Improving the Quality of Life in Pilsen

Sponsored by The Resurrection Project and LISC’s New Communities Initiative
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Quality of Life Plan is part of LISC/Chicago’s New Communities Initiative (NCI). The New Communities Initiative is a large-scale comprehensive community building program that is assisting community development corporations in developing and implementing multiple projects and programs aimed at strengthening their neighborhoods and the lives of those who live and work in them. The three organizations are: The Resurrection Project, The Woodlawn Preservation and Investment Corporation, and the Southeast Chicago Development Commission. Components of the NCI program include: 1) comprehensive quality of life physical planning in each community; 2) flexible new program/project development support; 3) core support for NCI staff at the CDCs; and 4) program-wide and project specific technical assistance.

This plan, prepared by the Resurrection Project (TRP), seeks to improve the quality of life in Pilsen, a historic port of entry for Chicago’s Mexican-American population, as this community moves toward becoming a community of choice - a permanent home for current and future Mexican immigrants in which to realize the economic and social aspects of the American dream. It is based upon the vision of Pilsen as a center of home and culture for these immigrants and their families.

The plan gives direction to this vision, and the mission of TRP, by encouraging a set of unified projects which further establish Pilsen economically, physically and socially as a center for the city’s Mexican population. It does this by establishing eight strategies to provide a quality environment for the residents of Pilsen.

1. **Build Village Center**

   If Pilsen is to be “un pueblo dentro de la ciudad,” - the village within the city - then it must provide a center which brings together economic, cultural, social, and physical activities in a manner reminiscent of the plazas of a Mexican town. This center is proposed to be located in the vicinity of 18th and Paulina Streets, and is to result from the following projects:

   - The Centro Familiar Guadalupano Plaza which will occupy Paulina Street between 18th Place and 18th Street.
   - The nearly completed renovation of St. Vitus Church into Centro Familiar Guadalupano Cultural Center.
   - The development of the Resurrection Resource Center that, among other things, will be home to a new employment resource center.
   - Streetscape improvements along 18th Street.
   - Enhanced parking.

2. **Strengthen Pilsen’s Economy**

   Improving the local economy in a fashion that incorporates our community’s culture suggests two key approaches - revitalizing the 18th Street Commercial Center and improving access to employment opportunities for all residents. These efforts will redevelop 18th Street as a center of ethnic and specialty stores which serve the surrounding Mexican community. The projects suggested for this purpose include:

   - A Resurrection Employment Center.
   - Increasing access to capital through the establishment of a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) and the growth of the Resurrection Loan Fund.
• Encouraging business owners along the commercial streets of Pilsen to work together to market and grow Pilsen-based business.

3. **Preserve and Expand Affordable Housing**

Home ownership levels in Pilsen suggest a severe shortage of quality, affordable rental and ownership options. During the past nine years, increasing the quality and quantity of housing in Pilsen has been the priority of TRP. We propose to continue this effort through the following sets of projects:

- Continuing our successful track record in creating home ownership opportunities and home rehab loans.
- Developing additional affordable housing units.

4. **Improve Our Health**

The ability of Pilsen to evolve as a community of choice rests heavily on the extent and quality of services available to its residents. Health care is one of the most important services. Therefore, TRP has made a major commitment to increasing the scope of health-related services within the community through the establishment of:

- Centro de Salud Familiar (Family Health Center) - a bi-cultural, bilingual facility to be developed in partnership with a major health care institution within the village center.
- Outreach to increase involvement in the KidCare health insurance program, which serves children of low and moderate income families.
- Expansion of the Gilead project of United Power for Action and Justice which is working with leaders to provide health insurance to more than 1,300,000 uninsured people in Cook County.
- Establishment of a health leadership team which will establish a health education outreach program in partnership with the proposed Family Health Center.

5. **Create a Safer Neighborhood**

Increasing community safety has always been part of TRP efforts. This plan continues this local leadership function by:

- Encouraging residents to become more involved in achieving and maintaining safety and security in the neighborhood by working through the CAPS program.
- Expanding the block clubs, which are organized around TRP’s member parishes.
- Improving outdoor lighting along the streets and alleys of the neighborhood.

6. **Create a Cleaner and Greener Neighborhood**

Open space is in short supply within Pilsen. There are only two parks, few tot lots and little, if any, parkway space along its streets. Street trees are conspicuous by their absence. Improving the physical condition of Pilsen means improving its open space. Key projects for this purpose include:

- Working with the city to expand model block improvements.
- Expanding available open space, including developing the proposed Guadalupano Plaza, linking the CFG Plaza to Harrison Park, and improving community conditions through the provision of community gardens, additional neighborhood plantings, and improved community maintenance and garbage pick-up.
7. **Invest in Youth through Education and Recreation**

Youth are at the center of any immigrant community and the residents of Pilsen are young. For many, the move to this country, and to Pilsen, was prompted in part by the goal of making life better for one’s children. Our focus is in two areas - ensuring both educational and recreational opportunities for the community’s youth. Projects developed for this purpose include:

- A campaign to increase college as an educational option.
- Increasing the opportunities for Catholic school education.
- Engaging youth, and particularly at-risk youth, in positive social outlets.
- Establishing a unique college dormitory, “La Casa,” to foster leadership development and provide housing opportunities for young Latinos/Latinas in a faith-based setting.
- Establishing summer youth opportunities.
- Increasing areas for recreation through a park school linkage, additional tot lots and the establishment of play streets.

8. **Support Strong Families and Strong Leadership**

TRP’s mission is to build a healthy community by building healthy relationships. To do this we propose projects which prepare leaders to actively participate in both local and metropolitan-wide issues. This is encouraged by activities within TRP member churches, its Leadership Teams, and block clubs. Such investment reaches into the community as a whole through our Esperanza Familiar Program which focuses on strengthening the bond within families through sets of program services.

These projects are further discussed in this plan, which concludes with a work program that prioritizes the projects and identifies the lead organization responsible for its implementation.
I. THE NEW COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

This Quality of Life Plan is part of LISC/Chicago’s New Communities Initiative (NCI). The New Communities Initiative is a large-scale comprehensive community building program that is assisting three Community Development Corporations (CDC) to develop and implement multiple projects and programs aimed at strengthening their neighborhoods and the lives of those who live and work in them. The three organizations are: The Resurrection Project, The Woodlawn Preservation and Investment Corporation, and the Southeast Chicago Development Commission.

NCI speaks to the evolution of community development over the past 20 years by recognizing the importance of helping neighborhoods maximize their own internal strengths and by using an entrepreneurial approach in focusing on the comprehensive revitalization agendas they advance. Believing, as it does, in working from the bottom up, NCI is premised on the notion that seasoned community development organizations can build the capacity to expand from the sole pursuit of housing or economic development and use their status as community leaders to mobilize others in rebuilding efforts that embrace the needs and aspirations of the community they serve.

NCI has its roots in the findings of the Futures Committee - a LISC/Chicago led panel of community leaders that met in 1996 and 1997 to assess the current state and future of community development in Chicago. The Committee found that despite great achievements in housing and commercial development within low-income neighborhoods, it was clear that economic and social conditions continued to be stagnant. Affordable housing was still in demand, violent crime and drugs affected many neighborhoods, and unemployment rates often exceeded 25%.

The Committee reaffirmed the centrality of the community development industry in addressing these problems, emphasizing that CDCs and LISC/Chicago should be engaged in more comprehensive community building activities. LISC created NCI in 1998 in response to the Committee’s recommendations and raised $8 million to move the program forward, thus linking LISC’s national and local resources to three community development corporations selected for participation in the initiative on the basis of their track records and strong neighborhood ties.

NCI funds are used for: 1) Quality-of-Life Physical Planning by each community; 2) flexible support to assist in the development of new projects and programs, including loans, grants and equity; 3) core support for NCI staff at participating CDCs; and 4) program-wide and project specific technical assistance.

NCI underwrites the cost of a community-based planning process, which works through CDC-led leadership teams composed of the CDC’s constituents as well as leadership from other neighborhood groups, and seeks to develop plans of action which are implemented by other local entities in addition to the host CDC. The plan presented in this document results from the substantial investment in this process made by TRP Board and staff as well as many other members of the community.

The goal of NCI is to gather a body of experience that will inform future community development efforts in Chicago as well as in other urban areas of the country where it is also recognized that neighborhoods facing a multiplicity of issues are not well served by partial, or staggered, approaches to their revitalization. It is our hope that what we learn from NCI in Chicago will be useful to others both within, and beyond, the LISC network.
The New Communities Initiative is generously supported by the National Community Development Initiative, the Surdna Foundation, Avondale Bank, Bank of America, Bank One, the City of Chicago’s Mayor’s Office of Workforce Development and the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation.
II. A VISION FOR PILSEN

The Pilsen neighborhood in Chicago has, for the past 30 years, served as a port of entry for Chicago’s Mexican community. To some Chicagoans, Pilsen evokes images of overcrowded, aging housing stock, families living in poverty, and limited job opportunities. To others, it is a vibrant ethnic neighborhood, home to thriving churches, community organizations and local businesses. No matter how it is perceived, Pilsen has existed for generations as people have transported their cultures to new surroundings.

Pilsen today continues to evolve as its role and character shift. No longer just a port of entry, it has begun to emerge as an ethnic community of choice. The challenge for Pilsen now is to capitalize on its spirit and strength to create a community of choice for current and future generations of Mexican immigrants, a permanent home in which to realize the economic and social ideals of the American dream.

The Resurrection Project

The vision and direction of The Resurrection Project (TRP) supports this effort. Founded in 1990 by a coalition of six Pilsen churches, TRP is an institution-based neighborhood organization. TRP’s mission is to build relationships and challenge people to act on their faith and values to create healthy communities through organization, education, and community development. By organizing through our member parishes, we have built institutional power, developed community leadership, won new investment, and renewed a spirit of promise in Pilsen. Since our inception, an additional eight churches in the Pilsen, Little Village and Back of the Yards neighborhoods have become members of TRP.

Despite a relatively short history, TRP has had a significant impact on our community. In 1990, St. Vitus church in Pilsen was closed by the Archdiocese of Chicago as part of a diocesan-wide restructuring. The vacant facility was transformed from an important community asset into a hangout for gangs - St Vitus, which had been a revered institution, was covered with graffiti. Following the church closing, pastors, parents and other lay leaders responded by establishing a leadership team to explore the reuse of the facility.

By May 1992, leaders won the donation of the sanctuary, rectory and school to their new organization. The Resurrection Project’s staff and leaders galvanized financial, human and spiritual resources to transform the facility into a much needed family center. TRP’s community leadership worked to transform the vacant school building into a 208 child day care center. The rectory became home to The Resurrection Project’s main offices in April of 1996 and the once vacant church became a space for cultural enrichment and artistic activities for families.

TRP also contracted with Francisco Mendoza of Orozco Academy - located across the street from the CFG Plaza - and the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum to adorn the facility with murals depicting Mexican history, culture and spirit. Finally, parishioners of TRP’s six founding member parishes voted to name the facility the Centro Familiar Guadalupano (CFG) after the Virgin of Guadalupe, a religious and cultural symbol within the Mexican and larger Latino community.

TRP has had numerous other successes in developing and implementing innovative projects and programs which have catalyzed more than $25 million in physical development and capital improvements throughout its nine year history. TRP has developed community service programs and partnerships to facilitate investment of more than $12 mil-
lion on an annual basis into the local economy and continues to create additional investment to further our mission of building a healthy community. Such projects include:

Physical Development and Capital Improvements

- Developing more than 160 units of rental, for-sale and supportive housing that has leveraged nearly $24 million in public and private investment for the community. TRP is the city’s largest producer of affordable single-family homes under the New Homes for Chicago Program.
- Closing more than 249 mortgage and home improvement loans, totaling $6.5 million with less than 1% default.
- Renovating the Centro Familiar Guadalupano facility at a cost of over $2 million.
- Winning the demolition of dangerous abandoned grain silos in Pilsen at a cost of $1 million to the City of Chicago. This effort was driven by TRP’s Block Club organizing and community leadership.
- Facilitating investment in neighborhood capital projects such as sidewalk, alley and other local infrastructure improvements.

Community Service Programs and Partnerships

- Creating TRP’s Construction Cooperative, a unique economic development program that supports individuals as they begin and/or expand construction businesses. Since its inception, the Co-Op and its member businesses have created, or maintained, more than 200 new jobs. Gross annual sales for its 28 members totaled more than $8.5 million in 1998.
- Providing more than $4 million in programs and services to the community through The Resurrection Project and the Centro Familiar Guadalupano Day Care Center. These two organizations have generated 65 new jobs within the CFG complex.
- Creating innovative programs such as a faith-based parenting education program to strengthen families.
- Developing a network of community leaders who provide the vision to TRP’s programmatic initiatives.

Additional Investment

- Expanding TRP’s commercial development portfolio with more than $17 million in projects in the pre-development stage.
- Creating an additional 165 units of affordable housing with development costs exceeding $18 million.
- Undertaking the construction of two child care centers, totaling $4.6 million, that will serve more than 450 children.
- Initiating the Resurrection Loan Fund, with a beginning investment of $350,000, to improve access to capital for small construction contractors, particularly those who are members of TRP’s Construction Co-Op.

For its efforts, TRP has received notable honors such as the Fannie Mae Foundation’s Sustained Excellence Award, the Sara Lee Foundation’s Chicago Spirit Award and the B.P. Amoco Leader Award.

This Quality of Life Plan is an example of the TRP mission in action. TRP convened a leadership team to direct the planning effort and, with NCI assistance, engaged a team of planning consultants to assist the leadership team. TRP’s leadership team included residents, local merchants, service providers, block club leadership and TRP staff. The plan provides support to the mission by encouraging a set of unified projects which further establish Pilsen - economically, physically and socially - as a center for the City’s Mexican population. It is based on a vision of Pilsen as a community of choice for its existing residents - a center of home and culture for immigrants and established families.
The Pilsen Community

The 50,000 residents of Pilsen are of modest means - the estimated 1998 median income is $24,400, as compared to a city median of $35,500. Although most of the residents work, 35% have annual incomes below $15,000 and live in poverty. Between 1995 and 1997, almost 63% of residents reported incomes below twice the poverty level, compared to the city average of approximately 41%. Among Pilsen residents living below the poverty level, over 36% are children.

Yet Pilsen is a community with a strong family culture, a strong faith and an emerging class of small business entrepreneurs. This evolution in community structure, economy and strength provides great opportunities to assure the viability of a community of choice anchored in its Mexican-American culture.

The geography of Pilsen helps to achieve our vision. Bounded on the north by a railroad embankment, the south by the Chicago River, and the east by the Dan Ryan Expressway, Pilsen seems to have been designed as a self-contained village within the city. (See Figure 1: Study Area Boundary and General Land Use) Indeed, the architecture of Pilsen - nineteenth and early twentieth century small homes on small lots, raised streets and sidewalks, and a mixture of workplaces with residences - creates a distinct and picturesque image that is not typical of newer, more homogenous areas of the city. The land use continues this theme. The community’s commercial focus is organized along 18th Street and is surrounded by predominantly residential development giving way to industrial districts to the south and the east as illustrated on Figure 1.

However, current geographic boundaries alone are not sufficient to ensure that Pilsen remain a community of choice for its current residents. This plan is necessary to articulate a vision which reflects the community of Pilsen in the midst of significant development of the surrounding communities - the southward growth of the Chicago Medical District, the University of Illinois and the nearby redevelopment activities of the Chicago Housing Authority are bringing Pilsen into the orbit of the broader real estate market. Without a strong image and a strong local real estate market, these forces may well change Pilsen in a manner which disrupts its ethnic cohesiveness. A community of choice for its predominantly Mexican population, with a physical infrastructure, institutions and businesses oriented toward that community, works against such threatened change.

This plan is based on a vision of Pilsen as a community of choice for its existing residents.
Figure 1
STUDY AREA BOUNDARY AND GENERAL LAND USE PLAN
PILSEN NEIGHBORHOOD-CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
III. STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

This Quality of Life Plan suggests eight strategies to provide a quality environment for the residents of Pilsen. Each of these strategies builds upon the assets of the community. They contribute to enhancing the quality of life for Pilsen, ensuring that Pilsen is a safe, inviting, vibrant, and economically viable community for its families, leaders, churches, neighborhood institutions, and local businesses. Significantly, each strategy has been developed in consultation with TRP’s leadership. These eight strategies are illustrated in Figure 2: The Vision and Its Strategies and include the following:

1. Build Village Center
2. Strengthen Pilsen’s Economy
3. Preserve and Expand Affordable Housing
4. Improve Our Health
5. Create a Safer Neighborhood
6. Create a Cleaner and Greener Neighborhood
7. Invest in Youth through Education and Recreation
8. Support Strong Families and Strong Leadership

These strategies call for a number of ambitious projects, which are advocated by TRP’s community leaders as necessary to achieve its vision. These are illustrated in Figure 3: Key Proposals of the Plan. Many of these projects require the leadership, involvement, and resources of other institutions or organizations, including many of the businesses, groups and institutions that have joined with us in the planning process. TRP will also encourage others to participate in achieving the plan. This plan is a pro-active response in the midst of change. TRP is a vehicle to manage this change to ensure that it benefits the existing community.

1. BUILD VILLAGE CENTER

Many Mexican residents of Chicago look to Pilsen for the cultural, familial, physical and commercial environment of their home in Mexico. Given migration patterns from Mexico, there is often a resettlement of residents from a particular Mexican state or village in the same neighborhood. Consequently, these residents seek to create their village on both sides of the border. In addition, many have indicated that “Pilsen is where we have our roots,” meaning that while they may move from beyond Pilsen into other neighborhoods, they have a continuing linkage, or nostalgia, for the Pilsen environment.

Thus, there is a great desire to have elements of Pilsen - its physical structure, its institutions and its local economy - bear a strong resemblance to what is typical of the Mexican culture. We see this desire being expressed through the development of a village center, which focuses upon a central plaza - the zocalo - the heart of community life. Typically, all components of community life are represented in, and around, the plaza. Here, one finds the church, the government buildings, the market and the neighborhood conversations which complement most life-cycle events. In a culture where the evening walk is an institution, the plaza is often a key destination and key meeting point for the community.

If Pilsen is to be “un pueblo dentro de la ciudad” - the village within the city that we envision - then it, too, must provide such a center. The proposed village center - the Centro Familiar Guadalupano Plaza - brings together economic, cultural, social and physical activities in a manner reminiscent of the plazas of a Mexican town. It is premised on the central notions of a Mexican community; it would serve as a community anchor for the western areas of Pilsen and it would
Vision
TRP Mission: Building a Healthy Community

- Build Village Center
- Strengthen Pilsen’s Economy
- Support Strong Families and Strong Leadership
- Invest in Youth through Education and Recreation
- Create a Cleaner and Greener Neighborhood
- Create a Safer Neighborhood

FIGURE 2
Figure 3
KEY PROPOSALS OF THE PLAN
PILSEN NEIGHBORHOOD-CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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THE RESURRECTION PROJECT
CAMIROS
strengthen programs and the community’s appearance. It will also be a home to job development, economic development and community service. An illustration of this vision is shown in Figure 4: Plaza Perspective.

The success of this strategy depends upon our ability to implement a number of projects which would anchor and influence development in the western portions of Pilsen. These are as follows:

1. The Centro Familiar Guadalupano Plaza
2. Centro Familiar Guadalupano Cultural Center Renovation
3. Resurrection Resource Center
4. West 18th Street Streetscape
5. Parking

**The Centro Familiar Guadalupano Plaza**

In Mexico, the Plaza is the anchor of the community. All public life radiates out from the Plaza as it integrates and connects the private life of families with the public life of the markets, church and government. It is a gathering space for families and individuals, a space for children to play, and grandparents to sit and talk. The Plaza reflects life and movement in its colors, in the flowing water of its fountains, the sounds of traditional mariachi music, and the aroma of nuts and sweets sold by vendors from their pushcarts. The architecture, shrines, and statues connect visitors with their past and provide a stable sense of the future. The Plaza is, above all, an inviting, welcoming and open space for the entire community.

The Community Planning Leadership Team for the Guadalupano Expansion has defined the vision for our Plaza in this context:

“The Guadalupano Plaza is an important anchor of the Pilsen community; one which attracts both local residents and visitors. It is active, attractive and reflects the spirit and character of a Mexican center. The Plaza extends out to, and embraces, the 18th Street business district and its purpose is to enhance the visual and economic quality of Pilsen to maintain it as a community of choice for existing residents.”

*The plaza is the anchor of the community.*

The Plaza Centro Familiar Guadalupano project is more than the construction of an outdoor space. It is the centerpiece of a range of physical, economic and human service projects occurring on, and around, this space, touching the entire community. The core of the vision, as shown in Figure 5: Components of the Plaza and the Surrounding Area, is to build a plaza which reaches out and connects the community to the key facilities at this location - Centro Familiar Guadalupano (CFG), the Blue Line El, the offices of TRP, a new Resurrection Employment
Center, a Community Development Financial Institution, St. Adalbert’s Church, Harrison Park, the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, Orozco School, a family practice medical facility to be located on the corner of 18th and Paulina Streets in the present Zemsky Building, and adjoining retail uses along 18th Street.

The plaza will serve as a key gathering point for the community as well as a key entry and gathering point for persons returning to the community, or coming to visit our village, from elsewhere in the city. Thus, it provides the impetus for the redevelopment of adjacent commercial uses, a cultural attraction, an area to extend community programming from within the Centro Familiar Guadalupano to the outdoors, and a nexus for the residential neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the plaza area.

The plaza will begin in the open space directly between the CFG and the Resurrection Resource Center, a community service center to be developed opposite the CFG. Today, the Plaza is a street end closure which separates the 18th Street Commercial Corridor from adjacent residential streets and provides an entry for the CFG. Small in size and lacking amenity, it is a thoroughfare for pedestrians on their way to, and from, 18th Street. The Plaza Design Leadership Team determined that their programming desires for the Plaza - a locus for community events, a place for sitting and strolling, a desire to accommodate street vendors and other commercial activities, the need to provide play space, and the creation of a feeling of spaciousness - could not be accommodated in the limited public space presently dedicated to the Plaza. Thus, the physical scope of the Plaza area is proposed to incorporate the present parking lot of a building adjacent to the Plaza to the northwest and, to incorporate through pavement and streetscape design, portions of Paulina Street north of 18th Place and the streetscape along 18th Street between Ashland Avenue and Wood Street as illustrated in Figure 5: Key Components of the Plaza and the Surrounding Area.

Figure 6: Guadalupano Plaza Design, illustrates a potential plaza design. This enlarged plaza will:

1. Provide an area to plant ornamental trees and shrubs to enhance aesthetics and encourage use.
2. Reflect the tradition of a true Mexican plaza through its colors, design, mosaics and murals.
3. Enhance public safety by encouraging more pedestrian traffic at all times.
4. Provide additional space for residents, artists, merchants and visitors to congregate for various social and cultural activities and events.
5. Provide additional outdoor play spaces for local children.
6. Accommodate community use with amenities such as seating, an information kiosk, a plaza fountain and mosaics.

The Guadalupano Plaza is a major project requiring the support of the City of Chicago, other community groups and the neighborhood. Its completion is a high priority.

Centro Familiar Guadalupano Cultural Center Renovation

Another major project, the physical renovation of the sanctuary space of the old St. Vitus Church into a fully functional cultural center, is nearing completion.

Centro Familiar Guadalupano is one of the largest venues in the Pilsen community with the potential to provide space for cultural programming. The size and prominence of the building offers the opportunity to provide a state of the art community center that offers performance, rehearsal and class space to artist groups and organizations interested in providing cultural programming to individuals and families in the Pilsen community. The interior of the auditorium has been
Figure 5
COMPONENTS OF THE PLAZA AND THE SURROUNDING AREA
PILSEN NEIGHBORHOOD-CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
restored to its original splendor. The majority of the stained glass windows and all of the paintings on the ceilings are intact. The floor, the columns and the capitals of the auditorium have been completely re-finished, and it is now being used for community activities. To complete the transformation of the CFG Cultural Center requires a new heating and cooling system, installation of a new elevator to make it handicap accessible, and complete renovation of the second and third floor loft space.

Centro Familiar Guadalupano has the potential to be one of the largest venues in Pilsen for cultural programming.

**Resurrection Resource Center**

With NCI support, the building opposite the CFG has been recently purchased by TRP and it will be renovated into a fully accessible community resource center to house the organization’s expanding economic efforts and program services. The building will be home to the following:

- The Resurrection Employment Center, which will work with residents to create access to quality jobs.
- Housing Services Resource Center, which delivers homeowner education, client counseling, loan packaging assistance and the marketing and sales components of TRP’s New Homes Program.
- Financial Services, which provides services to develop the economic capacity of the community with an emphasis on business development and access to working capital.
- Resurrection Construction Cooperative, which serves as a small business incubator for new and emerging construction services.
- Office and conference room space for adjunct TRP programs and functions.

**West 18th Street Streetscape**

The physical improvement of 18th Street between Damen Avenue and Ashland Avenue is seen as an expression of the continuation of the Plaza as well as the streetscape improvements already in place east of Ashland Avenue. The intent is to continue the character and design of the existing 18th Street streetscape built by the city and link it to the design of the Plaza. This augmentation could entail additional street furniture and the establishment of an 18th Street entry at Ashland Avenue and 18th Street to increase the image of the community at its intersection with Ashland Avenue.
The existing 18th Street improvements should be continued west with special treatment at Ashland Avenue and Paulina Street.

Parking

Additional parking is obviously needed in an area as congested and densely populated as Pilsen. Some improvement can be achieved by encouraging business owners and employees to park away from the strip and by restructuring on-street parking layouts. As shown in Figure 7: Diagonal Street Parking, diagonal parking can be established along those street fronts which are public, thereby increasing parking opportunities without significantly affecting abutting private property owners. Indeed, the parking shown in Figure 7 provides an increase of approximately 45% over that presently available along these public frontages, making parking easier for local residents and more available to shoppers and visitors attracted to the Plaza area. Coordination with business owners and a city model block project is anticipated to be the first step in this effort which, over time, could be applied community-wide.

2. STRENGTHEN PILSEN’S ECONOMY

A successful neighborhood economy brings investment into the neighborhood, which can be shared by the residents of the neighborhood through jobs, business creation and more complete shopping choices. This means working to build and maintain a complete community - one which is synonymous with a village and which incorporates our community’s culture in all that is done. One area of effort is to expand Pilsen’s economy by encouraging the growth of local businesses, which serve the community as well as the larger public. A second area of effort is improving access to employment opportunities for all residents.

Four key projects are proposed under this strategy. The first two are community-wide and stress the need to expand local economy and improve employment opportunities for residents.
Figure 7
DIAGONAL STREET PARKING
PILSEN NEIGHBORHOOD-CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
The latter two focus on 18th Street but, in a sense, are prototypes, which, over time, can be applied to commercial areas throughout the community.

1. Resurrection Employment Center
2. Access to Capital
3. Cultural and Mercado Initiative
4. Revitalize the 18th Street Commercial Corridor

**Resurrection Employment Center**

Pilsen is a community of the working poor - where underemployment is as severe an issue as unemployment. Although Pilsen residents are considered to be hard-working, productive and trusted employees, and demonstrate a 68% participation rate in the labor force, many are still poor. According to analyses done by the Latino Institute, one of every five Latino adults lives in a working poor household. In contrast, approximately 14% of African Americans and 6% of all Whites are in a similar status.

With NCI’s assistance, TRP has linked with Project Match, a nationally recognized employment program to create *The Resurrection Employment Center*. The program combines Project Match’s expertise, gained through 15 years of experience, with TRP’s assets, which include an array of neighborhood-based and citywide relationships, employer networks and recruitment mechanisms. The program will provide long-term, individualized pre- and post-employment services to any Pilsen resident, regardless of income, gender, educational background or work history. The program has been designed to reach residents who, for a variety of reasons, are slipping through the cracks of other employment efforts.

Given the preponderance of underemployment in Pilsen, TRP anticipates that a significant number of clients will be the working poor. By focusing on the individual needs of each resident, this program offers tremendous opportunities for connecting these residents to new and better jobs that may offer higher salaries, and/or provide much-needed medical benefits. Program participants will also have access to a fully equipped resource room with free use of computers with internet access, telephones, fax machines, copiers, job listings and a staff person who will always be available to provide assistance. Located in *The Resurrection Resource Center*, a minimum of 100 residents will be served annually. The program has established benchmarks and will be coordinated with one other Project Match site and two other NCI sites in the city.

**Access to Capital**

Community growth, development and redevelopment requires access to capital which, for numerous reasons, is often limited in poorer neighborhoods. Thus, a key element of this Quality of Life Plan is to open up sources of capital to local businesses and residents wishing to remain in Pilsen for the long term.

**Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI)**

Through its relationships with local residents and community leaders, TRP recognizes that there is limited use of traditional financial institutions by community residents. According to Metro Chicago Information Center, 42% of Chicago area Latino households had no checking accounts in 1999. These residents are more likely to use currency exchanges and mortgage brokers to meet their financial and investment needs than they are to use a bank. This practice is partially the result of
a lack of familiarity and comfort with financial institutions by many of
Pilsen’s low-income, Mexican immigrant residents.

As a consequence, many residents pay higher fees, interest rates and
premiums for basic financial services. To alleviate this situation, TRP
proposes a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). A
CDFI is a specialized financial institution that works in market niches
that are not adequately served by traditional financial institutions. The
CDFI Fund provides small infusions of capital to leverage private sec-
tor investments from banks, foundations and other funding sources.

Resurrection Loan Fund

TRP has begun to incubate such a program through the creation of The
Resurrection Loan Fund. This fund, administered through the Finan-
cial Services Division of TRP, provides loans to members of the Con-
struction Cooperative who have been awarded a construction contract
for TRP projects. The fund is currently capitalized at $350,000 and is
planned to increase its capital base to $1,000,000 in 2000. The CDFI
would expand upon this concept. TRP’s competition is much more
likely to be the area’s currency exchanges and mortgage companies
than a traditional bank. By offering financial services through a CDFI,
TRP will ensure that residents are charged a fair price for transactions
and loans.

Cultural and Mercado Initiative

As part of the overall economic development strategy of the CFG Plaza,
TRP will work with local leaders and merchants to develop cultural
programming and a mercado on the CFG Plaza. Cultural program-
ing will reflect the spirit and traditions of Mexico. It may consist of
mariachi music on Sunday afternoons or performances by any of the
three dance troops which currently use the CFG Cultural Center. A
weekend mercado is envisioned, which sells traditional foods
and arts from various regions of Mexico. Local ambulatory vendors
will also be central as they incorporate their services into the mercado.
The Plaza and the Cultural Center will be enjoyed by community resi-
dents; for example, it will be a place where grandparents can come
with their children to stroll, talk and enjoy the cultural and economic
activity. This economic activity will further contribute to the develop-
ment of the 18th Street Commercial Corridor and generate additional
foot traffic for local merchants.

Revitalize the 18th Street Commercial Corridor

While 18th Street is not the only commercial street within Pilsen, it has
a greater impact upon the character and setting of the community than
its counterparts - Ashland Avenue and Cermak Avenue.

18th Street is a commercial anchor of the community. It traverses the
east/west length of the community, is the locus of many small shops
and restaurants, which exclusively serve the community and its cul-
ture, and its width and traffic volume is conducive to a strolling pedes-
trian environment.

Ashland Avenue, on the other hand, is a citywide arterial that bisects
the community, as does a river. The width of the street encourages
through traffic, and while some local development is sited on it, the
street itself bears little direct linkage to the community. Similarly,
Cermak Road is a divider between residential and industrial Pilsen. It,
too, contains certain commercial elements oriented to the community
yet, its size and the nature of its adjacent businesses do not attach a
community flavor to it.

In order for 18th Street to truly thrive, there must be significant in-
volve ment and organization to revitalize it as a hub of economic de-
velopment for the community. We envision a strong and vibrant 18th
Street which will include commercial activity and specialty shops which
provide services to its Mexican immigrant consumer base as well as street improvements and building facades which reflect the surrounding ethnic culture and aesthetically embrace the design elements of the adjacent Centro Familiar Guadalupano Plaza and mercado. This revitalization will ensure that Pilsen’s 18th Street Commercial Corridor remains integral to Chicago’s neighborhood and ethnic commercial mosaics. A strong commercial corridor will facilitate the overall economic development of Pilsen.

TRP also recognizes that the continued development of the Centro Familiar Guadalupano Complex is inextricably linked to the development of 18th Street. The proposed CFG Community Resource Center, Cultural Center and Centro de Salud will dramatically increase the number of visitors to 18th Street, regardless of whether they come to receive community services, health care or participate in cultural activity. To ensure the successful integration of the CFG Plaza and 18th Street revitalization, partnerships are required among diverse stakeholders, including the local merchants, TRP, nearby residents, schools, and organizations. Significantly, it will also require a large-scale commitment of public and private funds to achieve its full potential.

We envision that the revitalization of 18th Street will be led by the local merchants. However, TRP will provide assistance to facilitate the following projects.

**Business Owner’s Initiative**

Recently, a core group of 18th Street business owners have begun to meet on a regular basis. Together they planned a coordinated holiday display and holiday party for their loyal customers. In addition, they agreed to jointly hire someone to assist with cleaning up commercial sidewalk and area streets. As they continue to meet, they will learn from each other and consider whether 18th Street can function as a business district in the same manner that a shopping mall functions as a unified operation. This may include coordinated hours of operation, joint advertising, model leases, coordinated outside maintenance and, perhaps, a business operations coordinator.

These actions might best be accommodated if 18th Street were organized into a Business Improvement District (BID). Ultimately, the business owners themselves will determine the best way to foster growth. As they continue to assert their leadership and ownership to improve 18th Street, TRP will support their efforts at their request.

**Building Improvement Project**

A drive or walk down 18th Street shows that many of the buildings suffer from neglect and, when improvements are made, they lack coordination or attention to the original facades. The physical image of the street reflects the history of Pilsen. Originally developed as a residential area to serve adjacent factories and riverport facilities, the street is a mix of two- and three-story residences and stores. These buildings are old; 79% of the neighborhood building stock was built prior to 1939 and many date back to the 1900’s. A survey of building conditions indicates that much of the area is in need of repair. To encourage the physical and structural improvement of these properties, TRP will explore the development of a commercial building rehab project.

Further, the vast majority of buildings on 18th Street are small and have floor plates in the range of 1,000-2,000 square feet. These are not efficient sizes for major stores and are among one of the reasons that this street is seen as a candidate for local, community-oriented facilities, rather than as a place to accommodate retail chain or franchise uses. However, these buildings may even be too small for certain desired specialty shops. A pilot project will be considered to facilitate connections between adjacent buildings to accommodate integration of the buildings’ ground floor spaces as a single commercial unit.
Many buildings in Pilsen have not been updated since construction.

Facade Improvement Program

Many of the building facades along 18th Street have retained their original 19th century form. They have not been updated or repaired and reflect the years of severe impact caused by Chicago’s environment. To attain the impact of a community street, and create an inviting shopping space, many of the buildings will require facade improvements. Local merchants may consider modifying their local entries into the shops to open up the entire front of the store in good weather. This will help to facilitate the indoor/outdoor culture so typical of Mexican commercial streets.

18th Street Maintenance Project

Outdoor maintenance, street cleaning, sidewalk washing, garbage pickup and infrastructure repair are critical to attracting a strong and broad-based market. The businesses on 18th Street and local community residents have worked together to continue maintenance along the street.

In addition, the TRP Block Club Network has initiated a local clean-up campaign in partnership with local area businesses and area youth. For example, they have creatively involved local children by allowing them to drive a toy vehicle adapted with a broom, which sweeps the street. Area children now clamor for the privilege of working on the clean-up campaign.

Marketing Project

Increasing business on 18th Street, and assuring that merchants fully realize the potential of this important ethnic shopping and restaurant area, also requires the development of a coordinated marketing effort for 18th Street businesses, reflecting approaches typically used within a single-owner shopping mall. This would include working to establish coordinated hours of operation, joint advertising, coordinated marketing and suitable retail spaces. Again, this is a project which, over the long term, should properly be the responsibility of a Business Organization or a BID. This effort might also include the merchants determining the most appropriate strategy to enhance a business environment by emphasizing Mexican products, arts and services.
3. **PRESERVE AND EXPAND AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Pilsen continues to have an array of housing needs. By any measure, the community is overcrowded; 23% of the residents live in overcrowded conditions, averaging 3.5 people per room. While there is a severe shortage of affordable high-quality rental units, home ownership options are even more scarce. Only 22% of the neighborhood’s housing units are owner-occupied, compared to a citywide average of nearly 50%.

Through the development of affordable housing, TRP’s leaders have sought not only to increase home ownership and community owned assets, but to develop new leadership and greater public accountability in Pilsen.

Educating families on how to become home owners, creating an environment in which the public and private sector would invest, and having the faith to lead the largest development of affordable housing in Pilsen’s history, were the first steps in The Resurrection Project's strategy for creating a healthy community. During the past nine years, TRP has:

- Developed 114 new homes and renovated 55 rental apartments which provide affordable housing to more than 500 residents in Pilsen.
- Educated more than 1,000 families on home ownership issues through 70 workshops.
- Closed 249 new home, conventional, refinance and home improvement loans for a total investment of more than $18 million.

The Resurrection Project develops and renovates real estate in a sustainable and affordable manner. To accomplish this, TRP acquires rental and commercial property and develops it to meet the changing needs of the community. Currently, TRP is managing $31 million in real estate development projects. These include:

- Development of Casa Sor Juana into 18 affordable apartments with a total project cost of more than $2.3 million.
- Development of Casa Colima and Casa Guanajuato into 12 affordable apartments with a total project cost of more than $1.2 million.
- Development of Casa Puebla, a three-building affordable rental housing project, with approximately 85 apartments. Casa Puebla will utilize nearly $11 million in low income housing tax credits and city financing.
- Construction of 20 new single-family and/or two unit homes for working families with a total value of $3.2 million.

This plan continues to emphasize TRP’s strong work in this critical area. Additional projects are needed to continue our successes and to assure housing opportunities within Pilsen that will truly make it a community of choice. Therefore, we are calling for:

1. **Home Ownership Opportunities and Home Rehab Loans**
2. Development of Affordable Housing

**Home Ownership Opportunities and Home Rehab Loans**

TRP will continue its successful track record in this area by continuing to educate community residents on various aspects of home ownership. Potential homeowners will be educated through workshops, outreach and individual counseling. TRP staff will help residents gain access to various types of loans and grants available from the City of Chicago and financial institutions. In addition, local residents will be educated on aspects of buying their home, including the ABC’s of home ownership, the closing process, and acquiring an understanding of real estate and property taxes.
TRP also continues to create investment in Pilsen by ensuring that residents have access to low-interest loans to rehab and maintain their properties. TRP will continue to facilitate local investment by assisting current, and new, homeowners in acquiring rehab loans. TRP has a long-standing partnership with Neighborhood Housing Services to facilitate homeownership education and make various loan products available to the community.

**Development of Affordable Housing**

TRP will continue its aggressive strategy to provide affordable housing by building new homes and renovating apartment buildings. TRP has launched a campaign to build 50 new homes in the adjacent community of Little Village. Twenty of these new homes will be occupied by December of 2000 and the remainder will be completed by early 2002. TRP continues to seek new opportunities to create affordable housing and will roll out the next phase of its homeownership campaign in mid-2000. These new homes will continue to be available to families who make as little as $23,000 a year.

As a consequence of TRP’s successful home ownership effort, there is very little vacant land in the community upon which to build new homes. Quite literally, very few vacant lots remain in land-locked Pilsen. In addition, TRP leaders realized that very low income residents in the community could not afford TRP’s homes. Hence, TRP initiated a successful campaign to rehab rental housing for low-income residents. To date, TRP has rehabbed 55 units in six buildings in the Pilsen and Little Village communities. Affordable rents to low-income residents are as low as $270 on a monthly basis. As part of this on-going effort, TRP is in the pre-development stage of creating 85 more units of affordable rental housing. This project will be financed through a $11 million tax credit allocation received from the City of Chicago. These apartments are expected to be fully rehabbed and available for occupancy in early 2001. TRP will continue to pursue this strategy by seeking new opportunities and financing for its rental housing initiative.

4. **IMPROVE OUR HEALTH**

There are numerous reasons to place access to quality health care high on our priority list. First, no community can be healthy unless its residents are physically well. Second, as a largely Mexican immigrant community, Pilsen residents tend to lack the health insurance so necessary for proper health care in the United States. National data indicates that more than one-third of the United States Latino community...
lacks health insurance and this number is likely to be even higher in poorer Mexican immigrant communities such as Pilsen. While the level of health insurance is not available by community area, given the significant number of children living below the poverty level in Pilsen (36%), we can assume that a very large number of children in the community have no health insurance.

Local data bears out this need. Pilsen ranks above city mortality rate averages due to chronic liver disease and cirrhosis cases, and diabetes mellitus cases. Pilsen also has significant rates of tuberculosis cases (22 per 100,000 - which almost matches the city average of 23 per 100,000) and children aged 0-6 with elevated lead screenings (97 per 1,000) within its community boundaries. In addition, in terms of maternal and infant health, Pilsen has the sixth highest fertility rate among the 77 community areas in the city, at over 108 births per 1,000 women of child rearing age, while the city average was 77.1.

Given its mission, The Resurrection Project must work to provide improved health care and health education opportunities, as well as improved access to medical benefits and health insurance for Pilsen residents. Proposed projects in this TRP strategy include:

1. Centro de Salud Familiar (Family Health Center)
2. KidCare
3. Health Education
4. Gilead Project

**Centro de Salud Familiar (Family Health Center)**

In partnership with a major health care institution, TRP will establish Centro de Salud Familiar - a bilingual, bi-cultural family practice medical facility at the end of the Plaza, on the corner of 18th and Paulina Streets. This project, initiated with technical assistance from NCI, will generate $4 million in public and private program investment and increase the availability and usage of medical and other health-related services for all Pilsen residents. Planned to accommodate 40,000 patient visits annually, the 9,200 sq. ft. facility will be located in a multi-story building adjacent to the proposed plaza and the 18th Street Blue Line El station. Improvements to the building will be made to facilitate this use, including a new passenger elevator providing access to the upper floors, a new electrical system and new bathrooms. The development of this facility at this site not only extends opportunities for quality medical care to all of Pilsen, but also assures that the Plaza will be the site of substantial community activity.

**KidCare**

More than one-third of Pilsen's residents are children under the age of 18. Given the overall lack of medical insurance in the Latino community, it is probable that many of these children do not have access to consistent health care. In an effort to ensure that these children are healthy, TRP will conduct outreach to sign up children for the KidCare Health Insurance Program, which serves children of low and moderate-income families whose families do not exceed 185% of the poverty level. KidCare ensures that all eligible children have access to comprehensive medical care including doctor visits, emergency services and prescription drugs. KidCare also ensures that income eligible pregnant women can have access to critically needed prenatal care. TRP was recently awarded a $70,000 grant to conduct this outreach by the Illinois Department of Public Aid.
Health Education

Health educators, both professionals and trained community residents, will operate out of the Centro de Salud Familiar. They will lead sessions to provide information which focus on approaches to wellness and preventative medicine targeted at Pilsen residents. Ideally these initiatives will integrate traditional health education with healing practices traditional to Mexican culture. This staff will also mount an outreach program to visit and educate residents who are unable to visit the Center. Specific areas of health education and wellness will be identified by community residents and leaders through a TRP Health Leadership Team.

Gilead Project

As a fourth component of its health strategy, TRP is actively involved with the Gilead Project of United Power for Action and Justice. As a member of this organization, TRP is working with leaders across the region to create a pool of $20 million to provide health insurance to the more than 1,300,000 uninsured people in Cook County.

5. CREATE A SAFER NEIGHBORHOOD

A good neighborhood is a safe neighborhood and Pilsen is working to improve the safety of its residents, businesses and their property. Yet, Pilsen has serious gang and crime problems with a documented 10 gangs currently operating in the community. Since crime statistics are published on a district basis, which encompass an area larger than Pilsen, it is difficult to get an accurate picture. However, the overall statistics of the 12th District tend to illustrate the scope of the problem. The 12th District substantially exceeds the city average in all categories except burglary. Particularly striking is the fact that murder, aggravated assault and theft exceed the city average by more than 50% on a crimes per thousand persons basis.

Issues of neighborhood safety are being addressed by TRP through a range of organizing and program actions within Pilsen. As related to safety, TRP’s Block Club organizing has deepened the relationships within member institutions and strengthened the organization’s grassroots base.

During the past nine years, leaders have:
- Established an active network of 17 Block Clubs in Pilsen.
- Won the demolition of dangerous abandoned grain silos in Pilsen at a cost of $1 million to the City of Chicago
- Won capital improvements for new alleys and streets, and increased sanitation services.
- Transformed once problem buildings into community assets by working with each other, police and landlords.

TRP will continue building upon its organizing efforts around crime and safety through the Block Club Network and strengthen its institutional relationships with the 12th District Police Department and the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) to:
- Expand the TRP Block Club Network in Pilsen.
- Continue to establish accountable relationships with the Chicago Police Department not only for Pilsen but also Little Village and Back of the Yards.
- Enhance the partnership between the Block Clubs and the CAPS program in all three communities.
- Organize pro-active prevention activities.
This will be done through the following projects.

1. Safety (Neighborhood Safety Police Patrols, CAPS, Hot Spots)
2. Expansion of Block Club Network
3. Improved Outdoor Lighting

Safety (Neighborhood Safety Police Patrols, CAPS, Hot Spots)

This project encourages residents to become more involved in achieving and maintaining safety and security in their neighborhood and on their blocks. Residents are encouraged to actively attend and provide comments and feedback to police and each other at CAPS meetings, especially with respect to problems associated with specific drug hot spots and problem buildings. Police are also encouraged to work in partnership with residents. Residents and representatives from various agencies will participate in devising plans to reuse areas of questionable activity for more positive ones.

Expansion of Block Club Network

Residents have established 17 organized and effective block clubs to date. These block clubs are organized with TRP’s assistance around TRP’s member parishes and on streets where new housing has been developed. Participants are actively engaged in community efforts and have developed strong bonds with one another. Together, they provide a key nucleus for crime prevention and safety activities.

This project would involve expanding the number of neighborhood block clubs by adding club chapters in previously under-organized blocks. The updated network will hold regular meetings with representatives from each block involved to discuss concerns and recommendations for making all parts of Pilsen a safer and better place to live. These clubs will be counted on to work with local agency sponsors to organize and host various activities for residents.

Improved Outdoor Lighting

Improved outdoor lighting is a high priority for Pilsen. To that end, the CFG Plaza emphasizes well-designed and suitable lighting. Similarly, it is critical to work with the Park District to have well lighted pathways in Harrison Park.

Additional street lighting needs to be installed in alleys and streets - many currently have little or no light during evening hours. Existing street lighting that is not up to current maintenance standards will be targeted for upgrading or replacement. This project will also focus on obtaining additional financing to install flood lighting on garages facing unlit alleyways as an important safety measure.

6. CREATE A CLEANER AND GREENER NEIGHBORHOOD

Open space is in short supply. The Cityscape program estimates that Pilsen only has 27 acres of open space, while according to City standards for its population, it should have at least 64 additional acres. Small areas easily accessible by parents with small children are also in short supply. All of Pilsen contains only 7 tot lots. Only 3 play areas oriented towards small children are found in the Plaza area. This is a particularly severe problem given that 38% of Pilsen residents are below 18 years of age. Only two parks - Dvorak and Harrison - are found in our community.

Pilsen is an old neighborhood. There is little, if any, parkway space on most streets and its vaulted sidewalks make it difficult for grass to grow. Buildings are close together and often there is only a gangway between them. Street trees are conspicuous by their absence and houses are so close to the sidewalk that only minimal private front yard space is available for planting. Thus, it is essential to invest significantly in a
creative strategy to improve Pilsen’s physical condition and increase the amount of green space. Key projects include:

1. Model Blocks
2. Open Space Improvements
3. Community Gardens
4. Neighborhood Planting Program
5. Community Volunteer Clean-Up
6. Improved Garbage Pick-Up

Model Blocks

TRP’s Block Club Network will continue to work with the City to assure that the neighborhood receives physical maintenance, such as replacing gutters and curbs in poor condition. Certain blocks will be identified and recognized as positive assets of the community, reflecting neighborhood culture and advancement. Their impact is widely felt, given that the block infrastructure is dramatically enhanced. They galvanize local residents to improve their homes and contribute to feelings of neighborhood ownership.

Open Space Improvements

This project will focus on increasing beautification efforts through streetscape and maintenance improvements to attract more social outdoor activity and continue to enhance the beautification of the community. Recommendations include signage and landscaping treatment along pedestrian sidewalks and streets that have a similar design theme as the Guadalupano Plaza site, and installation of a landscaped pedestrian promenade which links the CFG Plaza to the Orozco School Expansion and the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum.

Community Gardens

Available, unused vacant lots, that have been identified as being suitable, could be reused as community floral or vegetable gardens. Another initiative in this area might be a community-wide planter and box garden initiative. Such planters can border buildings and window sills throughout the community.

Neighborhood Planting Program

Recommendations in this area include improving the streetscape conditions to beautify the neighborhood. Features such as trees and street corner planting areas might be considered, following a design theme approved by block club representatives. It is envisioned that all improvements will comply with maintenance standards. Potential partnerships can be created to ensure maintenance by relevant block clubs, the Chicago Park District and other organizations.

Community Volunteer Clean-Up

TRP Block Club leaders have organized youth in a neighborhood clean-up effort as a summer activity. In addition to being a social activity, the program increases environmental awareness.

Improved Garbage Pick-Up

TRP organizers will work to develop a leadership team of block clubs to launch a pilot collection and recycling campaign to address the problem of overflowing garbage in alleys. The responsibility for designing the specifics of this program will rest with the leadership team. However, TRP and local leaders will also work with the Department of Streets and Sanitation to facilitate improvements in this area.
7. INVEST IN YOUTH THROUGH EDUCATION AND RECREATION

Youth are at the center of any immigrant community. The residents of the Pilsen neighborhood are young; 30% are under the age of 14, and of these, 36% live below the poverty line. Further, young adults also comprise a large part of the population. In many respects, the move to this country, and this community, was prompted, in part, by the goal of making life better for one’s children. Thus, establishing Pilsen as a place in which one’s children can grow, learn and prosper is critical to the success of TRP’s mission. There is much to do within this strategy. The focus is in two areas - ensuring both educational and recreational opportunities for youth. The following projects have been developed for this purpose.

1. College Campaign
2. Catholic School Initiative
3. Youth At Risk
4. La Casa
5. Summer Youth Activities
6. Play Streets
7. Tot Lots
8. Park-School Linkage

**College Campaign**

This campaign represents an organizing effort to motivate parents and students to pursue the benefits of all levels of education by raising their consciousness regarding the link between successful early education, college entrance and achievement. The goal of the campaign is to enroll more Latino youth in higher education, whether it is attending a four-year college or university, two-year college or a vocational/technical training initiative.

In addition, this effort will provide young adults guidance and resources so that they may make informed choices about their college options. It involves parents participating in monitoring their child’s academic performance and working with teachers to promote higher education. This program provides young adults resource assistance with career counseling, financial assistance through grants, scholarships and loans, and discussion sessions about living on campus away from home. Volunteers recruited from the TRP’s member institutions and leadership are to organize program activities throughout the community.

As envisioned, this college campaign will not be limited to students ready to enter college. TRP leaders will also initiate a community-wide education campaign which will focus on ensuring that all our...
children are prepared for college. This campaign will include parent involvement in local schools, education on how parents can measure the success of their children in school, and how parents should work with their children’s teachers. The program will be organized by a leadership team who will work with their neighbors, churches and local schools. It will include elementary, high school and college education. It also will assist high school students in learning about their college options. The emphasis of this campaign is to provide Pilsen parents with the tools and resources they need to be leaders in their children’s education, enabling their children to obtain a college education. TRP will also explore ensuring that this program has staff and a permanent funding stream.

Catholic School Initiative

Declining enrollment in Catholic schools threatens the viability of these assets within the Pilsen community. Under this initiative, members from the parochial community and local community and TRP staff will work together to create a plan to develop and implement a marketing program to increase the viability of area Catholic schools and to develop an educational fund to provide scholarships to eligible students.

Youth At Risk

This initiative engages youth, particularly at-risk youth, to reflect upon their lives and engage in positive social outlets. It is a partnership of TRP and St. Pius V Church, through Casa Juan Diego, resulting from meetings between TRP leaders, block club members and local social service agencies that are engaged in a process to develop activities that provide youth various positive social outlets. An example of activities that have come out of the process is the involvement of former gang members acting as positive role models to at-risk youth by organizing recreational activities to counteract the negative influences and pressures to join local gangs.

La Casa

TRP will renovate the now vacant St. Adalbert Convent for use as a unique college dormitory for up to 25 local area college students. This dormitory will provide housing opportunities for young Latinos/Latinas to explore their faith and potential for leadership through reflection, living in community, service and action. In addition, it will provide space for several of TRP family-based programs including Esperanza Familiar, Supportive Housing, the Education Resource Center and community organizing.

Summer Youth Activities

It is important to provide augmented youth activities during the summer months to take advantage of increased leisure time and help to encourage the growth of positive social skills. Two key projects include:

Summer Basketball Tournament

This project will serve as a recreational and social interaction activity for youth throughout the neighborhood. Organized by the TRP Block Club Network, youth will participate in regular Friday night tournaments played at one of the seventeen block club locations throughout the neighborhood during the summer. This activity engages the youth, their parents, and community members in a positive community activity.
**Summer Youth Camp**

The Summer Youth Camp will serve as a common ground for youth throughout the community to interact with each other and participate in various educational, recreational and social activities. This camp will be held at the Centro Familiar Guadalupano on a regular schedule throughout the summer season.

**Play Streets**

Tot lots are good for tots, not for active, independent children of school age. They need places to run, play sports, and socialize. They also need to be close to home. Two parks in all of Pilsen, plus several school playgrounds, do not fully address this need. Unless additional neighborhood parks can be constructed, an alternative is to establish a series of formal play streets, which are located in areas of moderate to low traffic and can be closed for a specific period during the day to accommodate children. Figure 3 identifies some sites for these streets which, whenever possible, are located to expand the minimal open space around elementary schools. Discussions will be held with the Chicago Department of Transportation and the Police Department to determine the feasibility of formalizing such play streets.

**Tot Lots**

Parents of these children should be able to take infants and youngsters to playgrounds and sitting areas convenient to their homes. This means that a tot lot, or equivalent, should be accessible within approximately two blocks from all residences. Figure 3 identifies the potential location of additional tot lots, which would help central Pilsen meet this standard. We recognize that the Chicago Park District has tremendous maintenance responsibilities and may not have the resources for continued maintenance of such facilities. However, we believe that the Park District must undertake the initial construction. TRP would work to secure local sponsors, such as block clubs and local businesses, to provide the maintenance.

TRP will work to encourage the Park District to build additional neighborhood parks within Pilsen to the degree that suitably sited vacant land which can be redeveloped can be found. The need for tot lots or other small play areas is vital to the community, since Pilsen is home to many large families with small children.
Park-School Linkage

Existing schools in Pilsen lack any significant outdoor play space. For example, Juarez High School only has some two acres of open space and lacks any meaningful complement of outdoor athletic facilities. The present Orozco and Cooper Schools have no useable outdoor play space. Some actions are being taken to rectify this problem. Landscaped play space is provided as part of the new Walsh School and the proposed new Orozco School will provide outdoor space as well.

This linkage should be reflected in the design along 18th Street between Damen Avenue and Wood Street as well as in the development of a promenade through Harrison Park that can link residential areas to the south and the Fine Arts Center to the new Orozco School. Additional opportunities may also be found in other parts of the community and such linkages should be considered in the location of any future neighborhood parks within the community.

8. SUPPORT STRONG FAMILIES AND STRONG LEADERSHIP

TRP’s mission is to build relationships and challenge people to act on their faith and values to create a healthy community. We are committed to demonstrating our capacity to build institutional power, develop community leadership and implement effective housing, family and economic development projects within the community. To do this, TRP prepares leaders to actively participate in both local and metropolitan-wide issues. It currently has a network of community leaders throughout its membership. At present, some 90 individuals actively participate on TRP’s Board of Directors, leadership teams, and volunteers. Leadership at all levels is important to TRP as is reflected below:

TRP Member Churches

TRP is an institution-based organization of 14 Catholic parishes in the Pilsen, Little Village and Back of the Yards communities. Five of the parishes are in the Pilsen planning area. These parishes are the founding members of TRP and continue to provide critical leadership to its Board of Directors and its programs.
TRP Leadership Teams

The original vision for the Plaza was developed by TRP’s founding leaders. It has been further developed by a Plaza Leadership Team of 18 persons representing institutions, block clubs and community organizations through two retreats and monthly meetings. TRP’s leadership teams in the areas of health, safety, families, housing, economic development and education will be critical to ensuring the successful implementation of this plan.

TRP Block Clubs

TRP has an expanded network of 17 block clubs, seven of which are located within the Pilsen planning area. TRP staff work with the leadership of these block clubs to implement a collective agenda which focuses on creating safe streets, a cleaner and greener community, and implementing summer activities for neighborhood youth.

Family Services Programs

The award winning Esperanza Familiar Program, started by TRP with assistance from NCI, is a community-wide leadership effort focused on strengthening the bond within families through five key sets of program services: preventive education for parents, crisis intervention counseling for families, adolescent support groups, domestic violence support groups and leadership development. Its faith-based approach to parenting and mental health issues fosters stronger families and enables civic participation. All classes are offered in a bilingual/bi-cultural setting, and the majority of program participants are monolingual Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrants. Last year, nearly 100 parents graduated from this program and more than 500 hours of counseling service were provided.

Supportive Housing

The Supportive Housing program of TRP also works to build strong families by providing housing and comprehensive case management to 14 formerly homeless women and their children. For up to two years, they receive support to increase their emotional and economic self-sufficiency and independence by developing life skills and capacities that result in better management of their own lives, obtaining permanent housing, and actively participating in their community.
IV. IMPLEMENTING THE VISION

The Resurrection Project recognizes that it cannot carry out these strategies and related projects alone. Implementation of this ambitious Quality of Life Plan will require the involvement of the city, other local groups, private businesses, and local institutions. TRP’s role, in addition to taking prime responsibility for implementation of the Plaza and related projects, will be to work to encourage a community-wide effort by coordinating the efforts of interested parties, seeking investment from within, and beyond, our community, and acting as a rallying point for all in the community to get involved and support the Plan.

A key component of this effort is to secure the commitment of outside funders and implementers for the host of projects outlined in this Plan. The following chart outlines the scope of the Plan, its strategies and its projects. Listed in this table are proposed timelines for each project, and those groups or entities which have committed to, or are targeted for, leadership of each project. The degree to which each project supports one or more of the Plan’s strategies is also indicated here.

TRP cannot carry out this plan alone. It needs the commitment and involvement of other local groups, businesses, and the people of Pilsen to bring about “un pueblo dentro de la ciudad” - the village in the city.
## PILSEN QUALITY OF LIFE PLAN WORK PROGRAM

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<tr>
<td><strong>I. BUILD VILLAGE CENTER</strong></td>
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<td>A. Build Centro Familiar Guadalupano (CFG) Plaza</td>
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<td>B. Complete CFG Cultural Center</td>
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<td>C. Renovate Community Resource Center</td>
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<td>D. Expand Parking</td>
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<td>E. Enhance 18th Street Streetscape</td>
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<td><strong>II. STRENGTHEN PILSEN’S ECONOMY</strong></td>
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<td>A. Create Resurrection Employment Resource Center</td>
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<td>B. Improve Access to Capital Expand Resurrection Loan Fund Develop Community Development Financial Institution</td>
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<td>C. Create Cultural and Mercado Initiative</td>
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<td>D. Revitalize 18th Street Commercial Corridor</td>
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<td>Implement Business Owners Initiative</td>
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<td>III. PRESERVE AND EXPAND AFFORDABLE HOUSING</td>
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<td>A. Increase Home Ownership</td>
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<td>B. Develop Affordable Housing</td>
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<td>IV. IMPROVE OUR HEALTH</td>
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<td>A. Create Centro de Salud Familiar - Health Center</td>
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<td>V. CREATE A SAFER NEIGHBORHOOD</td>
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<td>C. Improve Outdoor Lighting</td>
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<td>VI. CREATE A CLEANER AND GREENER NEIGHBORHOOD</td>
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<td>A. Develop Model Blocks</td>
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<td>C. Create Community Gardens</td>
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<td>D. Develop Neighborhood Planting Program</td>
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<td>E. Continue Community Volunteer Clean-up Campaign</td>
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<td>F. Improve Garbage Pick-Up</td>
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<td>VII. INVEST IN YOUTH THROUGH EDUCATION AND RECREATION</td>
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<td>A. Initiate College Campaign</td>
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<td>C. Work with Youth At Risk</td>
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<td>VIII. SUPPORT STRONG FAMILIES AND STRONG LEADERSHIP</td>
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