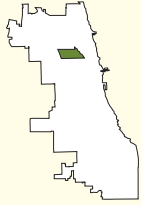


LOGAN SQUARE: A Place to Stay, a Place to Grow

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Logan Square



Logan Square Neighborhood Association

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One of Chicago’s oldest and most successful community organizations, Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) has been at the center of community life since the organization began, in 1962. In at least one respect the association provides a model for the New Communities Program (NCP): LSNA’s day-to-day work is guided by a holistic plan, not unlike an NCP quality-of-life plan, which is updated annually. The eleventh, most recent, holistic plan aims to build and protect “an excellent place to live, work, play, raise children, run a business and worship.”

At the center of LSNA’s work are programs that build a stronger community through stronger schools:

- The Parent Mentor program each year trains more than 100 parents as tutors in seven public schools.
- Community Learning Centers at five schools provide English as a Second Language and GED instruction for adults, along with childcare, tutoring and recreation for children.
- Literacy Ambassadors sends teams of teachers and parents on home visits to counsel parents on reading strategies and to build home-to-school bridges.
- *Nueva Generación*, in partnership with Chicago State University, trains parent mentors to become professional bi-lingual teachers and has become the model for a new statewide initiative.

These programs have opened new worlds of opportunity for hundreds of immigrant mothers, helping many develop the confidence and leadership skills needed to launch careers outside the home. This multi-purpose approach is typical of LSNA’s initiatives, from job training and retention to child care, from engaging youth to organizing seniors, from promoting local artists to securing more affordable housing.

The housing effort is especially crucial, because residential displacement undermines progress elsewhere. LSNA has partnered with Hispanic Housing Development Corporation and Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation to produce hundreds of affordable units for Logan Square. With the help of supportive aldermen, several for-profit developers have been persuaded to set aside affordable units in upscale developments. LSNA is a leader in the citywide Balanced Development Coalition, which seeks to make affordable set-asides a matter of law.

The association succeeds by pitching a big tent for all stakeholders—a tent in which Spanish is spoken along with English. Its 50-person Members Action Council draws from schools, churches, block clubs, community agencies and businesses. Hundreds attend its annual membership Congress, at which issues are debated and voted upon.

A Place to Stay, a Place to Grow

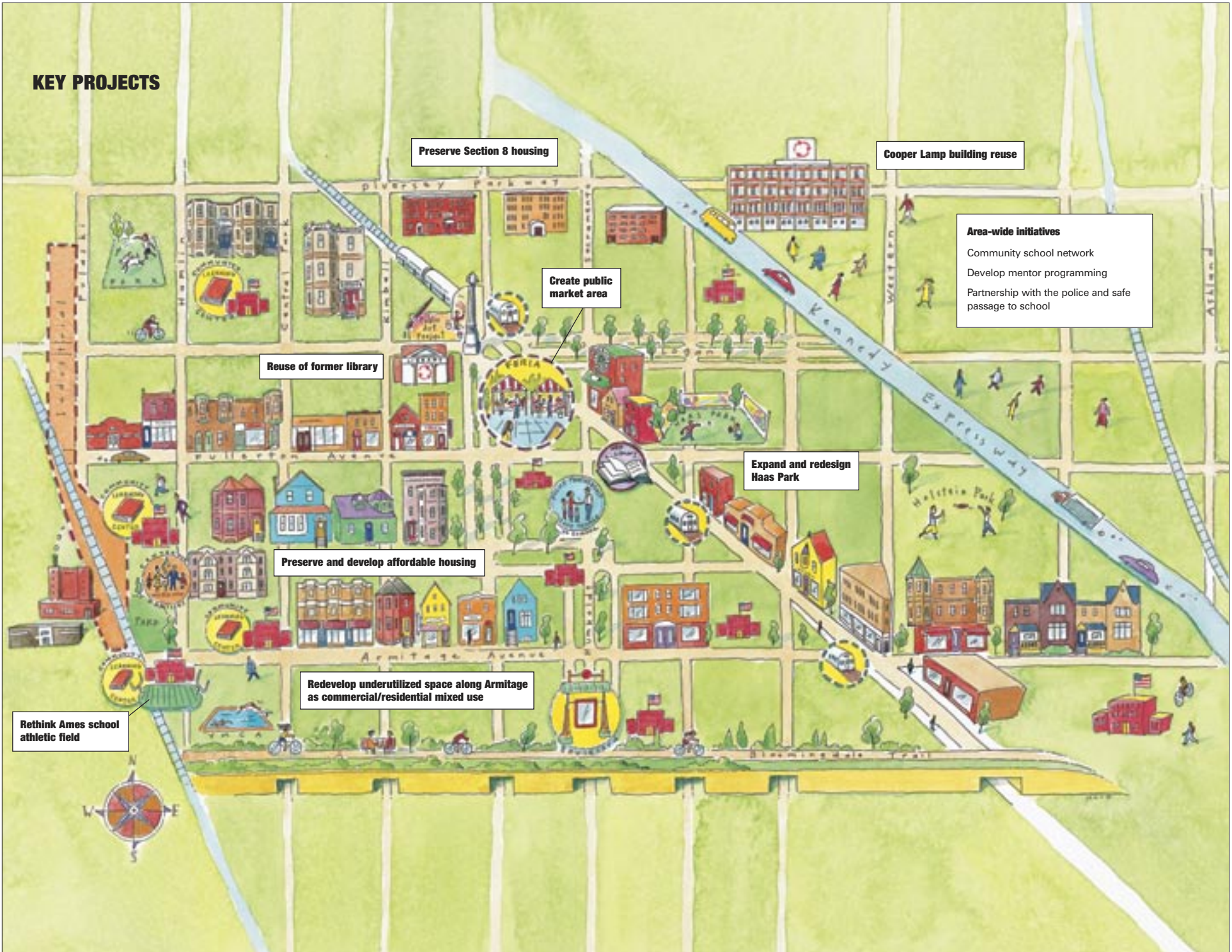


Our community has strong programs to involve parents in school improvement.

Logan Square is a place to stay and to grow. It is, above all, a place to grow healthy families—families secure that their homes are, and will continue to be, decent and affordable; families confident that their children are both physically safe and intellectually challenged in quality schools and pre-schools; families sustained by access to meaningful work at livable wages; families proud of their ethnic and cultural heritage, yet welcoming of the energy and diversity that newcomers bring to the mix.

While Logan Square is a place to grow, ours will be a balanced and holistic growth that fosters true, rooted community for young and old, new immigrants and long-time residents alike.

KEY PROJECTS



Preserve Section 8 housing

Cooper Lamp building reuse

Area-wide initiatives
Community school network
Develop mentor programming
Partnership with the police and safe passage to school

Create public market area

Reuse of former library

Expand and redesign Haas Park

Preserve and develop affordable housing

Redevelop underutilized space along Armitage as commercial/residential mixed use

Rethink Ames school athletic field



Residents Seek Path to a Diverse Future



Elaborate mansions were built along the boulevards starting in the late 1800s.

Logan Square is on the move. But for many working families of this historic North Side neighborhood, the nagging question is whether they, too, must inevitably move. Or might it be possible to harness the mighty-but-mindless market forces moving west from the lakefront's condo belt, and use those forces to weave a new type of community?

If so, what kind of community? This quality-of-life plan envisions one that Chicago has produced all too rarely. It would be both stable and diverse, neither Gold Coast nor barrio—a place where families of all kinds, colors and classes would not simply coexist, but support one another as they pursue their own versions of the American dream.

Such a community would not be that different from historic Logan Square. This is a neighborhood born in the scramble for affordable housing that followed the Great Fire of 1871. Located beyond the city's brick-only fireproof zone, early Logan Square's wooden two- and three-flats were an affordable godsend to displaced German and Scandinavian mill workers. After the city annexed the neighborhood and enhanced it with broad boulevards and public squares, merchants, managers and professionals built dignified greystones and Queen Annes along Kedzie, Logan and Humboldt boulevards. This legacy of diversity, this mix of rich and not-so-rich, of English-speakers and those who speak another tongue, has endured for more than a century. The accents heard along Milwaukee Avenue were first Yiddish, then Polish, and most recently, Spanish. All the while, a diverse yet stable Logan Square has remained one of Chicago's best examples of what an urban neighborhood can be and do.

The next wave may not be so benign. The gentrification of Lincoln Park has jumped the Kennedy Expressway, first colonizing Bucktown, now bidding up real estate and rents as far west as Kedzie Avenue and beyond. The median price of all homes sold last year in Logan Square was more than \$300,000, though Chicago magazine notes that single-family detached homes averaged \$442,766. The last property tax reassessment, in 2003, imposed an average increase of 76 percent. This in a neighborhood where, as of Census 2000, fully one-third of renters devoted too much of their income to rent.

The scale of the consequent displacement, if not the pain, is apparent in census tract 2216, which covers the 20 blocks east of Western Avenue between Armitage and Fullerton. During the 1990s, rents there doubled, home values tripled and 44 new units were added. Yet the tract's population fell by 15 percent, and the number of Latinos and children dropped by half. As gentrification rolls west, the implications are clear.

No plan can stop this tide. Then again, no thoughtful planner would try. Fresh investment can be life's blood to a healthy neighborhood. But there are ways to meld the old and the new, to make the tapestry more interesting rather than tear it apart, or worse, bleach it to monochrome.

This is a plan to preserve diversity in Logan Square. More than 200 community representatives, working through a task force led by the Logan Square Neighborhood Association, were involved in its preparation. Our vision for Logan Square is that it be a place to stay, and a place to grow.

STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS

STRATEGY 1 Preserve and expand affordable housing.

- 1.1** Work to preserve affordable rental housing.
- 1.2** Establish a Logan Square housing center.
- 1.3** Partner with community development organizations to build housing.
- 1.4** Advocate for affordable set-aside units in new and substantially rehabbed market-rate housing developments.
- 1.5** Start limited-equity housing cooperative projects.
- 1.6** Develop supportive housing in Logan Square.
- 1.7** Establish the Logan Square Legacy Project.

STRATEGY 2 Expand and improve parks and recreational programs, and create new community spaces.

- 2.1** Expand and improve Haas Park.
- 2.2** Support construction of the Bloomingdale Bike Trail and Greenway.
- 2.3** Work with park advisory councils to improve park facilities and programming.
- 2.4** Construct small playgrounds and gardens on vacant parcels.
- 2.5** Support creation of a multi-use plaza on Chicago Transit Authority property.
- 2.6** Rethink and reconfigure the Ames School athletic field.
- 2.7** Support renovation of the West Park Commission Comfort Station on Logan Square.

STRATEGY 3 Improve and expand model community school programs, and foster educational opportunities for residents of all ages.

- 3.1** Expand the Parent Mentor program.
- 3.2** Build upon school-based Community Learning Centers.
- 3.3** Enhance the Literacy Ambassadors program.
- 3.4** Develop the Parents as Tutors program.
- 3.5** Expand high school service learning opportunities.
- 3.6** Continue the Grow Our Own Teachers program.
- 3.7** Expand pre-kindergarten and Head Start programs, and develop a new pre-school.
- 3.8** Improve access to computers at local schools, the new public library and other public spaces.
- 3.9** Improve opportunities for high school students to advance to college.
- 3.10** Commission research on school mobility in Logan Square.

STRATEGY 4 Revitalize key commercial corridors by working with elected officials, businesses and property owners.

- 4.1** Pursue school-to-school housing and retail redevelopment on Armitage Avenue.
- 4.2** Study potential zoning changes to encourage mixed-use projects.
- 4.3** Recruit badly needed businesses and services.
- 4.4** Support streetscape and building façade improvements along Fullerton, Armitage and Milwaukee avenues.

STRATEGY 5 Support industrial retention and business development, and provide coordinated job training, job placement and financial education to community residents.

- 5.1** Expand Community Learning Centers to provide coordinated employment services and financial education.
- 5.2** Assist local entrepreneurs with training and business development.
- 5.3** Work with local industrial councils and others to protect manufacturing jobs.

STRATEGY 6 Improve the health, safety and well being of Logan Square residents and families.

- 6.1** Initiate a Healthier People/Healthier Workforce program.
- 6.2** Continue to expand health and nutrition programs.
- 6.3** Expand PrimeCare, a full-service health clinic in Logan Square.
- 6.4** Expand physical fitness and sports programs at schools, facilities and parks.
- 6.5** Improve access to mental health services, addiction counseling and dental care.
- 6.6** Help young people make healthy lifestyle choices through a community-wide effort.
- 6.7** Make Logan Square a safe place to bike and walk.
- 6.8** Form new block clubs to take on health and safety issues.
- 6.9** Increase participation in crime prevention strategies.

STRATEGY 7 Support local arts organizations, promote art activities and expand arts programming and cultural events.

- 7.1** Identify suitable workspace and buildings for lease or purchase by artists and arts organizations.
- 7.2** Expand arts programming in our Community Learning Centers.
- 7.3** Strengthen the Logan Square Arts Council.
- 7.4** Undertake public art projects.
- 7.5** Establish a cultural center to serve as the hub of arts activities.

STRATEGY 8 Build community leadership and enable all residents, young and old, citizen and non-citizen, to participate effectively in decisions affecting their lives.

- 8.1** Strengthen institutional ties, and build new relationships to advance the plan.
- 8.2** Organize to protect and advance the rights of immigrants.
- 8.3** Help immigrants obtain services and certifications needed for citizenship.
- 8.4** Organize young people to have a voice in their future.
- 8.5** Connect young and old, organize seniors and help them get needed services.
- 8.6** Expand voter registration efforts.

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.

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Michael Stanek, cover (middle left, far right)

The New Communities Program (NCP) is supported by a major grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Additional funding has been provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Joyce Foundation, Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, Living Cities, Mayor’s Office of Workforce Development, Nationwide Insurance, Partnership for New Communities, Polk Bros. Foundation and Surdna Foundation.