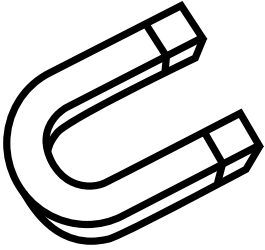


# GETTING IT DONE: NEW TOOLS FOR COMMUNITIES

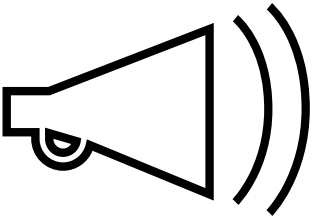
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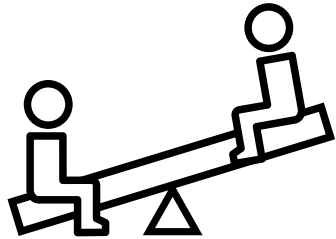
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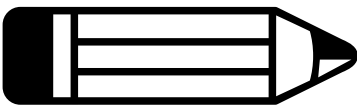
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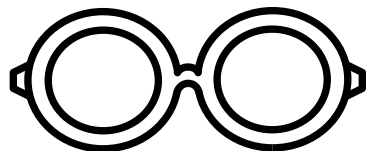
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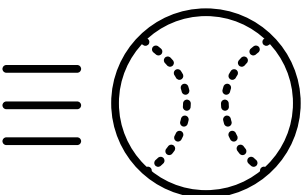
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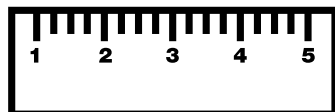
LEADING



PLAYING



EVALUATING



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# HOW DO WE DO WHAT WE DO?

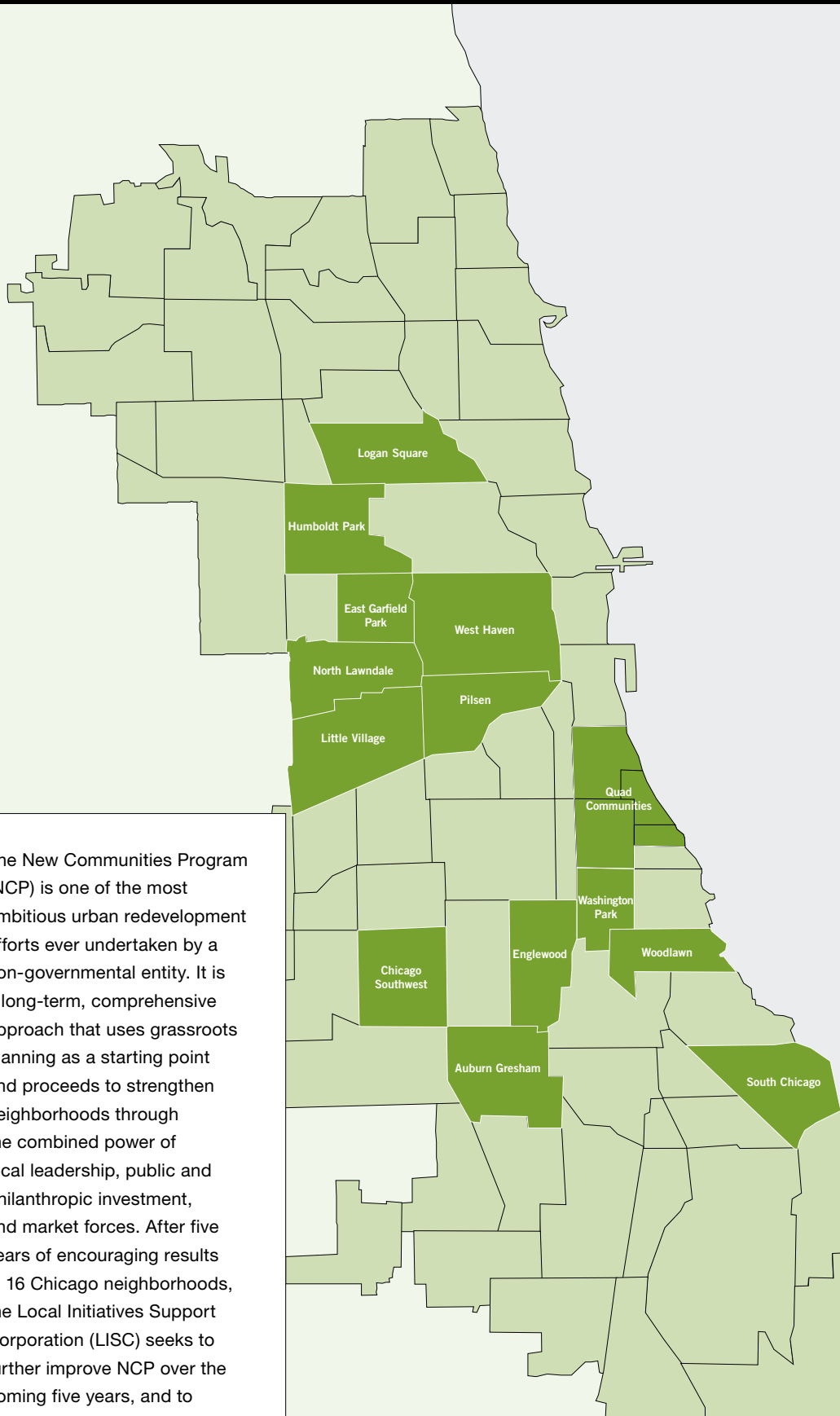
What are our most effective tools? What are we doing in NCP that is different from what we've done before?

Over the past several months, neighborhood leaders have discussed and defined the techniques that have produced the best results in the New Communities Program. Our intention is to sharpen our understanding of these devices—perhaps even add a useful tool or two—at the eight workshops scheduled as part of the NCP Conference.

Obviously, one can't participate in all eight sessions... though you're welcome to try. We do, however, encourage you to review the background stories for each workshop that appear on the following pages.

Reading through the stories you may begin to see how they connect—that good planning depends on good engagement, how leveraging leads to deal making, why good communications leads to good evaluation and even how learning to play can teach you how to lead. And so it goes... If there is one lesson to draw from the NCP toolkit, it is this: connections matter.

# CHICAGO'S NEW COMMUNITIES PROGRAM MAP



The New Communities Program (NCP) is one of the most ambitious urban redevelopment efforts ever undertaken by a non-governmental entity. It is a long-term, comprehensive approach that uses grassroots planning as a starting point and proceeds to strengthen neighborhoods through the combined power of local leadership, public and philanthropic investment, and market forces. After five years of encouraging results in 16 Chicago neighborhoods, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) seeks to further improve NCP over the coming five years, and to inspire and inform similar efforts in neighborhoods across America.

## FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK



As Mayor, and on behalf of the City of Chicago, it is my pleasure to extend my warmest greetings to all those attending the LISC/Chicago New Communities Program (NCP) conference.

As you gather to review five years of solid accomplishment and lay plans for the work ahead, you can take pride in your efforts to make neighborhoods safer and more inviting places to live and raise families. Encouraging the growth of affordable housing and local businesses helps keep Chicago a thriving and vibrant city, and I commend your outstanding achievements in community development.

In partnership with LISC/Chicago, NCP and other nonprofits and philanthropies, the city has engaged neighborhoods and community leaders in a productive

dialogue. This year, with more patrolmen and more security cameras assigned to local police beats; updates to parks, libraries and transportation systems; and our efforts to make Chicago the most environmentally friendly city in the nation, we can continue to effect positive and lasting change in our neighborhoods.

I look forward to continuing to work with you on these important projects and send my best wishes for a productive and informative event.

Sincerely,

Richard M. Daley, Mayor,  
City of Chicago

## MUCH ACHIEVED, MUCH TO GET DONE



Welcome to the 2008 Getting It Done Conference hosted by LISC/Chicago and the New Communities Program.

We gather at a crucial time, not just for NCP—the nation’s largest experiment in comprehensive community development—but for all cities and the neighborhoods that make cities livable.

Resources are limited, and our challenges are many and ever-changing. Domestic entitlements and foreign entanglements now claim federal monies once available for community redevelopment, spurring us to leverage local resources with ever-more-inventive partnerships. Globalization continues to export good-paying jobs, yet also creates new opportunities and, importantly, re-energizes our neighborhoods with hard-working immigrants pursuing the American Dream. Lately, our neighborhoods have been buffeted by an epidemic of predatory lending and mortgage foreclosures—an avoidable tragedy, and one that must not be allowed to reverse the progress we’ve made securing decent housing and financial stability for working families.

All this convinces me, more than ever, that we are on the right track with NCP and its comprehensive, partnership-based approach to community development. Ours is a grassroots strategy tailored to produce more with less. Ours is also a highly flexible

approach, one that enables us to not just adapt to, but take advantage of, the constant changes that seem the hallmark of this new Millennium.

We gather now to review lessons learned and to plan for changes yet to come. But let us be mindful, and proud, of what we have accomplished during the first five years of NCP:

- **ALL 14 OF OUR LEAD LOCAL PARTNERS** across 16 city neighborhoods have established a comprehensive program of neighborhood renewal coordinated on-site by a LISC-funded NCP director and organizer. All have led a grassroots planning process and all have produced a professional-quality neighborhood plan, each with specific strategies and projects, each with a matrix of responsibilities and timetable for completion. All now are embarked on an implementation phase in which hundreds of planned projects—from affordable housing to retail development, from parents-in-the-schools to basketball-on-the-block—are either coming to fruition or making genuine progress.
- **AS FOR MONETARY INVESTMENTS** LISC/Chicago has made 620 NCP grants worth \$15 million and loans worth \$16.4 million. Almost 50 percent of the grants have supported new local projects or cross-community initiatives such as our Centers for Working Families. Direct support to lead agencies was \$6.8

million, while another \$1.2 million has been invested in capacity building among lead agencies and their local partners.

- **OUR FUNDRAISING**, from the beginning, has been generously anchored by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, which has invested more than \$20 million in NCP over these last five years. Other foundations and corporations—about 20 so far, but still counting—also have stepped up with nearly \$10 million in program support. This number does not include the four-year, \$18 million commitment newly made by The Atlantic Philanthropies to bring its community-based Integrated Services in Schools program to five Chicago grade schools, via NCP. Also looking forward, and thanks especially to the leadership of its President Jonathan Fanton, the MacArthur Foundation has renewed its core support of NCP through 2012 with an unprecedented grant of \$26 million.

What’s even more ambitious, perhaps, is the MacArthur Foundation’s decision to invest \$4 million to seed comprehensive development programs in other LISC cities nationwide. I would dare to suggest that this last item—the prospect of re-engineering community development nationally, and indeed, in more neighborhoods here in Chicago—ought to be the central theme of our discussions throughout the conference. As we go about what can only be called the ‘next generation’ of our work in city after city, it is critically important that we get it right and know why we’re doing what we do. Along the way, we need to ask tough questions about

what works, and yes, what doesn’t work; what needs to be improved, and what ought to be left behind.

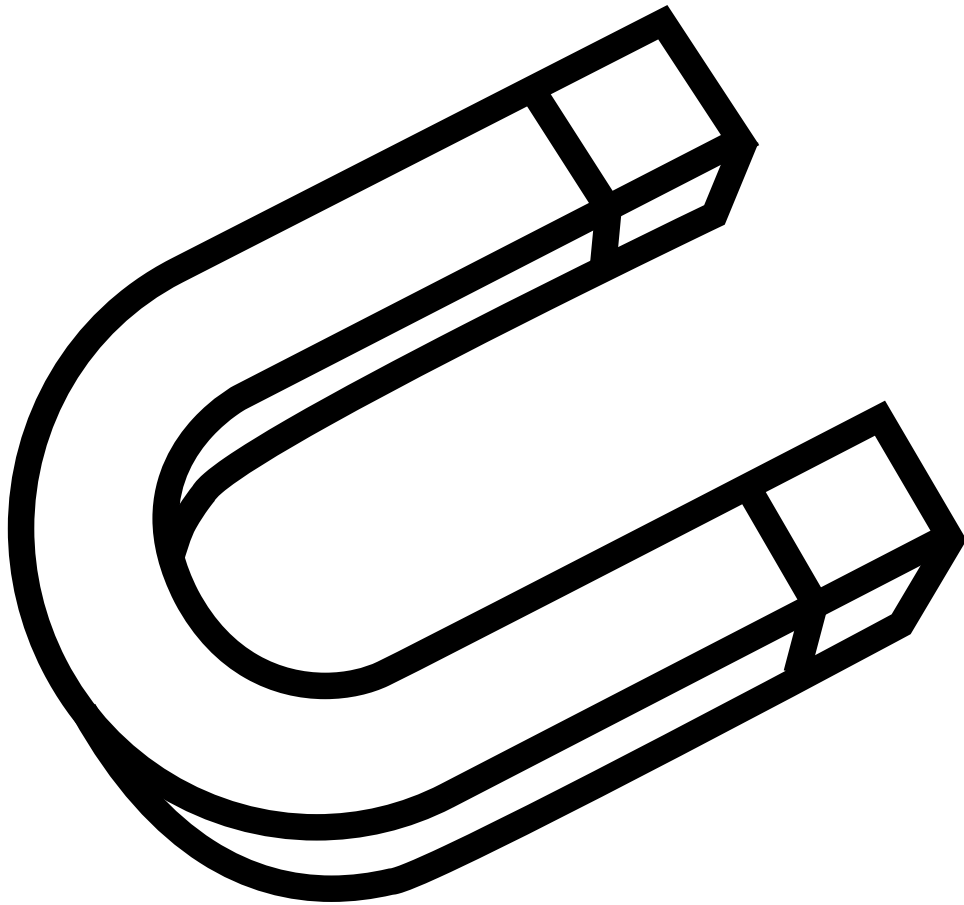
So let’s get under the hood and find some answers. What is the value of having a capable lead agency as local intermediary? What is the central role of organizing and planning as the starting point and roadmap? What is the role of flexible capital, of professional technical assistance, of dedicated NCP staff both in the neighborhoods and at LISC/Chicago? Last but not least, what are the intangibles of neighborhood renewal? Let us explore the art of building trust through personal relationships, of cultivating political clout, of winning “buy-in” from skeptical everyday citizens, of engaging our youth, and even of letting our hair down and having some fun once in a while.

Finally, I would like to extend my personal “Thank you!” to our community partners not just for your thoughtful engagement on these matters, but also for all the hard work you’ve done making your neighborhood a better place to live and to learn, to labor and to love. After all is said and done, it is you, and your tireless effort, that best explains the remarkable success of our New Communities Program.

Sincerely,

Andrew J. Mooney  
Executive Director  
LISC/Chicago

## □ ENGAGEMENT



## ORGANIZING FOR SUCCESS

The work of building a community begins with old-fashioned organizing, sophisticated relationship building and a diverse “big tent” approach to achieve lasting personal commitments to neighborhood action. Only by bringing a wide range of people to the discussion, and by enabling them to shape and own what is being decided, do we build the critical mass of doers and supporters needed to effect change. Leadership comes from below as well as above.

Different constituencies are engaged in different ways. Rallies and public hearings may be good to alert the wider community and spur popular support. But other key supporters, such as an alderman, bank president or block club leader, are better recruited via personal outreach. Hard-to-reach constituencies such as teenagers are more likely to be drawn to a wall mural project, a concert or a car wash. Seniors might be drawn to a special event such as Auburn Gresham’s Senior Blues Breakfast, or through their affiliations with block clubs or tenant associations.

No matter who is recruited or by what method, real engagement is not achieved until each person feels they have a personal stake in the success of the community-building effort.

### LSNA’S COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

It started in the early ’90s when the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) began training parents to serve on the new Local School Councils. At first it was about making the schools better for the kids...and to some extent, it still is. But what has evolved is much

more. LSNA has developed a national model for turning schools into centers of neighborhood life—and for lifting immigrant parents from the shadows of cultural isolation onto the bright stage of community leadership. And it’s a model they are sharing with other NCP communities—from Chicago Southwest to Woodlawn.

“It doesn’t start out looking like organizing,” says Nancy Aardema, LSNA’s executive director. “But once our parents recognize their potential, once they begin seeing themselves as leaders, they begin acting as leaders.”

Today, LSNA has over 120 paid parent-mentors in 8 schools; runs after-school Community Learning Centers in six schools; sends 35 Literacy Ambassador parent-teacher teams on home visits; and has enrolled more than 50 in a collegiate “Grow Your Own Teachers” program leading to state certification.

Gaining acceptance by school teachers and officials was as challenging as recruiting and training Spanish-speaking parents to dive into *terra incognita*. Progressive principals at Funston and Monroe elementary saw early on the potential of bringing in parents as aides and tutors. But others, Aardema remembers, had to be won over “by meeting with them one at a time and carefully building relationships.” At the classroom level, barriers needed to fall so teachers “could start to think of parents as assets rather than problems.” Friday afternoon post-mortems were held for teachers and parents to iron out issues such as lines of authority and allocation of physical space.

The payoff was immense. Isolated moms who once dropped their children off at school and went home to watch *telenovelas* came to understand they had valuable skills that could be used outside the home. “Once, parents were afraid to walk into the schools,” said Maria Alviso, a former parent leader at Monroe School. “Now, they walk in like it’s their house.”

### GREATER SOUTHWEST'S PRE-PLANNING INTERVIEWS

Quality-of-life planning in Chicago Southwest began not with a large public meeting, as in most neighborhoods, but with a carefully targeted 1-on-1 opinion survey.

“We said to ourselves, let’s identify 100 leaders that we know of...but don’t really know,” recalls Jim Capraro, executive director of the Greater Southwest Development Corp (GSDC). “We defined a ‘leader’ as: 1) someone who has followers; and/or 2) by virtue of his or her position—the president of a hospital or a bank, for example, has influence.”

In fall 2003, organizers from GSDC and the Southwest Organizing Project, or SWOP, made appointments with—and visited in *their* space—some 114 people so identified...or identified by

interviewees as “someone you should talk to.” Interviewers used the open-ended SWOT format, as in ‘What, as you see it, are our neighborhood’s Strengths? Weaknesses? Opportunities? Threats?’ They also did what is so very hard for anyone to do in conversation—they just listened.

“We were both learning and engaging,” Capraro says, referring especially to the neighborhood’s African-American, Hispanic and Middle Eastern populations, some of whom were newer to the community. “We didn’t know their leadership. They didn’t know GSDC or SWOP. So our first priority was to build relationships, to build trust.”

The interviews doubled as an effective recruitment tool. More than half of those interviewed, along with 20 to 30 other neighborhood regulars, were invited to the first NCP planning meeting at Holy Cross Hospital. More than 175 people showed—far more than were formally invited—including many who heard about the interviews and wondered what was going on. “It was order-forming,” Capraro says of that first session. “It was emergence.”



## ENGAGEMENT CHECKLIST

- REACH** out to as broad a potential constituency as possible—the “Big Tent.”
- DEVELOP**—and maintain—relationships between and among community stakeholders.
- BUILD** a shared covenant, vision or compact that all can work toward.
- ASSIGN** responsibilities and meet regularly to benchmark and to make needed changes.
- CELEBRATE** every success and reward good performance with opportunities for leadership advancement at every level.

## □ DEAL MAKING



## PARTNERING FOR RESULTS

No one player in NCP has the money or know-how to deliver what the community needs, but when we form partnerships, nothing is impossible. This is about deal making, about forging coalitions whose members bring knowledge and power to the task, who add value whether that value be political, financial or popular support. It's also about tenacity, longevity, persistence and not taking "no" for an answer.

The glue that best bonds coalitions is shared resources...and credit. It is no accident that lead agencies that win the most NCP grants are also those that "pass through" the most funds to their project partners. "With us, it isn't about getting credit," explains one knowing staffer at Bickerdike Redevelopment Corp., a leader in grant approvals. "It's about getting resources."

Then again, sometimes the best partnership decisions are the ones you decide *not* to make. Mutuality is key, as in finding partners willing and able to contribute at least as much as they receive. It's a good idea, too, to "get it in writing" via a signed memorandum-of-understanding (MOU) or, when money is involved, a binding contract.

Partnerships range from formal combinations that undertake large commercial ventures to looser, community-minded coalitions out to provide a needed social service. Here are two examples:

### QCDC'S COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

"Don't be afraid to ask. You never know. They might say 'yes.'"

That cheeky advice from Bernita Johnson-Gabriel, executive director of Quad Communities Development Corporation (QCDC), helps explain how one of Chicago's most blighted retail strips is being repositioned as *the* place to live and shop on the South Side.

Johnson-Gabriel and Ald. Toni Preckwinkle (4th), QCDC's former board chair, have coaxed the "y" word from big-time national developers and skeptical local storeowners, from city planners and prestigious Loop architects, from fellow nonprofits and fickle foundations. Together, their unlikely coalition is systematically remaking the fabled-but-fallen Cottage Grove Avenue between Pershing Road and 51st Street.

To some, it seemed quixotic when LISC/Chicago and QCDC brought in job trainees from CleanSlate, part of The Cara Program underwritten by JP Morgan Chase and others, to sweep sidewalks and bag litter. Or when they engaged high school students from the Little Black Pearl Art & Design Center to "banish the gray" by designing snazzy signage and street furniture that gives "The Grove" its own look.

The pump-priming won the attention of Mahogany Ventures, an Ohio-based developer that took a look at the situation (including a study of retail potential by LISC/MetroEdge) and committed to a 136-unit condo-over-retail project at 47th

and Cottage. Elsewhere along Cottage, more than \$100 million worth of additional residential/retail projects are proposed by similarly impressed developers.

And more magic is in the works: opening in June is The Bronzeville Market, a Sunday outdoor bazaar on the site of demolished CHA high-rises; and a \$12 million grant-and-loan program to help longtime merchants spruce up to the new standard. “Got to be creative,” Johnson-Gabriel urges. “Got to come up with something that’s not on the street... something folks can’t say ‘no’ to.”

### TEAMWORK ENGLEWOOD’S “WEED & SEED”

After two innocent children were killed in separate incidents of stray gunfire in March of 2006, local leaders looked to Teamwork Englewood’s new quality-of-life plan for ways to fight the hopelessness behind the violence. There, they found spot-on strategies to “steer youth away from gangs and into long-term employment” and to “establish a services network for formerly incarcerated individuals and their families.”

Such tasks are easier planned than achieved. But Larry Sachs, grant-writer with the Chicago Police, saw in Englewood’s plan—and in its mix of chronic problems and emerging leadership—a strong case for the U.S. Justice Department’s coveted “Weed & Seed” program.

“We met with LISC, with Teamwork Englewood, with the church pastors,” remembers Sachs. “There were rifts and splits in the community. We saw this as a way to bring people together.” After much bridge-building and split-mending, the Justice Department last

August approved a five-year, \$1 million grant—only the fourth in Illinois and one that stretches the traditional definitions of “weed.” Instead of police sweeps and door-busting drug raids, the Weed & Seed site director at Teamwork Englewood, guided by a 25-member steering committee, will coordinate a mix of re-entry services for ex-offenders. The Safer Foundation will handle case management and job placement. Pastors of Englewood will provide spiritual inspiration along with van transportation to job sites and to state offices where IDs are issued. Beloved Community Family Services will create “safe havens” where ex-offenders can escape the hardships of the street.

As for “seed,” some 25 at-risk students from Harper and Robeson High Schools will be tutored after school by students from the new Kennedy-King City College.

“At first, we wanted to ‘save’ everybody,” says Rev. Rodney Walker, executive director of Teamwork Englewood.

“But after meeting with the two high school principals we decided on a more realistic approach. These are kids with significant economic, environmental and family issues. Just *getting* to school is a challenge. So we’re going to feed them. We’re going to have prizes and awards. We’re going to have trips outside Englewood. We’re going to use the gyms and the science labs at Kennedy-King.”

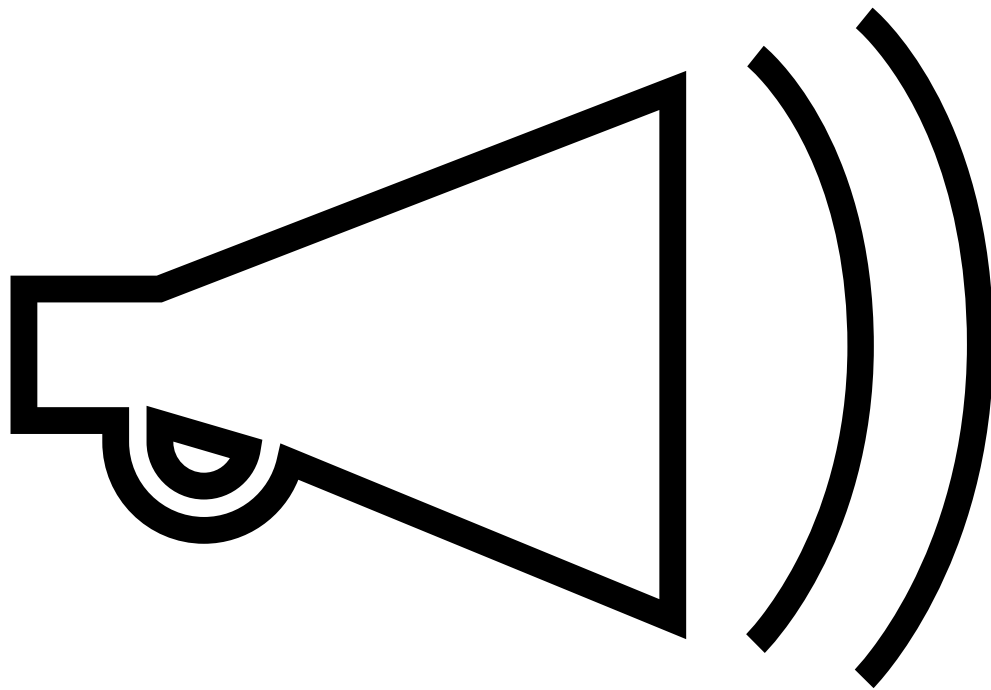
The program involves dozens of partners whose roles and responsibilities are spelled out in a grant narrative that runs 16,000 words. Such complexity is its own teacher, says Sachs. Besides fighting crime, “we’re developing the capacity of community organizations to manage resources.”



## DEAL MAKING CHECKLIST

- MAKE** a list of potential partners. What value can each bring to the project? Any downsides?
- MEET/TALK** with all potential partners. Show respect for their accomplishments and *listen*.
- ENTER** the deal ready to learn about and understand your partners’ needs and wants and be committed to helping them get it.
- DELEGATE** and empower. Don’t micromanage over your partner’s shoulder.
- SPELL** out roles, responsibilities and benchmarks in a *written* memo of understanding.
- QUIETLY** repair operational problems, but loudly celebrate the fruits of success.

# □ COMMUNICATING



## TELLING YOUR STORY FAR AND WIDE

Effective communication, internal and external, is essential to effective community development and a core strength of the NCP model.

Early on, LISC/Chicago engaged the services of community-wise journalists called “scribes” to chronicle the work at every step, including meeting-by-meeting narratives of each neighborhood’s quality-of-life planning process. Their lively accounts helped galvanize and coalesce citizen-planners in a way that dry meeting “minutes” never could.

Besides providing real-time documentation, scribes have produced the central NCP website [www.newcommunities.org](http://www.newcommunities.org), a 26,000-photo bank of digital images, the quarterly *RE:NEW* newsletter and themed publications such as the *Investment Portfolio*, the *Heroes* booklet and these *Toolkit* materials. Most recently, the “scribing” effort has turned to training and equipping our neighborhood partners to tell their own stories with an emphasis on very affordable—and very powerful—digital media.

### AUBURN GRESHAM'S MULTIMEDIA APPROACH

Kimberly Rudd’s start-up business, a fitness center called Curves Auburn Gresham, doesn’t have enough cash flow, yet, to build its own website or pay a web host. So she jumped at the offer from the Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation (GADC) to include Curves in the “Local Businesses” directory of its website: [www.gagdc.org](http://www.gagdc.org)

“It’s insanely valuable,” says Rudd. “Ours is a word-of-mouth business, but it really helps to have that validation, that credibility, of being on the web.” Not to mention an interactive Google Map direction-finder to her gym on Racine Avenue, full description and contact information with hours of operation, and even a two-minute audio slideshow about Curves’ “Morning Power Hour.”

“What we’re trying to do,” says Carlos Nelson, GADC executive director, “is narrow the digital divide, have a presence on the other side and help folks across the bridge.”

Like other NCP groups that have built or upgraded sites, GADC worked with Webitects, a digital design firm retained by LISC. Staffers also worked with the Community Media Workshop on reporting and writing skills, and learned to produce and upload audio/video shows at a series of LISC-organized workshops.

“I got into the habit of taking my camera wherever I go,” says NCP Organizer Ernest Sanders, a newbie webmaster and video producer. “We keep the words to a minimum and say it with pictures.”

But the internet doesn’t reach everyone in Auburn Gresham, so GADC gets its messages across in many ways. To promote the annual 79th Street Renaissance Festival, they bought display ads on the sides of CTA buses. To promote free income tax prep, they bought placards inside the buses and placed free public service announcements on CAN-TV Ch. 19. There’s also *The Vision* newsletter that circulates 2,500 print copies and can

be viewed online by the website's 1,250 unique visitors each month.

Carlos Nelson advises against forsaking the old-fashioned methods in search of web “hits” or “page views.” Their old reliables still include information-packed “Friday folders” that kids bring home from school (“Our principals are our secret weapons”) and face-to-face encounters at church, ward and CAPS meetings. But to get it out there 24/7, there's nothing like the web.

### **THE SCRIBE: AN EVOLVING APPROACH TO COMMUNITY JOURNALISM**

It began back in 2001, during NCP's pilot phase, called NCI. The citizen-planners of Pilsen and Southeast Chicago were underwhelmed by early drafts of quality-of-life plans written by LISC-hired planning consultants. Bullet points and stiff “planner-ese” didn't capture the commitment or enthusiasm of ordinary folks talking about where they live. It wasn't their voice.

So Patrick Barry, a neighborhood-savvy Chicago journalist, was asked by LISC to cover subsequent planning sessions in West Haven and to “report out” what was said and why. Barry's animated narratives—crackling with plain-spoken quotes (“We shouldn't have to send our kids across the city to find a good school!”) and straightforward explanations—won a resounding “That's it!” from the citizen-planners...and formed the core material for the final quality-of-life plan.

When NCI scaled up to NCP, more freelance journalists—dubbed “scribes”—were brought aboard to cover, in Barry-fashion, the planning process across 10 neighborhoods. They helped write those plans and began writing newsy pieces for NCP's *RE:NEW* newsletter, for the newcommunities.org website and for themed publications such as the *Heroes* booklet and the *Portfolio* of investable projects. LISC also engaged professional photographers to illustrate the stories and to stock a digital image bank that is widely shared with the communities and partners.

NCP journalists still do this core documentation, but the thrust has turned to helping neighborhoods tell their own stories. And why not? The same digital revolution that threatens mass media like metro newspapers now enables neighborhood groups to reach wider audiences than ever before. LISC is helping its partners create or upgrade their web presence, moving beyond static “Here we are” formats to become true community portals chocked with local news, event calendars, directories of local businesses and services, and evocative audio/visual storytelling.

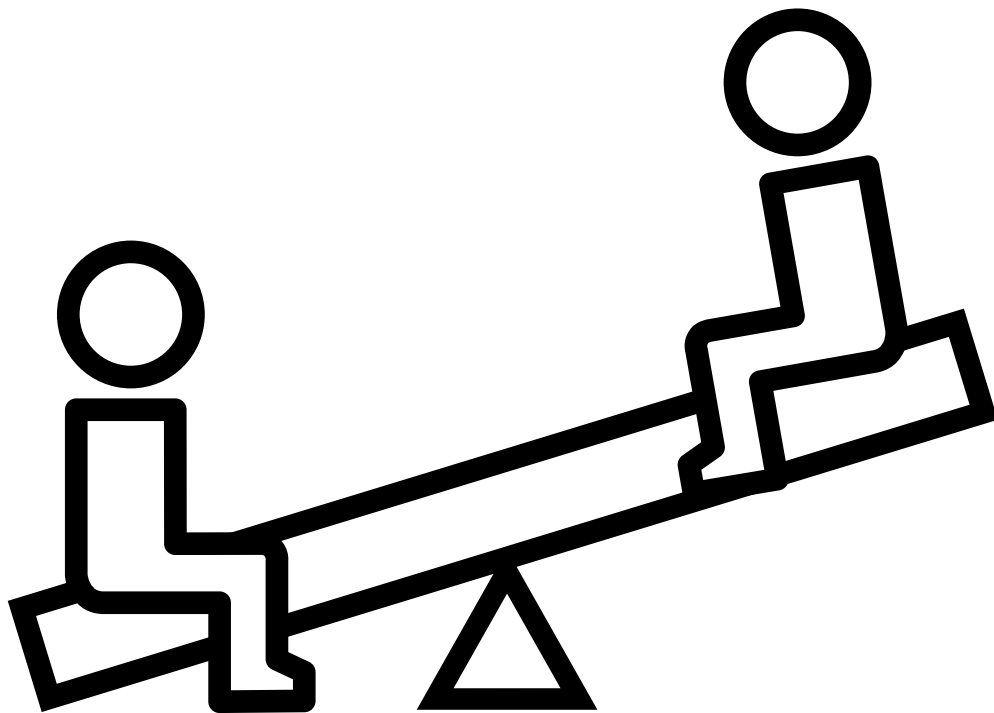
There are challenges, beginning with the need for staffing, technical training and editorial skills. But NCP is proving that home-grown journalism has the power to both document and advance the work of community development. Turns out every neighborhood can use a scribe or two.



## **COMMUNICATING CHECKLIST**

- DEVELOP** a communications plan that identifies key audiences and ways to reach them—through print, the web and old-fashioned word-of-mouth.
- ESTABLISH** a “tone” that's not boring but communicates credibility and commitment.
- INVEST** adequately in communications gear, space, staffing and training.
- GET** expert help. Even the pros are struggling to master all the new tools.

## □ LEVERAGING



## ATTRACTING RESOURCES TO BUILD COMMUNITIES

The idea is to be a catalyst, not a banker. The method is to invest early in good ideas—ideas that attract partners and investors so the effort grows to meaningful scale.

On projects like the Lorington Apartments in Logan Square, an early LISC/NCP investment of \$50,000 to The Community Builders, Inc. is leveraging public and private investment of \$10 million to preserve affordable housing. An even greater ratio will be achieved in Quad Communities, where modest pre-development grants and loans are leveraging an \$81 million mixed-use development at 47th Street and Cottage Grove by Mahogany Ventures. In both cases, the NCP affiliate carefully studied the situation, identified potential partners and provided a stability that reassured new recruits.

But strategic leveraging is not limited to big-dollar real estate deals. NCP uses similar techniques to multiply its impact in health services, educational support, job placement and many other building blocks of healthy communities.

### NEAR WEST SIDE'S HOME VISITORS PROGRAM

Rosemary Pigram, a child of the Henry Horner Homes public housing complex, used to ditch high school and indulge in all manner of “negative stuff.” Now she’s a dean’s list freshman at Northern Illinois University (NIU), her sights set on a career in business management.

Like so many coming out of Horner Homes, the 19-year-old was on the road to nowhere when she turned to the Near

West Side Community Development Corp. and one of the many services tied into its Home Visitors Program. She was about to drop out when she sought help finding a job from the Center for West Haven Families, one of the NCP-supported Centers for Working Families. They helped her transfer to Austin Career Academy, get a diploma, and, after some job prep, a part-time job with a computer retailer. Her strong performance there helped win admission to the CHANCE financial aid and learning support program at NIU in DeKalb.

“We see a lot of families struggling with employment, with a lack of skills, with negative social behaviors,” says Vorrícia Harvey, director of Near West’s Home Visitors Program and Family Center. “But with the right kind of help, we also see success after success.”

Under the leadership of Executive Director Earnest Gates, Near West has parlayed start-up grants from NCP and others—notably the Partnership for New Communities—into a citywide model for helping poor families make the transition from public housing high-rises to new, mixed-income developments. They’ve found that opportunity tends to benefit those prepared to take advantage. Home Visitors began in the late ’90s as an emergency response to a lack of preparedness. CHA families needed help with housekeeping skills, getting along with upscale neighbors, budgeting for unfamiliar expenses like utility bills and, most of all, finding employment.

So effective is Home Visitors that the city’s Department of Human Services

appointed Near West the official Service Connector for families leaving Horner. City funds, in turn, enabled Near West to add staff, to partner with TASC addiction services, and to augment its Families Center with Harborquest job skills training and the proven job-placement services of Project Match. More than 600 individuals have been prepared, like Rosemary Pigram, to move on to a brighter future.

### **THE GREATER HUMBOLDT PARK COMMUNITY OF WELLNESS**

The health surveys told a grim story. Nearly half the children of Humboldt Park were clinically obese, yet only one parent in 10 was aware of a problem. One in seven adults reported being diagnosed with diabetes, roughly double the national average. The proportion of children screening positive for asthma was a city-worst 28 percent.

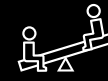
These and other findings by the Sinai Urban Health Institute stirred deep concern and soul-searching discussions among community leaders. In 2003–04, Ald. Billy Ocasio (28th) convened City Council committee hearings and community forums were led by The Puerto Rican Agenda, the Humboldt Park Empowerment Partnership and Bickerdike Redevelopment Corp. the local NCP lead.

“Instead of charging off in different directions,” says Miguel Palacio, associate director of Association House, “we decided to work together under one umbrella.” From this consensus-building—and with the help of a \$35,000 NCP grant—was born the Greater Humboldt Park Community of Wellness.

More than 30 organizations and healthcare providers have rallied to the cause, and significant additional investments have been made by the Otho S.A. Sprague Memorial Institute, the Chicago Community Trust and others. There is a steering committee and eight task forces whose missions are to educate, coordinate, advocate and intervene on their respective issues, from obesity to HIV, from oral health to school health services.

The task force on health careers, for instance, has a Pipeline program through which high school students are exposed to, and connected with, career opportunities. One recent Wells High School graduate, Maria Ramirez, was inspired by Pipeline field trips to local hospitals and helped by Saturday tutorials in reading and calculus. Now she’s interning with the wellness project and taking courses at Wright Junior College with the goal of becoming a certified nursing assistant.

“Too many of my people are afraid of doctors,” said Ramirez, whose Mexican parents speak little English. “Someone needs to explain things—that we don’t want you to be skinny, just active.”



## **LEVERAGING CHECKLIST**

- DON'T** go it alone. Once you’ve researched a problem, find like-minded allies to solve it.
- CREATE** project stability that reassures and attracts others...and their allies and funders.
- TAKE** advantage of the skills of others. Don’t duplicate their work...put them to work.
- BE** entrepreneurial about funding. Strive to become a contractor, not just a grantee.

## □ PLANNING



## COMING TOGETHER TO MAKE SOMETHING HAPPEN

Some benefits of planning are obvious. The NCP quality-of-life process puts at the disposal of each neighborhood's citizen-planners a professional team of certified planners, writer-scribes, graphic designers and other resources worth well over \$100,000. Planning helps focus the mind on current realities and future possibilities. And if the finished product assigns responsibilities and schedules, as NCP plans do, plans have a good chance of becoming reality.

But none of these is the main reason we plan. In neighborhood after neighborhood, NCP has shown that planning has a unique power to bring people and groups together, and to get them talking about the things that matter. It's a chance for *everyone* to voice their fears and hopes—not like slogans shouted at a rally, but in a thoughtful, information-rich environment where school principals and police commanders can share insights with block club leaders and just plain folks.

Planning also has the power to convince people—and organizations—to set aside past differences. There were holdouts here and there, but in the past five years nearly every NCP neighborhood has seen groups and constituencies once at odds come to agreement around the planning table.

### THE PILSEN PLANNING COMMITTEE

Carmen Velásquez, the feisty director of Pilsen's Alivio Medical Center, may have said it best: "None of us can do anything positive for the neighborhood without communication and respect."

"Us" she explains, includes the half-dozen Pilsen community groups that had jostled with one another through much of the '90s, posturing and parrying over the explosive matters of turf and gentrification. It was hard for outsiders to keep track. Which group was opposing new investment to renew the neighborhood's tired, pre-Fire housing stock? Which was supposedly "selling out" to developers or to City Hall? The charges and counter-charges never stopped.

Things got a little better after The Resurrection Project (TRP), with its solid record as a developer of affordable housing, was chosen as lead agency for the New Communities Initiative, the pilot phase of NCP. Several parishes, the Pilsen YMCA, the Spanish Language & Cultural Center and *Mujeres Latinas en Acción* helped finish up a plan in the spring of 2000. But other groups were only marginally involved and, although TRP pushed ahead on housing, progress in other areas lagged.

The second time around was different. This time, having worked with Ald. Danny Solis (25th) on community review of proposals for new condo developments, the factions coalesced into a Pilsen Planning Committee and, together, tackled a full-scale NCP quality-of-life plan. "We said let's do something different this time," recalls TRP's Álvaro R. Obregón of the 17-member coalition. "Planning became the venue to bring people together."

Published in early 2007, the 26-page "*Pilsen: A Center of Mexican Life*" strikes a balance between seeking new

investment, and preserving affordability and cultural integrity. “It was never about keeping new people out of Pilsen,” explained Teresa Fraga, who brought the once-estranged Pilsen Neighbors Community Council to the table. “It’s about keeping people in Pilsen.”

### PLANNING IN A TIME OF TRANSITION

It doesn’t always go smoothly. NCP neighborhood groups have weathered a variety of crises, big and small, as they pushed ahead with quality-of-life planning. Key staffers moved on; personalities clashed; a few early partners lost interest...or walked out in a huff. By and large, however, all the lead agencies persevered, held their coalitions together and built consensus over final versions endorsed by hundreds of participants.

One example was the process in South Chicago, where internal troubles at the original lead agency caused planning to be handed over, mid-stream, to another group for completion.

“It was very helpful that we were, from the beginning, part of the planning process,” said Angela Hurlock, executive director of Claretian Associates, the new NCP lead agency for South Chicago.

“But there’s a difference between participating and actually having to get it done. You quickly see how all the moving pieces have to come together.”

And come together they did, thanks to some adroit personnel shifts. Claretian outreach specialist Graciela Robledo took up the role of NCP organizer. And Jacqueline Samuel, who had been working on a companion Building Community through the Arts plan for the neighborhood, took over as Claretian’s NCP director. Camiros planner Eileen Figel and scribe Beatriz Ponce de Leon also helped smooth the transition.

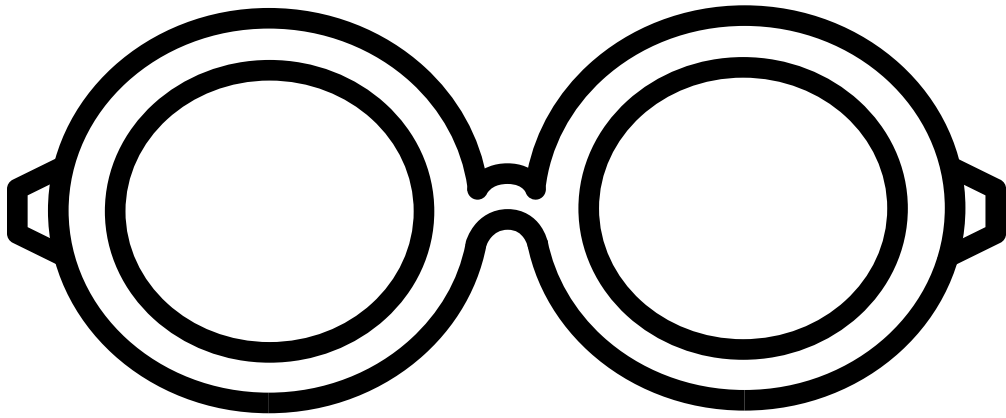
One thing she learned, says Hurlock, is that Claretians had to find its own style, not just borrow methods that work elsewhere. “Your shoes don’t always fit in my closet,” observes Hurlock. “Every neighborhood and every organization is different. Some methods don’t translate.”

What does translate is the power of a good plan to transform a neighborhood over time...even as personnel and organizations come and go.

## PLANNING CHECKLIST

- USE** grassroots organizing and planning to bring disparate forces together, then continue building up relationships and political support to keep them going.
- DON'T** stint on preparation or attention to detail. Accurate maps, data sets and on-point presentations help focus discussion and discourage pointless debate.
- ASSIGN** and involve sufficient talent so the process will go on despite untimely turnover or defections.
- IT'S OKAY**, even necessary, that different neighborhoods and organizations do things differently. But all neighborhoods should strive for a big, comprehensive vision.
- “DOING** while planning” is often the best way to show partners that this time it’s about getting it done. Invest in small visible projects and get public commitments to future projects while planning is underway.

## □ LEADING



## TAKING YOUR ORGANIZATION TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Dynamic leadership doesn't just happen. It has to be nurtured, cultivated and rewarded. Effective organizations are mission-driven, always looking for results on the street...not just another year of rote operation and internal expansion.

If there's a secret to effectiveness, NCP experience shows it may be an organization's ability to hire, develop and promote talented people. Ideally, the newest administrative assistant might, in time, develop into a program manager or even an executive director. This is about "building the bench" through skillful recruiting and continual career development. There is a pipeline within effective organizations that begins with internships for students or the less-skilled, ascends through the ranks, and ends with succession planning for key leaders. Boards of directors also can play a role in finding talent and mentoring senior staff.

Sure, veteran leaders in any organization can probably function independently, advises one experienced NCP leader, but the key to developing younger staff is to always "take someone with you."

### **BICKERDIKE REDEVELOPMENT CORP. : A STUDY IN EFFECTIVENESS**

Back in 1999, Dena Al-Khatib was not your typical new hire, what with her master's degree in urban planning and some prior organizing experience at Near West Side CDC. But over the next seven years at Bickerdike, first helping develop multi-unit housing, then as NCP manager, Al-Khatib grew her skill set and managerial ability to the point that, last year, she was chosen to be executive

director of the citywide Chicago Community Land Trust.

"Bickerdike has a strong focus on mission," says Al-Khatib. "But it's also a flexible, family-friendly place. It's a place people want to stay, where they promote from within as much as possible. The director of human resources started as a receptionist. They help you grow."

Her NCP work? "Invaluable," she remembers. "At first I was over-eager to get things done. Sometimes I said the wrong things to people. With NCP you have to be a little more diplomatic, to understand where other people are coming from." NCP also taught her how to manage committee structures, she said, and how to "report" back, both to LISC and to the community.

Bickerdike's nurturing ways don't, however, get in the way of business. "They're as tough on themselves as they are on everyone else," says Susana Vasquez, LISC's NCP director. It's no accident that by the end of Year 5, Bickerdike had brought in more NCP grants and loans than any lead agency. Or that most of the money was passed through to the group's partners.

They *could* go it alone—this organization has developed, and now manages, about a thousand units of housing, many built by its subsidiary construction company. But in community development work, as in staff development, it pays "to take someone with you."

### WEST HUMBOLDT: THE LITTLE LAND TRUST THAT COULD

Bill Howard didn't know much about community land trusts, but with all the vacant lots in West Humboldt Park, not to mention all the renters who wanted to own, he figured his organization ought to learn. So with help from Bickerdike and LISC/NCP, the executive director of the West Humboldt Park Family & Community Development Council proceeded to research, design and establish the aptly titled "First Community Land Trust of Chicago."

The idea is to secure some of West Humboldt's many city-owned lots, and, with a combination of government and philanthropic subsidies, produce houses worth more than \$200,000 that can be sold to limited-income families for as little as \$90,000. It's more complicated, of course. For one thing, lifelong renters with marginal job histories need to be schooled in the ways and means of homeownership, beginning with how to save up a \$2,500 down payment.

"Bickerdike played an important role helping us understand the nuances of

development," Howard recalls of the start-up days. It helped that the land trust became a key strategy of Humboldt Park's quality-of-life plan and that LISC/NCP grants provided technical assistance and enabled Howard to visit land trusts elsewhere. What emerged is a multi-partner setup that develops homeowners as much as homes—a setup involving the Spanish Coalition for Housing, the University of Chicago's Mandel Legal Aid Clinic, the city, HUD, Illinois Housing Development Authority and Bethel New Life. The latter group helps applicants save up those down-payments using tax-advantaged Individual Development Accounts, or IDAs.

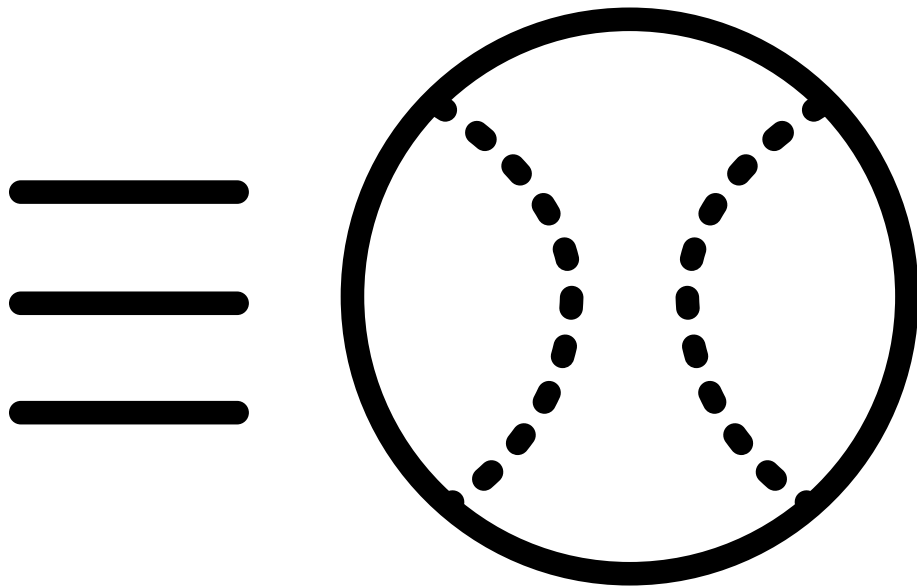
Work is proceeding on the first 10 homes and eight qualified buyers are standing by, having agreed that, when and if they sell, most of the equity increase will stay with the land trust to preserve affordability for the next owner. It's a tribute to Howard, to Bickerdike and to NCP that many of the program's features have been adopted by the citywide land trust launched by Mayor Richard M. Daley in early 2006.



## LEADING CHECKLIST

- EFFECTIVE** organizations are “mission driven” toward results, not going through the motions.
- GETTING** results requires talented staff dedicated to both mission and organization.
- STAFF** development ought to be part of everything you undertake.
- “TAKE** someone with you.” The younger the better. The more the better.
- BEING** a lead organization does not always mean you take the lead—mentor other groups to help them get *their* projects done.

# □ PLAYING



## THE ROLE OF THE ARTS, ATHLETICS AND...FUN!

Nothing builds enthusiasm and community spirit like having fun together. It's not as pricey as housing development or as serious as employment training, but a well-planned bit of fun has the power to change attitudes about community, spark commitment and sometimes transform lives.

Special events like Quad Communities' "Groovin' on the Grove," East Garfield Park's "Unity Fest" and Washington Park's "Block Club Festival" give residents a sense of community ownership, involvement and progress. That's essential because much of what we do, such as closing a real estate deal or conducting a marketing study, though necessary, has little immediate impact on residents. But a wall mural project? Or a sidewalk tree-planting party? Or a neighborhood health fair? They can instantly galvanize and involve.

The NCP experience reaffirms that fun events and programs are especially effective in reaching out to children and teenagers. Many youngsters couldn't care less about quality-of-life planning or commercial redevelopment. But give them a chance to strut their stuff in a basketball tournament, or on a blank wall with acrylic paint, or on a concert stage...well, the results can be amazing.

### LITTLE VILLAGE CDC'S B-BALL ON THE BLOCK

"Get the kids off the street? No. I say: Let's get the kids on the street." That piece of unconventional wisdom, from Pilsen's Álvaro R. Obregón, gets at the thinking behind "Hoops in the Hood," an initiative sponsored by NCP and the

Chicago Bulls. Safe and inviting streets are too important to be surrendered to gang-bangers and drug thugs, Obregón explains. So why not take them back with a fun, organized activity that shows that decent families and their kids aren't about to give up their community to gangs?

"There's something very powerful about a community using public space for a public purpose," says Rob Castaneda, who co-directed "B-Ball on the Block"—the Little Village version of Hoops. Late on Friday afternoons, uniformed teams of kids 8 to 18, along with coaches and officials, converge on a pre-selected block, close the street to traffic, roll in two sets of backboards, and, under the approving eyes of beat cops and sponsoring adults, play some pretty competitive basketball. There's food, too, and a companion arts-and-crafts mini-festival.

Early on, a few punks cruised by, shouted their shouts and flashed their signs, but when B-Ball organizers didn't flinch, they slunk away. Even during inter-league, when African-American teams visited from North Lawndale, there were zero incidents and a lot more smiles and handshakes than dirty looks. Swearing was a technical foul.

Four neighborhoods competed for the Hoops championship in 2007 and created such a buzz that 11 communities got together over the winter to discuss the league's expansion. To help make that happen, NCP has developed a Hoops how-to kit, and several neighborhoods are looking at which blocks to take over for basketball nights.

### MUSIC IS MAGIC IN WOODLAWN

Breyanna's mother, Shirley Roberson, says her daughter was "a little hyper" in pre-school but, starting last year, something "balanced her out." She thinks it's the violin.

Breyanna is one of 38 four- to six-year-olds who come with their parents on Saturdays to Andrew Carnegie School in the Woodlawn neighborhood. There she learns about fretting, bowing and the many wonders of classical string musicianship. The Suzuki-style program is run by MAGIC (Metropolitan Area Group for Igniting Civilization, Inc.) with musical instruction provided by members of the Music Institute of Chicago. Financial and logistical support is provided by LISC/NCP, the University of Chicago and Bishop Arthur Brazier's Apostolic Church of God.

There's a lot more going on at Carnegie than teaching kids to play violins, violas and cellos, says Joe Strickland, founder of MAGIC. Besides the music, youngsters

learn the habits of goal-setting, concentration and perseverance. After 20 Saturday sessions, there's a full-dress concert to put icing on the cake. The parents, meanwhile, experience first hand what their child is capable of under supportive conditions...and learn how to create those same conditions at home.

Indeed, Saturdays at Carnegie School have evolved into a support circle for parents, trading experiences and parenting tips over coffee and donuts supplied by the program. "It has become a forum for them to share best practices," says Bryan Echols, MAGIC's executive director. "We're building a network, sharing information about car pools, daycare...you name it."

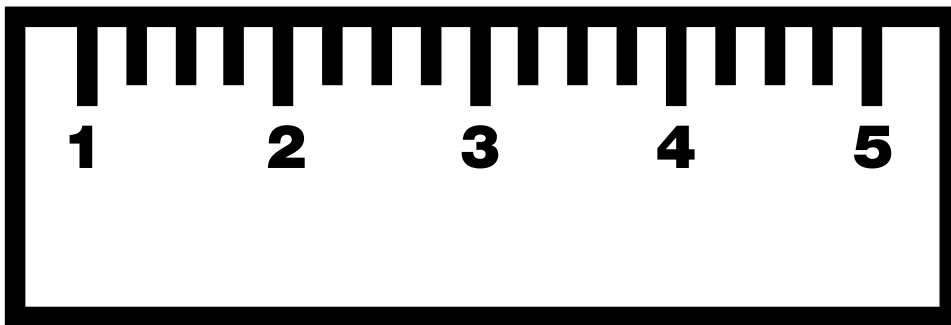
Strickland is seeking funds to increase enrollment in Woodlawn—there are 25 to 30 families on a waiting list—and eventually, to expand the String Instrument Program across the South Side.



## PLAYING CHECKLIST

- MAKE** a list of "fun" yet inexpensive activities and events that could build community spirit and a sense of mutual ownership.
- LOOK** for activities with a "fun-plus" bonus, such as a sports tournament that also makes streets safer, or music lessons for kids that also improve parenting skills.
- SEEK** sponsorships for sports/arts/celebratory events from non-traditional funders such as pro-sports franchises, downtown art institutions or local businesses and clubs.
- INVOLVE**, don't just entertain. Use fun events to identify and engage community leaders.

# □ EVALUATING



## THE BIG “SO WHAT?”

Is the New Communities Program really accomplishing anything? There’s plenty of anecdotal evidence we are. Check out our websites or the *RE:NEW* newsletter and it’s hard not to be impressed by the energy and scope of what’s happening across 16 neighborhoods.

But is all this activity having an appreciable impact beyond NCP’s circle of partner agencies, pass-through grantees, staffs and perennial supporters? That’s the test, because the millions invested by the MacArthur Foundation and other donors, along with the good efforts of so many NCP players, were never intended to “move the needle” all by themselves. The idea is to catalyze—to build confidence in our neighborhoods that spurs investment of new capital, both financial and human.

Trouble is, those ripple effects are hard, if not impossible, to measure. Other forces in our neighborhoods—the recent sub-prime foreclosure mess being an example—can undermine our efforts. We might develop a dozen affordable housing units on one block only to see twice that number foreclosed elsewhere in the neighborhood. Sometimes progress means things “would’a been worse” without us.

Still, with so many technical advances in data collection, aggregation and evaluation, we are now more able than ever before to account for extraneous forces and to begin, however modestly, to gauge our success. At minimum, these new tools can help tell us which strategies and techniques work better than others.

Another thing we are learning is the absolute need for a second, “real time,” system of measuring and evaluating. There must be periodic journalistic reporting of results, as well as specific criteria for grant renewal ... or termination. NCP’s downtown management also has its own quasi-independent internal critiquing process, using its scribe team to ask tough questions that serve as discussion points at regular meetings between LISC and MacArthur.

We may never solve the “but for” riddle, but our development of leading-edge measurement and evaluation techniques promises to inform future community development everywhere.

### **MDRC: HOW THE EVALUATION PROS MEASURE WHAT WE DO**

Starting in 2007, following 18 months of fine-tuning their plan, a veteran team of urban evaluators began poring over NCP documents, interviewing participants and crunching “baseline” data about our neighborhoods. The result will be one of the most comprehensive studies ever made of the methods and performance of a private, nonprofit community initiative.

Leading the effort is MDRC, a New York-based nonprofit that helped pioneer the study of socio-economic interventions and community change. Assisting are two local research heavyweights: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, which is a partner with MDRC in conducting in-depth field observations and interviews; and the Metro Chicago Information Center. MCIC has built elaborate multi-scale

models—from income and employment data to school test scores and business starts—to gauge the trajectory of our neighborhoods during the NCP years.

MDRC's 80-page evaluation plan was prepared against the backdrop of a larger discussion among national experts, at meetings here and in Cambridge, Mass., convened by the MacArthur Foundation. The central question: How can we best evaluate the methods and outcomes of community work?

Craig Howard, who left MDRC last year to become director of community and economic development at MacArthur, calls his recent change in perspective “sobering.”

“We can look at project-level results (affordable units preserved, job placements made, etc.), and we can look at how communities change over time (such as in terms of overall income diversity),” explains Howard. “The challenge facing the evaluators is how to connect the two, given that many forces, and not just NCP, will likely affect neighborhood change. The evaluators are not there yet, but this will be the principal measurement challenge.”

And yet, he continued: “NCP is one of the best conceived, best thought out, and hopefully, best implemented efforts ever to address community change. It deserves an equally creative research and evaluation agenda. The question we need to ask isn't just ‘Is it working?’ but ‘How?’”

### **VERSUS WHAT? MEASURING CHANGE IN NORTH LAWDALE AND WASHINGTON PARK**

What, exactly, constitutes progress in a neighborhood like Washington Park—a

community with more than 1,400 vacant lots, with less than a third of the population it had 40 years ago, with over half of those still there living below the poverty level?

Or North Lawndale, a neighborhood the *Chicago Tribune* profiled in a controversial 1985 series as the epitome of America's “permanent underclass.” It's still one of Chicago's poorest places.

How does one fairly compare, moreover, baby-step progress in such places to dramatic strides taken by Quad Communities, with its massive transformation of public housing to mixed-income neighborhoods; or Logan Square, where rapid gentrification, not poverty, is the main issue?

For Keri Blackwell, LISC's program officer for North Lawndale, the signs of significant change are not hard to spot... if you know where to look. “Success will be putting in place an infrastructure that gets North Lawndale ready for further development,” Blackwell says. She cites a plan to redesign the Ogden Avenue commercial strip, progress on Powerhouse High School at Homan Square, and solid “new relationships” between NCP's Lawndale Christian Development Corp. and other groups who hope to guide development to benefit the community.

Same goes for Sandra Womack, who monitors Washington Park for LISC/NCP. She hails a new steering committee of pastors, business owners, the University of Chicago and DuSable Museum. Together they've launched quality-of-life planning—an effort that will identify opportunities for the neighborhood... whether or not the summer Olympics open there in 2016.



## **EVALUATING CHECKLIST**

- MAKE** research and learning part of every serious community development effort, and make sure it has value for both funders and practitioners.
- CAREFULLY** document what is done, record benchmarks and measure wider impact over time.
- GAUGE** and report performance in “real time” so as to make necessary corrections.
- BEWARE** assertions of “but for” causality, but track neighborhood trajectory nonetheless.

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## NCP LEAD AGENCIES

Bickerdike Redevelopment Corp.

[www.bickerdike.org](http://www.bickerdike.org)

Claretian Associates

[www.claretianassociates.org](http://www.claretianassociates.org)

Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance

[www.garfield-conservatory.org](http://www.garfield-conservatory.org)

Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corp.

[www.gagdc.org](http://www.gagdc.org)

Greater Southwest Development Corp.

[www.greatersouthwest.org](http://www.greatersouthwest.org)

Lawndale Christian Development Corp.

[www.lcdc.net](http://www.lcdc.net)

Logan Square Neighborhood Assoc.

[www.lsna.net](http://www.lsna.net)

Little Village Community Development Corp.

[www.lvcdc.org](http://www.lvcdc.org)

NCP/Woodlawn

[www.ncp-woodlawn.org](http://www.ncp-woodlawn.org)

NCP/Washington Park

[www.newcommunities.org/communities/washington](http://www.newcommunities.org/communities/washington)

Near West Side Community Development Corp.

[www.nearwestsidecdc.org](http://www.nearwestsidecdc.org)

Quad Communities Development Corp.

[www.qcdc.org](http://www.qcdc.org)

Teamwork Englewood

[www.teamworkenglewood.org](http://www.teamworkenglewood.org)

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