

## Near West Side AI Summit Seven Neighborhoods: Strong History, Shared Future

Healthy & Happy People | Thriving & United Communities | Vibrant &  
Equitable Economies

### Stories That Share Our Dreams For The Future

*Once upon a time* there was a community near west side, that cared deeply about itself but wasn't all that it could be. **EVERY DAY**, the young people in the community would look for productive and positive activities to engage in. **ONE DAY** \_they planted a fruit orchard with their parents and neighbors. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, the orchard grew not only as a beautiful place for gathering a diverse neighborhood but also provides healthy food. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, the community was able to attract new residents, commercial development and grow strong, engage law enforcement, foster an environment of beauty of walkable places. **AND EVER SINCE THAT DAY** everyone was able to come together and celebrate each other's humanity.

*Once upon a time* thousands of children were transported to the Near West Side schools from other neighborhoods. **EVERY DAY**, they had to spend their time being transported far away from their homes with limited before and aftercare resources and limited opportunities to participate in sports and other extracurricular activities. **ONE DAY** the community worked together with the families of those children to build affordable housing, vibrant parks, community hubs and resources. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, schools improved and people moved into the neighborhood. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, businesses came, visitors flocked, the neighbors took ownership of its amenities, the community grew, and safety ceased to be a daily concern. **AND EVER SINCE THAT DAY** the Near West Side became the best neighborhood to live, work, play, and stay.

*Once upon a time*, there were two teenage friends who were born to families who lived in the Near West Side. **EVERY DAY**, they were hanging out and looking for fun things to do, but their options were limited. **ONE DAY** a group of local residents, businesses, and other community partners saw an opportunity to turn underutilized spaces into vibrant places for kids to explore many current and new interests. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, the two friends had abundant opportunities to socialize, play, explore, grow, and have fun. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, they grew up to be future residents and neighborhood leaders. **AND EVER SINCE THAT DAY** the Near West Side has continued to flourish.

*Once upon a time* a young child dreamed of growing up big and strong and making positive changes within their community. **EVERY DAY**, that young child noticed that there were things about their community that needed to change. They wanted their family to have better access to food, make it easier to get around the city, and more fun events to bring their friends and family together. **ONE DAY** an Ambassador from the Near West Side Partners stopped by and saw the child, asking them what their community needed and what they wanted to see in the future. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, the young child spoke out about the things they saw in their neighborhood and asked the Ambassador why the world couldn't be that way. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, the child, now an adult, helps listen to the next generation as an ambassador to support the continued growth and vision for the neighborhood. **AND EVER SINCE THAT DAY** a tidal wave of change has swept across the Near West Side and the rest of Milwaukee to improve the lives of people everywhere.

*Once upon a time* there was a 7 year old girl named Ashley who lived in the NWS with her family of 6 on Wells Street. **EVERY DAY**, Ashley dreamed of her family owning their own home, like the ones she had seen in Cold Springs Park. **ONE DAY** a major new investment into NWSP's Live, Work, Play program and new affordable housing options opens up new housing opportunities for the community. Soon after, Near West Side Partners helps Ashley's family with a down payment to buy their own house. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, her family moves into their dream home with outdoor space for her to play with her siblings. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, Ashley's family - and many like them - become permanent residents of the NWS. **AND EVER SINCE THAT DAY** her family enjoys home ownership and the incredible benefits of the revitalized NWS community.

*Once upon a time* the So-Hi neighborhood was a boarded up commercial district. **EVERY DAY**, the only place people could go was Daddy's Soul Food, **ONE DAY** Near West Side Partners came along and helped lift the neighborhood up. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, the neighborhood became more welcoming by opening grocery stores, coffee shops, parks, movie theaters, and art centers. **AND EVER SINCE THAT DAY**, So-Hi has been a vibrant and inclusive place to live, work, and play.

*Once upon a time* there was a free-spirit named Jesse. **EVERY DAY**, he lived for today and hoped for tomorrow. **ONE DAY** he met a wise man who shared a vision for a happy life. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, he grateful for the beauty of everyday moments. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, he looked to the past to inspire changes for tomorrow, and took what is hard to create what light. **AND EVER SINCE THAT DAY** he surrounded himself with others to build a joyful and harmonious community that set his spirit free.

*Once upon a time* there was a proud community of people that lived in the NWS and wanted to make the community even stronger. **EVERY DAY**, individual community members wished for more shared prosperity and safety, while businesses and institutions wished to deepen their connection to contribute to a thriving community for all. **ONE DAY** representatives from the community came together to align on values and resource needs/priorities to create a process to for establishing shared prosperity. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, financial and emotional investments were unlocked. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, businesses and entrepreneurship flourished, employment and education opportunities increased, and families thrived. **AND EVER SINCE THAT DAY**, the NWS became known as a community where young people choose to live, work and play, with community members, and where people gather together in shared, safe, and green places.

*Once upon a time* there was a neighborhood of 7 neighborhoods. **EVERY DAY**, the residents work to make their neighborhood a place where everyone belonged and wanted to be, and the anchor institutions worked to figure out how they could support the residents in their endeavors. **ONE DAY** for the first time ever, the anchor institutions and residents came together to join forces forming a collective that co-created the neighborhoods of their dreams. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, kids could be seen walking to school passing brightly colored houses, beautiful gardens, and murals, their joyous laughter and happiness echoing throughout the neighborhood. People walked and biked to the multiple food trucks serving up yummy food that was soul nourishing. Diversity is celebrated and everyone in the neighborhood feels safe, welcomed, and a part of something they belong

to. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, the community feels alive, healthy, and robust. **AND EVER SINCE THAT DAY** the Near West Side became a place where no matter your dream, you could live it there.

*Once upon a time* there was a very economically challenged area, where neighbors were scared to leave their home and people didn't walk at night. **EVERY DAY**, people would wonder how we could change the image of our community to people could see the assets not the challenges. **ONE DAY** the community stepped out on the street started walking and talking and sharing their views, stories and vision, and how their dreams are connected and we have a shared vision and pushing in that direction. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, we decided what needed to change, what resources we needed to bring, we took action. **BECAUSE OF THAT**, they created a community space, met at new spaces and created commerce, because they have the courage to step out on the street, we connected spaces; connected cities; all the connection to link one business to the next; people to the businesses. What if near west side was completely walkable. **AND EVER SINCE THAT DAY** there was connected spaces, food trucks and music, the community was walking and talking and continuing the dialogue, and spending money! People had money to spend and bringing to spend; destination where people stop and sit.

*Once upon a time* the Near West Side residents struggled with local access to basic resources (ex., healthy food, retail), quality, affordable housing, including well managed rentals and home ownership; lack of community spaces to promote health and wellness, health and mental health disparities and income inequity. **Every day**, the residents struggled with limited access to services and safety, which prevented them from going outside and connect with their neighbors. There was a commitment to drive collaborative improvement. **One day**, community residents, businesses and partners joined forces and came up with a plan to align assets to promote quality of life (ie., social and health resources aligned to provide coordinate services to address resident needs, communal space identified to promote healthy movement, activities, community engagement, green space for fresh food, quality, affordable, inclusive housing). **Because of that** businesses continued to thrive and make investments, increasing opportunities for jobs and higher incomes. **Because of that**, residents received health care and social services to address their health, emotional needs; and became highly engaged in the neighborhood initiatives. **And ever since that day** the Near West Side became the most successful, inclusive, safe, neighborhood in Milwaukee County with healthy and happy people, thriving in united neighborhoods, and a vibrant and equitable economy