

RE:NEW

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ASSEMBLY CELEBRATES NCP ACCOMPLISHMENTS, HEROES

By Ed Finkel



The Community Heroes assembled for a group shot, above. "Working hard in your community should be like breathing, it should be a natural thing," said East Garfield Park Hero Dwayne Truss, eighth from left. Read about all the heroes at www.newcommunities.org

More than 300 agency staff, city leaders, funders and supporters gathered Nov. 30 at the Palmer House Hilton to celebrate the accomplishments of the New Communities Program and to honor 28 community heroes.

"What you are doing is serious. It directly affects the lives of Chicagoans all across the city," said Andrew Mooney, LISC/Chicago's senior program director. "Today's program is intended to invigorate all of us."

Nearly 4,000 people across 16 neighborhoods have participated in quality-of-life planning processes, said Jesus Garcia, executive director of lead agency Little Village Community Development Corp., and the resulting plans have led to, or leveraged, \$255 million in investments.

"Good things are happening because of the good decisions we made five years ago [when NCP was conceived]," Garcia said. "We are making a difference, and with your support we will continue to transform our communities."

City "100 percent supportive"

NCP has the firm support of Mayor Daley, said Lori Healey, commissioner of the city's Department of Planning and Development. "He is absolutely, unequivocally 100 percent supportive of the New Communities Program," she said. "It was very clearly his priority ... and his expectation that everybody in the city use these [quality-of-life] plans to guide our actions."

Those plans will not collect dust on a shelf, Healey promised. "As we set up TIFs, and land financing, we will keep these plans in mind." She added that her department would use as a guide NCP's new Community Investment Portfolio, which highlights a catalytic project in each neigh-

borhood (see page 2).

Jack Markowski, commissioner of the Department of Housing, presented awards to 28 "Community Heroes" chosen by NCP lead agencies and collaborators. They received a standing ovation from the packed ballroom.

The heroes are "emblematic of all the great effort" going on across the city, Markowski said. "Our community heroes have a deep and abiding commitment to their neighborhoods and the city of Chicago."

Also pledging continued support was Jonathan Fanton, president of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, which has provided \$21 million for NCP-related work over the past five years.

Dreams are becoming reality, "not by luck, but by the creative hard work of everybody in this room," he said. "We are pleased with the progress we see, and you can count on our continued support. We are with you."

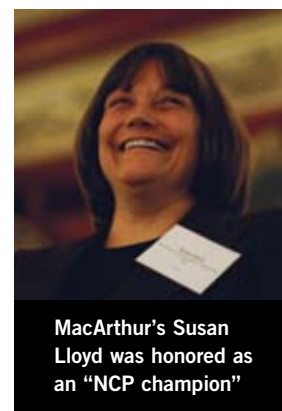
Some might have doubted how do-able the plans were at the outset, Fanton said, but "your tangible accomplishments will prove the skeptics wrong. ... The early projects are not just isolated success stories but part of a comprehensive and coherent plan of action, which is what makes them powerful. They touch our souls, speak to practical needs and inspire investors to commitment."

Faith and partnerships

MacArthur program director Susan Lloyd received a warm sendoff as she transitions away from her MacArthur position to become an independent consultant.

Carlos Nelson, executive director of the Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corp., described Lloyd as "NCP champion," "true

believer in what we do," "great friend" and "a tireless advocate for all of us." The Heroes booklet, he pointed out, was dedicated to Lloyd.



MacArthur's Susan Lloyd was honored as an "NCP champion"

"If you have faith, it will happen," said Lloyd, beaming with pleasure. "And I have always had faith in community development."

Bernita Johnson-Gabriel, NCP director at Quad Communities Development Corp., reminded the gathering

that success doesn't often come easily.

"Partnerships are key to what we do. They are much like a marriage," she said. "They require attention. They require nurturing. Know when to talk. Know when to listen. ... Do these things, and it will guarantee that these projects will be successful, and no one, but no one, will have to sleep on the sofa."

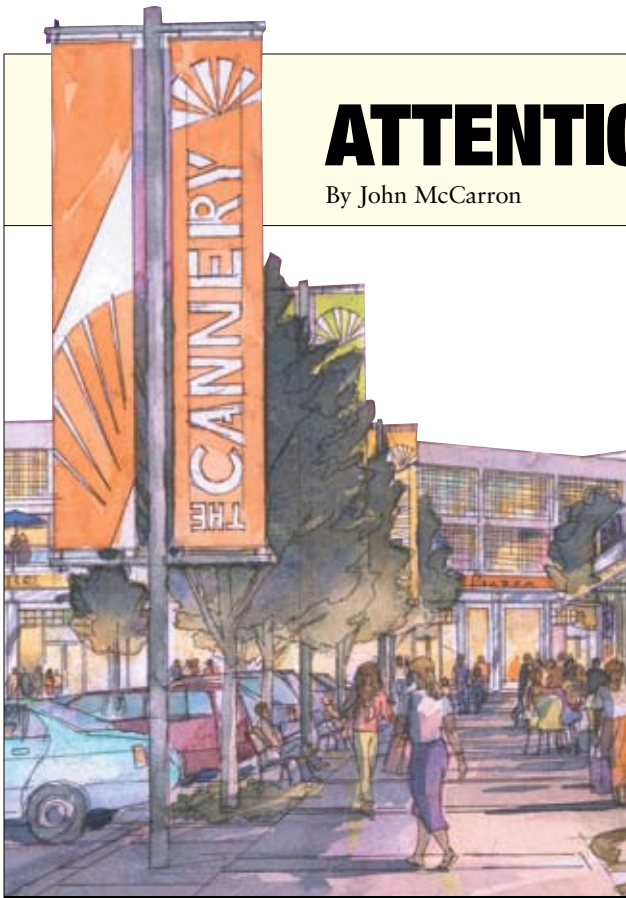
Jim Capraro, executive director of the Greater Southwest Development Corp., reflected on the maturation of the community development field during his 35 years of service. He noted that the investment portfolio is ambitious, but achievable, because the NCP groups have the needed skills.

"The field has decided to evolve," Capraro said. "We can change our neighborhoods. We can deliver a better quality of life for these people in these places with these projects. We have decided. We will accomplish this investment portfolio and, quite frankly, much more."

Read more and download the "Community Heroes" and "Investment Portfolio" publications at www.newcommunities.org

ATTENTION INVESTORS: THE NCP PORTFOLIO

By John McCarron



The Cannery will anchor neighborhood redevelopment.

Chicago has no shortage of investment opportunities . . . and some of the most promising do not overlook Millennium Park or Wacker Drive. They are waiting to be discovered in the city's neighborhoods, especially those too long overlooked by investors more focused on downtown and the city's lakefront.

To make the point, every NCP lead agency recently put forward one of its best opportunities as part of a "Community Investment Portfolio" that was unveiled and displayed at the Nov. 30 assembly at the Palmer House.

The 14 projects range in size from a \$62 million shopping mall in Chicago Southwest to a \$275,000 auto repair garage in Englewood. The range is even wider for sheer creativity, from converting an empty convent in Pilsen into a college dormitory to building affordable housing on the very site in North Lawndale where the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once lived. Most projects sprang from each neighborhood's comprehensive quality-of-life plan. When implemented, they will mark a \$245-million-plus investment in NCP neighborhoods by the public, non-profit and—most importantly—private sectors.

"This is about people, places and projects," James Capraro, executive director of the Greater Southwest Development Corporation told those gathered at the Palmer House. "Look around the room at these projects. We don't look like scruffy little neighborhood development groups, do we?"

Below is a summary of the Portfolio. For complete details, request a printed copy or download the PDF file at www.newcommunities.org

Auburn Gresham: Green and Energy-Efficient Renovation

An empty, city-owned building at 934 W. 79th St. will be rehabbed using energy-efficient materials and methods. Below three affordable apartments will be an office for Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corp. plus meeting spaces for computer classes, personal finance instruction and help with income tax returns.

Chicago Southwest: Cannery Shopping Center

The Cannery at 61st Street and Western Avenue will be a "neighborhub" of stores, restaurants and other "walk-to" destinations on a busy corner. General Growth Properties, one of the world's largest shopping center developers, is working with Greater Southwest Development Corporation to build up to 375,000 sq. ft. of retail space. The center will incorporate existing stores, including a Jewel-Osco, and expand onto adjacent vacant land.

East Garfield Park: Madison Street ROADMAP

Systematic redevelopment of the West Madison Street commercial district, from Damen to Central Park Avenues, is the aim of the feasibility and marketing consortium known as Retail Opportunities And Design, the Madison Advisory Partnership. A market survey by the University of Illinois at Chicago shows population and auto traffic will support a restaurant, 40,000 sq. ft. of retail/apparel space and more. ROADMAP will produce marketing materials and field an agent to tell the story.

Englewood: Chicagoland Auto Repair Service (CARS)

This career training program for mechanics at Kennedy-King City College seeks to open an off-campus repair shop in a building at 59th and Green Streets. Working with partners such as Ford Motor Company, Daimler-Chrysler and EmployAmerica, CARS trains and places at-risk youth and adults in jobs where starting pay averages \$30,500-a-year.



CARS instructor Clinton Hall with students.

Humboldt Park: Mural Arts Program

Not a real estate project so much as a statement of community spirit and strength, the program will install 10 original murals by local artists at prominent locations. Each will reaffirm Humboldt Park as a culturally distinct neighborhood and emphasize the connections among, and contributions by, Puerto Ricans, African-Americans and Mexicans. Artists will craft two murals a year through 2011.

Little Village: Park Campaign

A collaboration among the neighborhood, city, park district and public schools, the campaign seeks demolition of the empty Washburne Trade School at 3100 S. Kedzie Ave. and creation of a two-block recreational campus anchored by a badly-needed public park and community facilities.

Logan Square: School-to-School Armitage Housing

Sixty units of family rental housing above storefront and restaurant spaces will be built along a mile-long stretch of Armitage Avenue from Humboldt Boulevard to Springfield Avenue. New construction will fill six vacant lots, now a hazard to children going to six nearby schools and three nearby parks. The project will link families, schools and affordable housing in a common corridor.

North Lawndale: Dr. Martin Luther and Coretta Scott King, Jr. Memorial District

A memorial to Dr. King will be the centerpiece of a two-block campus devoted to affordable housing, a new park and a community center at 16th Street and Hamlin Avenue. In 1966 Dr. King moved his family into a walk-up apartment there, drawing national attention to slum conditions across the urban North. That building, like so many in North Lawndale, was later torn down.

Pilsen: La Casa College Dormitory

The former St. Adalbert convent on 17th Street west of Ashland Avenue will be converted into a 70-student dormitory and study center for young adults attending area colleges and universities. Besides 19 single rooms and 31 doubles, La Casa will feature a drop-in study center for current and prospective collegians complete with a computer lab and conference rooms.



Pilsen dormitory will be built in this former convent.

Quad Communities: Cottage Grove Corridor Initiative

This marketing, beautification and maintenance plan sets the stage for redevelopment of a 12-block stretch of this historic Bronzeville avenue into a shopping venue with a strong residential component. Mixed-use projects already are being attracted, in part, by the Cleanslate upkeep program and streetscape designs by local art students that say "You've arrived at The Grove."

South Chicago: Steel Town to Green Town

Partnering with developers, the community will build energy-efficient and affordable "green" homes on city-owned vacant lots between 83rd and 92nd Streets outside the gates of the demolished USX South Works steel mill. Developers will work closely with the new Chicago Community Land Trust.

West Haven: Haven Square Shopping Center

This 65,000 sq. ft. retail center at the southeast corner of Madison Street and Western Avenue will feature the first grocery/supermarket on the Near West Side since the devastation caused by the 1968 riots and subsequent wave of disinvestment. The project creates 107 jobs and eliminates an unhealthy "food desert."

Woodlawn: String Instrument Program

Forty young people, ages 6-12, will learn to play the violin, viola or cello at a series of 30 Saturday sessions at Andrew Carnegie public school. Instructors from The Music Institute of Chicago will employ the Suzuki method, involve parents in the learning and make rental instruments available at an affordable rate. The program supports Woodlawn's aspiration to be a mixed-income community with a strong housing market.



A model program is already underway.

“BEACON OF LIGHT” SHINES IN LAWNSDALE

By Ed Finkel



PHOTO BY ED FINKEL

Shannon Jefferson helped paint the mural and learned that “it takes people working together.”

When about 100 North Lawndale area residents gathered Nov. 21 for the 35th annual Thanksgiving Luncheon of the Westside Association for Community Action Network (WACA), they had an extra reason to give thanks. They were treated to a new community asset: a half-block mural along the side of WACA's building painted this summer and fall by about 20 area youth under the tutelage of Pilsen-based artist Rahmaan Statik.

While filling up on delicious servings of ham, turkey, stuffing, collard greens and pumpkin pie, attendees heard about—and then had a chance to go outside and take in—the new “Beacon of Light” mural, which is part of the North Lawndale Public Art Corridor. That’s a larger effort to create three outdoor murals and four bricolage mosaics through youth-artist collaborations within the service area of NCP lead agency Lawndale Christian Development Corp.

“Beacon of Light,” which faces northeastward at the corner of Ogden and Central Park, took four months to paint and sports high-contrast colors so it's visible from several blocks away, said Statik, who had finished the credits at the far end of the mural that morning.

“The young people, community residents and WACA staff held a series of meetings to come up with the ideas,” he said. “I drew it all up, made the big shapes and had [the youth] block in the giant spaces of color.”

“We are extremely proud today to present it to the com-

munity,” said Ernie Jenkins, CEO and executive director of WACA. “Residents and passersby on Central Park have a conversation piece. I just watch the passersby and the impact it has on them. The community is embracing this.”

Youth who participated have the thrill of being able to think, “I did this,” Jenkins added. “The impact it's had on our youth is just tremendous.” A couple of the young artists live right across the alley, he said.

Precious Norah, a freshman at Collins High School, said she helped to paint some of the white blocks of color as well as people’s faces and clothing. She also helped paint a mural at her school and would like to do more. “You have to know how to stencil your picture on the wall before you draw it,” she said.

The mural project was a first for Shannon Jefferson, a freshman at Farragut High School, though he's long been an artist. He learned that “it takes people working together” and enjoyed the process of “going from the drawing to real life, and how we put all the colors together.”

Both Norah and Jefferson came to the project through the Chicago Public Schools’ After School Matters program, which has supported it along with LISC, LCDC, the Chicago Public Art Group, the Woods Fund, and the Steans Family Foundation.

The first bricolage mosaic in the Public Art Corridor was completed in 2005, and the partners hope to complete the project in 2007.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

CITGO to support high school health center

The CITGO Petroleum Corporation announced in November a donation of \$400,000 to the Little Village Community Development Corporation (LVDC) to support the start-up of a school-based health center at the Little Village Lawndale High School Campus.

The health center is a response to the documented lack of access to quality health care in Latino and African-American neighborhoods. Given that generally adolescents do not make doctors' visits on their own, the school-based health center will make it easier for them to receive the type of health education, awareness and services they need to lead healthy lives and do well in school.

The center will be located at the Little Village Lawndale High School Campus, 3120 S. Kostner, with health services provided by the Dr. Jorge Prieto Community

Health Center. To build awareness and develop appropriate services, LVDC is holding focus groups with parents and students and conducting needs assessment surveys. For more information, contact Christina Bronsing at LVDC, (773) 542-9233, ext. 15.



Little Village leaders show off the check that will get the health center going.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LVDC

LSNA active on Milwaukee Avenue issues

The Logan Square Neighborhood Assn. had a busy fall playing a leadership role on Milwaukee Avenue property and business issues.

One focus has been the triangular Morris B. Sachs building on the 2800 block of North Milwaukee. More than 200 residents turned out at a Nov. 13 meeting hosted by Ald. Rey Colón to discuss future use of the building. LSNA has been educating neighbors about its

use as supportive housing and gathered signatures from 100 residents and 16 nearby businesses in support of that use. Delia Ramirez, executive director of Humboldt Park Social Services and LSNA president, urged creation of a multi-use building “that would have business, services and affordable housing on site. Both staff and residents would support local businesses in the area; it’s a win-win for all of us.”

LSNA is also working with merchants in the recently reopened Logan Square MegaMall, 2500 N. Milwaukee, to negotiate fair rental agreements with the owner. The mall had been closed for building violations in 2005, spurring creation of a Merchants Association among the more than 100 small businesses that had operated in the mall. At a rally outside the mall on Nov. 22, Ramirez called on the owner to meet with the merchants committee and negotiate a fair lease.



Mariano Kon, owner of Mini Botanica and one of the leaders of the Comité Comerciantes del MegaMall, addresses the crowd.

PHOTO BY MARCELO FERRER

Bickerdike wins two national awards

NCP lead agency Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation’s approach to community development has been recognized with two prestigious national awards.

The 2006 Maxwell Award for Excellence, Most Impressive Overall Affordable Housing Benefit, from the Fannie Mae Foundation, recognizes the agency’s reclamation of vacant land in southeast Humboldt

Park through development of the Harold Washington Unity Cooperative.

The 2006 Jim and Patty Rouse Award for Excellence in Community Development, from Enterprise Community Partners, Inc., recognizes Bickerdike’s well-rounded and comprehensive approach to neighborhood revitalization by and for local community residents.

Humboldt's healthy 'Challenge' up and running

By Ed Finkel

Many people talk a good game about eating healthier, exercising more and losing weight. But employees from seven agencies in Humboldt Park aren't playing around.

The group has launched a pilot “Healthy Lifestyles Challenge,” through which participating employees will measure their progress in reducing weight and body fat, pursuing exercise opportunities and attending nutrition education sessions.

“We’re going to tally all the data and see what worked and didn’t work,” said Mayra Hernandez, NCP director for Bickerdike Redevelopment Corp.

The six-month project started in November and organizers hope it will lead to a community-wide initiative next summer. Participating agencies include Association House, Bickerdike, Centro San Bonifacio, Erie Family Health, McCormick Tribune YMCA, West Town Leadership United, and the Puerto Rican Cultural Center’s CO-OP Humboldt Park (Community Organizing for Obesity Prevention) project. Others may yet join up.

The Healthy Lifestyles Challenge furthers

a key plank of the Humboldt Park quality-of-life plan, which calls for creating “a community of wellness where health is a dimension of community improvement.”

The health issue was underscored in a Sinai Urban Health Institute survey that showed 37 percent of people in Humboldt Park would be considered overweight and another 35 percent obese.

To slim down those figures, a coordinator at each organization will collect and record individuals’ weight and body fat, along with their frequency of exercise as measured by average number of daily “steps.” The latter is a rating system developed by the YMCA’s “Activate America” program to capture the relative health benefits of everything from aerobic dancing to yoga (see www.america-onthefly.org).

Jeanette Robles, executive director at the YMCA, noted that “focusing entirely on weight would be discouraging” and not the only relevant measure. Tracking steps “might be the light bulb: ‘Maybe I need to be a little bit more active,’” she said.

NCP neighborhoods and lead agencies

The New Communities Program supports comprehensive community development in 16 Chicago neighborhoods. A lead agency in each neighborhood coordinates efforts and leads a quality-of-life planning process to determine improvement strategies. LISC/Chicago provides technical assistance, seed money for projects and support for two staff members at each lead agency.

Auburn Gresham

Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corp.

Chicago Lawn

Greater Southwest Development Corp.

Douglas, Grand Boulevard and North Kenwood-Oakland

Quad Communities Development Corp.

East Garfield Park

Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance

Englewood

Teamwork Englewood

Humboldt Park

Bickerdike Redevelopment Corp.

Little Village (South Lawndale)

Little Village Community Development Corp.

Logan Square

Logan Square Neighborhood Assn.

North Lawndale

Lawndale Christian Development Corp.

Pilsen (Lower West Side)

The Resurrection Project

South Chicago

Southeast Chicago Development Commission

Washington Park

St. Edmund's Redevelopment Corp.

West Haven (Near West Side)

Near West Side Community Development Corp.

Woodlawn

Woodlawn Preservation and Investment Corp.

AS CONFERENCE SPREADS CWF METHODS, MACARTHUR KICKS IN \$3 MILLION MORE

By John McCarron

Earn it. Keep it. Grow it. Like the program's unofficial motto, good things seem to come in 3's for Chicago's growing network of Centers for Working Families.

Make that three million – the dollar amount of a new and expanded investment in CWF announced December 6 by Jonathan Fanton, president of The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

"We see this is a promising and path-breaking opportunity for putting low-wage families on the path to economic independence," Fanton told a national gathering of philanthropy executives and anti-poverty experts at a two-day Chicago "Leadership Conference" on CWF.

He went on to cite what is being accomplished by the nine Centers for Working Families now operating in Chicago neighborhoods: more than 22,000 individuals and families assisted; more than 3,000 helped to find jobs that pay, on average, over \$9 an hour; thousands helped to file their income tax returns and claim earned-income credits averaging \$1,500; thousands choosing bank-rate financial services rather than predatory lenders and currency exchanges.



Participants learned that there is no cookie-cutter for CWFs; each must reflect the local community's culture

"We hope those of you here to 'kick-the-tires' will join us," Fanton urged the 100 community investors and practitioners. The confab was hosted by Chase Bank and sponsored by MacArthur, LISC and the originator of the CWF model – the Baltimore-based Annie E. Casey Foundation.

To date there are CWFs operating in 13 U.S. cities, though not all are as tightly meshed with comprehensive community development as in Chicago.

At a breakout session where local directors explained their programs, Juan Salgado, executive director of Chicago's Instituto del Progreso Latino, described the life-changing potential of a CWF that weds employment and financial services with more typical immigrant services such as citizenship prep and English classes.

"Help enough families become citizens, get good jobs, save up and

buy a home," he said, "and you can't help but create healthier communities."

One key take-away from the conference is that CWFs need not conform to a "cookie cutter" but can and should be tailored to the neighborhoods and populations they serve. Another is that CWF isn't so much a whiz-bang new idea as a pragmatic bundling of employment services with one-on-one financial counseling.

"People are poor for a lot of different reasons and that suggests a lot of different remedies," said Douglas Nelson, president of the Casey Foundation, citing the need for "hubs that combine, bundle and sequence existing resources."

"If we can earn the trust and participation of low-income families," Nelson said, "we may be on to something here that can make a very big difference."

To download new resources about CWFs, visit

www.newcommunities.org



MacArthur President Jonathan Fanton urged others to invest in or create CWFs.

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Senior Program Director,

LISC/Chicago: Andrew Mooney

Executive Editor: Joel Bookman

NCP Director: Susana Vasquez

Managing Editor: Patrick Barry
773-973-2169, barry.patrick@comcast.net

Contributing Editor: John McCarron

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1 N. LaSalle Street, 12th Floor Chicago, Illinois 60602

p 312.360.0800 f 312.360.0183 www.newcommunities.org

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