoods.

For instance, the ESNTTP offers important technical assistance and consulting services to the Urban Community Corporation (UCC), a 501C-3 community-based organization that trains at-risk youth and low-income workers in the construction trades and works on the rehabilitation of abandoned houses in the target neighborhoods. It also provides technical assistance to St. John Baptist Church, which has long been involved in the successful planning, development and management of high-quality, low-income housing in the Fruit Belt community.

In partnership with community businesses, ESNTTP also has helped establish a Fillmore Avenue Merchants Association and works with businesses on a range of activities designed to improve the corridor's physical environment, bolster safety and security and provide owners with access to capital, training, and technical assistance.

Taylor says, "We believe that participation in a range of activities in these neighborhoods is critical to developing a deep understanding of the constellation and interaction of projects, programs and activities that are required to bring about significant change in neighborhoods experiencing distress.

"With this in mind," he says, "we also established a mini-grant program with the UB Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy in the UB Law School to encourage our faculty members to engage in theoretical and applied research in urban education, housing and neighborhood development, as well as in community economic development."