LITTLE VILLAGE: Capital of the Mexican Midwest
Little Village Community Development Corporation (LVCDC) thanks the more than 150 community residents, leaders, business owners and social-service providers who shared their ideas, time and effort to develop this quality-of life plan. The energy and resources they bring to changing and improving our community are invaluable.

Little Village Community Participants

Cristina Padilla  Community resident
Salvador Pedroza  Little Village Chamber of Commerce
Reene Plaza  Unilever
Rev. Victor Rodriguez  La Villita Community Church
Maria A. Rojas  St. Anthony Hospital
Jose Saldaña  Community resident
Juan Salgado  Instituto del Progreso Latino
Leopoldo Saucedo  LVCDC Board Member
Mauricio Sone  LVCDC Board Member
William Velazquez  LVCDC Board Vice President
Olga Verduzco  LVCDC Board Treasurer
Josie Yanguas  Little Village High School Transition Advisory Council

This list was compiled from sign-in sheets at planning meetings and may not include all participants. Our apologies for any misspellings or omissions.
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La Villita: A Cultural and Business Destination

Little Village, or La Villita, is the retail, residential and cultural capital of the Mexican Midwest, and we want to retain that role for many years to come. With more than a thousand businesses along famous 26th Street and elsewhere, our neighborhood attracts visitors from all over Illinois and other states. To continue as a cultural and economic magnet, we must preserve our Mexican identity and strengthen the services, businesses, organizations and people that make us unique.

Over the past 30 years, Little Village has become a major port of entry for Mexican immigrants, and our community has been strengthened by the economic power, traditions, determination and hope that they bring. While solid housing stock and thriving commercial districts have been key to our prosperity, we are challenged to invest in our human resources—especially in our youth and families. Half of our residents are under the age of 25, creating a demand for better schools, recreation programs and health and social services. Our schools are overcrowded and under-performing.
Little Village has high rates of diabetes, obesity, and depression. We are among the city neighborhoods with the most violence and fewest parks.

This plan lays out eight strategies and more than 40 projects for making Little Village a great place to live. We want to create a large new park on the east side of the community and a new retail and housing development on vacant land at 26th and Kostner. We plan to improve academic performance by creating more small schools and community schools and by supporting the new Little Village High School campus.

We will partner with established organizations to bolster our health and human services, strengthen our business districts and improve public safety. And we will generate more positive activities for youth, including recreation, entertainment and arts opportunities.

Through all of these activities, Little Village can maintain its position as a vibrant center of Mexican life.
STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS

STRATEGY 1 Expand access to parks and open space by improving facilities and creating a large new park.

1.1 Develop a large new park on the east side of the neighborhood, with connections to residential areas and the canal.

1.2 Improve facilities at Piotrowski Park, create connections to the new Little Village High School campus and explore expansion of green space.

1.3 Improve campus parks, small parks and play lots throughout the neighborhood.

1.4 Establish a management entity for the Manuel Perez, Jr., Plaza and continue to enhance the plaza as a center for community activities.

STRATEGY 2 Make high-quality education for youth and adults the cornerstone of Little Village’s future.

2.1 Support the small-school culture at the Little Village High School campus.

2.2 Promote the community-schools model and support expanded evening and weekend programming throughout Little Village.

2.3 Create a community-schools network.

2.4 Create programs to promote college and other post-secondary education.

2.5 Develop a student-teacher community center and residence.

2.6 Broaden local education choices.

STRATEGY 3 Create a safe and peaceful community through violence prevention, gang intervention and increased resources for youth and families.

3.1 Build and strengthen the Violence Prevention Collaborative (VPC) as a key vehicle to address community safety issues.

3.2 Promote positive, respectful and productive relationships between police and community members.

3.3 Expand street-level gang intervention to deter local youth from crime and violence.

3.4 Support prevention efforts and establish new programs to address family and domestic violence, gang violence, teen dating violence, alcoholism and drug abuse.

3.5 Address the needs of juvenile offenders through programs such as Balanced and Restorative Justice and the Juvenile Intervention and Support Center (JISC).

3.6 Broaden opportunities for youth to engage in constructive activities.
**STRATEGY 4** Foster healthier families by improving and expanding health and social services for all residents, regardless of age, income or immigration status.

4.1 Develop the Mexican Immigrant Resource Center (MIRC), which will begin with services for Mexican immigrants and expand into a multi-service youth and family center.

4.2 Develop the St. Anthony Wellness Center, which will take a holistic approach to individual and family wellness.

4.3 Increase affordable, accessible preventive and primary health care.

4.4 Expand comprehensive health and mental health education and screenings for adults and children.

4.5 Improve the quality of child care and expand options for families by establishing a child-care providers network and center.

4.6 Research the viability of connecting social-service providers through information technology.

4.7 Create a multi-agency partnership to provide services for senior citizens.

4.8 Plan and implement a community-wide campaign to reduce teen pregnancy in Little Village.

**STRATEGY 5** Improve the business district and create new mixed-use developments at 26th and Kostner and other sites.

5.1 Support mixed-use redevelopment at 26th Street and Kostner Avenue.

5.2 Improve the appearance and functioning of established commercial corridors.

5.3 Bolster the community’s image with gateway and corridor treatments.

5.4 Explore opportunities for transit-oriented development around new CTA Blue Line stations.

**STRATEGY 6** Attract sustainable, environmentally friendly industry and expand economic opportunities for local workers.

6.1 Establish a Planned Manufacturing District (PMD) in industrial portions of the neighborhood.

6.2 Build corridor identity around a signature industrial activity.

6.3 Establish a dedicated industrial road south of 31st Street.

6.4 Develop streetscape and signage programs.

6.5 Link workforce development to employer needs by addressing three major barriers to employment: language, skill deficits, and immigration status.

**STRATEGY 7** Maintain the neighborhood’s attractive and affordable housing and create new housing to meet changing needs.

7.1 Develop housing for seniors.

7.2 Expand programs to support homeowners and renters.

7.3 Develop new housing and preserve existing housing.

7.4 Develop a strategy to address the short-term and long-term housing needs of the homeless in the neighborhood.

**STRATEGY 8** Create and expand arts opportunities for youth and families.

8.1 Create a Little Village arts collaborative to organize and expand arts, music, and cultural activities.

8.2 Open a school-community facility at the Telpochcalli/Maria Saucedo campus.

8.3 Create new partnerships with city music and art schools to offer in-school and out-of-school programs to children and adults.
Strolling down 26th Street, the familiar smell of fresh bread from a panadería welcomes us, the ring of a vendor’s bell invites us to buy an ice cream bar, and the tuba beat of banda music escapes from cars and vans cruising between California and Kostner. As we walk with our families to church, do our banking in Spanish or shop for butcher-cut meat and fresh produce, it almost feels like we’re in a Mexican town. But the cold wind, Chicago-brick buildings and looming presence of Cook County Jail remind us that this is not México.

It is Little Village, or La Villita, as we have renamed Chicago’s South Lawndale community. Ours is an energetic, densely populated urban neighborhood that for more than a hundred years has been a home for immigrant families seeking a better life.

Lured by good jobs at the McCormick tractor plant, Western Electric’s 40,000-employee Hawthorne Works, Sears Roebuck and hundreds of smaller businesses, generations of German, Dutch, Polish, Czech and, in the last 30 years, Mexicans, have inhabited the neighborhood.

The era of manufacturing prosperity has passed, but Little Village remains a vibrant and prosperous community, part of a 15-square-mile area of adjoining Mexican neighborhoods extending south through Brighton Park to Back of the Yards and Gage Park, and stretching from Pilsen on the east to suburban Cicero and Berwyn on the west.

About 313,000 Latinos (including South and Central Americans and Puerto Ricans) live in these neighborhoods, and Little Village is where they go—along with visitors from all over Illinois and neighboring states—to purchase Mexican cooking products and specialty items for weddings, quinceañeras (debutant parties for 15-year-old girls) and other events. Little Village businesses, churches and institutions serve the second-largest Mexican community in the nation (after Los Angeles), with more than 786,000 people of Mexican origin in Cook County alone.

Little Village has become a major port of entry for Mexican immigrants in Illinois. According to a 2004 estimate by the Metropolitan Chicago Information Center, we are home to the largest group of undocumented immigrants in the city (17,000 at a minimum). While their limited opportunities for work, school and civic life add to the mix of challenges in the neighborhood, immigrants also strengthen our community with their economic power, traditions, determination and hope. Thousands of permanent legal residents in the neighborhood—potential U.S. citizens—represent a tremendous untapped source of political power.
**Mexican identity key to prosperity**

Little Village is the retail, residential and cultural capital of the Mexican Midwest, and we want to retain that role for many years to come. We believe that Little Village will continue to prosper if we preserve our Mexican identity and strengthen the services, businesses, organizations and people that make Little Village unique.

Commerce is one of our greatest assets. The 80 companies in our industrial corridor, stretching south from 31st Street to the Stevenson Expressway (I-55), provide about 2,500 jobs, many to local residents. The corridor is well situated for manufacturers and distributors, thanks to excellent access to railroad yards and the Stevenson and Eisenhower (I-290) expressways. Recent investment includes a new facility on 31st Street for MRC Polymers, a manufacturer of specialty plastic resins.

Far more visible are the retail corridors, including the famous 26th Street strip, with its welcoming Mexican archway at Albany Avenue. Other concentrations are on Cermak Road, which connects Little Village to Pilsen and Cicero, and along Kedzie, Pulaski and 31st. With more than a thousand businesses selling food, clothing, housewares, music, books, hardware, auto parts and electronics, the neighborhood generates sales of nearly $900 million per year, making 26th Street one of the most prosperous retail corridors in the city. The majority of stores are Mexican-owned, and some are so successful that they have opened branches in other neighborhoods and suburbs.

With a median household income of $32,320, Little Village falls below the city median—$38,625, according to the 2000 Census. Nonetheless, a ShoreBank/Social Compact profile of community buying power showed concentrated retail spending of $128,000 per acre, far exceeding that of many wealthier neighborhoods. Almost 30,000 new residents have moved to Little Village since 1970, bringing the population to an all-time high of 91,000. Many more residents were probably not counted by the 2000 Census because they are undocumented.

Like many other immigrant communities, we have a vibrant informal economy that is not reflected in official statistics. A U.S. Department of Commerce study found that low-wage workers often supplement their income through a cash marketplace that includes services such as haircuts, car repairs, home improvement, child care and sales. This is clearly evident in Little Village, where one can buy just about anything on the street or from a neighbor—from healing by a *curandera* to a custom wedding dress, homemade *tamales* or an hour of mariachi music.

Most homes are solid and well-maintained, with custom iron fences, fresh tuckpointing and decorative gardens.
Figure 1  Southwest location near transportation
Little Village is part of a 15-square mile area of adjoining Mexican neighborhoods close to major transportation resources and industrial corridors.
Little Village housing stock contributes to neighborhood stability. Of 19,000 units, about 7,000 are owner-occupied, and more than 12,000 are in two-flats and three-flats that provide rental income for the owners. Most homes are solid and well maintained, and their custom iron fences, fresh tuck-pointing and decorative gardens reflect the masonry, carpentry, painting and metalwork skills of the residents.

The neighborhood has occasional problems with overcrowding, neglectful landlords and predatory lending, but there are few vacant lots or empty buildings. Property values have risen steadily yet remain affordable by Chicago standards, with a median sale price of $124,000 for a single-family home in 2002.

For years we have been fighting for better quality education, and finally, our schools are becoming an asset. In 2001, in the wake of unfulfilled promises and repeated delays in construction to relieve overcrowding at the 2,500-student Farragut High School Career Academy, parents and other community members fasted for 19 days before the Chicago Public Schools committed to build the Little Village High School campus. That $63 million facility is scheduled to open in September 2005, housing four schools. This is a tremendous opportunity to improve educational outcomes at both the new campus and Farragut. We have also secured funding and support for using small-school and community-school models and have begun to explore charter and alternative schools to provide innovative programs for our children.

Tackling our challenges: education, parks, health and safety

Despite the construction of several new elementary schools and the creation of many new academic programs, overcrowding and poor student performance remain serious problems and grave threats to our future. Our neighborhood has 16 elementary schools, of which 15 report standardized test scores. While scores have improved in recent years, 10 schools were rated as non-performing by the Illinois Facilities Fund in 2004. Fewer than 40 percent of students at these schools met standards for their grade.

Almost half of Little Village residents are under age 25. About 20,000 young people are enrolled at public and private elementary and high schools. This young population has created a demand for more and better schools—as well as for recreation programs, social services, parks and entertainment. We believe youth and young adults are among our most valuable assets. Investing in them, especially in their education, is essential.

We are troubled by a severe shortage of park space. The city’s official Cityspace Plan calls for a minimum of two acres of public open space for every 1,000 residents, yet Little Village provides only 61 acres total. This falls 120 acres short of the standard; Little Village has the second lowest open space-to-resident ratio of any Chicago community area. Piotrowski Park is the neighborhood’s largest at 23 acres, and it is always busy with soccer, baseball, basketball, picnics, swimming and indoor activities.

Douglas Park, a major regional facility, lies on the northeast edge of Little Village. It is under-used by residents. The park is inaccessible to pedestrians, and the northern half is considered a part of neighboring North Lawndale rather than Little Village. We use the southern end of Douglas Park primarily on weekends for soccer and picnics, but rarely for other activities. The lack of green space and recreational activities contributes to the neighborhood’s health and violence problems and cannot be ignored.
Residents’ health is also impacted by limited access to preventive and primary health care, mainly due to the high cost of care and insufficient number of health care facilities. A 2004 study by the Sinai Urban Health Institute found that South Lawndale residents had a very high diabetes mortality rate, yet low levels of diabetes diagnosis—an indication that residents lack the preventive care and treatment that can control diabetes and other diseases. Thirty-seven percent of residents were diagnosed or screened as depressed, and about 58 percent of our youth were found to be overweight or obese, more than twice the national average.

More than half of the 300 Little Village residents in the Sinai survey rated their own health as fair or poor, yet resources to improve that situation are inadequate. It can take weeks to get an appointment at a local public health center. With fewer than half of our non-elderly adults covered by public or private health insurance, cost is a factor that keeps many residents from getting the care they need.

Little Village has the highest rate of teen pregnancy in Chicago. Cultural taboos about sex, a lack of comprehensive sex education, limited access to preventive health care, poorly performing schools and insufficient recreational and youth activities are contributing factors. Among teen moms, Latinas are the least likely to complete high school, making them and their children more likely to live in poverty. We must break this cycle if our youth are to be active, productive community members.

Despite these many health concerns, there is no community-wide effort to improve access to health, mental health and social services. This is an area that requires new partnerships and innovative solutions.

Like many inner-city neighborhoods, Little Village suffers from violence, crime and intense gang activity. In 2004, twenty-two people were murdered in Little Village, many in gang-related shootings. Two major street gangs control turf that divides the east and west sides of the community. Drive-by shootings, retaliations for perceived infractions of gang rules, and senseless killings have become a grim reality of life in Little Village. This violence leaves families shattered and, along with drug dealing, public intoxication and other illegal activities, puts the neighborhood on edge. Even busy 26th Street is perceived by some residents to be unsafe at times.

Responding to this situation, the Little Village Violence Prevention Collaborative (VPC) has been successful in bringing together individuals and organizations committed to promoting peace. In August 2004, hundreds participated in a day of peace organized by the collaborative, vowing to create a community-wide partnership to end the bloodshed, make our neighborhood safer and create more opportunities for youth. The plan laid out that day—and other strategies set forth in this plan—are steps in the right direction.
Figure 2  Current projects

Recent successes include construction of a new high school, renovation of the Toman branch library and improvements to the 26th Street commercial area.
Work not finished

We have chosen to live, work and invest in Little Village because we believe this community has great potential. Residents have proven that we can organize and fight for the resources we need. Recent community successes include revitalization of the Manuel Perez, Jr., Plaza, construction of the new high school, expansion and renovation of the Toman branch library and complete renovation of the Douglas Branch of the CTA’s Blue Line, a $482 million project.

Still, much work remains. Although we recently opened two schools providing evening and weekend programming for children and adults, we need additional community schools to improve academic performance and create welcoming places where residents can come together. We are working to create a new park but will need to raise millions for land acquisition and environmental cleanup. We also want to fulfill the potential for new retail, housing and institutional development on the vacant 40-acre plot at 26th and Kostner.

Many of our issues also affect North Lawndale, the community immediately to the north, with which we share the transportation resources of Cermak Road and the Blue Line. Yet we remain separate neighborhoods, one African-American, one Mexican-American, with a well-known dividing line near 21st Street. While the two communities have worked together, seeking and finding common ground in the struggles to develop the high school and restore weekend Blue Line service, racial tension continues, and more work remains to be done. As joint use of schools, transportation, employment resources and shopping districts grows, it is important that we bridge cultural and racial differences for the benefit of both communities.

We are proud of our hard work, entrepreneurial spirit and determination to create a better life for our families, and we are encouraged by the energy and potential of our youth. This plan lays out our vision for the future and the strategies for making Little Village an even greater place to live.
LEAD AGENCY

Little Village Community Development Corporation (LVCDC)

LVCDC was formed in 1990 by Little Village residents who came together as volunteers to redevelop the abandoned industrial park at 26th Street and Kostner Avenue. Through this effort, the LVCDC founders felt they needed to create an organization that would engage neighborhood residents in planning for their community’s development.

LVCDC became a staffed organization in 1998, when the board hired its first executive director, a former Little Village alderman and Illinois state senator. Today the organization has more than 15 staff and has broadened its work to address both economic and educational development. Its mission is to:

Ensure a balanced development of the Little Village community that respects the wishes of community residents, including working families, local businesses, faith-based organizations, senior citizens, and youth.

Unlike many community development corporations, LVCDC has thus far put less emphasis on bricks-and-mortar projects and more on community organizing and collaboration with other organizations and individuals. It helps identify neighborhood needs and involves residents in projects that will benefit them and their families. LVCDC hopes to guarantee a strong, consistent community voice in matters affecting Little Village.

In the last six years, LVCDC has worked on the 26th and Kostner development, established block clubs and implemented programs in industrial retention, violence prevention and housing counseling, as well as multiple efforts to elevate the quality of education for children and adults. LVCDC is committed to creating an “education renaissance” in Little Village that will break the cycle of low educational achievement, violence and limited economic mobility.
Building on Community Resources

When the New Communities Program (NCP) presented the opportunity to conduct comprehensive community planning, LVCDC and its neighborhood partners and residents crafted a quality-of-life plan that could transform Little Village into a healthy, safe and prosperous Mexican community.

The New Communities Program director and organizer helped recruit community leaders for the planning task force and then supported the task force as it identified important issues. Initial ideas were influenced by discussions at the 2003 LVCDC Community Convention, attended by more than 200 residents, and by a visioning session in May 2003 at a citywide New Communities Program retreat.

In November of that year, the task force had its first meeting at St. Agnes Church. The group of approximately 25 residents, students and leaders of block clubs, non-profits, banks, businesses, schools and churches met regularly over the next 10 months. In July 2004, task force members participated in a planning workshop to discuss strategies and projects and begin to identify key partners.

To develop broader input, two public meetings were held—a community visioning session, conducted in Spanish, which drew 140 residents in March 2004, and a smaller meeting to discuss renovation of the Manuel Perez, Jr., Plaza. The meetings yielded ideas and potential partners to recruit as the work proceeds.

LVCDC embraced the principle of “doing while planning” by completing two Early Action Projects. In partnership with CoreNet Global—a national network of real estate developers—corporate and local volunteers completed a three-day makeover of the long-neglected Manuel Perez, Jr., Plaza on 26th and Kolin, reclaiming this rare bit of open space for children and families. Also in the spring of 2004, a partner organization, the Little Village Chamber of Commerce, secured funds to revitalize the 26th Street archway, painting, adding lighting and repairing the arch’s broken clock.

LVCDC is committed to ensuring that the strategies and projects outlined in this quality-of-life plan become reality over the next five years. LVCDC will help partners complete the projects to which they are committed, continue to create opportunities for community participation, work to attract outside resources and periodically review and update the plan.

This plan was completed and ratified by the Little Village task force in January 2005.
A Healthy, Safe and Prosperous Mexican Community

Little Village will be the retail, residential and cultural capital of the Mexican community in the Midwest—a healthy, safe and prosperous neighborhood alive with Mexican arts and culture, and a great place to live for both longtime residents and new immigrants. *La Villita* will be an attractive, peaceful community where residents of all ages have the opportunity to learn, work, worship, play and create a better life for themselves and their families.
Manuel Perez Jr. Plaza improvements/enhancement

Mixed-use development around CTA train stations

Commercial corridor streetscape enhancements

Housing opportunity site
- New housing
- Rehabilitation

New park development

Industrial identity program

High school/park connection

Boulevard beautification

New housing opportunity site

Rehabilitation

Mixed-use development around CTA train stations

Commercial corridor streetscape enhancements

Housing opportunity site
- New housing
- Rehabilitation

New park development

Industrial identity program

High school/park connection

Boulevard beautification
Blueprint for Implementing the Vision

The planning task force developed eight strategies and 40 projects to strengthen Little Village and enhance its role as the center of the Mexican community.

Our Strategies:

1. **Expand** access to parks and open space by improving existing facilities and creating a large new park.
2. **Make** high-quality education for youth and adults the cornerstone of Little Village’s future.
3. **Create** a safe and peaceful community through violence prevention, gang intervention and increased youth and family resources.
4. **Foster** healthier families by improving and expanding health and social services for all residents, regardless of age, income or immigration status.
5. **Improve** the business district and create new mixed-use developments at 26th and Kostner and other sites.
6. **Attract** sustainable, environmentally friendly industry and expand economic opportunities for local workers.
7. **Maintain** the neighborhood’s attractive and affordable housing and create new housing to meet changing needs.
8. **Create** and expand arts opportunities for youth and families.
Little Village is one of Chicago’s most densely populated neighborhoods but ranks near the bottom in terms of open space. Two alternative locations for a large new park are the Washburne Trade School site and the Celotex site.
STRATEGY 1

Expand access to parks and open space by improving facilities and creating a large new park.

Although Little Village is one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in Chicago, it has a severe shortage of parks and recreational facilities—only 61 acres of green space. Most children play on the streets and sidewalks in front of their houses or in parking lots. Aside from Piotrowski Park, there are six small play lots and five campus parks, ranging from old and obsolete to the recently completed Corkery School campus park. Fear of gangs and a lack of programming at campus parks keep many youth and families from using the few facilities available. Figure 4 identifies neighborhood park resources.

Though Piotrowski Park is heavily used, some of its facilities need renovation, and demand for programs exceeds the park’s capacity.

The lack of green space contributes to health problems such as obesity and diabetes and provides few opportunities for exposure to nature. We want more open space, where children can play safely and adults and families can exercise, jog, walk and ride bikes. A public gathering space for community and arts events is also a priority.

1.1 Develop a large new park on the east side of the neighborhood, with connections to residential areas and the canal.

This “green corridor” could stretch from 31st Street south to the Sanitary and Ship Canal and east along the waterfront to the wooded Job Corps campus and a regional trail system being developed near Western Avenue. Figure 4 depicts two sites that could be pursued for the new park.

- Washburne Trade School: South of 31st Street just west of Kedzie, this 11-acre parcel includes a vacant four-story brick structure that was once a factory and then a vocational school. Asbestos removal, demolition and soil remediation would be necessary to prepare the site for recreational use. A 15-acre parcel east of Washburne might also be acquired to create a larger park.

- Celotex: North of 31st Street between Albany and Sacramento, this 17-acre former industrial site would also require environmental cleanup. It could be expanded to the west and northeast by 15 acres.
1.2 Improve facilities at Piotrowski Park, create connections to the new Little Village High School campus and explore expansion of green space.

Work with the Chicago Park District to address physical needs of Piotrowski Park, including improved site drainage, picnic areas and parking. Develop an attractive and safe connection between the high school and the park, adding landscaping and other barriers to separate pedestrians from factory sites. Thoughtful land development policy and design would benefit industrial businesses on Kolin, as well as the school and park.

1.3 Improve campus parks, small parks and play lots throughout the neighborhood.

Establish and improve school-campus parks, where possible, to take advantage of open space around public schools. Established campus parks include Gary/Dominguez, Zapata, Paderewski, Farragut High School Career Academy and Corkery. Work with the Chicago Park District to identify improvements needed at Shedd Park, Limas Park, Miami Park, Washtenaw Playground, Homan Play Lot and Trumbull Play Lot.

1.4 Establish a management entity for the Manuel Perez, Jr., Plaza and continue to enhance the plaza as a center for community activities.

In 2004, volunteers renovated this small plaza on 26th Street at Kolin Avenue, reclaiming the space for community use. Established as a memorial to veterans of war, the plaza features a monument to World War II hero Manuel Perez, Jr., along with flags, benches, landscaping and lighting. The plaza is listed on the city’s official inventory of malls and plazas. A local business or organization should be recruited to enter into a maintenance and management agreement with the city. The management entity and its partners should:

- Ensure trash pick-up, maintain and water plants, coordinate repairs and improvements.
- Develop partnerships and funding to create plaza activities, including performances, festivals, public or family gatherings and outdoor markets.
- Construct a new wall along the alley perimeter to enclose the space; create secure storage space for tables, chairs and other equipment; install informational kiosks to advertise performances and community events; and help adjoining property owners enhance the plaza through façade improvements, landscaping, lighting and signage (see Figure 5, Perez Plaza Redevelopment Concept).
- Develop community art in the plaza, such as murals or mosaics (see Projects 8.1 and 8.2).

![Figure 5 Perez Plaza improvements](image_url)

Suggested improvements to the Manuel Perez, Jr., Plaza include murals and lighting, an informational kiosk and a storage area for maintenance equipment.
STRATEGY 2

Make high-quality education for youth and adults the cornerstone of Little Village’s future.

Probably the most important challenge facing Little Village is to improve the quality of education for our children and youth. Nine of the neighborhood’s 16 elementary schools are overcrowded, and 10 of those schools are in the bottom categories of academic performance, according to a recent Illinois Facilities Fund study. Farragut High School Career Academy graduated only 47.3 percent of the 705 freshmen who began at the school in 2000, according to a January 2005 study by the Consortium on Chicago School Research. Though these statistics are similar to those in many other Chicago neighborhoods, we believe it is critical to dramatically improve the system that serves 20,000 local students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

Little Village residents and leaders are committed to raising academic performance in the elementary grades, developing more college-bound students and providing broader opportunities for post-high-school vocational training. We plan to open more schools and create a system of small schools, community schools and supportive programs, changing school culture and improving the way schools work.

Our goals are to improve parental understanding of and participation in education, advocate for increased school funding, expand and improve in-school and after-school cultural, sports and arts programs, and strengthen adult education programs such as English, GED, job-training and technology classes.

2.1 Support the small-school culture at the Little Village High School campus.

The new school campus offers a fresh opportunity to create high-performing high schools in the neighborhood. Designed for 1,400 students in four small-school environments, the school will open in the fall of 2005 with freshman classes only and fill to capacity over the next three years. It will serve students from both Little Village and adjoining North Lawndale; leaders from both communities are developing programming and curricula to foster a healthy and socially integrated student body. Features of the school include:

- Distinct identities for the Infinity School of Math and Science, a Multicultural Arts School, the Greater Lawndale/Little Village School of Social Justice and a World Language School.
- Special programs such as a student-run bank branch to promote financial education; on-site social services; a health clinic; and programs to improve parents’ effectiveness as partners in the education of their children.
- Innovative architecture that creates four separate buildings surrounding a commons. The design includes 19-degree angles to honor the 19-day fast that led to the school’s construction. A skylight will block out the sun for an hour on the days in May and June when the hunger strike took place.

2.2 Promote the community-schools model and support expanded evening and weekend programming throughout Little Village.

Turn local school buildings into centers of community life by creating a safe, welcoming, fun environment for students, families and community residents. Open the schools five evenings per week and on Saturdays to compensate for the lack of park space and to provide opportunities for families and residents to be together.

Pursue funding for a phased expansion (one or more new schools per year), modeled after community-school programs launched in 2004 at Eli Whitney and Rosario Castellanos schools. These schools are open evenings and Saturdays and offer activities that serve as bridges between schools and the community. They include El Puente Family Leadership Program; academic enrichment, arts, sports and technology programs for youth and adults; ESL, GED, technology, leadership, job training and other adult education programs; and a host of health education and violence prevention workshops and programs for families.
2.3 Create a community-schools network.
Develop a network of educational and community leaders and administrators to coordinate programming at community schools; recruit additional community-based partners to manage community-schools programs; and advocate for additional funding.

2.4 Create programs to promote college and other post-secondary education.
Starting in middle school, raise parents’ and students’ college expectations and expand awareness of college opportunities by conducting college prep programs. Develop a dual-enrollment program that permits high school juniors and seniors to take college classes and graduate with as many as 60 college-credit hours. Create a college resource center at Little Village High School campus, where students and families can learn about post-secondary opportunities and receive help with applications for entrance and financing.

Provide information about non-college training, as well, including referrals to coursework in technical, manufacturing and building trades skills and employers who can use those skills. Continue to advocate for policy changes at all levels of government that expand tuition resources for undocumented immigrants.

2.5 Develop a student-teacher community center and residence.
Work with Illinois State University, State Farm Insurance, Chicago Public Schools and LISC/Chicago to develop a facility for student teachers who will live and work in Little Village while completing their teacher training at the new high school and other local schools. The center will have space and activities devoted to community uses.

2.6 Broaden local education choices.
Expand Instituto del Progreso Latino’s Rudy Lozano Leadership Academy to include a program for pregnant and parenting teens, and explore the development of a new charter middle school in partnership with Erie Neighborhood House.

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**Figure 6 Little Village schools**
Recent construction and new programs are helping turn local schools into assets for community improvement.
STRATEGY 3

Create a safe and peaceful community through violence prevention, gang intervention and increased resources for youth and families.

Violence in Little Village is of grave concern to our residents and threatens the prosperity of our community. Violence can dissuade potential homeowners, visitors and consumers from coming here—and drive residents and businesses away.

During the quality-of-life planning process, residents and task force members shared many stories of students who dropped out of school for fear of gangs; adults robbed on the bus or the street; people afraid to leave their garages late at night; parents discouraged from attending Local School Council and CAPS (Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy) meetings; parks, school campuses and play lots vandalized with graffiti; and women seeking refuge from a violent partner. Many residents do not know their legal rights or trust the police, who have sometimes treated community residents inappropriately or disrespectfully.

Preventing violence through public education, gang intervention, better police and community relationships, and more activities for youth and families is critical to creating a safe and peaceful community. Implicit in these strategies is the need to invest in youth development. Youth must have places to go after school, in the evenings and on weekends, where they can participate in positive, creative activities and develop a sense of community and leadership.

3.1 Build and strengthen the Violence Prevention Collaborative (VPC) as a key vehicle to address community safety issues.

The VPC is a coalition of community-based organizations, churches, schools and individuals committed to stopping violence and bringing peace to our neighborhood. While LVCDC provides staff support and some funding, the VPC relies largely on volunteers and has been limited in its ability to implement a comprehensive violence prevention plan. Priorities developed at an August 2004 “Peace-ing Little Village” march and meeting include:

- Establish a gun turn-in program in partnership with four parishes—Epiphany, Our Lady of Tepeyac, St. Agnes of Bohemia and Good Shepherd—and the Chicago Police Department.
- Develop and implement a community and police training program to improve relationships between residents and 10th District police officers, with leadership shared among VPC, the Chicago Police Department, and CAPS.
- Establish a bilingual crime hotline that will be more accessible and useful to the Spanish-speaking community.
- Support the creation of a new park on the east side of Little Village (see Project 1.1).
3.2 Promote positive, respectful and productive relationships between police and community members.
- Create a forum for resident/police dialog and develop public education focusing on new immigrants and the role of police in American society.
- Hire more Spanish-speaking, culturally sensitive police officers and officers who live in the neighborhood, and implement more people-to-people policing strategies, such as bike patrols, foot patrols, youth officers and business liaison officers.
- Strengthen neighborhood-watch clubs and block clubs through organizing, training and youth advocates, and use these vehicles to demand greater police accountability.
- Engage police and residents in collaborative peace-promoting activities to address crime hot spots.

3.3 Expand street-level gang intervention to deter local youth from crime and violence.
Develop additional funding for programs that use outreach workers to communicate with gang-involved youth and direct them toward positive activities.

3.4 Support prevention efforts and establish new programs to address family and domestic violence, gang violence, teen dating violence, alcoholism and drug abuse.
Support and expand programming such as the Little Village Boys and Girls Club’s after-school activities and the Jorge Prieto Clinic’s drug and alcohol counseling programs. Provide support services for victims of crime, addressing the special needs of immigrants.

3.5 Address the needs of juvenile offenders.
Programs such as Balanced and Restorative Justice and the Juvenile Intervention and Support Center (JISC) are key to reclaiming at-risk youth. Balanced and Restorative Justice, a program of the juvenile justice system, involves the young offender, the victim and the community in a collaborative effort to repair harm done. JISC is a multi-agency network that coordinates the activities and services of police, prosecutors, social workers, probation officers and community leaders. Work with the JISC program, which serves the 10th Police District, and coordinate with schools, health care and social-service providers to address problems of juvenile offenders.

3.6 Broaden opportunities for youth to engage in constructive activities.
Expand recreational and educational programming and provide information about it to youth and adults. Support and improve programs at Piotrowski Park, Little Village Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, the proposed new park and other institutions that provide youth activities.

The Violence Prevention Collaborative (VPC) organized an August 2004 community “day of peace” that helped to set community safety priorities.
STRATEGY 4

Foster healthier families by improving and expanding health and social services for all residents, regardless of age, income or immigration status.

Because of Little Village’s large and growing population, providers of health and human services are unable to meet local demands. Historically, many social-service agencies serving the community have been located in Pilsen, a more established Mexican community to the east, or in other parts of the city.

Health-care services are also limited. The Chicago Department of Public Health Clinic in Little Village and Cook County’s Jorge Prieto Clinic are at capacity and often have long waiting periods for new patients. St. Anthony Hospital recently opened the Esperanza Clinic to assist in providing safety-net care, but the need for affordable or free health care is expected to exceed that program’s capacity. While most children are covered by Illinois KidCare, Medicaid or private insurance programs, a 2004 study by the Sinai Urban Health System found that only 44 percent of adults in Little Village have health insurance—about half the national level.

The Sinai survey of 300 residents found that 51 percent considered their health to be fair or poor, compared to just 14 percent of the U.S. population. The lack of preventive care and treatment is reflected in very high diabetes mortality rates in Little Village—even though the disease can be controlled by diet, exercise and medication. The Sinai study also shows that a startling 58 percent of local children are overweight or obese.

It is critical that we strengthen the quality and availability of health and human services in Little Village through collaborative initiatives that bring together under one roof a variety of health, mental health and social services. Centers should be on both the east and west sides of the neighborhood and include a range of services, from citizenship and parenting classes to preventive care and one-stop applications for public programs.

4.1 Develop the Mexican Immigrant Resource Center (MIRC), which will begin with services for immigrants and expand into a multi-service youth and family center.

The center will offer a variety of human and social services, recreational and educational activities, and be a hub for provision of services and information through schools, churches, parks, community-based organizations and non-traditional venues. The MIRC will open at Epiphany Parish and may build a long-term facility at the 26th and Kostner development.

4.2 Develop the St. Anthony Wellness Center.

This new facility at the former site of St. Ludmila will take a holistic approach to individual and family wellness, offering mental health services, family support programs, early childhood programs and health education and prevention services.
4.3 Increase affordable, accessible preventive and primary health care.
Build a school-based health center at the new Little Village High School campus; explore the viability of expanding the Jorge Prieto Clinic or opening a new community health center; and continue advocacy for expanded access to public insurance programs.

4.4 Expand comprehensive health and mental health education and screenings for adults and children, including nutrition, diabetes, obesity, asthma, depression, drug, alcohol and sex education, through new or expanded partnerships with government, schools, health centers, churches, businesses and other organizations. Explore partnerships with health care providers located in neighboring communities that are used by Little Village residents.

4.5 Improve the quality of child care and expand options for families by establishing a child-care providers network and center.
This should offer training, mentoring and peer support to licensed and license-exempt home-based child-care providers. To oversee development of this network, create an advisory panel that includes organizations such as El Valor, Action for Children, Carole Robertson Center for Learning, YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, North Avenue Day Nursery, St. Anthony Hospital, Women’s Business Development Center and Latino Child Care Providers in Action.

4.6 Research the viability of connecting social-service providers through information technology.
Explore use of a health and social services information system to share information among providers, reduce costs and make services more effective.

4.7 Create a multi-agency partnership to provide services for senior citizens.
Partners could include private and public organizations serving the aging population, as well as the Chicago Department on Aging.

4.8 Plan and implement a community-wide campaign to reduce teen pregnancy in Little Village.
The campaign will include research-based strategies proven to be effective, including comprehensive sex education, parent involvement, youth development activities, and increased access to health care. Year one will be used to identify lead partners, select best models and solicit funds.
Little Village is served by a large number of resource organizations including churches, social service providers, schools, youth support services, health care providers, business support and government service agencies. Many have committed to helping implement this plan.

**Churches**
1. Amor de Dios United Methodist Church
2. Assumption Catholic Parish
3. Crawford Bible Church
4. Epiphany Parish
5. Good Shepherd Parish
6. Grace Lutheran Church
7. Iglesia Luz del Mundo
8. La Villita Community Church
9. Our Lady of Tepeyac Parish
10. St. Agnes of Bohemia Parish
11. St. Roman’s Parish

**Social service providers**
12. Carole Robertson Center for Learning
13. Central States SER
14. Familias Unidas
15. Lutheran Child and Family Services
16. P.A.W.S. Spay/Neuter Clinic
17. Programa Cielo
18. Rainbow House
19. S.A.V.E. Another Life
20. Salvation Army
21. YMCA (Street Intervention Program)

**Education and jobs**
22. Cyrus McCormick School
23. Daniel J. Corkery School
24. David Farragut High School
25. Eli Whitney School
26. Emiliano Zapata Academy
27. Francisco Madero School
28. General Woods Boys and Girls Club
29. Gerald Kanoon School
30. Instituto del Progreso Latino
31. Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez School
32. Josefa Gary School
33. Latino Youth
34. Lazaro Cardenas School
35. Little Village Academy
36. Little Village Boys and Girls Club
37. Little Village Chamber of Commerce
38. Little Village High School Campus
39. LULAC LNESC
40. Our Lady of Tepeyac Girls High School
41. Paderewski School
42. Padres Ayudando Padres
43. Rosario Castellanos School
44. Spry Elementary School
45. Telpochcalli Community Education Project

**Health care providers**
46. Access Community Health Network
47. Centro de Salud Esperanza
48. Centro Medico San Rafael
49. Dr. Jorge Prieto Health Center of Cook County
50. Little Village Family Medical Center
51. Pilsen/Little Village Mental Health Center
52. Project VIDA
53. Resurrection Health Care
54. School-based Farragut Lawndale Christian Health Center
55. South Lawndale Clinic
56. St. Anthony Hospital

**Government Service Agencies**
57. 10th District Chicago Police Department Headquarters
58. 12th Ward Alderman George A. Cardenas
59. 22nd Ward Alderman Ricardo Munoz
60. Dept. of Streets and Sanitation 22nd Ward Yard
61. Social Security Administration Agency
62. State Representative Susana Mendoza
63. Toman Branch Library
64. U.S. Post Office
Little Village’s vibrant business district is recognized throughout the Midwest as a prime source of Mexican merchandise. With more than a thousand stores on 26th Street, Cermak, 31st Street and throughout the community’s residential areas, Little Village offers a wide range of goods and services to neighborhood residents and visitors.

While day-to-day goods and Mexican-oriented services are readily available, the neighborhood lacks other modern shopping and entertainment amenities, such as major retail outlets, chain department stores, a movie theater, coffee shops, American and other ethnic restaurants and full-service grocery stores. Residents are loyal customers of established neighborhood businesses, but they would also like to see new businesses round out the commercial and entertainment mix.

This strategy includes several projects to strengthen commerce and open the door for larger scale development to bring in goods and services not currently available. Mixed-use development of vacant industrial sites offers the potential to bring new affordable housing to the community.

5.1 Support mixed-use redevelopment at 26th Street and Kostner Avenue.

The long-vacant Chicago Central Industrial Park has been targeted for reuse for many years because of its key location at the western end of the 26th Street business strip, but several attempts to develop the site have failed. The 40-acre parcel represents one of the few opportunities for development in the neighborhood, which has very little vacant land except in former industrial areas. In a planning workshop in September 2003, residents envisioned mixed uses for the site, including a shopping center, mixed-income housing, a community service center, an elementary school and green space. Next steps are to:

- Share the community’s vision for development—including a housing component and new green space—with the landowner and development team (see Figure 8 and 9, 26th and Kostner Concept Plan).
- Work with the landowner and development team to get development started and ensure the project reflects community input.
- Promote the site to neighborhood retail businesses for expansion or new-store development. Ensure that the new shopping area includes locally owned as well as new businesses that will complement the current mix and Mexican atmosphere.
- Identify service businesses interested in relocating to the development.
5.2 Improve the appearance and functioning of established commercial corridors.

The tremendous success of Mexican retail businesses throughout Little Village has resulted in a very low vacancy rate on most commercial streets and an important stream of revenue for building improvements, payrolls and reinvestment in local enterprises. The industrial area south of 31st Street is also an important component of the local economy. But traffic jams along 26th Street, truck traffic on 31st, a parking shortage throughout the neighborhood, crime, and growth of Mexican-oriented businesses elsewhere threaten this business vitality. Projects to protect and enhance the business corridors are shown in Figure 9, Infrastructure and Streetscape Improvements. They include:

- Improve parking along 26th Street. Identify parcels for acquisition and development of small parking areas for shoppers (15 to 20 spaces each). Establish employee-parking requirements for the business district, and create large employee parking lots at the east and west ends of the business strip. Employee lots could be located on vacant land east of Albany near Cook County Jail and west of Kostner at 26th Street, with shuttle-bus service to the retail area.
The site could be configured to accommodate a mix of uses including housing, green space, retail and entertainment.

- Mixed retail, service and entertainment
- New park-soccer fields
- Town homes (18 depicted)
- Single family homes (76 depicted)

- Improve the look and feel of retail corridors through the city’s façade-rebate program. Create a plan for phased streetscape improvements for commercial areas, including 26th Street, 31st Street, Kedzie and Pulaski, and Cermak from California west to the railroad viaduct. Consider a Special Services Assessment (SSA), already in place along 26th Street, to generate local revenue through a tax on businesses. Investigate other city programs to support these initiatives.

- Enhance the 31st Street corridor. This busy artery marks the transition between residential and industrial land uses and has two distinct personalities. Between California and Central Park, large development sites are anchored by Cook County Jail on the east and industrial parcels to the west. Between Central Park and Kostner, 31st Street is a tree-lined residential street with stores and restaurants, anchored on the west by the new Little Village High School campus. Develop pedestrian amenities and safety features, limit heavy truck traffic, develop an attractive front door to the industrial corridor and improve the intersection with Central Park Avenue.

- Expand business resources. Work with the Little Village Chamber of Commerce, Acción Chicago, Assets Chicago, the Women’s Business Development Center and new partners to support local businesses with financing, technical assistance and affordable consulting services.

- Recruit new businesses. Seek out entertainment venues, major retailers, coffee shops, bookstores and businesses that complement established vendors and will attract new customers.
5.3 Bolster the community’s image with gateway and corridor treatments.
Develop gateway and signage enhancements to business districts, the industrial corridor and residential areas. Create an entrance to Little Village on Kedzie near I-55. Study the feasibility of a park-and-ride lot there to relieve congestion. Work with the Little Village Chamber of Commerce to maintain the arch on 26th Street at Albany. Plan improvements around the arch, such as landscaping, lighting, and enhancements to the parking lot and shopping center. Beautify Marshall and California boulevards, which are part of the city’s historic boulevard system.

5.4 Explore opportunities for transit-oriented development around new CTA Blue Line stations.
The $482 million renovation of the Douglas Branch of the Blue Line—and restoration of weekend service—create an opportunity for mixed-used development around the rail stations. The Loop is less than 15 minutes away from the California stop, which served 750 passengers per day in late 2004, up 25 percent from the year before. The Kedzie stop, with 400 daily riders, is also showing passenger growth. Both areas offer opportunities for retail and high-density residential development within walking distance of the stations.

Figure 10 Infrastructure and streetscape improvements
Attractive gateways, landscaping and streetscape improvements should be considered for the locations shown here.

- Primary streetscape
- Secondary streetscape
- Industrial streetscape and buffer
- Boulevard beautification
- Gateway features
The industrial districts that surround Little Village have changed dramatically from the years when large factories employed tens of thousands of people, but they continue to provide an important source of local employment for entry-level and skilled workers. The centrally located Roosevelt/Cicero and Western/Ogden corridors extend like a ring around North and South Lawndale, with available sites offering direct access to interstate highways and a large local labor supply.

The competitive nature of industrial site selection—and declining demand for industrial space—mean that Little Village must distinguish itself as a location of choice for industrial companies. To retain 80 established businesses and 2,500 jobs, and to attract new companies and investment, Little Village must provide a secure business environment, good roads, an attractive physical setting and workforce amenities. Many of these features are lacking today. Though the 100-year-old corridors show some new investment and modern structures, many buildings are outmoded, and infrastructure needs to be upgraded. Residents have expressed a preference for clean manufacturing operations that offer long-term stability and growth.

An important step toward establishing a unique identity for the neighborhood’s industrial area is the designation of the Little Village Industrial Corridor in November 2004. Made up of parts of the current industrial corridors, it runs along the south end of Little Village, adjacent to the Stevenson Expressway.

Creation of a Planned Manufacturing District would help support Little Village’s solid base of industrial jobs and businesses.

**6.1 Establish a Planned Manufacturing District (PMD) in industrial portions of the neighborhood.**

Planned Manufacturing Districts are zoning designations that create secure environments for industrial operations and prevent incompatible residential or retail uses. Since 1988, the city of Chicago has worked with local organizations and businesses to create 10 PMDs, resulting in more than $1 billion in private and public investment. Little Village organizations should work with the city to identify suitable boundaries and create a PMD in the new Little Village Industrial Corridor (Figure 11, Proposed Planned Manufacturing District). A tax increment finance district (TIF) should also be established to fund business expansions, workforce development and infrastructure improvements. To maximize flexibility in use of TIF funds, the new district should abut established TIFs east of Kedzie and at 26th and Kostner (Figure 12, Tax Increment Financing Districts).
6.2 **Build corridor identity around a signature industrial activity.**

Brand the corridor around a particular industry so that related businesses choose to locate there. One possibility is food processing, one of the strongest sectors of the Chicago economy. The industry is in transition due to displacement of meat-packing and other food businesses from the Fulton Market, west of downtown. Food-processing companies already located in the corridor include Unilever, Kraft Foods, La Preferida, Lagrou, and Crawford Sausages.

6.3 **Establish a dedicated industrial road south of 31st Street.**

The road would improve factory operations, reduce traffic conflicts with residents and lessen fuel emissions. Work with the Chicago Department of Planning and Development to study feasibility of a new east-west road south of 31st Street, with links to industrial parcels and major arterial streets that connect to the Stevenson Expressway (I-55). Assess various routes, including one alongside the freight tracks that run through the corridor, and submit a plan to the Chicago Department of Transportation for implementation. See Figure 11. Consider use of TIF funds for construction.

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**Figure 11: Proposed Planned Manufacturing District**

Designation of the Little Village Industrial Corridor as a planned manufacturing district (PMD) will help ensure that current industrial uses are protected.
Figure 12 Tax increment financing districts

Several tax increment financing (TIF) districts exist in or around Little Village, providing a source of funding for qualifying developments and projects. Designation of a new industrial TIF should be pursued to support business expansion, workforce development and infrastructure improvements.

6.4 Develop streetscape and signage programs.

Streetscape, landscape and signage amenities make it easier to retain and recruit business and attract investment. Such improvements also reduce conflicts among residential, commercial and industrial users by establishing transitions from one land use to the next. Develop design guidelines for coordinated, phased improvements, including gateway signage, lighting and other features. Encourage private-sector improvements that complement the corridor’s design standards for façades, fencing, landscaping, lighting and signage. Special attention and resources should be devoted to 31st Street, the front door of the industrial corridor, and to beautifying residential areas along 33rd Street, bordering industrial areas (see Figure 9, page 29).

6.5 Link workforce development to employer needs.

Despite the close proximity in Little Village of employers and prospective employees, immigration status, language barriers and skill deficits are barriers to employment. Residents who do find work often lack the services and financial literacy skills needed to build assets. To address these problems:

- Connect residents to skills-training programs through Instituto del Progreso Latino, Central States SER, the City Colleges of Chicago’s West Side Technical Institute and other training organizations.
- Create information packets in English and Spanish that employers can use to explain the skills required for available jobs and direct applicants to appropriate training.
- Partner with financial institutions to offer financial literacy and banking services to employees.
- Continue advocacy in support of immigrants’ rights and legalization. The future of Little Village depends on the contributions of all its residents, including those who are undocumented.
STRATEGY 7

Maintain the neighborhood’s attractive and affordable housing and create new housing to meet changing needs.

7.1 Develop housing for seniors.
Despite a tradition of multi-generational extended families in Little Village and other Mexican neighborhoods, there is a growing need for affordable independent and supported living options for senior citizens. Work with government agencies and non-profit and for-profit developers to develop senior housing in existing or new-construction buildings. A senior activity center should be considered as part of any such development.

7.2 Expand programs to support homeowners and renters.
Provide professional advice to owners and renters about predatory lending, tenants’ rights and legitimate financing options. Address landlord/tenant issues to improve quality of rental housing and reduce overcrowding. Refer residents faced with foreclosure to counseling and credit providers to minimize financial losses and household disruption. Partner with financial institutions to provide financial literacy training and banking services.

7.3 Develop new housing and preserve existing housing.
Identify sites and partner with non-profit and for-profit housing developers to:

- Build affordable and market-rate new housing on empty land, including the 26th and Kostner site, areas around the train stations, and other sites, such as the perimeter of the proposed new park.
- Rehabilitate structures such as those in the northeast sector of the neighborhood around Marshall Boulevard to create affordable apartments.
- Preserve neighborhood bungalows through the city’s bungalow initiative.

7.4 Develop a strategy to address the short-term and long-term housing needs of the homeless in the neighborhood.
Aside from the few men seen drinking and occasionally sleeping on benches in the Manuel Perez, Jr., Plaza, homelessness is not visible in Little Village. But overcrowded housing suggests that it is a problem. Social-service providers and school staff report that the homeless in Little Village are able to stay for short periods with neighbors, friends and relatives, bouncing from place to place. It appears that they are a mix of teen parents and their babies, entire families and jornaleros—men working as day laborers.
Unlike neighboring Pilsen, which has a thriving artistic culture—including Mexican and Anglo artists, galleries, live-work spaces and the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum—Little Village has only a small core of working artists and cultural programs. Increasing arts programming and involving more youth and adults would support other strategies in this plan by improving the visual and social environment, providing constructive activities for residents, and reinforcing the small but important efforts already underway.

Several resources can provide a foundation for expanding the neighborhood’s cultural offerings. The Perez Plaza renovation (Project 1.4) has created an attractive venue for music and other live performances, as well as space for a new mural. Telpochcalli Elementary School, on the eastern edge of Little Village, has integrated Mexican arts into its curriculum and has an artists-in-residence program. St. Agnes Church and the Little Village Boys and Girls Club offer training in folkloric dance, and the Chicago Public Art Group is adding art to the Blue Line train stations that serve Little Village. Farragut High School Career Academy has a strong arts program, and one of the new schools at the Little Village High School campus will have a fine-arts focus.

8.1 Create a Little Village arts collaborative to organize and expand arts, music, and cultural activities.
Convene a working group of local artists and cultural leaders, including those involved at the Little Village High School campus, to develop a vision for the community and serve as an advisory group. Provide technical and financial support for neighborhood activities. Focus on performances, exhibitions and hands-on arts programming at Perez Plaza, community schools, the arts-focused small school on the Little Village High School campus, Telpochcalli School and a possible youth arts center. Include visual arts, storytelling, theater, dance and music.

8.2 Open a school-community facility at the Telpochcalli/Maria Saucedo campus.
Develop funding, partners and community support for this campus, which will provide educational, recreational, and cultural involvement opportunities for community residents and students. As this facility is being developed, support youth programming run by Telpochcalli Community Education Project’s S.I.T.Y Ollin youth group. Telpochcalli means “house of youth” in the Aztec Nahuatl language. S.I.T.Y. Ollin means Stop Ignoring The Youth Movement (Ollin is Nahuatl for “movement”).

8.3 Create new partnerships with city music and art schools.
Offer in-school and out-of-school programs to children and adults. Potential partners include DePaul University, Merit School of Music, Suzuki-Orff School for Young Musicians, Old Town School of Folk Music, Lill Street Art Center, and the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum.
Many organizations have pledged to implement the projects in our quality-of-life plan. They include (but are not limited to):

- Amor de Dios Parish ADD
- Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy CAPS
- Chicago Public Schools CPS
- Cook County Trauma Center CCTC
- Chicago Police Department CPD
- Erie Neighborhood House ERIE
- Eli Whitney School EW
- Hispanic Housing Development Corporation HHDC
- Instituto del Progreso Latino IDPL
- Juvenile Intervention Support Center JISC
- Jorge Prieto Health Clinic JPHC
- Little Village Chamber of Commerce LVCC
- Little Village Community Development Corporation LVCDC
- Little Village High School campus LVHS
- Mexican Immigrant Resource Center MIRC
- Metropolitan Tenants Organization MTO
- Pilsen-Little Village Mental Health Center PLVMH
- Piotrowski Park PP
- Rosario Castellanos School RC
- St. Agnes Parish SAP
- St. Anthony Hospital SAH
- Central States SER
- Telpochcalli Community Education Project TCEP
- Violence Prevention Collaborative of Little Village VPC
- Women’s Business Development Center WBDC
- YMCA
- 12 Ward Alderman Cardenas 12WD
- 22 Ward Alderman Munoz 22WD
## Schedule and Priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2-3</th>
<th>4-5</th>
<th>ORGANIZATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. EXPAND ACCESS TO PARKS AND OPEN SPACE BY IMPROVING FACILITIES AND CREATING A LARGE NEW PARK.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1 Develop a large new park on the east side of the neighborhood, with connections to residential areas and the canal.</td>
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<td>LVDC, VPC, SAP, 22WD and others</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2 Improve facilities at Piotrowski Park, create connections to the new Little Village High School campus, and explore expansion of green space.</td>
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<td>PP, LVCDC, 22WD</td>
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<td>1.3 Improve campus parks, small parks and play lots throughout the neighborhood.</td>
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<td>LVDC, ADD and others</td>
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<td>1.4 Establish a management entity for the Manuel Perez, Jr., Plaza and continue to enhance the plaza as a center for community activities.</td>
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<td>LVCC, LVCDC</td>
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<td><strong>2. MAKE HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION FOR YOUTH AND ADULTS THE CORNERSTONE OF LITTLE VILLAGE’S FUTURE.</strong></td>
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<td>2.1 Support the small-school culture at the Little Village High School campus.</td>
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<td>LVDC and others</td>
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<td>2.2 Promote the community schools model and support expanded evening and weekend programming throughout Little Village.</td>
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<td>LVDC, RC, EW</td>
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<td>2.3 Create a community schools network.</td>
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<td>LVDC,</td>
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<td>2.4 Create programs to promote college and other post-secondary education.</td>
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<td>LVDC, VPC and others</td>
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<td>2.5 Develop a student-teacher community center and residence.</td>
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<td>ISU, CPS, LVDC and others</td>
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<td>2.6 Broaden local education choices.</td>
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<td>IDPL, ERIE</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3. CREATE A SAFE AND PEACEFUL COMMUNITY THROUGH VIOLENCE PREVENTION, GANG INTERVENTION AND INCREASED RESOURCES FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES.</strong></td>
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<td>3.1 Build and strengthen the Violence Prevention Collaborative as a key vehicle to address community safety issues.</td>
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<td>LVDC (1st year) VPC (thereafter)</td>
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<td>3.2 Promote positive, respectful and productive relationships between police and community members.</td>
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<td>VPC, CPD, CAPS</td>
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<td>3.3 Expand street-level gang intervention to deter local youth from crime and violence.</td>
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<td>VPC</td>
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<td>3.4 Support prevention efforts and establish new programs to address family and domestic violence, gang violence, teen-dating violence, and alcoholism and drug abuse.</td>
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<td>JPHC, CCTC, PLVMH, MIRC</td>
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<td>3.5 Address the needs of juvenile offenders.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>VPC, CPD, JISC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Broaden opportunities for youth to engage in constructive activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>VPC, SAP, IDPL, SER, YMCA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4. Foster Healthier Families by Improving and Expanding Health and Social Services for All Residents, Regardless of Age, Income or Immigration Status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>TIMEFRAME (YEARS)</th>
<th>ORGANIZATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>MIRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>SAH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>PLVMHC, JPHC</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>PLVMHC, JPHC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>LVCDC, SAH, WBDC and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>ERIE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>LVCDC and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>JPHC, VPC and others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Develop the Mexican Immigrant Resource Center (MIRC), which will begin with services for Mexican immigrants and expand into a multi-service youth and family center.
- Develop the St. Anthony Wellness Center.
- Increase affordable, accessible preventive and primary health care.
- Expand comprehensive health and mental health screenings for adults and children.
- Increase the quality of child care and expand options for families by establishing a child-care providers network and center.
- Research the viability of connecting social service providers through information technology systems.
- Create a multi-agency partnership to provide services for senior citizens.
- Plan and implement a community-wide campaign to reduce teen pregnancy in Little Village.

### 5. Improve the Business District and Create New Mixed-Use Developments at 26th and Kostner and Other Sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>TIMEFRAME (YEARS)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>LVCDC, LVCC, 22WD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>LVCC, LVCDC, 22WD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>LVCC, LVCDC, 22WD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>LVCDC and others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Support mixed-use redevelopment at 26th Street and Kostner Avenue.
- Improve the appearance and functioning of established commercial corridors.
- Bolster the community’s image with gateway and corridor treatments.
- Explore opportunities for transit-oriented developments around the new CTA Blue Line stations.

### 6. Attract Sustainable, Environmentally Friendly Industry and Expand Opportunities for Local Workers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>TIMEFRAME (YEARS)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>22WD, LVCDC</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>22WD, LVCDC</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
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<td>22WD, LVCDC</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>22WD, LVCDC</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>IDPL, SER, LVCDC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Establish a Planned Manufacturing District (PMD) in industrial portions of the neighborhood.
- Build corridor identity around a signature industrial activity.
- Establish a dedicated industrial road south of 31st Street.
- Develop streetscape and signage programs.
- Link workforce development to employer needs.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>ORGANIZATIONS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. MAINTAIN THE NEIGHBORHOOD’S ATTRACTIVE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND CREATE NEW HOUSING TO MEET CHANGING NEEDS.</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7.1 Develop housing for seniors.</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>HHDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 Expand programs to support homeowners and renters.</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>LVCDC, MTO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3 Develop new housing and preserve existing housing.</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>LVCDC, 12WD, 22WD and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4 Develop a strategy to address the short-term and long-term housing needs of the homeless in the neighborhood.</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>LVCDC and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. INCREASE ARTS OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES.</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1 Create a Little Village arts collaborative to organize and expand arts, music, and cultural activities.</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>LVCDC, LVCC, LVHS and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2 Open a school-community facility at the Telpochcalli/Maria Saucedo campus.</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>TCEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3 Create new partnerships with city music and art schools.</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>LVCDC and others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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
Jesus Garcia Executive Director
Rebecca Lopez NCP Director
Alicia Gonzalez NCP Organizer
Ken Govas Local Industrial Retention Initiative
Little Village Community Development Corporation
2756 S. Harding Avenue
Chicago, IL 60623-4407
Phone: 773/542-9233
Fax: 773/542-9241
jgarcia@littlevillagecdc.org
www.littlevillagecdc.org

Keri Blackwell Program Officer
LISC/Chicago
1 N. LaSalle Street, 12th Floor
Chicago, IL 60602
312-697-8211
kblackwell@liscnet.org
www.newcommunities.org
www.lisc-chicago.org

Staff and Consultants
LISC/Chicago
Andrew Mooney Senior Program Director
Amanda Carney Director, New Communities Program
Susana Vasquez Deputy Director,
New Communities Program
Keri Blackwell Program Officer
Patricia Barry Scribe Coordinator and Editor
Beatriz Ponce de León Scribe

Camiros Ltd.
Leslie S. Pollock Principal Planner
Richard Wilson Project Planner
Jose Magan Urban Designer
Jing Cui Urban Designer
Dena Hicks Landscape Architect
Denise Lea Planner

Kym Abrams Design, Inc.
Kym Abrams Creative Director
Kelly Komp Design Manager
Andy Eltzroth Designer

Illustration and Photo Credits
Steven Mach illustration, page 16
Richard Wilson, Camiros, Ltd., cover (middle left, middle right), pages 7, 14, 15, 19, 26
Juan Francisco Hernandez, cover (far left, far right), pages 2, 6, 9, 10, 32, 36
Susana Vasquez, pages 12, 24
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www.lisc-chicago.org
www.newcommunities.org