

# HUMBOLDT PARK: Staking Our Claim

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Humboldt Park



# Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation

### Planning Task Force Members

Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation worked in partnership with the Near Northwest Neighborhood Network/Humboldt Park Empowerment Partnership, West Humboldt Park Family and Community Development Council, Nobel Neighbors and 42 other organizations to develop this quality-of-life plan. The organizers gratefully acknowledge the following people for the time, energy and resources given to this process.

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The New Communities Program lead agency in Humboldt Park is Bickerdike Redevelopment Corp., an organization founded in 1967 whose mission is “the redevelopment of the West Town, Humboldt Park, Logan Square and Hermosa communities for the benefit of and control by the lower- and moderate-income residents of these areas.” Founded by community organizations, churches and local residents to rebuild the area’s crumbling housing stock, the organization works to simultaneously preserve ethnic and cultural character while improving its service area economically.

Bickerdike has developed 1,006 affordable housing units, of which 145 units are owner-occupied, 692 are rentals and 169 are cooperative housing. The agency’s Humboldt Construction Company employs 15 to 30 area residents through carpentry and general contracting services. Recent developments include the recently constructed 87-unit, \$17.6-million Harold Washington Unity Cooperative and the 57-unit, mixed-use La Estancia now under development.

Bickerdike also undertakes leadership development and organizing through its:

- **Residents Council**, which builds leadership among tenants and community in Bickerdike’s housing developments;
- **Youth Council**, led by Bickerdike resident youth, which develops leadership through organizing and civic activities;
- **Affordable Housing Committee**, which advocates for citywide and countywide reforms; and,
- **Public Safety Campaign**, which focuses on such activities as CAPS participation, resident participation in block parties and safety marches, and police accountability.

## A Prosperous and Inclusive Community

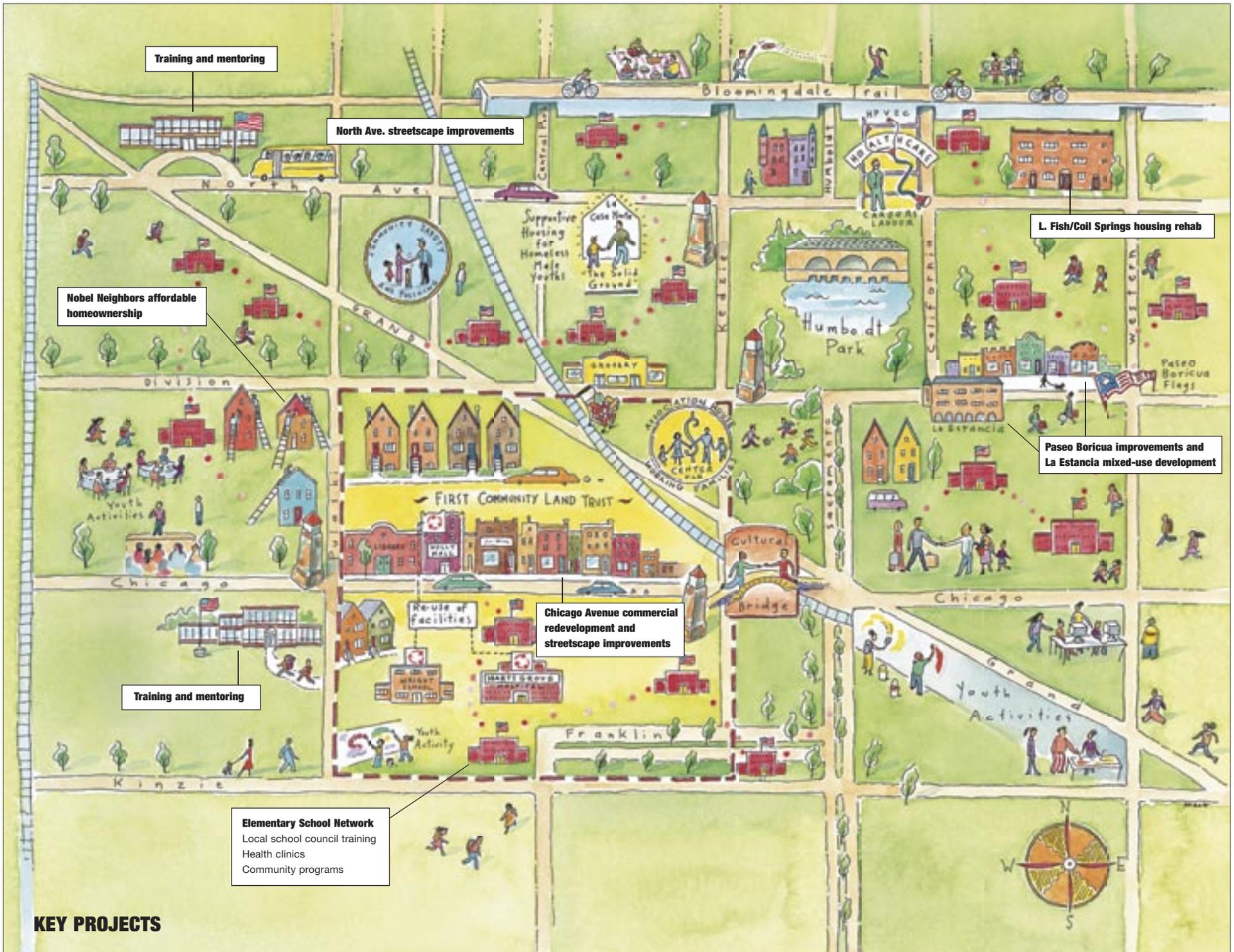


Local youth formulated their own vision for the community.

Our neighborhood will be a prosperous, inclusive community in which children are well educated and cared for, adults can find good jobs or start their own businesses, and all enjoy safe streets, dependable public transportation, affordable health care, attractive open space and excellent city services.

### **We envision a Humboldt Park where:**

- Residents feel empowered to improve the quality of life and the physical environment, working hand-in-hand with city officials;
- Adults can find living-wage employment working for—or starting—positive, indigenous businesses that provide needed products and services;
- Children enjoy state-of-the-art schools as well as after-school and summer programs that prepare them for a future as responsible adults;
- The elderly have easy access to senior services and people with disabilities have opportunities for independent living;
- Families of all incomes can afford decent, safe housing;
- Family members are healthy in body, mind and spirit, with adults responsible for themselves and their children;
- Everyone can access culturally sensitive and affordable health care, attractive and safe open space, and dependable public transportation;
- No one is threatened by gangs or crime—or has public safety used against him and her because of class or racial fears; diversity is celebrated; and
- Private and public properties are improved through beautification efforts.



Training and mentoring

North Ave. streetscape improvements

Nobel Neighbors affordable homeownership

L. Fish/Coil Springs housing rehab

Paseo Boricua improvements and La Estancia mixed-use development

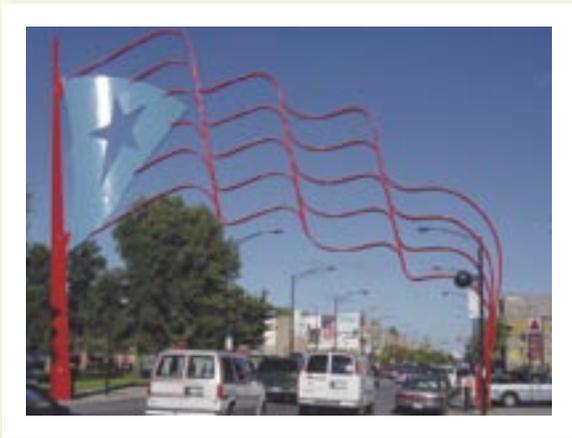
Chicago Avenue commercial redevelopment and streetscape improvements

Training and mentoring

**Elementary School Network**  
 Local school council training  
 Health clinics  
 Community programs

**KEY PROJECTS**

## Neighborhood Creates Plan as New Residents Arrive



East of the park, Puerto Rican flag sculptures span Division Street.

A historic beacon for immigrants and low- to moderate-income residents, Humboldt Park is responding to encroaching gentrification by working furiously to stake a claim for longtime residents who wish to stay.

A mixed community with Puerto Ricans to the east, African-Americans to the west and an increasing influx of Mexican-Americans, Humboldt Park is a well-organized, outspoken, sometimes fiery community that has had mixed reactions to the growing number of higher-income, predominantly white newcomers who attract investment but drive up housing prices and property taxes.

Longtime residents appreciate the positive results that new development can bring, such as safer streets and greater amenities, but want to preserve affordable housing, retain industry and improve education, job training and health care. Unfortunately, industry has declined in recent decades, retail strips have withered and schools have performed poorly, all contributing to the twin plagues of gang and drug activity. But new investments in housing, the commercial strip along Division Street known as Paseo Boricua (Puerto Rican Gateway) and the green expanse of Humboldt Park itself have fostered a sense of renewal.

This plan includes many ideas from earlier plans, notably the Empowerment Zone process in the 1990s led by the Near Northwest Neighborhood Network/Humboldt Park Empowerment Partnership, and plans by West Humboldt Park Family and Community Development Council and Nobel Neighbors. Although implementing this plan will require greater coordination and less attention to “turf” issues among local organizations, all involved realize they must unite—or be conquered.

## STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS

### **STRATEGY 1 Improve local schools using a community-based and culturally sensitive approach**

- 1.1** Elementary School Network. Create a new organization or enhance the capacity of existing organizations to link teachers, parents and students.
- 1.2** Community Schools. Establish community centers at schools that will be open evenings and weekends.
- 1.3** Cultural Awareness Program. Create school programs that connect students with their cultures to increase self-esteem and broaden self-identity.
- 1.4** Student Motivation Project. Use traditional and non-traditional means to motivate students and create ladders of educational opportunity.
- 1.5** Five-Year Vocational High School. Create a five-year vocational high school that prepares students for jobs in the trades.
- 1.6** Student Retention. Develop programs to retain students at risk of dropping out and connect with those who already have dropped out.

### **STRATEGY 2 Create a community of wellness where health is a dimension of community improvement**

- 2.1** Community Healthcare Work Group. Provide leadership on advocacy issues related to health care.
- 2.2** Health Education and Outreach. Inform residents about and link them to new and existing health care services.
- 2.3** Asthma Reduction. Establish or expand programs that address the stubborn problem of asthma.
- 2.4** HIV/AIDS Reduction. Work to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS through screening, testing, counseling and prevention.
- 2.5** Dental Services. Increase sliding-fee, community-based dental services.

**2.6** Substance Abuse. Use schools and youth service agencies to deliver anti-smoking and anti-substance abuse messages.

**2.7** School-Based Clinics. Increase the number of school-based clinics that provide treatment, education, psychological counseling and other services.

**2.8** Active Lifestyle Program. Promote active lifestyles for adults and youth to combat obesity and related health problems.

### **STRATEGY 3 Provide resources to sustain healthy individuals and families**

**3.1** Center For Working Families. Develop a center that provides employment services, financial services and financial education under one roof.

**3.2** Homeownership Counseling. Coordinate existing homeownership counseling programs to better prepare prospective homeowners.

**3.3** Ex-Offender Project. Coordinate and expand job placement and exchange programs for former prisoners.

**3.4** Parenting Information Services. Identify available programs and resources to support and inform parents.

**3.5** Youth Forums. Develop forums in schools to help students and parents understand each other's perspectives.

**3.6** Child Care Services. Gather data on existing services to facilitate development of new child care programs as needed.

**3.7** Spanish-Language and Immigrant Counseling. Increase availability of counseling services in Spanish.

**3.8** Holistic Case Management. Develop a holistic system to connect residents with case management services.

**3.9** Adult Day Care and Home Care. Expand adult day care and home care programs.

**3.10** Gay/Lesbian Services. Develop gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender services to meet the needs of the area's diverse population.

#### **STRATEGY 4 Increase community control over use of physical resources**

- 4.1** Community Land Trust. Institute the “First Community Land Trust of Chicago” in West Humboldt Park to encourage balanced development and increase control over land use.
- 4.2** Development Monitoring. Monitor land use and negotiate with developers to ensure projects meet local needs.
- 4.3** Zoning Remap. Undertake zoning education activities to prepare for the city’s zoning remap.
- 4.4** Affordable Rental Housing. Develop affordable rental housing and stake a long-term claim for the lowest-income residents.
- 4.5** Affordable Homeownership. Develop affordable homeownership projects for moderate-income residents.
- 4.6** Special Needs Housing. Research needs of and develop supportive housing for special needs groups such as the homeless, seniors, people with disabilities, and people with HIV/AIDS.
- 4.7** Fair Housing. Establish a fair housing program to address violations.
- 4.8** Employer Assisted Housing. Collaborate with employers to develop subsidy and incentive programs for local home purchases.
- 4.9** Local Resident Rehab and Home Purchase. Develop a program to help residents purchase and rehabilitate abandoned buildings.
- 4.10** Retail Corridor Development. Strengthen existing retail corridors to ensure that local businesses thrive and new business are attracted to Humboldt Park to fill identified retail gaps.
- 4.11** Open Space Coalition. Create an Open Space Coalition to help implement the “Open Space Plan for Humboldt Park.” Enhance existing parks and create new parks and green space.
- 4.12** Community Facilities Development. Develop new and re-use existing facilities to serve community needs.

#### **STRATEGY 5 Engage youth in the community in productive ways**

- 5.1** Youth Leader Program. Bolster opportunities for youth to give back to their community and become leaders.
- 5.2** After-School and Summer Programs. Increase after-school and summer programs that emphasize music, sports, gardening and service projects.
- 5.3** Youth Employment. Expand opportunities through summer jobs programs and internships.

#### **STRATEGY 6 Improve physical, economic and social infrastructure through marketing, communications, beautification and safety**

- 6.1** Economic Development Summit. Develop an annual economic development summit for business leaders, policy makers and residents.
- 6.2** Community Resource Guide. Develop a web-based resource guide to serve as an electronic bulletin board.
- 6.3** Community Walk/Bike Map. Create a tour map that identifies key landmarks and points of interest.
- 6.4** Focus on the Park. Promote Humboldt Park itself as the center of activities for residents, schools and others.
- 6.5** Gateway Development. Implement streetscape and community gateway projects to provide a sense of a welcoming front door.
- 6.6** Community Art and Murals. Develop art and mural projects at prominent intersections and preserve the mural at North and Artesian.
- 6.7** Paseo Boricua. Enhance and expand the “between the flags” Paseo Boricua Restaurant and Cultural District.
- 6.8** Cultural Bridge Program. Develop a program to creatively address racial and cultural relations between east and west Humboldt Park.

- 6.9** CAPS Promotion. Encourage regular attendance at CAPS policing meetings and expand involvement of local businesses.
- 6.10** Community Safety Initiative. Sponsor creation of a CeaseFire branch or other safety initiative in Humboldt Park.

#### **STRATEGY 7 Provide jobs through training and local business development**

- 7.1** Healthcare Careers. Create bridge programs that lead to advancement up the healthcare and health policy career ladder.
- 7.2** Career Training. Provide paid internships for students in medical allied health programs and technical programs at the Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center (HPVEC).
- 7.3** Basic Skills Training Coordination. Coordinate and enhance existing basic skills training programs and improve access for residents of subsidized housing.
- 7.4** Minority/Latino Contractors Association. Create a minority/Latino contractors’ association to provide referrals and other services.
- 7.5** Access to Small Business Resources. Increase access to small business development resources through lending institutions.
- 7.6** Technologies Business Development. Create a Latino Technology Development Center at the Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center.

## **New Communities Program**

NCP is a long-term initiative of Local Initiatives Support Corporation/Chicago to support comprehensive community development in Chicago neighborhoods. It seeks to rejuvenate challenged communities, bolster those in danger of losing ground and preserve the diversity of areas in the path of gentrification. Each effort is led by a neighborhood-based lead agency that coordinates programs among other local organizations and citywide support groups.

The program gives each of the lead agencies several resources: two full-time staff positions (an NCP director and organizer), technical support for planning and documenting the planning process, a pool of loan and grant funds distributed on a competitive basis for project seed money, and opportunities for learning from both peers and subject-area experts.

All NCP neighborhoods spend their first year undertaking a structured community planning process that leads to the quality-of-life plan, then move on to implementation. They are encouraged to be “doing while planning,” undertaking short-term “Early Action Projects” such as launching a youth program, opening an employment center, creating public art or sponsoring local health fairs.

NCP is designed to strengthen communities from within—through planning, organizing and human development. The comprehensive approach is designed to help broaden opportunities for local residents through better education, broader housing choices, safer streets, stronger personal finances and new economic opportunities. The strengthened community is better equipped to take advantage of larger market forces, attract new investment and enhance the overall quality of life.

## **For more information**

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## **Illustration and Photo Credits**

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**NNNN/HPEP**, cover (middle left)

**NNNN/HPEP Youth Action Team/Batey Youth**,

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**Eric Young Smith**, page 5

**W. Humboldt Park Family and Com. Dev. Council**, cover (far right)

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