

RE:NEW

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The Englewood meeting included, from left, Emily Dunn, Teamwork Englewood's NCP director Wanda White-Gills, Mayor Daley and Corey Luckett.

PLANS 'EXTREMELY HELPFUL' SAYS DPD COMMISSIONER

By John McCarron

Lori T. Healey, Chicago's new commissioner of planning and development, "gets" the dynamics of neighborhood redevelopment as well as anyone who has ever held that key post.



Lori T. Healey The city's new commissioner of planning and development

Healey has advised and directed neighborhood projects for major architectural and planning firms, and in the public realm, both as the city's deputy commissioner of planning and as a board member of the Chicago Housing Authority. There she has helped guide the neighborhood-shaping Plan for Transformation. She is especially savvy in uses of tax increment financing, or TIF, which she has helped fine-tune into the city's main engine of neighborhood renewal.

So, while "turnover on Ten" inevitably makes neighborhood types hold their breath, Mayor Richard M. Daley's October selection of Healey for the top job on City Hall's tenth floor is cause for a collective sigh of relief.

Already the new commissioner is sitting in on meetings between Daley and delegations from NCP neighborhoods. "(NCP's) holistic approach to neighborhood development is a commendable undertaking," Healey told RE:NEW. "It's extremely helpful to me to go through the interests and concerns of neighborhood groups, all organized and prioritized."

Also impressive, Healey said, is the diversity of NCP neighborhoods, both demographically and in the variety of problems faced, with some dealing with galloping gentrification and displacement while others struggle with the more familiar problems of poverty and disinvestment.

Taking a cue from the mayor's recent budget message, in which Daley called for a citywide war on poverty, Healey promised stepped-up levels of collaboration between her office, schools, parks, the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development and the new Department of Children and Youth Services.

And those 1-on-1 meetings between the mayor and NCP neighborhoods?

"Oh, he listens. He's all ears. There's good interaction, good give-and-take. There's follow-up. This mayor is pumped about everything that has to do with neighborhoods."

And so, Healey might have added, is Chicago's new planning commissioner.

NCP GROUPS HAVE MEETINGS WITH MAYOR DALEY

By Patrick Barry

Leaders from NCP neighborhoods visited City Hall this fall for a series of fifth-floor meetings with Mayor Richard M. Daley. The 50-minute sit-downs came at the invitation of the mayor, who wanted to learn more about the neighborhood quality-of-life plans and how they are being implemented.

Nine of the 14 NCP groups had sent their delegations by press time. Participants reported that, true to his reputation, the mayor was intimately familiar with their neighborhoods and eager to discuss ideas for community improvement.

When Carlos Nelson of Auburn Gresham began his presentation on Sept. 29, Mayor Daley jumped right in, asking about a deteriorated motel at 79th and Vincennes. "That was supposed to be part of *my* presentation," responded Nelson to general laughter. The group went on to discuss possibilities for a large CTA property, ideas for bringing more retail to 79th Street and the neighborhood's strategy to market the community to young professionals and families.

The delegation from Chicago Lawn arrived to find their quality-of-life plan open on the mayor's table, "dog-eared and marked up." The meeting included an update on the neighborhood's campaign to reduce predatory lending, a presentation on leadership development by Edith Robles and a personal story from Earl Johnson about standing up to local gang members. Mayor Daley encouraged Johnson to keep working with community policing officers—and to let the Mayor's Office know if he needed any help.

This was the second time Robles and Johnson had shaken the mayor's hand, as they were the presenters on May 18, 2005, when communities

officially passed their quality-of-life plans to the mayor. Most groups sent those same representatives to the fifth-floor meetings, along with a board or staff member.

A favorite topic was education. When Karen King and Tyree Liddell from Woodlawn brought up schools, the mayor urged them to start early to prepare students for high school. To the Quad Communities delegation of Mary Steward and Leroy Square, Mayor Daley mentioned the need to boost skills of students who are entering the work force directly from high school. He urged the Logan Square group to promote Chinese-language classes, and told others of his desire to keep schools operating year-round.

Another big topic was redevelopment opportunities: the 26th and Kostner site in Little Village, now under new ownership; reuse of Logan Square's Cooper Lamp building for light manufacturing; and revitalization of Ogden Avenue in North Lawndale. Mayor Daley told the Quad Communities group that Drexel Boulevard's resurgence is "coming along beautifully" and agreed with local plans to bring retail development to Cottage Grove Avenue.

Also true to form, Mayor Daley at several points asked his aides to take a note on something and to follow up—"bring him in here," he said about one property owner. Sam Assefa, the mayor's deputy chief of staff for economic and physical development, attended most meetings. More recently, Lori Healey has been at the table as the Department of Planning and Development's new commissioner.

The rest of the mayoral meetings are expected to take place early in 2006.

HUMBOLDT PARK PARTNERS UP FOR ACTION

By John McCarron

Here's a quick NCP quiz:

1. Which of the 16 New Communities has had the most grants approved by LISC?
2. Which has spread its grants across the widest number of partners?
3. Which was the first to complete its quality-of-life plan, fully six months before last May's unveiling of all NCP plans?

Shout “No nos moverán!” (We will not be moved!) if your answer was Humboldt Park, led by Bickerdike Redevelopment Corp.

NCP is no horse race. The 16 neighborhoods are not competing—nor should they—to see which can be the first with the most. For one thing, there's a wide range of organizational capacity among the groups, from startups such as Teamwork Englewood to savvy veterans like Greater Southwest.

Still, when LISC recently computed its three-year summary of grants, covering everything from early-action projects such as community gardens to pre-development financing for affordable housing, there was no doubt which neighborhood led the

promote healthy lifestyles and delivery of clinical services. And a Center for Working Families is being organized to lift household financial fortunes.

Many of these projects are being executed not by Bickerdike, but by other organizations that, despite old rivalries, have rallied to the NCP banner.

“At first I was disappointed,” said Eliud Medina, whose Near Northwest Neighborhood Network once vied to be Humboldt Park's lead NCP agency. “But I've gotten over it. In a partnership you have to be flexible, to put your self-interest aside, so you can serve the community.”

Recruiting NNNN paid dividends, because during the '90s the network had pulled together its own coalition in a bid to win federal empowerment zone status. The zone went elsewhere, but the Humboldt Park Empowerment Partnership, or HPEP, lived on, tackling problems in a manner not unlike NCP.

“HPEP taught us we don't have to fight over scraps,” said Enrique Salgado, executive director of the Division Street Business Development Assn., which will manage La Estancia's commercial space. “It's better when each group does what it does best and we all work together.”

“NCP brought a new energy,” Salgado added, “and helped us expand into new areas” such as healthcare, safety and open space.

Shifting housing market

If there is a single gravitational force pulling everyone together, it's the shared belief that Humboldt Park, located smack in the path of North Side gentrification, needs to act swiftly and emphatically to save places for working families.

That's a tall order, especially east and south of the big park from which the neighborhood takes its name. The 2000 Census found that area was still predominantly Puerto Rican, but those are not fried plantains the customers are ordering at a new Wi-Fi internet café called Humboldt Pie at California and Augusta, where the menu features cappuccino and gourmet salads. Nor are limited-income families buying the mini-tower condos sprouting east of the park, with their granite countertops and master baths with whirlpools.

The pros at Bickerdike know what's coming. Founded in 1967 and one of the city's most respected community-based developers, with over 1,000 housing units to its credit, Bickerdike once raced to save affordable units in West Town, the neighborhood to the east. Condos there now fetch \$350,000 and more. As this pressure spreads to Humboldt Park, Bickerdike, with help from LISC and others, has responded with developments like the Harold Washington Unity Cooperative, 87 units built by its own Humboldt Construction Company on 18 vacant, city-owned lots.

Further west across Kedzie Avenue, the problem is not so much gentrification as old-fashioned blight and decay. Here NCP partners including Nobel Neighbors and the West Humboldt Park



Puerto Rican flags serve as a gateway to the Paseo Boricua retail corridor on Division.

Family and Community Development Council have begun reclaiming the hundreds of vacant lots where once stood working-class cottages, balloon frames and two-flats. Humboldt Park lost 3,900 dwelling units between 1980 and 2000, many of them in this African-American neighborhood.

“We just weren't on the city's policy map,” said Bill Howard, executive director of the West Humboldt Council.

Already the First Community Land Trust, with help from Ald. Walter Burnett, Jr. (27th), has taken control of 10 city-owned lots on North Avers and Hamlin Streets. They'll be redeveloped with single-family houses under the city's New Homes For Chicago program, then sold to moderate-income families. If a family later decides to move, they'd keep some, but not all, of the appreciated value. The trust would then sell to another family.

Howard sees the trust eventually reaching 100 member families, who would be encouraged to form block clubs and to participate in family financial counseling. With its focus on organizing residents, the West Humboldt trust may hold lessons for the citywide land trust being developed by Chicago's Department of Housing.

All of which shows what can happen when an NCP lead agency is willing to support, rather than control, the efforts of others. “A truly collaborative development,” is the way Bickerdike executive director Joy Arugete described the approach at the La Estancia groundbreaking. As for Bickerdike's success in snagging grants, NCP manager Dena Al-Khatib had a two-word explanation: “We ask.”

“We were an organized community to begin with,” she went on, referring to Bickerdike, NNNN and the rest. “So we had the ability to get things done right out of the gate. With us it (NCP) isn't about getting credit, it's about getting resources.”

Contact: Dena Al-Khatib, BRC, 773-278-5669; www.bickerdike.org, dal-khatib@bickerdike.org



An early action project helped neighborhood kids learn how to fix bicycles and ride them safely.

pack. And it's not a case of superior grantsmanship. They're getting it done. As of October, a Bickerdike performance audit showed substantial progress on 25 of the 55 projects in its quality-of-life plan. It showed a better than 2:1 leveraging of LISC grants, with total investment of \$1.3 million throughout the neighborhood.

Just getting started

In October, Bickerdike and partners broke ground on La Estancia, a \$21 million, 57-apartment residential-over-retail development on three sites along Division Street's Paseo Boricua business district. In West Humboldt Park, the city's first community-based land trust is identifying vacant lots for purchase—while the price is still right—for affordable housing. Lowell Elementary is adopting a “community school” format and an anti-violence Peace Games curriculum. A “Community of Wellness” has been formed to



Students painted ornamental flowers and planted real ones at Casal School's garden project.

Humboldt Park Community Area

POPULATION		
Population (2000)	65,836	Down 2.6 percent since 1990
Pop. Chg. (1960-2000)	Down 5,773	
Racial/Ethnic Makeup (2000)	47% Afr.-Amer. 48% Latino	18.8 percent of residents were foreign-born in 2000
HOUSING		
Housing units (2000)	19,834	Down by 543 units since 1990
Number of vacant units (2000)	2,004	Vacancy rate 10.1%
Owner-occupied housing (2000)	37.6%	Up 1.4% since 1990, trails city's average of 43.8%
INCOME		
Pop. below poverty level (2000)	31.1%	Up from 22% in 1990
Hshlds w/ pub. assistance (2000)	2,790 (15.6%)	5.9% received Section 8 housing assistance
Hshlds w/ income above \$35,000/year (2000)	2,790 (15.6%)	1,644 households had income above \$75,000.

Sources: U.S. Census data from www.chicagoareahousing.org and Local Community Fact Book Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1984 and 1995.



A diverse Humboldt Park crowd turned out for the La Estancia groundbreaking.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BICKERDIKE

PHOTO COURTESY OF BICKERDIKE

PHOTO BY ERIC YOUNG SMITH

PHOTO BY JUAN FRANCISCO HERNANDEZ

SEVEN LEAD AGENCIES CLIMBING ON-RAMP TO INTERNET

By Ed Finkel



NCP lead agencies that had piecemeal web sites—if they had them at all—spent the fall uploading content to the New Communities Program server in preparation for launching stand-alone web sites in early 2006.

The NCP web site absorbed 70 new articles from seven participating groups as they prepared background material and wrote stories about recent projects.

“It was a real carrot for the groups, who felt, ‘We would like to get our content out there,’” said Chinwe Onyeagoro, a consultant who trained participants on creating and uploading stories and photos. “Most of the work is writing the stories, creating the content.”

The project uses an economical common interface being developed by Webitects, whose “content management” system allows simple and frequent updating of the NCP web site at www.newcommunities.org. The new sites will share a “back-end” system for loading stories and photos, while allowing each group to choose its own colors, layouts and calendar formats. “They push a button and can start authoring,” said Paul Baker, president of Webitects. “The sites will look quite a bit different.”

Community portal

One of the more powerful features will be a community portal that can list schools, health clinics, businesses and other items of interest, Baker said. “It’s an easy, quick way to get a lot of information to the community,” he added. “It’s almost like a community newspaper.”

The \$80,000 estimated cost to LISC will be half that of building individual sites, said Susana Vasquez,

NCP deputy director. The learning curve was shortened as well. “Groups got a lot of technical assistance and support as they learned how to manage their own sites.”

Online presence

Interest in the project stemmed from two directions, Onyeagoro said. Several NCP groups that did not have web sites approached LISC about building them, while Quad Communities Development Corp. (QCDC) wanted to beef up its section of the NCP site. “Those two initial nibbles catalyzed LISC to start thinking about how it could help groups build more of an online presence,” Onyeagoro said.

Among the groups expressing interest was Logan Square Neighborhood Assn. (LSNA), which already had a web site. But LSNA’s site was visually unappealing, said NCP director Susan Yanun, and had not been updated often because, like most web sites, it required knowledge of html, or hypertext markup language. The system developed for NCP allows editors to manipulate stories and photos with few technical barriers.

“It seems like it’s going to be very user-friendly,” said Yanun, who has uploaded text in both English and Spanish.

QCDC’s site will reflect the organization’s growing status as a community information hub, says Bernita Johnson-Gabriel, NCP director.

“We felt that having a stand-alone web site would be beneficial to not only us, but the community,” she said.

QCDC and LSNA are likely to be the first sites launched at www.qcdc.org and www.lsna.net. Those addresses now lead to the NCP site but will be switched to the new sites as they go live.

Other participating organizations and their addresses are:

- Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corp.,** www.gagdc.org;
- Little Village Community Development Corp.,** www.littlevillagecdc.org;
- Near West Side Community Development Corp.,** www.nwscdc.org;
- St. Edmund’s Redevelopment Corp.,** www.sercchicago.org;
- Woodlawn Preservation Investment Corp.,** www.picwoodlawn.org.

JOEL BOOKMAN NAMED NCP DIRECTOR



After serving nearly a year as the interim director of the New Communities Program, Joel Bookman is taking on

the job full-time for LISC/Chicago. Bookman has been active in community development for nearly 30 years, including 23 years as executive director of the Lawrence Avenue Development Corp., which

spurred more than \$150 million worth of reinvestment and 3,500 new jobs in the Albany Park neighborhood.

He has also been a consultant in strategic planning and real estate development, and a lecturer in nonprofit management at the North Park University Graduate School of Business.

“It’s been great working with the neighborhood organizations and staffs over the last year and I look forward to a very productive 2006,” said Bookman.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD



PHOTO COURTESY LVDC

The celebration included music by the Afro-Caribbean ensemble Okokan.

Day of the Dead celebration at renovated Perez Plaza

By Jaime de Leon

More than 100 people crowded the newly renovated Manuel Perez Jr. Plaza in Little Village on Nov. 1 to take part in the Mexican holiday celebration known as Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead).

Typically celebrated on Nov. 2, Día de los Muertos is a day to remember loved ones that have passed away, honor their spirits and invite them back to the living world. The Little Village Community Development Corporation (LVDC) chose the day to unveil a mural that was created last summer by youth and local artists, and to bring out a

crowd to the plaza, which was renovated as an NCP early-action project.

Residents celebrated Day of the Dead by placing altars on the plaza in honor of loved ones. People also enjoyed the traditional punch, hot chocolate and “pan de los muertos.” The celebration ended with performances from Okokan, an Afro-Caribbean ensemble, and Nahui Ollin, a dance and musical group that performed ancient Aztec ritual dances.

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LSNA wins national leadership award

Logan Square Neighborhood Assn.’s work with schools has won the Ford Foundation’s Leadership for a Changing World award to “highlight the importance of community leadership in improving people’s lives.” LSNA was one of 17 organizations chosen from 1,000 applicants.

“Over the past 12 years, the LSNA Education Team has transformed the way schools and the people of the Logan Square neighborhood interact with one another, improving the lives of parents and their children,” the Ford award states.

“Today, the eight community-based schools are a national model for their effective approach to involving parents in school reform. Hundreds of families participate in literacy and health programs, adult education, school leadership training and community development, including affordable housing. According to LSNA’s Education Team, “We have an answer to the universal question: ‘How do you get parents involved?’ We have parent involvement that uses parents’ skills and knowledge to help schools.”

Cited as models for others were LSNA’s Community Learning Centers, the Parent Mentor and Literacy Ambassador programs, and the Nueva Generación “Grow Your Own Teachers” program.

Each awardee receives \$100,000 plus an additional \$15,000 to strengthen individual or organizational effectiveness. LSNA’s education team members are Ada Ayala, Lissette Moreno-Kuri, Leticia Barrera, Joanna Brown and Maria Alviso. **Contact:** Lissette Moreno-Kuri, 773-384-4370, lmorenokuri@lsna.net



PHOTO BY MARC POKEMPIER

LSNA’s award-winning education team.

First student teacher hired in Little Village

An effort that brings student teachers from Illinois State University (ISU) into Little Village schools notched a major success in November as a student teacher at Cardenas School, 2345 S. Millard Ave., was offered a permanent teaching position.

ISU elementary education student Ashley Thomas, a student teacher in the fall of 2005, was offered the job by Cardenas Principal Sylvia Ortiz.

Little Village Community Development Corp. is working with ISU, LISC, State Farm Insurance and Chicago Public Schools to develop a residential facility for ISU student-teachers in Little Village.

“This should be something we all

celebrate,” said ISU’s Robert E. Lee, director of the Chicago Teacher Education Pipeline Program. Thomas should be just the first, he said, “of many ISU students who will experience and embrace the vibrancy of Little Village and choose to start their professional careers in our community schools.”

The project’s partners are searching for the right building and location to build a state-of-the-art facility with residential space and rooms for community use. The project is part of Little Village’s quality-of-life plan.

Contact: Keri Blackwell, 312-697-8211, kblackwell@liscnet.org

Donation honors former NCP director Amanda Carney

The pioneering work of former New Communities Program director Amanda Carney was honored by a significant donation to LISC/Chicago’s recent capital campaign, which raised \$35 million from 66 donors.

Jim and Kay Mabie’s donation for NCP-related activities was made in Amanda’s name to acknowledge her role in shaping the program since its pilot phase as the New Communities Initiative (NCI). Amanda managed the planning processes for three communities under NCI and then led the launch of the much-larger NCP program covering 14 lead agencies. She resigned in

2005 to spend more time with her five children.

In a note to Amanda, LISC/Chicago Senior Program Director Andrew Mooney wrote that “The honor is so well-deserved. As I took Jim around on our tour, I pointed out to him any number of projects and programs that had your fingerprints on them in one way or another. You can be very proud of your legacy to the city and its neighborhoods, a legacy that will long endure, just as we are proud of you.”

“Congratulations from all of us for this fine recognition,” Mooney wrote. “And by the way, we miss you greatly.”

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.

FULL CIRCLE MAPPING PROJECT BRINGS COMMUNITY DATA ALIVE

By Satu Kumpulainen

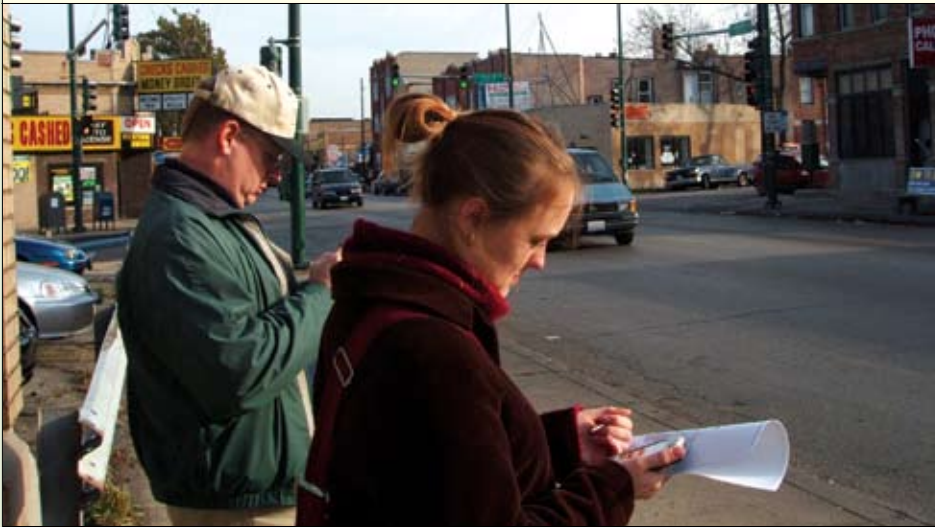


PHOTO BY SATU KUMPUAINEN

Reid Mackin (left) and Andrea Traudt map land usage along Grand Avenue in Humboldt Park.

On the sunny corner of Grand and Hamlin in Humboldt Park, a group of people from different community-based organizations meets to map local land usage. Using hand-held devices that record and transmit data about building type, condition, usage and size, the group works its way down the street and within two hours another stretch of Grand Avenue has been successfully recorded in a web-accessible database.

Collecting information is important along Grand because of the commercial corridor's location in between wards, neighborhood organizations and ethnic groups. Until recently, nobody had a real interest in developing the street, explains Reid Mackin, one of the mappers and the economic development coordinator at the West Humboldt Park Family and Community Development Council. The gap became clear during the Humboldt Park quality-of-life planning process, and now eight organizations are working together through the Grand Avenue Task Force.

Humboldt Park is one of three NCP neighborhoods participating

in Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission's (NIPC) Full Circle project, which helps communities inventory their assets to better target community development efforts. Each neighborhood has focused on different types of data:

Businesses Quad Communities Development Corp. developed a listing of 796 businesses and vacant business parcels. A second project focused on cleanliness and safety.

Bungalows Greater Southwest Development Corp. mapped 1,399 bungalows and 700 other properties. Seminars and door-to-door promotion of the Chicago Historic Bungalow Initiative led to 94 new applications for bungalow certification, which qualifies owners for reinvestment and energy-efficiency subsidies.

Land use Bickerdike Redevelopment Corp. is working on the Grand Avenue project and another mapping effort in a residential area. The information will be used when drawing up zoning recommendations for Chicago's Zoning Remap.

"The system is very easy to use and it works in 'real time,'" says Livia Villarreal, who along with Cynthia Stewart has mapped four complete census tracts in Chicago Lawn. "When you click save, the data is transmitted by cell phone to the database, and then you and others can access it (using a password) from the Full Circle web site." Each property is identified by type of construction, building condition and whether it is a certified bungalow.

Chicago Lawn's NCP director Donna Stites says Full Circle's potential is huge because each certified owner is eligible for up to \$8,500 worth of subsidies through four separate programs. The Illinois Housing Development Authority, for instance, will provide a 100 percent match on certain improvements, up to \$5,000.

The Southwest Side has only 400 certified bungalows right now among the uncounted thousands that make up the area's bungalow belt. If mapping and outreach can increase certification, "it's no exaggeration to say that this project could leverage hundreds of thousands of dollars," says Stites.

NIPC provided each participating organization with the handheld devices, training and funding for mapping staff. Quad Communities used 10 interns to punch in new data. The resulting business directory is available online at www.qcdc.org.

Andrea Traudt, who organized mapping at Bickerdike, believes the project offers much more than information. "It teaches people to think in a way that they would not normally think about the neighborhood."

Based on the project's success, the MacArthur Foundation in December made an additional grant to NIPC to expand Full Circle.

LISC

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