

RE:NEW

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500 AT NCP ROLLOUT MAKE 'NO SMALL PLANS'

By Ed Finkel

A century ago, legendary city planner Daniel Burnham set a high standard in Chicago with the dictum: "Make no small plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood."

On May 18, more than 500 people, including Mayor Daley, 11 aldermen and several other city leaders, celebrated the release of 14 quality-of-life plans for the neighborhoods in LISC/Chicago's New Communities Program—neighborhoods that probably could not make small plans if they tried.

"Today, we write a new chapter in Chicago's history," said Earnest Gates, NCP director for West Haven, whose 2002 community plan has already changed the neighborhood and will soon bring a new grocery store to the corner of Madison and Western.

Burnham's work cleared up the "ugliness and confusion" that resulted from a lack of planning, Gates told those crushed into a ballroom at the Hilton Chicago for NCP's First Annual Leadership Assembly: "This morning, we celebrate the Burnham in each of us."

Daley: "outside the box"

Mayor Daley praised the efforts of the community coalitions, which produced plans in four neighborhoods between 2000 and 2003 and 10 more plans in the past two years. Daley promised the city would take a hard look at what the neighborhoods created.

"All of us will review it, seek to implement it, take the highest priorities, take your suggestions," said Daley, who was joined by Police Supt. Philip Cline, Housing Commissioner Jack Markowski,



Representatives from Logan Square passed their plan to Mayor Richard M. Daley and received a commemorative plaque. From left, Delia Ramirez, Mayor Daley, San Juanita Gonzalez, and Jonathan Fanton of the MacArthur Foundation.

Planning Commissioner Denise Casalino, Chicago Housing Authority CEO Terry Peterson and other city officials.

"One size doesn't fit all," Daley said. "The creativity of a community, of one's mind, works much better. It isn't from a consultant who sits downtown and tells us what to do. It's from people like yourselves."

While many issues were raised through NCP planning, Daley said education stands out. "I can build anything you want, but if we don't rebuild this public school system and tell the adults to take responsibility, it's all for naught," he said. "If we don't think outside the box, we will fail another generation.... That's what the New Communities Program is all about: thinking outside the box."

Daley and Jonathan Fanton, President of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, presented awards to leaders from the neighborhoods while former NCP Director Amanda Carney read off highlights from their plans.

Key projects

Auburn-Gresham seeks to revive the 79th Street business district. Englewood will target job preparation and economic development. Humboldt Park and Logan Square will seek to preserve affordable housing. Pilsen plans to build La Casa, a dormitory for college students. Woodlawn aims to coordinate and enhance youth programs.

Displays ringing the room gave attendees a chance to check out the plans in detail as they

munched on muffins and fruit. Groups laid out press clippings, photos, videos and Powerpoint presentations on laptops, along with illustrated maps of "key projects."

East Garfield Park displayed a giant fruit-and-vegetable basket to symbolize its emphasis on personal health and environmental initiatives; South Chicago put out copies of the newspaper it started, the Southeast Chicago Observer; Lawndale created its own "Monopoly" board to describe the neighborhood and its aspirations.

"I've shared a glimpse of your dreams for the future," said MacArthur's Fanton. "Let us bear witness today to translate these plans into reality.... Better incomes, higher graduation rates—these will be the markers of our work together."

The NCP stretch

Welcoming the "incredible turnout" from the neighborhoods, City Hall, corporate boardrooms and foundations, LISC/Chicago's Senior Program Director Andy Mooney encouraged everyone to stand up and take a morning stretch.

"That's what NCP is all about—stretching our vision, stretching our boundaries, stretching our faith in ourselves. Boy, have you stretched," he said. "It takes my breath away. Thousands have come together to plan for a common future and to accept responsibility for that future."

Gates predicted that the NCP efforts will bring results. "Can these plans be brought to life? The answer is a resounding, 'Yes.' If you can conceive it, you can achieve it."

To learn more or to download the neighborhood plans, visit www.newcommunities.org/tools



A custom Monopoly board illustrated the plan for North Lawndale. From left, Harrison Steans of the Steans Family Foundation and LCDC's Stanley Merriwether.

IN CHICAGO LAWN, NEW CHAPTER BEING WRITTEN

By John McCarron



Jim Capraro and a recent investment in the neighborhood: the Churchview Supportive Living Facility.

You can still buy bacon buns—a diet-be-damned delicacy not carried by the supermarkets—at a small Lithuanian bakery not far from Marquette Park. You can, that is, after the lady behind the counter buzzes the electronic lock on the store’s front door.

It’s not like the old days, she explains, when you knew everyone in the neighborhood and they knew you.

Perhaps not, but a few hundred good and energetic people in this Southwest Side community are working to bring back that feeling of knowing your neighbor. Indeed, getting to know, respect and trust one another, regardless of race or ethnic background, is central to the quality-of-life plan for Chicago Southwest, the collection of neighborhoods surrounding Marquette Park.

Trust is a tall order, given the tumultuous history of the place.

“You could say everything has changed here but the names on the street signs,” says James “Jim” Capraro. He should know. Capraro grew up in what was “white ethnic” Marquette Park. In an organizing career spanning four decades, he has won a national reputation for helping his community deal with change—racial, ethnic, economic—as executive director of the Greater Southwest Development Corporation (GSDC.)

Moving up

But one very important thing has not changed. Ever since the rust-red bricks of its bungalows were laid in the 1920s, Marquette Park has been the city’s quintessential “move-up” neighborhood. It’s still where unsure immigrants become confident new Americans; where renters become homeowners; where children of families who lived day-to-day become planners of college for their kids and a modest retirement for themselves. It is an incubator of the middle class.

First it was the Lithuanians and Poles moving up from port-of-entry neighborhoods. White ethnics? Of the 51,347 people counted in Chicago Lawn in 1960, only three were “Negro.” Another 50 were “other races.” Among the rest, many had their baptism, wedding and funeral at the same communion rail. They cashed paychecks and swapped stories at the same corner tap. Rode the same buses to the same close-by factories.

This cozy world began to unravel during the early 1960s as grown children began moving up themselves, mostly to suburbia. This benign migration took an ugly turn in the late ’60s, when African-American families began moving

“You could say everything has changed here but the names on the street signs”

west across the racial boundaries of Western Avenue and the B&O tracks, into neighborhoods that greeted them with fear and panic.

But first there was rage, the low point in 1966 when open-housing marchers, led by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., were set upon by a mob of 2,500 whites. The violence lasted five hours. Dr. King was felled, momentarily, by a thrown rock. Cars were burned, bus windows smashed, 44 arrested and 31 sent to hospitals.

“I’ve been in many demonstrations all across the South,” Dr. King would later say, but “I have never seen, even in Mississippi and Alabama, mobs as hostile and hate-filled as I’ve seen in Chicago.”

Capraro witnessed that awful day and the memory feeds still his ambition to build a better Marquette Park. It hasn’t been easy. There’s been a steady evaporation of white residents, now less than 10 percent of the local population.

Diverse and stable

But there has been no replay of the stark disinvestment that so devastated other Chicago neighborhoods. Indeed, there was a net gain of housing units in the ’90s and the population grew to a record 61,412 by 2000, about one-half African-American and one-third Hispanic. The Latino families have helped rejuvenate Catholic parishes such as St. Rita, St. Nicholas and St. Mary Star-of-the-Sea. And Middle Eastern families have also discovered the good value of the bungalow.

What’s emerging may be Chicago’s best example of a truly diverse, yet stable, working-class neighborhood. But it has been a fight. For years Capraro, GSDC, Southwest Organizing Project and others have battled block-busting, red-lining and FHA mortgage scams. Foreclosures and board-ups are still a problem (see Predatory lending, page 3). And speculators are paying top dollar for houses and two-flats, then renting to families with Housing Choice rent vouchers worth up to \$1,500 per month, which drives up other rents and sale prices.

When not outbid by speculators, GSDC and its ally, Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago Lawn/Gage Park, have rehabbed and resold many a brick beauty to families looking to put down roots. They worked with the City of Chicago on the “Green Bungalow Block” at 6400 S. Fairfield, where rehabbed homes feature environmental improvements. On other blocks, once-worn houses are now showpieces.

“This is our dream come true,” says Lynn McDaniel of her bungalow at 60th and Maplewood. A clinical therapist for a mental health council, Lynn and husband Tyrone, a social worker, bought the place last summer from GSDC.

“Our neighbors told us it used to be a drug house,” she said. “What we have now is a classic. We paid \$175,000 for a vintage bungalow that, on the North Side where we were renting, would have sold for \$450,000.”

Greater Southwest has made about \$500 million worth of dreams come true since 1974, from retention of Nabisco’s Oreo cookie factory to the 2004 opening of the Churchview Supportive Living Facility at 63rd and Rockwell, with an assist from LISC and the City of Chicago.

That’s what Capraro and GSDC do—bring people and resources together. Creatively and methodically, they have identified and engaged neighborhood leaders from hospital CEOs to block club presidents. Chicago Lawn’s first NCP task force meeting was blessed jointly by a Hispanic priest, an African-American minister and a Muslim imam. They went on to envision a new community, set strategies for achieving it, and assign deadlines and who’s going to do what.

Will the vision be realized? Bet your bacon buns.

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Sturdy and attractive bungalows have provided move-up housing for generations of Chicagoans.

Chicago Lawn Community Area

POPULATION		
Population (2000)	61,412	Up 19.8% since 1990.
Pop. Chg. (1960-2000)	Up 10,000	Had declined in '60s, '70s.
Racial/Ethnic Makeup (2000)	52.9% Afr-Amer, 35.1% Hispanic	Since 1990, black population up 26.2%, Hispanic up 7.3%.
HOUSING		
Housing units (2000)	18,498	Up 3.7% since 1990.
Number of vacant units (2000)	1,421	Vacancy rate 7.7%.
Owner-occupied housing (2000)	51.6%	Stable for 50 years.
INCOME		
Pop. below poverty level (2000)	19.8%	Up from 10.5% in 1980.
Hshlds w/ pub. assistance (2000)	1,593 (9.3%)	
Hshlds w/ income more than \$35,000/year (2000)	8,811 (52%)	2,338 households have income more than \$75,000.

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



Tyrone and Lynn McDaniel in their vintage bungalow: “a dream come true.”

“IT TAKES A VILLAGE”— WOODLAWN STYLE

By Lisa G. Riley



PHOTO BY ERIC YOUNG SMITH

Tyree Liddell and Collean Fuller connect local children to chess sets, computers, tutors and recreational activities.

“It takes a village to raise a child.” This African proverb has been bandied about a lot in recent years, from the cover of Hillary Rodham Clinton’s book to the lips of Oprah Winfrey. But it has a much longer tradition in the Woodlawn community, where residents like Collean Fuller and Tyree Liddell have been watching out for kids for a long time.

“One day I was sitting at a block club meeting and I looked out the window and saw a woman walking down the street with three or four children,” says Fuller, thinking back 20 years. “I started to wonder if she had the help she needed with those children, so I asked her. She was a single mother who needed help when the children got out of school and I figured there were a lot of parents who probably needed that kind of help so they could work. Well, that’s how my after-school program started.”

The program began in 1987 and still doesn’t have an official name. It began in a small church, almost as a free babysitting service, with Fuller raising money for supplies by selling candy and cookies.

The organization survived on strong will and volunteers. Fuller enlisted the help of University of Chicago students who still come to tutor the children from 3 to 4:30 every afternoon. The program offers basketball from 5 to 8 p.m. and an open computer lab. When the program grew too big for one church, Fuller hunted around until she found The Christ Way M.B. Church.

“Reverend York opened her doors for us and now we get as many as 30 to 40 kids a day,” says Fuller.

Getting some help

Fuller’s altruism was contagious but her energy wasn’t unlimited, so soon she had a young disciple. Tyree Liddell, a member of the church, saw what Mrs. Fuller was doing and offered his help.

“I used to open the church gym for the kids to play basketball, but after talking to Mrs. Fuller,

I thought it would be good to combine our two programs,” says Liddell. “So now the children can get tutoring and play basketball and their parents don’t have to worry about them because they know they’re safe here.”

A graduate of Devry University, Liddell decided not to pursue a career in computer information systems and devotes his time instead to the program. In exchange for a stipend from the church and the opportunity to help, Liddell is—informally—the new executive director. He organizes field trips, runs the computer lab, organizes tutoring services and has started applying for grants.

“I do it because I’m dedicated to the kids,” says Liddell. “I want to break the cycle of negativity that some of them see in their environment. I’m glad to say that some of that negativity like gangs and drug dealing have subsided, but we’re still needed.”

Part of a plan

The ones who benefit most from these community benefactors’ efforts are the children, of course, and they are eager and excited to say how much they’ve been helped. Four different children spoke up on behalf of Mrs. Fuller’s program. Destiny Diggs, John Fuller, Chuck Griffin, Jr. and Ashley Wiley all say that coming to the program has improved their grades and their computer and basketball skills.

And it is this kind of involvement that must continue to implement the recently completed Woodlawn quality-of-life plan, appropriately titled “Rebuilding the Village.” Residents who would like to get involved can contact Karen King, New Communities Program director for the Woodlawn Preservation and Investment Corp., or attend the community rollout of the plan on July 30.

Contact: Karen King, WPIC, 773-363-4300.

Download the full plan at www.newcommunities.org/tools

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Cliff-hanger supreme: Predatory lending bill passes

By Patrick Barry

“I don’t think that, in my whole life, I have ever experienced such a nail-biter,” wrote an exultant Jim Capraro in an e-mail following the Illinois Legislature’s passage of a bill to monitor mortgage lending.

The executive director of the Greater Southwest Development Corp. and others from his Southwest Side communities had been working for years to put a lid on unsavory practices that result in high interest rates, foreclosures, swindles and boarded buildings. On May 31, after a tour-de-force of legislative maneuvering by House Speaker Michael Madigan, HB4050 passed both houses and went to Gov. Rod Blagojevich for his signature.

“This was the last bill to be called to the Senate floor before it adjourned the session at about 11 p.m. last night, and it passed by the slimmest margin of 30 “yea” votes,” wrote Capraro, “just in time for... subsequent passage of a concurrence vote on the House floor, literally minutes before the midnight adjournment deadline. This was a true demonstration of ‘mastery’ of the Illinois General Assembly’s parliamentary process.”

The new law will create, for the first time anywhere in the country, a “pilot-demonstration district” where all information, including the names and license information from mortgage originators, appraisers and Realtors involved in loan transactions, will be entered into a state database. It also requires that all sub-prime

borrowers must receive consumer credit counseling from a HUD-certified counseling agency before a loan can close.

Capraro says the database will provide a way to trace back through a loan’s history to find if and when an illegal or unscrupulous practice took place. He says such “transparency” is a first step in combating the practices that have disrupted the housing market in Chicago and elsewhere.

The bill was vehemently opposed by mortgage broker lobbyists. In past years they had beaten back similar efforts, but this time was different because Speaker Madigan had seen the damage caused by predatory lending in his own district. Springfield journalist Rich Miller, in his publication *Capital Fax*, described a full-court press by Madigan to first pass the bill through the House and then reach across the aisle into the Senate, where he called in favors and twisted arms to get the required 30 votes.

Jim Capraro enjoyed his part in the drama. “At one point we had a big meeting in our office with about 10 people from the industry, listening to their reasons not to support the bill. Later I found out that while the industry people were busy at our meeting, members of the Illinois House had passed the bill!”

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Free tax prep nets \$5.7 million in six neighborhoods

By Patrick Barry and Lisa G. Riley

A \$137,000 investment to expand tax preparation services in six neighborhoods has produced a one-year payoff of \$5.74 million in federal tax refunds.

Volunteers organized and trained by the Center for Economic Progress (CEP) helped more than 4,000 people file tax returns at centers supported by start-up or expansion grants from LISC/Chicago and the New Communities Program.

A new center at the Southeast Chicago Development Commission’s (SCDCOM) Employment Resource Center, 2938 E. 91st St., had heavy usage on most Saturday mornings. “The center is a lot more popular than we anticipated,” said SCDCOM vice president Ted Stalnos early in the tax season. “This is a great thing for low-income residents.”

The new center at Suder School in West Haven served 128 households. It included a partnership with Mid-America Bank so that participants could open checking accounts for direct deposit of refunds. A new center opened by Woodlawn Preservation and Investment Corp., open four times a week, cleared \$1 million in refunds on 711 returns. Bethel New Life served 609 at its new center, generating \$848,000 in refunds.

The hefty refunds come mostly from the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, which can reach \$4,300 for a working family with children. The City of Chicago is a major supporter of the tax prep centers because they put “money

in the pockets” of low- and moderate-income working families.

“We partnered with the Mayor’s Office and CEP because we know that providing free tax counseling in neighborhoods will help increase household income,” said Ricki Lowitz, a LISC/Chicago senior program officer. LISC contributed \$60,000 to CEP to cover operating expenses at the new West Haven and South Chicago centers. LISC also provided five grants totaling \$53,900 for computers, shredders and other start-up expenses.

Two centers that first opened for the 2004 tax season showed impressive gains this year thanks to expanded outreach and three days of operating hours each week. The St. Sabina Employment Resource Center saw a 50 percent jump from 2004, to 924 returns filed and \$1.2 million in federal refunds. At the Instituto del Progreso Latino in Pilsen, 1,456 returns brought refunds of \$2.15 million. Those programs were started last year with \$23,500 in LISC funds.

The program makes good sense to Patricia Olayiwola, a resident who used the South Chicago site. “I didn’t want to pay to have my taxes done. I’ve done that before. I will actually be getting much more back this year than I did last year. They were definitely helpful and I’m glad they’re here.”

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WEST HUMBOLDT LAND TRUST WILL LOCK IN AFFORDABILITY

Affordable housing is on the way to 10 vacant lots in West Humboldt Park—with more to come—thanks to a planned land trust that will help low- to moderate-income households put a foot in the door of the local housing market.

The Chicago Department of Planning and Development has set aside 10 city lots to help the West Humboldt Park Family and Community Development Council (WHPDC) set into motion the First Community Land Trust of Chicago. Housing to be built on the lots will have affordability locked in and give the community a voice in development decisions.



Bill Howard of WHPDC at one of the lots reserved for affordable housing.

Read the full land trust story, by Ed Finkel, and learn about other approaches to reuse of vacant land at www.newcommunities.org/communities/humboldt/

PHOTO BY JUAN FRANCISCO HERNANDEZ

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.

PLANNING, ACTIVISM RESULT IN NEW SCHOOL, GARDEN

By Beatriz Ponce de León

Sylvia Ortega knew it was time for real change when she enrolled her daughter in kindergarten at Sullivan Elementary in 1997. A long-time resident of an enclave called Bush on Chicago's Southeast Side, Ortega found a bare classroom with only a few worn books and tattered toys.

"My daughter was assigned to a half-day class instead of a full day, and for two weeks it was taught by volunteers, not teachers," recalls Ortega. She was outraged.

It didn't take long for her to gain a spot on the Sullivan Local School Council (LSC) and became a leader in the fight for a new school. Community residents of all ages, African American, Latino and white, fought hard and within five years the new school was opened. In the process, residents formed the Bush Homeowners and Tenants Association (BHTA), creating a new voice for community interests.

Though blighted by the shutdown of U.S. Steel's South Works, South Chicago has been reinventing itself with a mixed economy and rebounding housing market. One driver of change has been planning, including LISC's New Communities Program led by the Southeast Chicago Development Commission (SCDCom), the Chicago Department of Planning and Development's revitalization plan for the steel site, and most recently

the Chicago Department of Public Health's (CDPH) Healthy South Chicago initiative.

Pushing for what's needed

The other half of the formula is involved residents. BHTA has become a way for residents of Bush, between 83rd and 86th Streets, to become active. "While fighting for the school, we became involved in the city's planning for a TIF (tax increment financing district), really pushing for what we need—jobs, new homes, park space, access to the lake," says Ortega, now BHTA president. "The plan includes everything now. They even set up a formal resident advisory group, the first of its kind in Chicago."

Almost 100 residents turned out for a public meeting to discuss developer McCaffrey & Associates' plans for the site and the city's request for proposals to develop 65 vacant lots. BHTA was reassured that such developments will honor past commitments, among them relocation of U.S. 41 and a mix of uses including residential, commercial, recreation and open space.

Another victory was the alderman's set-aside of a lot at 8501 Buffalo for use by the Ada S. McKinley Neighborhood House. In 2002, BHTA obtained two lots across the street for a community garden. With help from residents, local gardener Karen Roothaan, grants from GreenCorps, and city donations of plants and soil, they created a thriving garden.

Their dream is to acquire 8501 and close the street with a cul de sac, creating a safe, inviting space for gardening, socializing and playing. They are working with the alderman and NeighborSpace, an organization that helps communities secure green space, to obtain 30-year leases on the lots.



"Garden of Hope."

Building skills

Resident Diane Ordonez says the garden has had a big impact on her life—she has become a master gardener—and on the surrounding area as well. "I just feel comfortable and relaxed there," she says. "Even gang members respect the gardens and the area around them. I tell them you have to keep this nice and they do. All kinds of residents come here, old and young, new immigrants, people from the scattered-site housing, teens. Everyone."

"BHTA is about buildings and gardens, but it is also about skill building of residents and capacity building of the community as a whole," says Dinah Ramirez, long-time resident and coordinator of the Healthy South Chicago program. "Through our work with the school, NCP, the USX plan, block clubs, the Jobs Working committee and the garden, we have seen residents get more involved and become leaders."

Mary Karen Reynolds, NCP director for SCDCom, agrees. "BHTA continually turns out residents for community events, activities, programs and advocacy. I can count on them. We're getting ready to do another New Communities planning process," she adds, "and I'd like them to have a big role in it."

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Garden provides space for playing as well as growing vegetables and flowers.

LISC

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