

2018 Development Plan

Binford Redevelopment and Growth, Inc*

INTRODUCTION

During the 1960s, young families moved away from downtown Indianapolis and into suburbs where better schools, homes with backyards and quiet, tree-lined streets were a big draw. This scenario describes the 40 plus neighborhoods in the BRAG area. They form a solidly middle class community that continues to enjoy a highly-educated population, above average family household income, a low crime rate, and excellent quality of life.

As the BRAG area matured in the 1990s, commercial and retail establishments - especially at Binford Boulevard and East 71st Street – moved to newer suburbs and left empty store front shells. Alarmed at the visual blight and deterioration, over 350 residents and business people met at Skiles Test Elementary School's cafeteria on April 27, 2005 to 'stop the blight' and began the process to form what is now Binford Redevelopment and Growth, Inc. or BRAG. In June, 2005 over 50 people came to the first official BRAG business meeting to brainstorm and discuss the actions the residents could take to return the area to its former glory. Over the next few months the BRAG board was formed and they set about forming an organization that addresses economic and quality of life issues facing the 35,000 residents of BRAG.

BRAG's first project to demonstrate the civic pride of its residents and businesses occurred on October 8, 2005 when over 800 volunteers showed up along Binford Boulevard to plant hundreds of trees, thousands of shrubs and perennials, and 15,000 daffodil bulbs. In 2006 BRAG applied for and received 501(c)3 status and the binford71.org website was designed. Over the next few years regular email newsletters and facebook pages were developed. The BRAG board holds monthly board meetings and sponsors several community meetings throughout the year addressing matters of local interest.

Note: The board strongly believes that BRAG is one of Indy's best kept secrets. With our beautiful landscape, convenience to downtown and award winning schools, BRAG has a lot to offer prospective and existing residents. However, when most people move to greater Indy from other states or countries, they are directed to Carmel or Fishers. Hamilton County is a shiny new toy that realtors like to sell due to the new developments, newer restaurants and shopping, and quality of schools. Each time a family moves out of the BRAG area or chooses Hamilton County instead, our area is short changed. The next few years of BRAG's strategic plan includes working hard to connect and re-connect with realtors, schools, HOA's, churches, and other community organizations to promote the BRAG area and in turn, attract more public and private funds that benefit our residents and business owners.

BRAG INITIATIVES

In December of 2006, BRAG was selected as a GINI (Great Indy Neighborhoods Initiative) grant recipient making any technical assistance available for three years to identify and implement quality of life enhancements. In 2007, a Community Coordinator was hired to manage a series of community wide visioning meetings, surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews with residents, area business owners, and other community stakeholders. In 2008, a Quality of Life Plan was published that outline the priorities that emerged from the year long process. In 2009 working groups were formed to implement the goals and strategies detailed in the Quality of Life Plan. From those priorities and input from the working groups, the BRAG Board of Directors established the initiatives that guide the organization to this day.

BRAG Business Association and BRAG NE Business Roundtable

Goal: Encourage the development or redevelopment of retail/commercial properties in the BRAG area. Support existing business owners and residents by offering ways for them to market themselves to potential clients in the area. Quarterly BRAG NE Business Roundtable meetings hosted by our partners at Community Health Network to further the dialogue about the future of the Northeast corner of Marion County and the Castleton Square Mall area.

Binford Redevelopment and Growth, Inc. formed because of the decline of commercial/retail areas along Binford Boulevard. The BRAG area has demographics that are attractive to many developers and businesses, and BRAG has a reputation for working with developers to attract businesses that are beneficial to both entities. As a result of BRAG's efforts, old structures have come down, modern structures were built, and new businesses moved in. More than 50 new businesses have come to the area since 2007, creating over 800 new jobs.

As the number of businesses grew and as the area developed a distinct identity, BRAG Business Association was formed to offer support to BRAG area businesses. Area businesses and residents consistently asked for a directory of area business and services to use to help them find goods and services in the immediate area. The first BRAG Business Alliance Directory was published in 2013 with underwriting assistance from Community Health Network and continues in an electronic version on the BRAG website www.binford71.org.

As our area evolves and people from all different generations are communicating in different ways, BRAG has made the decision to:

- **Produce the directory once a year and post on our new website**
- **Provide multimedia marketing for local businesses at the Binford Farmers Market – giving businesses a chance to have their short “commercial” play on a large interactive LED display monitor in the BRAG business tent. The setup could also be used as an educational tool for seminars and special events**
- **Offer businesses an email blast that would specifically promote their product or service to a large audience of shoppers in the BRAG area**
- **Work with local officials and businesses to further develop the area along Binford Blvd.**
- **Work with commercial real estate agents/brokers to develop a BRAG comprehensive map/brochure of available commercial properties in the BRAG area that includes square footage and contact information for dissemination to entrepreneurs and developers**
- **Actively pursue real estate developers and entrepreneurs for the new “international restaurant row” near 71st and Graham**
- **Increase membership in BRAG NE Business Roundtable through cutting edge marketing opportunities**

CRIME WATCH AND PREVENTION

Goal: Increase communication and information to residents and businesses about community related public safety issues.

In 2006 BRAG established a Residential Crime Watch Network that now includes 43 neighborhoods. The Crime Watch Network is a proactive program that helps educate and bring awareness to the BRAG community by reporting criminal activity and sharing information with area residents and businesses. Through email communication it is possible to put all of the surrounding neighborhoods on high alert when a criminal incident or suspicious activity occurs in any neighborhood or business area. These reports are received by approximately 8000 area residents and businesses. The network has a close working relationship with the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department and the Marion County Prosecutors' Office. Through BRAG efforts, a Police Satellite Office opened in 2009 at 5699 E. 71st Street. The station has since moved to the Castleton United Methodist Church at 71st and Shadeland. This increases law enforcement presence in the area and provides a service to the officers. The BRAG Crime Watch Network was awarded Crime Fighter of the Year Award in 2011 by the Marion County Prosecutors Office.

Moving forward, the Residential and Business Crime Watch coordinators hope to:

- **Work with businesses and neighborhood leaders to organize crime watch systems that are more localized**
- **Implement other forms of media (i.e. mobile app, Constant Contact) to send information more efficiently and effectively to BRAG residents and businesses**
- **Continue to support our officers by keeping the Satellite Station fully stocked with snacks and beverages**
- **Provide informational and social events for residents to promote prevention practices and provide an opportunity for residents and businesses to interact with local law enforcement**

TRAILS & CONNECTIVITY

Goal: Develop safe, alternative modes of transportation throughout the BRAG area.

Much of the BRAG area was built at a time when neighborhoods were designed around the automobile. Sidewalks and bike trails are virtually nonexistent in neighborhoods and major thoroughfares. The Accessibility Committee was formed to address the lack of trails and sidewalks. The objective of the committee is to build sidewalks and multi-use trails throughout the BRAG community, connecting neighborhoods both east and

West of Binford Boulevard, and to provide safe crossings at all major intersections. The pathways identified in the initiative plans are included in the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization Regional Pedestrian Plan. Because of committee efforts to raise the funds for an engineering study on 71st Street, the Indianapolis Department of Public Works (DPW) applied for and received \$1.2 million in federal funding to construct a multi-use path along 71st street from Binford Boulevard to Hague Road. The BRAG board supports a Complete Streets policy for Indianapolis and has passed a resolution in support of increased funding for improved mass transit solutions for the city.

In the next few years, BRAG's Trails & Connectivity initiative hopes to:

- **Work with other neighborhood organizations and public officials to promote more funds for sidewalks, trails, and bike paths**
- **Continue to communicate the city's plans for any sidewalk projects to residents and businesses and serve as a facilitator in obtaining easements, etc.**
- **Encourage the use of the existing trails through BRAG sponsored social and community awareness events**

PARKS & GREENSPACE

Goal: Continued enhancement of public parks and common areas in the BRAG area

BRAG's beautification efforts began with a project to plant trees and shrubs on Binford Boulevard In 2005. The newly formed board wanted to find a project that would make a statement to area businesses, residents and the city that the organization was serious about improving the BRAG area. Keep Indianapolis Beautiful, Inc. heard about the start up organization and approached BRAG to consider hosting a beautification day. With KIB's help and landscape plans developed by David Gorden from Mark Holeman, Inc., over 800 people came out on a beautiful day in October 2005 to plant over 200 trees and thousands of shrubs, perennials and daffodil bulbs. BRAG is responsible for the maintenance of the planting beds and trees. A dedicated group of volunteers keep the trees alive through committed watering and attention. Twice a year, BRAG holds a 'Beautification Day' to add new plants, mulch, work on special projects, pull weeds and pick up trash. Many of the planting beds and grassy areas all along Binford have been adopted by area businesses and service organizations. Skiles Test Nature Park is the only park in the BRAG area. In 2009, the entrance to the park received a new look when 2,000 native flowers and shrubs were planted around the parking and trail area on Fall Creek Rd. The park is connected to the Indy Parks Greenways Biking and Hiking Trail.

As we move forward as an organization, the plans for Parks & Greenspace include:

- **Working with other organizations and public officials to increase the number of parks in the BRAG area**
- **Working with volunteers, HOA's and businesses to implement a sustainable system for maintaining the green space in the BRAG area**
- **Promoting a sense of community and neighborhood engagement by hosting social and community awareness events that focus on nature appreciation**

TRASH & LITTER

Goal: Establishing a long term solution for the trash and litter along roads and sidewalks in the BRAG area

Littering is not unique to the BRAG area. If you drive through any part of the city, you will see garbage lining the roads and sidewalks. However, the BRAG area takes pride in its appearance and refuses to let illegal dumping and littering deter from the beauty that lies within this neighborhood. With the help of volunteers, BRAG has semi-annual clean up days. Along with KIB, BRAG orchestrates volunteers and provides them with trash bags and maps of areas that are in desperate need of repair. While this provides a short term solution to a major problem, it is not sustainable.

To tackle the litter and trash problem with a long term solution, BRAG hopes to:

- **Start an anti-litter campaign that encourages local businesses to take ownership of their lots**
- **Encourage HOA's and business parks to orchestrate clean up days specific to their area**
- **Work with public officials to enforce stricter litter laws**
- **Secure funding to provide more recycling bins and trash cans along common areas**

SCHOOLS

Goal: Improve interaction and understanding between BRAG area schools, parents, residents, and area businesses and improve the positive perception by BRAG residents of area public schools.

Suburban neighborhoods thrive with strong public schools and a variety of private schools. BRAG residents make a deliberate choice to live in the area so that their children may attend one of the outstanding public or private schools. The BRAG boundaries include portions of both Washington Township and Lawrence Township. Both townships offer award-winning schools built on a foundation of outstanding educators, administrators, school board members and a supportive community. Also in the BRAG area are a number of private parochial and private non-denominational nursery, elementary and high schools.

Schools in the BRAG area

Lawrence Township Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lawrence North High School• McKenzie Career Center• Skiles Test Elementary• Crestview Elementary Washington Township Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allisonville Elementary School• Eastwood Middle School	Private Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heritage Christian• St. Matthews School Nursery Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none">Cross and Crown Peter Panda PreschoolCUMNS KidsAllisonville Christian Church Weekday ProgramEpworth Weekday Children’s Ministries
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As education continues to be a crucial initiative for the organization, our future endeavors include:

- **Having a strong line of communication between representatives from BRAG schools to further promote them to residents in the area**
- **Hosting a breakfast or lunch for realtors each year to educate them on why they should promote the BRAG area to their clients**
- **Hosting open public forums that encourage representatives from area schools to promote their achievements and answer questions for potential or existing parents**
- **Using schools as meeting places for events to further highlight their facilities**
- **Creating a video of educator and parent testimonials/information from each school in the BRAG area**

NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT

Goal: BRAG will continue to strengthen and support its residents and businesses by building community through projects that improve quality of life

The BRAG Board believes that in addition to everything else that we value as being important initiatives for area residents and businesses, at the end of the day, people want to know their neighbors. They want to know who the owner of a business is and what school his/her children attend. They want to go grocery shopping and recognize people. They want to participate in events that allow them to meet others in the community – and only through this, will our community become stronger. To that affect, the Market at Hague (formerly the Binford Farmer’s Market) has served as a community gathering place since it began in 2007.

However, there are other opportunities that BRAG has identified as serving the same purpose:

- **Hosting community events that are “family friendly” and encourage young families in the area to spend time with their children and neighbors**
- **Open quarterly meetings that focus on topics of interest (Schools, Business Development, Safety, etc.)**
- **Joint “lunch and learn’s” with the Greater Lawrence Chamber of Commerce that offer a chance to learn a new concept and meet and network with others in the community**
- **Reconnect with our 43 neighborhoods by meeting with HOA officers and attending annual meetings**
- **Meet with community leaders, state and local officials, businesses and residents regarding the future of the Castleton Mall area**

Binford Farmers Market

Goal: With our local partners at Community Health Network; Provide a source for locally grown and produced food and artisan products and provide a gathering spot and sense of community to BRAG area residents and businesses

The Binford Farmers Market is the most visible of all BRAG initiatives and has developed a strong sense of community among farmers, artisans, area residents, and area businesses and nonprofit organizations. The market has a positive impact beyond the BRAG boundaries by enhancing the city-wide perception of the area, and showcasing the vibrancy of the residential and business community. BRAG uses the market as a tool to reach out to residents and business that may not be familiar with the organization and its impact on the community as a whole. The market seeks to enhance its influence on the community’s health and wellness by increasing its outreach to residents.

The market started in 2007 with 12 vendors and has grown to over 100 registered vendors. The market founders worked with Community Health Network and GINI to obtain funding for start up costs. The first season was held on the Stanley Security property at 75th and Binford and then moved to 62nd and Binford for the next five years. In 2014, the market moved to Lawrence North High School. Today, the market has returned to its’ original roots at Northview Church campus, 65th and Binford Blvd.

The market operates every Saturday from May-October and offers fresh, healthy food grown or produced in Indiana. Artisans from all across Indiana bring their handcrafted items to sell at the market the second Saturday of the month. Community groups use the market to let people know about their

services and events. Members of BRAG Professionals use the market to promote their services and products. Area musicians entertain shoppers. Hospitality tents are provided for shoppers to use to enjoy food and beverages, meet with friends and neighbors or business colleagues.

Looking ahead, the market hopes to:

- **Expand its operation to include a “winter market” so shoppers can reap the benefits of supporting local farmers and artisans after October**
- **Grow the number of vendors who participate**
- **Further promote the market through various channels to encourage an increase in the amount of shoppers**