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The Vision + Action Plan for Banglatown was developed with input from over 350 residents, business owners, and neighborhood stakeholders of the Banglatown neighborhood over a six-month period in Summer and Fall 2016. Thank you to all who joined in this planning process by talking with us at your front door, attending and hosting events, and helping to craft this plan. The Vision + Action Plan builds on the diverse hopes, dreams, and ideas of Banglatown residents to support a healthy and vibrant community.

In this work, Global Detroit partnered with goodgood, an interdisciplinary design firm, to weave professional design and design-oriented thinking throughout the project’s communications, engagement methodology, and overarching planning strategy. goodgood helped to thread together economic, social equity and ecological factors in the design and engagement process, teaching Global Detroit about the transformative role that design can play in neighborhood engagement and community building efforts.

A special thank you to the community partners and businesses that opened their doors for engagement events and community meetings including the Bangladeshi American Public Affairs Committee (BAPAC), Burnside Carwash, Hamtramck Historical Museum, Lasky Recreation Center, Meghna Bazaar, and Power House Productions.
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Bangladeshi American Public Affairs Committee (BAPAC)
Bandhu Gardens
Bank Suey
Burnside Carwash
Burnside Farm
Hamtramck Community Initiative
International Hope Center
Power House Productions
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This planning process did not attempt to establish a common set of neighborhood boundaries. The engagement area is instead broader than any single definition of Banglatown to be inclusive of all boundary definitions. The Vision + Action Plan will, at times, use **WEST**, **CENTRAL**, and **EAST** demarcations to highlight characteristics and conditions that are unique to a specific section of the engagement area.

**Global Detroit’s Position within the Community**

In 2014, Global Detroit was invited by BAPAC to host a microlending workshop for local business owners along the Conant commercial corridor in Banglatown. Our team was immediately inspired and motivated by the strong entrepreneurial spirit and diverse market fabric of the community.

In 2016, with the generous support of The Kresge Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), Global Detroit embarked on a neighborhood engagement and planning process that would generate a collective vision for the future of this community. Without a community development corporation in Banglatown, the neighborhood lacked a cohesive community plan to unite the various improvement efforts of diverse stakeholders.

**Engagement Area**

Global Detroit’s Opportunity Neighborhoods is an emerging strategy designed to zero in on Detroit neighborhoods with sizeable immigrant populations. The strategy aims to equip these neighborhoods with resources and tools to include immigrants in asset building and economic development, as well as enhance existing neighborhood-based efforts aimed at a healthier and more vibrant local economy. Opportunity Neighborhoods taps into, and mobilizes, the potential of both longstanding residents and immigrant groups, while creating mutually beneficial opportunities for all neighborhood stakeholders. The Banglatown neighborhood is one of six identified Opportunity Neighborhoods.

Banglatown is an Opportunity Neighborhood in which individuals and community groups in and around the community describe its geographic boundaries differently. Global Detroit began outreach in the areas defined by community partners including Power House Productions and the Bangladeshi American Public Affairs Committee (BAPAC) and expanded beyond these boundaries when natural nodes of connectivity pulled the outreach team to different areas of the community. Outreach also expanded into the “WEST” section of the engagement area to ensure meaningful relationship building with longstanding African American residents.
Global Detroit, working with stakeholders, leveraged staff time, volunteers, and existing relationships to generate the energy required for authentic neighborhood planning. The process contained specific resources and intentions to utilize design and data visualization to bridge language and cultural divisions between the community’s diverse residents.

For more than five years, Global Detroit has been a leader in creating infrastructure and systems to better integrate immigrants into the civic, social, and economic fabric of Metro Detroit. Global Detroit began with a 2010 study on the powerful impacts that immigrants have on the regional economy. With a strong understanding of not only the positive influence that immigrants have on communities, but the challenges they face due to social, cultural, and linguistic barriers, Global Detroit developed a methodology that would reach immigrants who would otherwise be excluded from community planning efforts and applied it to its work in Banglatown. This strategy included a door-to-door outreach campaign, a diverse outreach team, translation and interpretation for all communications, and informal, block-level events that would attract children and their parents and others unlikely to attend community meetings. In doing so, Global Detroit and goodgood, the “planning team,” also focused on connecting with low-income African American residents, who often face similar barriers to immigrants. This very same methodology - going to residents, rather than requiring they come to us - is critical in penetrating isolated communities. While the causes of isolation are different for immigrants than other low-income minorities, the outcome is the same - they often are disconnected from the information and resources that could improve the quality of life for them and their families.

With a Bangladeshi community organizer and a robust outfit of diverse outreach volunteers, Global Detroit built strong relationships of trust and demonstrated accountability and follow-through by also connecting families to needed resources and services including English as a second language (ESL) classes, citizenship classes, homeownership, foreclosure resources, food banks, and more. These relationships shed light on the strengths and challenges associated with living in this neighborhood, and the individual challenges that families face. Global Detroit aims to continue the work it has begun with the Banglatown community and looks forward to helping stakeholders activate the vision set forth by this document.

History
For the past three decades, a significant number of immigrants have moved to Banglatown, mostly from Bangladesh (often by way of Queens, New York), as well as from Yemen. The city of Hamtramck, which is partially included in the engagement area, is a traditionally Polish immigrant enclave. In the early decades of the 20th Century, the area attracted thousands of immigrants from Europe to work in the auto industry. Following World War II, the area continued to attract immigrants from Eastern Europe, including Yugoslavia, Ukraine, and Albania. In more recent decades, immigrants from the Middle East and Asia followed, including Yemenis, Bangladeshis, and Indians. Today, Banglatown is home to one of the nation’s densest clusters of Bangladeshi-Americans and Hamtramck represents the only community in America with election ballots printed in Bengali. In fact, in 2015 Hamtramck became the first American city with a majority Muslim City Council. Banglatown is also home to large numbers of African-American, Yemeni, Polish, Bosnian, and other diverse residents. The unique immigrant-rich climate of Banglatown makes it both a culturally and linguistically diverse community.

In the last decade, Banglatown also experienced an influx of artists moving into the area. Many of the artists have taken an active role in the community and are exploring creative ways to use art to address vacancy and blight, including a number of powerful public arts projects. Banglatown also has a walkable and dense commercial corridor on Conant Avenue, housing ethnic restaurants, markets, and retail shops. Although the area is vibrant and has a strong sense of community, the neighborhood and surrounding areas have still been impacted by the decades of disinvestment that much of Detroit has endured. Many families in the community live at or below the poverty level and struggle to meet basic needs. Further, community development efforts in the area have lacked the cross-cultural cohesion and common vision needed to transform the neighborhood as a whole.
Banglatown Community Snapshot

Boundaries
The borders of Banglatown are not well defined and differ depending on which source is referenced. For consistency throughout this planning process, Global Detroit has defined the Banglatown neighborhood as located in North Central Detroit and North Hamtramck. Global Detroit’s engagement has been predominantly concentrated in Northeast Hamtramck and a portion of North Central Detroit comprised of US Census tracts 5105, 5106, and 5520. However, Global Detroit has also conducted outreach in the areas south of this engagement area. The original engagement area was defined by the boundaries put forth by Power House Productions and BAPAC. In areas, the planning team extended beyond these boundaries to engage a diversity of residents, including business owners along Conant Avenue.

Population demographics
Data from the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates show that within the engagement area, 48.6 percent of the population are foreign-born, with 34 percent of the total population originally from Bangladesh, three percent from Yemen, three percent from Poland, and three percent from Ukraine. In addition to a large immigrant population, 17 percent of the population in the engagement area identifies as African American, and four percent identify as belonging to two or more races. In the engagement area 63 percent of units are owner-occupied, and 37 percent are occupied by renters, showing a fairly strong rental market for residents. As a whole, the engagement area has seen years of disinvestment. This is marked by a high poverty rate of 55 percent, an average median income of $24,313.67, and a housing vacancy rate of 25 percent. These numbers are significantly worse in the western portion of the engagement area which is 26 percent African American and has an average median income of $18,163, a poverty level of 63 percent, and a housing vacancy rate of 31 percent.

Methodology for Community Engagement
The planning team sought to build and implement an inclusive community engagement and neighborhood planning process to form a shared vision, long-term community priorities, and an actionable plan to counter decades of disinvestment in Banglatown. This intensive six-month planning process aimed to create a sense of ownership and collaboration amongst a diverse set of stakeholders so that they can become the driving force in the implementation of strategies to build community and improve the quality of life in Banglatown. Throughout the engagement process, the planning team sought feedback from residents and community partners. Adjustments were continually made to the strategy to foster stronger connections and draw in new participants. This approach has begun to form the foundation upon which to pursue community and economic development activities in a manner that is inclusive of immigrants, African Americans, and others that are often far removed from community and civic activities in the engagement area.

Outreach was designed to overcome barriers faced by residents of Banglatown such as transportation issues or English language barriers. By meeting residents in their homes, places of business, and recreational spaces, among other locations, the outreach team traversed social, cultural, and language barriers. Through door-to-door outreach, the planning team worked not only to engage residents in the community planning process, but also to work towards closing the perceived information gap in the neighborhood.

While talking with residents about the future direction of the neighborhood, the outreach team worked to connect individuals with resources and services to meet basic needs. Often, this involved exploring existing resources, connecting residents to appropriate providers, and providing additional support such as translation or aid in filling out an application.

The planning team ensured that community meetings were language accessible by providing Bengali and Arabic translators as well as utilizing visual design tools, such as iconography and data visualization, to help convey information to facets of the population who may have limited English proficiency. The planning team also engaged with those in the community that utilize technology regularly by posting information about community planning events and available resources on the Banglatown Block Club Facebook Page.
Overview, the planning team’s process was focused on hearing from and building relationships with as many residents as possible. This community engagement outreach strategy and timeline is outlined below:

Ongoing Door-to-Door Canvassing (April - October 2016)
The canvassing strategy consisted of one-on-one conversations with residents, passing out fliers to community meetings and other events, and administering an asset and challenge mapping community survey. The survey was used to help identify main priority areas in the neighborhood, where residents wanted to see change. Canvassing took place in the areas in which engagement events would later be held, in order to maximize long-term participation of residents in the process, as well as spread out canvassing efforts geographically to ensure the outreach team heard from as many different groups as possible.

Neighborhood Interactives (June, July, and September 2016)
The neighborhood interactives took the form of structured community planning meetings and were each held in a different geographic area of the neighborhood in order to attract different demographics of residents. We heard from diverse community members about their neighborhoods, including what they like and what they identify as problem areas. In order to maintain transparency, Global Detroit also updated the participants with new information emerging from the community. At the neighborhood interactive held in September at Lasky Recreation Center, attendees worked collaboratively in small groups to craft viable program ideas to address common challenges in the neighborhood. Groups conversations and proposals centered on homeownership, race and neighborhood cohesion, safety, women’s resources, prosperity and income, and parks and nature.

Neighborhood Walk and Asset Mapping (June 2016)
The planning team hosted a full day of neighborhood asset and challenge mapping as a way to learn about how residents navigate their neighborhood, what they admire about where they live, and the daily challenges they face. The mapping event was held at The Jar House and The Squash House, community-meeting places in the engagement area developed by Power House Productions. Global Detroit set up a tent in the neighborhood and had several large-scale maps for residents to draw on, as well as many smaller maps on clipboards to take on a neighborhood walk. Residents were encouraged to chart how they experience their neighborhood, exploring the past, present, and the future of what the neighborhood could look like on the large maps. Community members also were invited to lead the planning team and other members on their favorite routes throughout the neighborhood, and record information on the smaller maps. Community characteristics were explored, including the built environment, issues of mobility, borders, and public space. Evidence regarding where children like to play, how they get to and from the corner store, and where families usually do their grocery shopping emerged during this process. This day of community mapping culminated in a neighborhood potluck attended by several neighbors.
Community Picnics (August 2016)
Global Detroit hosted two community picnics in the summer months of this planning process. One was located at the Burnside Carwash, a neighborhood car wash run by two local residents in the western portion of the engagement area. The other picnic was held in the central section of the engagement area, outside of a store in the Conant Avenue commercial corridor, called Meghna Bazar. Holding picnics in two different locations allowed the planning team to meet with people who otherwise may have not been reached on their block or where they spend their free time. Both picnics focused predominantly on relationship building and on creating activities for children in the neighborhood. Community picnics improved the planning team’s ability to talk to residents about individual and neighborhood needs in an informal setting. Guests of these picnics helped to build B-Boards (design-rich oversized sandwich boards) that will help disseminate important information on community services. These B-Boards help to improve access to information and resources in and outside of the community. They will be placed at the picnic sites to serve as a point of resource sharing and information dissemination.

Neighborhood Voices Collaborative (August - October 2016)
As of October 2016, the Neighborhood Voices Collaborative is comprised of ten diverse Banglatown residents who were instrumental in the community planning process. The intent in creating this collaborative was to build deeper bonds and connections between different ethnic and racial clusters in the neighborhood and mobilize a group of residents to take a leadership role in implementing some of the elements of this Vision + Action Plan. The Neighborhood Voices Collaborative currently meets monthly to think through some of the priority areas identified by this planning process, such as safety, women’s resources, and workforce development.

Alley Clean Up (September 2016)
Global Detroit hosted a community alley cleanup in September 2016 in partnership with the City of Detroit Department of Neighborhoods, Councilman Scott Benson, Youth of Ummah (YOU) Hamtramck, and Power House Productions. Throughout the planning process, the planning team heard that despite residents viewing the alleys as unkempt and dangerous, they were often used as footpaths to get around while avoiding the busy main roads. The cleanup was focused on the alley by Ride It Sculpture Park, a park used by young neighborhood skaters and children that attend nearby Davison Elementary School.

Attending Community Events Hosted by Other Groups (Ongoing)
When Global Detroit began this planning process there was already a strong and active sense of community present in the neighborhood. Therefore, this process aimed to build relationships with those stakeholders who were already active in the community, in order to partner with them, build upon existing efforts, and avoid duplication of community building activities. Global Detroit team members attended numerous community events in an effort to establish trust, meet people where they are, connect in more informal settings, and to fully experience the range of civic, social, and volunteer activities in the neighborhood.

Conserving the Strengths of the Neighborhood
Banglatown shows a number of signs of progress and opportunity. Conant Avenue, the main commercial retail thoroughfare, is bustling with activity and is one of the few neighborhood retail strips in Detroit with virtually no vacancies. Neighborhood relations are relatively free of the conflict that often characterizes communities with such varied races, religions, cultures, and languages. The arts community has been developing some of the most innovative projects and programs of any disinvested urban neighborhood in America. Immigration draws thousand of new residents to this area, preventing the rate of population decline seen by many other Detroit neighborhoods.
Banglatown has many strengths that should be preserved to maintain the spirit of the community and leveraged in order to advance prosperity for those in the neighborhood.

**Housing + Homeownership:**
The community maintains much of its original housing stock developed at the beginning of the 20th Century. In many areas, this housing stock is well maintained by renters and homeowners. Rentals and homes for sale are largely affordable. The density of this housing offers established blocks of tree-lined streets and traditional street grids with alleys.

**Visual + Performance Arts:**
Artists and performance groups are integrating arts and culture into the daily lives of residents and visitors. They are blending intentional art and design strategies with natural immigrant, residential, and commercial redevelopment already underway. Some of these groups also are playing important roles in welcoming immigrants and connecting them to information and resources that ease integration. Artist groups of this nature include Power House Productions, Bank Suey, Popps Packing, The Hinterlands, Write a House project, Afterhouse, Right Brothers, and Zimbabwe Cultural Center of Detroit.

**Gardening + Urban Farming:**
Banglatown is home to an active and engaged urban farming contingent, many of whom enjoy sharing their methods of husbandry and sales/marketing of produce with immigrants in the community. Immigrants themselves bring gardening techniques that originated in their home country, which subsequently add to the unique landscape of the community. These include latticed gardens where produce is grown along vines raised in the air by scaffolding upwards of six feet tall. Urban farms and gardens in the community include but are not limited to Burnside Farms, a neighborhood growing collective that seeks to create a new narrative around race and difference, Bandhu Gardens, a women-only growing collective that has several accounts with restaurants and provides supplementary income for the families of these women, and Appleseed Orchards, an orchard that provides fresh produce to neighbors and additional income for growers in the neighborhood.

**Immigrant Gateway:**
Throughout the last century, the residents of this community have hailed from France, Germany, Poland, and now new immigrants are coming from Bangladesh, Yemen, Bosnia, and Ukraine. Immigrants account for most of the diversity in the community, a steady source of new residents (reducing population decline in this community and increasing investment), and the ongoing draw of others from across the globe. Immigrants contribute greatly to the diversity of foods, languages, and religious institutions. BAPAC is connecting immigrants to healthcare opportunities, encouraging political leadership in the Bangladeshi community, conducting civic engagement, and celebrating Bangladeshi culture in the community. Volunteer collaboratives, initiatives, and organizations including HUSS, Welcoming Hamtramck (a project of Welcoming Michigan), International Hope Center, Hamtramck Community Initiative, and ACCESS have been promoting a welcoming community, connecting immigrants to social services and other opportunities.

**Independent Business Culture:**
Immigrants and longstanding residents have established an entrepreneurial spirit in the community. This has made for a rich diversity of businesses and a dense commercial strip that is welcoming to new business owners. Many in the community aspire to own their own businesses. BAPAC and the Bangladeshi American Business Association of Michigan (BABAM) are supporting independent business development, as well as fostering a cultural destination of restaurants and stores on Bangladeshi Avenue.

**Open + Vacant Space:**
The open and vacant space in the neighborhood presents opportunities to repurpose vacant lots for new and affordable housing, community gardens, pocket parks, small ponds, and playgrounds.
Partnerships between the City of Hamtramck + the City of Detroit:
Banglatown straddles two municipalities and has shown early signs of collaboration between the two cities. Moving forward, these partnerships and collaborative efforts can serve as a good model for how cities in other areas can work together.

Transportation:
As of September 2016, the Detroit Department of Transportation’s (DDOT) service expansion included the addition of the #95 Ryan Express - connecting downtown Detroit via Conant, Caniff, Lumpkin, Holbrook, and I-75. Other long standing bus routes include the #12 that connects to Belle Isle via several stops along Conant; and the #10 that also goes downtown via Joseph Campau and Holbrook, among other stops. These options, while limited, help to reduce isolation by connecting residents with the rest of the city.

Walkability, Bikeability + Density:
Much of the engagement area offers a walkable and dense environment that is close to the commercial corridor on Conant Avenue, which houses ethnic restaurants, markets, and retail shops. The neighborhood contains most of what residents need day to day. The area is centrally located, close to amenities, and a bike ride away from Detroit’s cultural assets.

Volunteerism + Existing Networks:
While not all residents are connected to volunteer and engagement opportunities, there is a strong backbone of community-based volunteers involved in various efforts related to improving safety, starting block clubs, and helping residents with tasks, such as how to understand water bills and car insurance, or how to navigate the Department of Health and Human Services office. Once residents tap into some of the informal networks present in the community, they have access to important information related to community events, safety initiatives, and other resources.
I can walk everywhere.

People look out for one another.

I love the people in this neighborhood.

I wish my dad did not have to drive far for work.

I want to stay here forever.

I like being close to great markets, restaurants, and shopping.

The artist community is good for our area.

Seeing children playing makes me happy.

I can be myself here.
Vision Overview
The planning process culminated with a set of visionary statements that will steer the future direction of the neighborhood. These statements follow:

Banglatown is home to a strong, connected, and diverse community of residents and business owners. It also is a welcoming neighborhood where people from different cultures, backgrounds, and generations can learn about one another and contribute to the quality of life in the neighborhood. Neighborhood stakeholders and future investors are committed to building upon the community’s assets, including its history as a destination for newer immigrants, and to mobilizing efforts that maximize future opportunities for residents and visitors. Residents want to stay in the neighborhood because it is an enjoyable place to live, raise a family, or retire.

Banglatown is a neighborhood in which...

...people feel safe and secure.
...residents have access to and information about gainful employment, trainings to hone skills, and support through career laddering and small business development programming.
...residents have access to affordable rentals and homeownership opportunities including resources to renovate older houses.
...there are options for women-only recreation, exercise, entertainment, worship, and other supporting projects that meet their needs.
...people of different ages, ethnicities, races, socioeconomic statuses, genders, languages, and religions all interact and accept the differences of one another, recognizing their diversity as a strength.
...residents and visitors enjoy a clean environment, beautiful parks, and recreational spaces for people of all ages.
...residents are educated, informed, and empowered to access the information and resources they need to better support their families.
...residents feel informed and empowered to activate positive change in their community.
Vision + Action Plan

This Action Plan is informed by the perspectives, ideas, and solution-oriented thinking of over 350 local residents and representatives of community-based organizations. It is intended to provide a roadmap to bring this vision to reality. This plan is a cross-sector strategy that relies on active participation from municipal government, community partners, residents, and business owners.
SAFETY:

Residents and visitors feel safe and secure.

Neighborhood partners are building connections between City of Detroit and Hamtramck Police Departments, working with community partners and residents, strengthening relationships with the police to create a neighborhood where everyone feels safe, welcome, and respected.

Breakdown of issues that threaten Safety.

- Limited police presence.
- Insufficient methods of communication to notify others of crime in real time.
- Racial and cultural differences between police officers and residents.
- Lack of coordination between residents and police.
- Lack of coordination between resident-led safety patrols.
- Many residents disconnected from organized efforts.
Safety: Actionable Strategies

#1. Identify safety captains across the engagement area to coordinate with police, circulate crime updates, and flag issues within a two to four block radius. Task safety captains with promoting coordination between resident-led safety patrols.

#2. Promote better communication between Detroit and Hamtramck Police Departments and the Banglatown neighborhood and increase public safety presence in the engagement area. Work towards hiring at least one bilingual police officer to work in this community. Consider bike patrols in the neighborhood to reduce theft and other crime. Outline schedule for monthly communication between Detroit and Hamtramck Police Departments and key safety captains in the neighborhood. At monthly meetings, highlight challenges related to police attitudes in the community and racial and gender dynamics.

#3. Build off of existing efforts to reclaim outdoor spaces (lots and buildings) for projects like community gardens, outdoor sports, and public art installations. Promote outdoor projects in which groups are working outside in visible spaces making it more difficult for crime to take place in the community.

#4. Improve signs, sidewalks, and crosswalks to make the bike and pedestrian experience safer at all hours. Install signs at key intersections to ensure that vehicles stop and/or observe speeds and one-way arrow signs to prevent drivers from going the wrong way down one-way streets. Encourage municipal partners to provide regular updates regarding infrastructure improvements.

#5. Remediate blight and board up vacant commercial and residential buildings. See Physical Condition section below.

#6. Introduce a housing rehabilitation program to reduce open and dangerous spaces and maintain the density of the community. See Housing and Homeownership section.

#7. Encourage information sharing and real time communication through participation on Nextdoor, Facebook, and regularly scheduled community meetings.

#8. Replicate the Power House Productions safety model (see below in "Examples of existing efforts") in other nodes across the community - utilize mass texting, neighborhood patrols, outdoor spaces and programming, and a newsletter to keep people connected and vigilant.

Examples of existing efforts:

Power House Productions is organizing residents in the Northeast section of the engagement area. They have a texting group that sends out alerts related to safety, a neighborhood patrol that is dispatched regularly, and have worked to rehab formerly vacant lots and buildings to productive reuse. Programming in these lots and buildings ensures more people in public spaces where they can deter criminal behavior, sometimes simply due to their presence.

Hamtramck Community Initiative hosts a Hamtramck Citizen patrol. The Patrol watches for crime but also makes note of blight, street lights that are out and boarded up properties that have been reopened by trespassers.

BAPAC has worked with police officers to promote cultural sensitivity by providing opportunities for cultural emersion in Bangladesh.
PROSPERITY + INCOME:

Residents have access to and information about gainful employment, trainings to hone skills, and support through career laddering and small business development programming. The neighborhood has resources and connections to public and private sector entities that enable residents of all ages to increase wages and earning potential. Community partners are committed to working with existing career laddering, workforce development, and entrepreneurship training providers to bring culturally competent services to the community, where people are most comfortable receiving services. These educational workforce development and entrepreneurship opportunities build on existing assets of residents and business owners and match the needs of the population by providing tailored support for women, returning citizens, the long-term unemployed, new immigrants, and local business owners.

Breakdown of issues that threaten this vision for Prosperity + Income.

Limited transportation and high car insurance rates. Many jobs and job training opportunities exist outside of the community in areas that are difficult to reach without private or public transportation.

High car insurance rates preclude some residents from owning a car.

An absence of nonprofit and government-run initiatives intended to generate wealth within the community.

Immigrants have valuable skills that are underutilized (e.g., trained accountants working to package boxes).

Many women are saddled with the majority of household responsibilities, often leaving them incapable of understanding and participate in the local market, and contributing to family income.

Language and cultural barriers make gainful employment difficult.

Long-term unemployment and underemployment. The process of starting a business is intimidating and unclear.

While some locally-owned businesses thrive, many are providing only subsistence earnings and would benefit from additional access to capital, training, and technical assistance.
Prosperity and Income: Actionable Strategies

#1. Develop a workforce development model that meets the distinct needs of low-income communities of color by offering tailored career planning, soft skill development, women-only offerings, as well as partnerships with local employers to identify the jobs and skills that are most needed and offering trainings to build these skills.

#2. Improve access to existing workforce and entrepreneurship development programs by inventorying and disseminating information about these resources to residents in the community.

#3. Foster exchanges, sales, and service offerings between community members by taking an inventory of resident skills and professions, publicizing this inventory (printed and online), and working to make connections between residents with trades and skills and residents in need of services or goods.

#4. Introduce small business development trainings that are culturally competent and meet aspiring business owners where they are. Classes and other services should be offered in multiple languages (Bangla, English, or Arabic).

#5. Educate people on the advantages of being banked, using IRS tax volunteers to complete tax returns, applying for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and participating in other credit building opportunities like lending circles, or Individual Development Accounts (IDAs).

#6. Draw Reba-free and other flexible capital programs to the neighborhood for small business loans, housing rehab, and purchasing automobiles.

Examples of existing efforts:

Bandhu Gardens recognizes existing gardening talent and efforts of Bengali women in Detroit and helps amplify and expand their opportunities. Through connecting Bengali women gardeners with local restaurants and farmers markets, neighbors work together to increase families’ economic security, neighborhood vibrancy, and city-wide access to unique, fresh produce.

BABAM is an association of Bangladeshi businesses in Michigan. The organization was created to encourage cooperation among business owners, promote and maintain safety and security for business owners and their patrons, and to represent Bangladeshi businesses in the state of Michigan. At present most of their members are located in the city of Hamtramck.

BAPAC, in partnership with DTE, is helping residents by creating payment plans for unmanageable heating bills, reducing the likelihood that families will have to choose between paying their heating bill and buying groceries.

Better Life Bags hires local seamstresses who work from home in Hamtramck and Banglatown. The employees are given a commercial sewing machine and pre cut 'kits' to make high quality handbags, bike bags, cell phone pouches, etc.
HOUSING + HOMEOWNERSHIP:

Residents have access to affordable rentals, homeownership opportunities, and resources to renovate older houses. Residents have access to both affordable rental and homeownership opportunities in the neighborhood that meets their needs and stage in life. The cities of Detroit and Hamtramck, landlords, and developers are informed about and sensitive to the need for affordable housing and units that can accommodate multigenerational households. Residents are educated about home ownership opportunities, knowledgeable about the purchasing process, and supported by nonprofits and community-based organizations. Homeowners and landlords have access to new and existing housing rehabilitation resources to improve the existing housing stock.

Breakdown of issues that threaten these fair housing opportunities.

- Limited knowledge about the pathway to homeownership.
- Without consumer education, protection, and advocacy, renters and homeowners are not protected from unscrupulous contractors and landlords.
- The Detroit Land Bank Authority (DLBA) ownership information, as well as acquisition regulations and processes, are unclear to residents.
- Millennials are looking for efficient and modern housing. In order to attract this age-range, it’s recommended that new development consider the wants and needs of this generation.
- Demand for larger homes in the neighborhood.
- Limited Information about the resources available to remodel older homes is lacking.
- Many in the neighborhood are ineligible for existing city and nonprofit resources.

Limited Information about the resources available to remodel older homes is lacking.

Many in the neighborhood are ineligible for existing city and nonprofit resources.
Housing + Homeownership: Actionable Strategies

#1. Host a bi-annual housing fair in the neighborhood that educates residents about the purchasing process, available resources for rehab, how to work with the DLBA, and more (Bring information about these resources to events in the community throughout the year).

#2. While capital for homeownership and resources for renovation exist in Detroit and Hamtramck, many in the engagement area are not eligible. Respond to demands to renovate and merge duplexes for larger families by attracting existing or producing new lending and granting products.

#3. Improve access to homeownership by getting families into financial literacy programs and helping them open bank accounts. See Prosperity and Income section.

#4. Develop events and projects that include consumer education, protection, and advocacy to protect renters and homeowners from unscrupulous contractors and landlords. Produce a list pre-approved contractors or “questions to ask your contractor” checklist.

#5. Research and plan for affordable and efficient housing development in the community. Consider nonprofit, private/public, and other city-led models.

#6. Host a community training on permits and contracting to educate renters about the renovation process.

Examples of existing efforts:

Bandhu Gardens and Global Detroit are working with residents who are interested in owning a home. Support is provided to help residents understand the purchasing process, identify resources for rehab, complete applications, and other tasks as needed.
In traditional Bangladeshi and Yemeni households, women are encouraged to stay home and care for the family. Without venues and events that are for women only, we risk keeping women from valuable experiences and relationship building with other women.

WOMEN’S RESOURCES:

The neighborhood has options for women-only recreation, exercise, entertainment, worship, and other supporting projects that meet women’s needs. Women are valued and welcomed into the community and have spaces just for them. Women only activities are replete with childcare and children’s programming like art classes, indoor games, and storytelling activities.

Breakdown of issues that threaten this vision.

In traditional Bangladeshi and Yemeni households, women are encouraged to stay home and care for the family. Without venues and events that are for women only, we risk keeping women from valuable experiences and relationship building with other women.

Childcare demands, commonly falling on women in traditional households, reduce the time women can spend with others.

When women are isolated to the household, they are unlikely to share with others uncomfortable or harmful events that take place in the home.
Examples of existing efforts:

Bandhu Gardens, a neighborhood women’s gardening collective, meets with women to identify immediate needs and offers women-only programming in partnership with Women of Banglatown. Women of Banglatown is an maker’s space inside of Burnside Farms that helps women and mothers create arts and crafts to sell for supplemental income.

The International Hope Center facilitates a women-only ESL course. While the class can accommodate only a limited number of women, the International Hope Center is inviting women not yet in the class to join in on a social hour following the class. This time helps to create a safe space for women to form relationships with one another.

A small group of teenage girls who live in the neighborhood has established after school drawing classes at the picnic tables in the lots at Power House Production’s Squash House.

Women’s Resources: Actionable Strategies

#1. Develop a support network for women to call one another, meet up, and have safe spaces for conversations in order to build relationships with each other.

#2. Identify a secure and permanent venue for women’s only events. Program this space with children’s activities (art classes, indoor games, storytime, etc.) and women’s activities (sewing circles, small business training, financial literacy classes, ESL classes, etc.)

#3. Connect women to existing women-only spaces and groups including Sisterhood Fitness, Women of Banglatown, Burnside Farm, Bandhu Gardens, and ESL classes.

#4. For all asset building programs (homeownership, small business development, workforce training, cottage food tutorials, ESL, citizenship, etc.) a women-only track should be included, whenever possible.
RACE + NEIGHBORHOOD COHESION:

This is a truly diverse community with people of different ages, ethnicities, races, socioeconomic statuses, genders, languages, and religions all interacting and accepting the differences of one another, celebrating their diversity as a strength. Nonprofit and community partners are committed to providing the residents of this diverse neighborhood with cross-cultural exchanges and enrichment opportunities that bring people from different walks of life together to learn from one another and recognize similarities. Race and ethnicity are discussed openly, and there are programs in place for a welcoming and inclusive community.

Breakdown of issues that threaten this vision.

While there is genuine cohesion within specific groups (e.g., men’s groups, religious groups, or cultural groups), the same connections do not exist across groups. Without intentional efforts to bring people from disparate groups together, cross-cultural interaction will not take place.

Without cross-cultural interactions, stereotypes and prejudices will continue to run rampant, particularly those that pin certain groups as criminals or dangerous.
Race + Neighborhood Cohesion: Actionable Strategies

#1. Recruit an expert in race relations to facilitate interactions, dialogues, storytelling, and other exchanges that bring people together.

#2. Continue to convene and grow the Neighborhood Voices collaborative, a diverse group of residents who are learning about one another while executing on priorities such as safety, prosperity and income, and women’s resources.

#3. Work with artists deeply invested in the area to build on their efforts to foster multi-cultural events and bring people together through art, performances, and other programmed activities.

Examples of existing efforts:

During the planning process Global Detroit convened Neighborhood Voices, a collaborative of diverse residents to foster relationships with people from outside their ethnic, cultural, religious, and racial groups. The collaborative meets regularly to discuss issues of identity, racism, xenophobia and other challenges that residents of Banglatown, regardless of where they come from, have experienced. The members of Neighborhood Voices are working collectively on projects related to safety, women’s resources, and workforce development. Global Detroit is recruiting The Grace Lee Boggs and the Detroit Action Equity Lab Centers to provide the Neighborhood Voices collaborative with dialog, training, and resources related to race and neighborhood cohesion.

Hamtramck Community Initiative hosts two Town Hall meetings per year at the Hamtramck Public Library to hear resident concerns, address issues and come together to solve problems.

Power House Productions hosted a Talent Show in 2015 at their October Block Party. It drew a diversity of talent show participants as well as audience members, helping to celebrate talent and diversity in the community.

The Porous Borders Festival, led by The Hinterlands, was a successful multi-cultural event that brought together residents, artists, and performers in Banglatown. Visitors and residents experienced this invisible marker between Detroit and Hamtramck through a celebration of the unique spatial and cultural interactions between these two communities.

Popps Packing initiated Barter Bazaars and Skillshare Workshops as well as a NOMAD Caravan design competition culminating in a public festival where they all debuted. These events attracted residents from many different backgrounds, all interested in the arts.
PARKS + NATURE:

Banglatown offers residents and visitors a clean environment and beautiful parks and recreational spaces for people of all ages. Following in the vision of the Detroit Future City Strategic Framework, vacant property in the neighborhood has been repurposed to create a green neighborhood. With the City of Detroit, stakeholders are creating a community-based open space plan and deploy low cost and low maintenance open space improvements. Particularly in the western faction of the engagement area, large areas of public land will be slated for green reuse, leisure, and recreation with integrated blue (water) and green infrastructure as part of this open space plan. The development of attractive retention ponds, community gardens, and systems to care for and maintain the alleys are prioritized.

Breakdown of issues that threaten this vision.

Limited resources for beautification and maintenance. Limited understanding of regulations related to community gardens, planting on easements, etc.
Examples of existing efforts:

Power House Productions has reclaimed lots in the community and returned them to active reuse. This group has established Ride It Sculpture Park, a soccer field for nearby residents to use, a rain garden at The Power House and Sound House through a program run by Friends of the Rouge, Keep Growing Detroit, and Sierra Club called “Rain Gardens to the Rescue.” They are adding a sledding hill and landscaping, including tree planting, at Ride It Sculpture Park and lots to the west.

Urban farms including Burnside Farm, Appleseed Orchards, and others have activated formerly vacant and underutilized lots, contributing to and managing green space in the community.

Parks + Nature: Actionable Strategies

#1. Educate local gardeners and farmers about opportunities to beautify vacant property, easements, and other public spaces.

#2. Identify lots for ornamental retention ponds, rain gardens, and community gardens. Engage local gardeners in the activation of these new spaces.

#3. Map out a green alley plan, with residents, that improves walkability, bikeability, and sight lines.

#4. Seek out funding resources for community gardens, stormwater management, beautification, and maintenance projects.

#5. Partner with the City of Detroit in all efforts to reduce flooding, and beautify the community.
PHYSICAL CONDITION:

The physical condition of the neighborhood promotes safety, public health, and a clean environment. Neighborhood stakeholders are enforcing codes and cleaning up illegal dumping, shuttering vacant houses, demolishing houses that are beyond repair and remediating other blight. Main streets and residential streets are lined with trees and other landscaping and design accents to make the neighborhood feel warm and inviting to residents and visitors alike.

Breakdown of issues that threaten this vision.
Limited resources for beautification.

- Lack of code compliance and reinforcement.
- Open and dangerous commercial and residential spaces.
- Illegal dumping.
Physical Condition: Actionable Strategies

#1. Prioritize city- and county-owned properties that are severely blighted and threaten health and safety for demolition, boarding-up windows and other openings, or reuse of vacant property.

#2. Develop loan and grant options for residents who lack the resources to keep their homes up to code.

#3. Educate residents about DIY projects that can improve health and safety in the neighborhood (e.g., repurposing vacant land for gardening or recreational space; programming existing and new spaces to build recognition of these spaces as places to protect; partnering with a local business or builder to help board up vacant commercial and residential properties; hosting cleanups; etc.) and encourage grassroots project development.

#4. Develop a plan to transform vacant lots into parks and nature preserves.

Examples of existing efforts:

During the planning process, Global Detroit in partnership with Power House Productions, hosted an alley cleanup that removed trash and overgrowth and created a clear path for walkers and bikers to connect Davison Elementary School, Ride It Sculpture Park, and eventually the City of Detroit, Knapp Branch Library.

International Hope Center and Hamtramck Community Initiative host 100+ volunteers annually to clean up streets, parks, assist community gardeners and remove graffiti.

Make-A-Difference-Day, sponsored by Wayne State University, Detroit Public Schools, Detroit Police Department, and Americorps Urban Safety Program focused on securing vacant buildings, clearing debris from pathways, and clearing alleys near Davison Elementary School.
INFORMATION:

Residents are educated, informed, and empowered to access the information and resources they need to better support their families. Residents have access to the resources and city services offered in the surrounding area. Nonprofits and neighborhood partners are circulating information via printed newsletters, social media, as well as a physical office where people come to learn about asset building opportunities (e.g., homeownership, job training, small business development, etc.).

Breakdown of issues that threaten this vision.

Information about resources to meet basic needs and asset building is largely invisible to residents. Without a community development corporation, there is no single entity with the capacity to improve access to information and resources.

For low-income people who lack internet access, or have other obstacles, such as lack of transportation, inflexible job schedules, limited telephone minutes, or strained child care resources, there are several barriers to accessing important information. Others with a smartphone often have a limited understanding of where to go for resources and information important to their wellbeing.

Many in the neighborhood prefer their news to be printed or to get it word of mouth.

Numerous asset-building, nonprofit, and government programs, from workforce development to entrepreneurship and housing, do not offer programs, services, or information in culturally or linguistically accessible means.

Banglatown is underserved by nonprofit and government agencies.
Information: Actionable Strategies

#1. Identify an intermediary to collect information about all resources and asset building opportunities available to the residents of Banglatown. Develop new channels of communication - print, public board, virtual - to get the word out about important resources.

#2. Create a physical space where people can come for information, access resources, and get assistance. Program this space with art installations, storytelling, and crafting events that celebrate the many cultures in the community.

#3. Support existing efforts of community-based organizations to generate and circulate printed community newsletters.

#4. Encourage residents to join online platforms including the Banglatown Block Club Facebook page and Nextdoor.

#5. Ensure that all community materials are translated to meet the language needs of community members. Often this means including English, Bangla, and Arabic translations.

Examples of existing efforts:

Hamtramck Community Initiative has translated Bangla, Arabic and Polish outreach flyers for local block club meetings and hosts two Town Hall meetings per year to hear resident concerns and offer opportunities to meet with Local, County, and State leaders to discuss opportunities and challenges.

International Hope Center utilizes ESL classes to teach civic participation (citizenship classes, how to vote workshops) and to provide information on health, college applications, domestic violence and other relevant topics. Hamtramck Police Department and City Clerk come on site to teach and build relationships that bring information and improve accessibility to services provided.

Global Detroit is advocating that the local Department of Health and Human services office improve language access by hiring a Bangladeshi speaker. Additionally, in partnership with goodgood, Global Detroit developed B-Boards, or informational signs with contact information of service providers that will be placed strategically throughout the community.
ENGAGEMENT:

Residents feel informed and empowered to activate positive change in their community. Ongoing engagement from neighborhood based organizations and community partners is helping residents to activate positive change in their community.

Breakdown of issues that threaten this vision.

- Limited knowledge of the opportunities in the community for residents to volunteer or otherwise participate.
- Without a community development corporation, there is no single entity with the capacity to engage residents in projects and other activities.
- Lack of active engagement beyond one’s own racial, religious, or ethnic community.
- Women, often accountable for maintaining the household and caring for children, do not have free time for engagement activities or are in need of women-only opportunities.
**Examples of existing efforts:**

Hamtramck Community Initiative provides leadership development opportunities through block club participation, volunteer activities and Board membership.

Many of the artists groups - Power House Productions, Popps Packing, the Hinterlands - that are leading in the development of cross-cultural events are also helping to engage residents through art, performance, and recreation.

BAPAC leads a voter registration and get-out-the-vote to educate Bangladeshi immigrants and improve voter turnout. This committee is also promoting political leadership opportunities for immigrant residents.

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**Engagement: Actionable Strategies**

#1. Continue to build the Neighborhood Voices collaborative by inviting new members. Guide members through projects and opportunities for resident-led community building.

#2. Invest in leadership development by creating gardening clubs, youth programs, and women’s programming.

#3. Continue to educate residents about the power of collective, locally-led action to improve the community.

#4. Build off of the engagement efforts led by local artist groups and urban farmers to bring residents together around productive community building activities.
TRANSPORTATION:

Residents are mobile and can get to work, medical care, job training, and other appointments relatively easily. New private and public transportation systems have been developed to respond to the greatest needs associated with transportation.

Breakdown of issues that threaten this vision.

- Limited public transportation options for this community, particularly to the suburbs where many find work.
- Lack of knowledge about existing bus routes.
- Fear of riding public transportation, particularly for new immigrants.
- Limited resources for additional public or private transportation.
Transportation: Actionable Strategies

#1. Educate residents about existing bus routes, the basics of riding the bus, and associated costs. Work to dispel fears associated with riding public transportation.

#2. Advocate for additional bus stops in the community and routes that connect people to employment opportunities.

#3. Support small business development that offers privately run transportation services.

Examples of existing efforts:

A few industrious residents have started a work van that drives around picking people up for various jobs. There is also at least one all-women pickup. Another resident picks children up for Quran classes and other activities.
About goodgood

goodgood is an interdisciplinary design studio with offices in Boston and Detroit. goodgood looks beyond established boundaries, embracing a cross-disciplinary collaborative approach. We traverse traditional design, working with all forms of media, allowing the formal solution to arise through assessing the needs of client and audience. Moreover, we consider economical, social equity and ecological factors to be an integral part of the process, revitalizing the role of design.

Founded in 2008, we focus on fostering positive interactions, empathizing with those who utilize our designs. We seek to create unexpected, joyful experiences in the everyday.

About Global Detroit

Global Detroit is revitalizing Metro Detroit’s economy by mobilizing its immigrant potential. We are nationally-recognized as an innovator and expert in leveraging international talent to fill regional businesses’ unmet talent needs, catalyzing the growth and development of immigrant entrepreneurs, and building a global region with competitive advantages in job creation, business growth, and community development.

In 2010, Global Detroit released a study and strategy that outlined eleven strategies to help Metro Detroit’s economic recovery by welcoming and integrating immigrant talent and entrepreneurship. Global Detroit has launched leading-edge programs in international student talent retention, professional talent connection, immigrant entrepreneurship, and neighborhood revitalization.