

The Old 1st Ward Community Association Strategic Plan 2003-2005

Introduction

The OFW Community Association has been in existence as a 501 (c) 3 organization since 1979. We are a community asset located in the Old 1st Ward neighborhood of Buffalo, NY. Our mission is to address the Old 1st Ward's community-based development needs including economic redevelopment, housing and human services programs with a "vision for a new renaissance."

The work of the OFW Community Association focuses on both human service needs and community development needs. Our human service programs focus on meeting the needs of individuals and families that live in the neighborhood. Community development efforts are focused on improving the quality of life and vitality of the neighborhood and restoring The Ward to the vibrant and healthy neighborhood that it was in the past. Neighborhood focused efforts include housing and jobs. Our programs impact the lives of many people; since we opened our doors we've served nearly 10,000 people annually with our human service and community development programs.

Our human service programs include the operation of a full-time community center including youth and senior services. We offer transportation for seniors, 16 units of senior housing directly next door to the center and a senior nutrition program that includes breakfasts and lunches offered on-site or delivered. Our youth programs include recreation, a Kid's Café nutrition program, and tutoring. The Center also offers a food pantry, ceramics, aerobics, basketball and a weight room.

Our community development programs include affordable housing development through new home construction (29 units completed) as well as supporting home ownership through pre-purchase education and counseling and down payment and closing cost assistance programs. We have assisted over 200 buyers through education and 20 new homebuyers through down payment and closing costs. Existing neighborhood homeowners are supported through loans to improve homes (approximately 300 completed).

Economic development is a new program area that is just getting underway and we are conducting a feasibility study to determine the best direction for our services. We have identified several neighborhood assets that will be capitalized upon to support emerging entrepreneurs. Part of our new renaissance vision for The Ward is the cultivation of small, homegrown businesses in the neighborhood. The Old 1st Ward has an industrial history that left the area with three important assets for our business creation endeavors: Availability, Affordability and Accessibility. The neighborhood has available commercial, warehouse and industrial space plus plenty of parking. These real estate assets are affordable. Finally, the Old 1st Ward is highly accessible. There is water, rail, and highway access. The community is in close proximity to downtown yet without the

high cost and congestion. The location is also closely linked with South Buffalo and Lackawanna.

Beginning in 2000, OFW began a process of renewing our mission, focus and values. Among other things, this provided an impetus for considerable board renewal and change. The current board approved an updated mission, articulated core values and identified key high-level outcomes for achieving the mission.

Mission:

To serve the Old 1st Ward with Community Based Development Needs Including Economic Re-Development, Housing & Human Service Programs with a vision for a New Renaissance.

Core Values:

- Old 1st Ward programs and projects will *make a difference* in people's lives and in our community.
- We are a *pro-active* organization, planning for and impacting the future of our community.
- The Old 1st Ward is a community of *families working together and caring for each other.*
- Our organization is a *role model* for our community.
- *Collaboration* is an integral part of the way we achieve our mission.

Vision:

It is our vision that in the next five years the Old 1st Ward Community Association will be a vital source in creating a new renaissance for the Old 1st Ward community. This transformation will occur through strong families, active residents of all ages, vital housing and a healthy economy.

High-Level Outcomes:

- Residents that have access to adequate well balanced nutritional food.
- Residents that have meaningful active engagement with their neighbors.
- Residents that stay healthy through physical activity.
- Residents who are educated homebuyers and homeowners.
- Residents who have adequate financial opportunities for buying and maintaining their homes.
- Homegrown businesses that provide needed goods and services to the neighborhood and act as a community-based economic engine.
- Housing that is safe, decent, and financially sustainable.
- A community where residents choose to invest time, money, and energy.

Market Assessment and Needs:

Buffalo’s Old 1st Ward is a neighborhood just south of the city center with an old industrial heritage. The Ward has a working waterfront along Lake Erie and the Buffalo River that is dominated by old steel mills and tall, concrete grain elevators. The historic grain elevators and other industrial buildings create dramatic silhouettes along the Buffalo River and loom over the community’s modest housing. The Old 1st Ward is a unique community characterized by clustered residential areas that a close-knit neighborhood with several family generations born and raised there.

The neighborhood covers US Census Tracts 4, 5, 12 and 18. The needs in this neighborhood relate to households living in poverty and in very old housing structures.

The area is home to nearly 2,800 households with an average median income of \$21,400. Twenty-four percent of the households have an annual income of \$10,000 or less. There are nearly 2,700 occupied housing units in the neighborhood and 46 percent or 1,240 are owner-occupied. The vacancy rate is nearly 33 percent of all housing units. While this is extremely high, more than half (450) of the vacant units are in structures with greater than 3 units. Single-family structures that are vacant represent 14 percent of all vacant units or about 124 units. As is typical for Buffalo, most of the housing (69%) was built before 1939. This means the housing is old and usually in need of significant maintenance and upgrading. The average median home value in this neighborhood according to the 2000 Census is \$37,150 compared to a median value citywide of \$58,800.



Table 1: Household and Housing Unit Characteristics

	Old 1st Ward	City of Buffalo
Population	6,658	292,648
Households	2,787	122,672
Median Income	\$21,400	\$24,536
Percent Households below poverty	27%	25%
Occupied Housing Units	2,693	122,720
Vacant Housing Units	882	22,854
Percent Owner-Occupied	46%	43%
Median Value O-O Units	\$37,150	\$58,800

2000 US Census

Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) data shows low lending rates and very high denial and frustration rates for refinance applications that may indicate active subprime or even predatory lenders. During 2001, twenty purchase mortgages were made in the neighborhood yielding a lending rate of 16 loans per 1,000 owner-occupied housing units. This compares to a lending rate of 42 loans throughout the MSA.

Table 2: Home Mortgage Application Data 2001

	Old 1st Ward	Buffalo-Niagara MSA
Number of Purchase Mortgages	20	12,956
Origination Rate	50%	76%
Denial Rate	10%	12%
Frustration Rate (Apps not originated)	50%	24%
Lending Rate (per 1,000 O-O HU)	16	42
Number of Refinance Mortgages	28	15,148
Origination Rate	15%	40%
Denial Rate	52%	32%
Frustration Rate (Apps not originated)	85%	60%
Lending Rate (per 1,000 O-O HU)	23	49

HMDA www.ffiec.gov

Lines of Business:

OFW Community Association offers programs organized into five business lines: Nutrition, Human Services, Tutoring, Community Center and Community Development (including housing and economic development). Each of these business lines has a variety of programs and services that target a variety of household types, income levels and age groups.

Nutrition:

- Kids Café
- Senior Breakfast and Lunch
- Food Pantry
- Senior shopping transportation

Community Center:

- Aerobics
- Basketball Leagues
- Weight Room
- Ceramics
- Irish Dance

Tutoring:

- After School Tutoring
- Summer Tutoring

Human Services:

- Youth Recreation
- Youth Arts and Crafts
- Transportation (youth and senior)
- Senior Activities

Community Development:

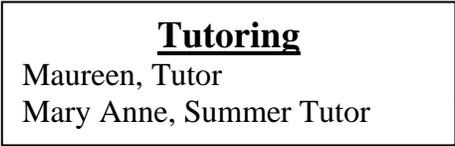
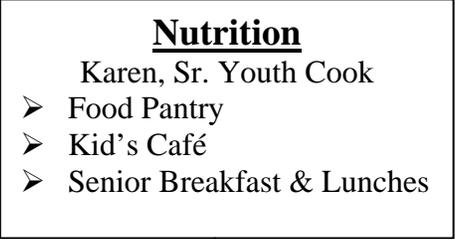
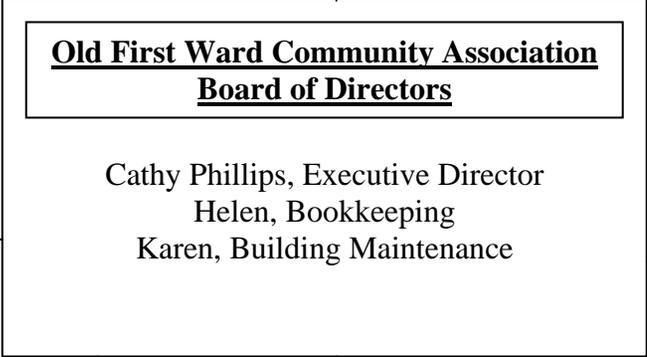
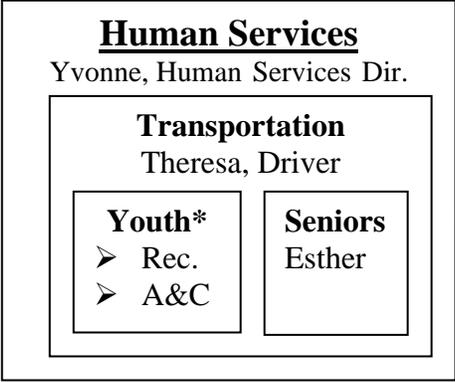
- Housing --
 - Senior rental housing
 - New Construction
 - Acquisition-rehab-resale
 - Pre-purchase Education
 - Down payment and Closing Cost Assistance
 - Home Improvement Loans and Grants
- Economic Development
 - Programs underdevelopment

The matrix on the following page shows how each of our lines of business help move us toward fulfilling our high-level outcomes and eventually achieving our mission.

Table 3: High-Level Outcomes and Lines of Business Matrix

	Access to adequate well balanced nutritional food	Meaningful active engagement with their neighbors	Healthy through physical activity	Educated homebuyers and homeowners	Adequate financial opportunities for buying and maintaining their homes	Homegrown businesses	Housing that is safe, decent, and financially sustainable	Residents choose to invest time, money, and energy
Nutrition	X							X
Community Center		X	X					X
Tutoring								X
Human Services		X	X					X
Community Development				X	X	X	X	X

The chart on the following page is an organizational chart of the Old 1st Ward.



* Recreation Aids: Nick, Mark, Drew & Marlene

Program Work Plans:

	2003	2004	2005
Nutrition			
Kids Café (meals served)*	5,000	5,000	5,000
Senior Breakfast and Lunch (meals served)	5,000	5,000	5,000
Food Pantry (households assisted)			
Senior shopping transportation (trips provided)	728	728	728
Community Center			
Aerobics (persons participating)	780	780	780
Basketball Leagues (persons participating)	100	100	100
Weight Room (memberships)	15	15	15
Ceramics (persons participating)	780	780	780
Irish Dance (persons participating)	30	30	30
Tutoring			
After School (Kids tutored)	20	20	20
Summer (One on One tutoring sessions)	72	72	72
Human Services			
Youth Recreation (persons participating)*	5,000	5,000	5,000
Youth Arts and Crafts (persons participating)*	5,000	5,000	5,000
Transportation (youth & senior) (trips provided)	220	220	220
Senior Activities (persons participating)	35	35	35
Community Development			
Housing			
Senior rental housing (units under management)	16	16	16
New Construction		2	2
Acquisition-rehab-resale		2	3
Pre-purchase Education (households educated)	50	50	50
Down payment and Closing Cost Assistance (units assisted)	10	10	10
Home Improvement Loans and Grants (units assisted)	14	12	12
Economic Development			
Program under development, see strategic goals below			

*The after school program consists of Kids Cafe, recreation and arts & crafts so these numbers represent the same children

Strategic Goals 2003-2005:

The strategic goals below represent efforts underway that are “over and above” our work in providing services in the program categories outlined in the table above.

#1. Design, development, funding and implementation of our economic development program.

Action: Work with the University of Buffalo Studio Project --

- a. Assess feasibility of economic/retail development on South Park Avenue.
- b. Investigate the practicality of instituting community gardens in the Old 1st Ward.
- c. Explore historic preservation and cultural tourism opportunities in the Old 1st Ward.

Action: Work with South Buffalo NHS and Lackawanna CDC –

- a. Develop façade program that runs from Lackawanna to downtown Buffalo.

Action: Work with the Greater South Buffalo Chamber of Commerce

- a. Work collectively on efforts to secure and support small business growth.

#2. Secure start up funding for our Social Enterprise

Action: Refine HomeTeam Inspection Franchise business plan

- a. Seek grant funding or venture capital investment to purchase franchise.
- b. Once funding is secured begin operations.

#3. Play an integral role in community planning for our community

Action: Work with the University of Buffalo Studio Project –

- a. Conduct a housing needs assessment

Action: Work with the City of Buffalo –

- a. Work with the Good Neighbors Planning Alliance on the Buffalo River Community plans and initiatives.

Action: Buffalo Statue

- a. Create a ‘gateway’ statue and sign with fiberglass Buffalo statute and sign.

#4. Continue to use innovation in special events and fundraising that allow us to generate program and operating income and establish events that allow for community building.

Action: Cultivate continued growth of our excellent special events.

- a. Hold each year: Chinese Auction, Shamrock Run, Meat Auction, Golf Tournament, Theme Table and Night in the Ward (every other year).