

RE:NEW

IN THIS ISSUE:

East Garfield's green dream **2**

Pilsen seeks college dorm **3**

Top 10 neighborhood issues **4**



GROCERY STORE, NEW HOMES ON THE WAY IN WEST HAVEN

By Ed Finkel

Years of meetings and planning are paying off in the West Haven neighborhood as a wave of new development transforms a community once best-known for its decaying Henry Horner Homes public housing high-rises.

A grocery-anchored shopping center will be built on the southeast corner of Madison and Western later this year, and 22 units of city-sponsored New Homes for Chicago are expected to break ground this spring. Both are projects of the Near West Side Community Development Corp., the area's NCP lead agency and sponsor of a 2001 community planning process that called for balanced, mixed-income development.

Also rising, on land formerly occupied by the Horner Homes, is the first phase of Westhaven Park, a 764-unit redevelopment that includes a three-way mix of market rate, affordable and public housing units. Private market-rate developments have been built nearby on the 2100 block of Madison and 2300 block of Adams.

"We have a changing community," said Near West CDC's executive director Pat Dowell, describing the balancing act of determining which grocery and other retail to bring in. "Some members would like to see a more upscale sort of grocery store, like a Whole Foods. There's another part of the community that would like to see a discount-type grocery. We've had to be thoughtful."

While final details of the grocery development remained to be worked out, NCP director Earnest Gates said Kroger Co. would open a 66,000-square-foot Food4Less warehouse store and that two or three smaller retail spaces would be built at Monroe and Western.

The New Homes for Chicago development is also part of Near West's strategy to maintain a mix of incomes in this community directly west of the Loop, between Lake Street and Van Buren from Ashland to Western.

The city-sponsored New Homes program underwrites development costs to reduce the purchase price for moderate-income families. A three-bedroom, 2,200-square-foot single-family unit will sell for \$150,000. Two-flats will cost \$220,000. LISC/Chicago provided a \$220,000 pre-development loan for the grocery project and is fully funding the new-homes construction with a \$1.4 million loan.

"We've been on track in that we've been able to attract a lot of different incomes into the community," said Gates. "But the greatest challenge," he added, "is going to be getting folks to function as a community, and with mixed incomes that tends to be a little more difficult than people envision. I don't know that there are any easy answers."

Contact: Earnest Gates, Near West Side CDC, 312-738-2280.

A breakout group defined issues and strategies at a meeting organized by the Quad Communities Development Corp.

REACHING OUT WITH A DELICATE TOUCH, NCP GROUPS LAUNCH PLANNING EFFORTS

Nobody said it was going to be easy. As more than 1,000 residents have come together in eight neighborhoods to begin the quality-of-life planning process, the first lesson is that planning is a complex and sometimes uncomfortable undertaking.

For the last few months, the New Communities Program lead agencies have been recruiting task force members, bridging political divides and asserting leadership without dictating the planning process. It has been delicate work. "The agencies are feeling real pressure to do things they haven't done before," commented Wesley Walker, one of four LISC program officers working with NCP groups. "They might be feeling a bit outside of their comfort zones."

But if bringing neighbors together is risky and unpredictable, it can also be exciting and hopeful. You can feel that much from the buzz of conversation around the planning tables and the way people linger after meetings, talking from their hearts.

Paper and scissors

Eight NCP agencies have organized their first planning meetings and early results are promising. Lawndale Christian Development Corp. invited residents to draw pictures and make cutouts of what they dream for their community and what obstacles need to be removed. It might sound silly, but the 140 people at the first meeting didn't think so. They drew pictures and shared their visions, and at a second meeting a week before Christmas, 115 people engaged in thoughtful discussions over scissors and construction paper.

Greater Southwest Development Corp. (GSDC) launched its process with one-on-one interviews and then brought 170 people together at Holy Cross Hospital to explore what GSDC staff member Betty Gutierrez termed the "tremendous rewards to relationship." The task force assembled by the Logan Square Neighborhood Assn. took a bus tour one icy Saturday, then used colored pencils to transfer their ideas to maps. "It was a great meeting, really exciting," said Becky Lopez, the group's NCP director.

Similar stories have unfolded in Woodlawn, Little Village, Auburn Gresham, Humboldt Park and on the mid-south side, where the fledgling Quad Communities Development Corp. (QCDC) has filled dozens of flip-chart pages with the ideas of 215 participants.

The meetings have brought out mothers and fathers, activists, business owners, nuns, high

PLEASE SEE **PLANNING**, PAGE 3



The Logan Square task force took a guided tour by school bus.

GREEN DREAMS FOR EAST GARFIELD

By John McCarron



The Garfield Park Conservatory is the jumping-off point for a larger community development strategy.

PHOTOS: MARTHA BROCK

Chances are you remember the Dale Chihuly art glass show at the Garfield Park Conservatory. Of course you do. It was the surprise hit of the art world's 2001-02 season, drawing nearly 600,000 to a corner of Chicago's West Side that many locals avoid.

But art exhibits come and go. And while a shimmering set of Chihuly water lilies remain to memorialize the triumph, the Conservatory, and the neighborhood that surrounds it, still yearn for renewal. That's a tall order, given East Garfield Park's 40-year ordeal of racial change and disinvestment, a skid that saw this neighborhood of stately graystones and brick walk-ups lose two-thirds of its population and housing stock.

Yet there is optimism. Why? Because an unlikely coalition of neighborhood activists, gardening buffs, philanthropists and Chicago Park District officials is laying plans for a green revolution on the West Side.

It's called the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, and it may be the most unusual anchor organization in the LISC New Communities Program. The Alliance has no cadre of community organizers, no portfolio of subsidized housing, no hot lunch or childcare programs. What it does have is faith in the power of nature to bind and inspire ordinary people, and two extraordinary women who think it's possible to transplant the Conservatory's newfound vitality to the streets of East Garfield.

"What I like about LISC is they want action," said Eunita Rushing, executive director of the Alliance. "I'm about action."

That much was obvious not long ago as she sat behind her impossibly cluttered desk in a back office of the Conservatory, speaking alternately

into a cell phone and to a visitor. A faded sign on her office door read "Foreman," which is exactly what she was doing, ordering last-minute touches for "Chapungu," an exhibit of stone sculptures from Zimbabwe.

Rushing's alter-ego is Lisa Roberts, the park district's director of conservatories. *Chicago Magazine* named them "Chicagoans of the Year" in 2002 for their role in staging the Chihuly. Now they'd rather talk about what's next.

Forging partnerships

"Our aim is to integrate our work at the conservatory with the work of the community," said Roberts. "The Alliance can be the catalyst that pulls it together, but only to the extent we forge partnerships. We're good at partnerships."

It was a partnership that rescued the Conservatory in the mid-90s, after a combination of neglect, vandalism and a cold winter killed off so many of its tropical plants there was talk of closing the 96-year-old landmark.

Instead, key players plotted a comeback. Mayor Richard M. Daley okayed an \$8 million rehab of the Conservatory with companion improvements to Garfield Park itself, along with a new Victorian-style rapid transit station on the CTA's adjacent Green Line. To bolster community and programmatic support, Roberts and others

"It's got to be person-to-person, hands-on, word-of-mouth."

Eunita Rushing, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance

established the Alliance with a grant from the Lila Wallace-Readers Digest Fund. What emerged was a unique public-private deal: the park district would maintain the conservatory and its world-class plant collection; the Alliance would run educational programs, community outreach and fundraising.

It worked. Attendance doubled, though it remained a fraction of that tallied by the Conservatory's junior cousin in Lincoln Park. Then came Chihuly and his 1,600 brightly colored pieces of glass.

"We didn't know he was a big deal the first time we showed him around," remembers Rushing. But the Tacoma-based artist thought the Conservatory was a big deal, all the better for its location in a community that wouldn't otherwise know his art.

Connecting with locals

And yet for all the buzz and pizzazz, the exhibit did not directly engage the majority of East Garfield residents, who struggle with some of the city's highest rates of poverty and crime. A Chihuly reception for 100 community leaders helped, said

Rushing, but a lot of bridge-building still needs doing.

"This isn't the kind of neighborhood where you mail people newsletters. It's got to be person-to-person, hands-on, word-of-mouth."

For kids, the Alliance put together self-guided school tours, teacher trainings and a Children's Discovery Garden. Adults come for the demonstration garden, horticulture workshops and a guided tour program that has brought out hundreds of neighborhood residents as students and volunteers. New last summer was Garfield Market, a weekend bazaar in the conservatory's former horse stables, where vendors sell organic foods, garden supplies and artworks.

More is on the way. Mayor Daley envisions a linear "Greentown" along Lake Street, where a variety of businesses, from landscape architects to flower wholesalers, would gel into a commercial district. The city's two year-old Midwest Center for Green Technology on Sacramento Boulevard would be its eastern anchor, the Conservatory and the Alliance would bolster the west.

Recently the city approved two more links. An enterprise that started at Garfield Market, called CityEscape Garden & Design, is buying discounted city land at 3022 W. Lake St. for a greenhouse and floral shop that will employ more than 30. Christy Webber Landscapes, a West Side firm that hires local people to plant and maintain roadway medians, has leased city land on the 2800 block of Lake Street.

Early action: jobs

Good jobs are key, which is why the Alliance, as its first NCP "early action project," is looking to open an employment center. Rather than start from scratch, the plan is to use LISC support to open an East Garfield branch of the successful center operated by West Garfield's Bethel New Life, Inc. Yet another partnership is being forged with the Al Raby School for Community and Environment, a new "small school" planned for the Lucy Flower High School building across the street from the Conservatory.

What about affordable housing? East Garfield Park has no shortage of vacant lots and board-ups. But new market-rate condos and townhouses, with names like "Conservatory Pointe" and "Garfield Park Place," are marching west from downtown, past Western Avenue, even past Kedzie, along suddenly fashionable streets such as Warren Boulevard.

With change on the doorstep, the Alliance hopes to tap into this energy, though housing would be novel work for a group that is, in some respects, as fragile as a Chihuly water lily. But Rushing and Roberts have the sparkle as well, and a knack for building partnerships that get things done.

Stand by for growing season on the West Side.



Constance Clark (center, with a neighbor and her daughter) recently bought this house on Carroll Ave., a few blocks from where she grew up. She says East Garfield is on its way up.

East Garfield Community Area

POPULATION		
Population	20,881	Fell 13% since 1990
Pop. Chg. (1960-2000)	Down 45,990	20,600 left in the 1970s
Racial/Ethnic Makeup	97.6% African-American	Virtually unchanged since 1970
HOUSING		
Housing units	7,673	Down 10% since 1990
Number of vacant units	1,120	Vacancy rate 14.6%
Owner-occupied	28%	Steady gains; nearly twice historic levels
INCOME		
Pop. below poverty level	35.2%	
Hsholds w/ pub. assistance	1,102 (16.9%)	10.3% use Sect. 8 housing
Hsholds w/ income more than \$35,000/year	2,055 (31%)	520 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. All figures are for 2000 unless noted.



The former Lucy Flower High School was renovated last year; a new "small school," the Al Raby School for Community and Environment, will open in the building this fall.



Vanessa and Freddie Wilburn had their tax forms prepared for free on Jan. 24 at the St. Sabina Employment Resource Center, 7909 S. Racine.

TAX PREP CENTERS OPEN: "WE MUST SAVE MONEY"

Seeking to put more money into the pockets of Chicago residents, the Center for Economic Progress opened its network of income tax preparation centers on Saturday, Jan. 24, including two new locations serving NCP neighborhoods.

The center's trained volunteers help residents file accurate returns and claim all available credits, including the Earned Income Credit, which can be worth up to \$4,140 for a household with two children.

"The Earned Income Credit was meant to increase the income of low wage earners, but it is money that some people are leaving on the table," said the center's director of financial programs, O.S. Owen, at a January meeting to introduce the new center in Auburn Gresham.

"If we want to build wealth, we must save money, and there is no better way to do it than putting your tax refund in a savings account."

The center and its local partners, including the Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corp., will be promoting the free tax preparation

services through April 15. They hope to exceed last year's \$14.8 million in refunds on 11,471 federal returns prepared at 12 Chicago locations.

The new centers are at the St. Sabina Employment Resource Center, 7907-11 S. Racine (open 5:30 to 8 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturdays) and at the Instituto del Progreso Latino, 2570 S. Blue Island, (open 5:30 to 8 p.m. Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays). The free service is available to families with income under \$35,000 and individuals earning less than \$15,000.

LISC/Chicago provided \$20,000 to each new center for promotion, technology upgrades and facility improvements.

Other centers serving NCP communities are at the Shorebank branches in Bronzeville and Chatham; at Armitage Baptist Church in Logan Square; at Homan Square in North Lawndale and at Association House in Humboldt Park.

Contact: For location and hours of all city and suburban centers, call the Center for Economic Progress information line at 312-409-6511.

PLANNING CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 school students, educators, malcontents, social service providers and at least one ex-convict, who told the people in his small group how difficult it is to reveal his prison record on job applications.

Different approaches

Style and methods have varied widely, from the highly organized 8 a.m. breakfast meetings run by QCDC, complete with facilitators and recorders for each of eight break-out groups, to the revival-style meeting that launched Auburn Gresham's process on Jan. 17, with fiery speeches by 17th Ward Ald. Latasha Thomas, St. Sabina's Father Michael Pflieger and Chicago Housing Authority CEO Terry Peterson.

Supporting it all are LISC's program officers plus seven professional planners from Camiros Ltd. and six "scribes" who are documenting the conversations as they take place. Integrating these

"outsiders" into the neighborhood-driven processes has been another of the challenges faced by lead agencies.

On page four is an informal list of the most-discussed issues. Below is a glimpse of the action as planning moves from issue identification to development of strategies and projects.

Humboldt Park: Bickerdike Redevelopment Corp. has assembled a diverse task force whose first business was to review existing plans for the area. The new plan will integrate previous ideas and develop strategies for issues not yet addressed.

Quad Communities: QCDC has used three visioning sessions to introduce itself as an organization and to position itself as a convener of groups already working in the 4th Ward. The next step is to recruit the task force that will develop the plan.

Little Village: The task force organized by the Little Village Community Development Corp. used a "dot-map" exercise to pinpoint

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Pilsen seeks dorm for college students

The Resurrection Project announced at a Jan. 20 press conference that it has received a \$3.4 million state grant to develop a college dormitory and resource center in the former St. Adalbert Convent, 1628 W. 17th St. in Pilsen.

The dormitory, to be called La Casa, would serve about 50 Latino students from area universities such as UIC, Loyola, DePaul, Columbia, Northeastern and Roosevelt. Students would live in small single rooms on the upper floors of the building, which also includes kitchen and lounge facilities, a drop-in study center and computer lab. The building is one block from a Blue Line el stop.

"La Casa would benefit many students who unfortunately are not able to afford a dorm in their school and are commuting," said Marilu Rodriguez at the press conference. She came to Chicago from Mexico at the age of 11 and now, as a sophomore at Northeastern Illinois University, often finds herself studying after midnight when her six siblings have gone to bed. "In La Casa



The Resurrection Project envisions a former convent as a home for Latino college students.

students would be able to find what every student wants, a peaceful and relaxing environment to study."

The Resurrection Project must raise an additional \$1.6 million to renovate the dorm and hopes to open the facility in the fall of 2006. State Rep. Edward Acevedo (2nd District) sponsored the state grant.

Contact: Lupe Esparza, Director of Resource Development, The Resurrection Project, 312-666-1323, ext. 213, lesparza@resurrectionproject.org.

Workshop warns of fraud, legal pitfalls

Leaders of organizations supported by the New Communities Program got together Jan. 21 for a morning's worth of advice about staying out of trouble: financial and legal trouble, that is.

Financial fraud is a reality all non-profits must guard against, warned speaker Thomas FitzGibbon, Jr. of MB Financial CDC. He told the NCP directors and executive directors that the potential damage from embezzlement goes beyond money, because "the loss to your reputation is more costly than the financial loss."

Fitzgibbon provided dozens of reasons that fraud can take place, from employees who feel underappreciated to lax board oversight or inadequate accounting systems. His checklist of procedures to detect and defend against fraud was well received by the 40 non-profit managers in the room, who added a few tips of their own.

"Relationships shouldn't get in the way of asking hard questions," offered Rev. Richard Tolliver of St. Edmund's Redevelopment Corp. Joy Aruguete of Bickerdike Redevelopment Corp. recommended that multiple people review financial transactions. "Otherwise you might have a former

employee who is still on the charge account at Menard's, buying things for his own home."

The session also included a review of legal safeguards by the Community Economic Development Law Project, which provides pro-bono advice on everything from political campaigns (keep them separate from your non-profit organization) to corporate records (keep them current). A final segment by LISC/Chicago's Sandra Womack introduced CapMap, a diagnostic and capacity-building program available to NCP participants.

"Over the next few years we will be passing a lot of money through your organizations," said Andy Mooney, LISC/Chicago's senior program director. "We need you to stay on your guard, to trust people but also verify."

Contact: Thomas FitzGibbon, Jr., MB Financial CDC, 773-292-2052, tfitzgibbon@mbfinancial.com; Richard Hendricks, Community Economic Development Law Project, 312-939-3638, rhendricks@cedlp.org; Sandra Womack, LISC/Chicago, 312-697-6105, swomack@liscnet.org.

locations of interest or concern. One possibility: "We need more community space where we can celebrate or just be together," said Celia Gonzalez Lozano from Tepochcalli School.

Chicago Lawn: Building relationships is the priority for this joint effort of the Greater Southwest Development Corp. and Southwest Organizing Project. The 170 people at the first meeting were sent home with the assignment of interviewing five others. "Everyone gets connected and this becomes an exciting community," said GSDC executive director Jim Capraro.

Auburn Gresham: The Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corp. recruited a 40-person task force and conducted a visioning session on Jan. 17. Among possible priorities are safety initiatives and further development of the 79th Street retail district.

Woodlawn: The Woodlawn task force was recruited by a three-way partnership between Woodlawn

Preservation and Investment Corp., The Woodlawn Organization and University of Chicago. A possible focus for recreational and community programming is the Harris YWCA building, now owned by the Chicago Park District.

North Lawndale: At two initial meetings, Arnold Aprill of the Chicago Arts Partnership in Education guided participants as they created drawings and murals. Among the most common images were dollar signs, liquor bottles and residents holding hands.

Logan Square: LSNA's process builds on the group's annually updated holistic plan, first developed 10 years ago. "The tension in our neighborhood," said executive director Nancy Aardema, "is how do you create safety and neighborliness and do it so people can stay? The simple solution would be to gentrify the whole thing. But LSNA is about people, not buildings."

By Patrick Barry with reports from LaVida Davis, Ed Finkel, John McCarron, Beatriz Ponce de León and Lisa Riley.

NCP neighborhoods and lead agencies

The New Communities Program serves 16 Chicago communities through these 14 lead agencies:

Auburn Gresham

Greater Auburn Gresham Community 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.

LISC

Senior Program Director,

LISC/Chicago: Andrew Mooney

Executive Editor: Amanda Carney

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

Contributing Editor: John McCarron

Reporters: Ed Finkel, Beatriz Ponce de León, LaVida Davis, Lisa Riley

Design: Kym Abrams Design

© 2003 LISC/Chicago

TOP 10 ISSUES: WHAT NEIGHBORS ARE TALKING ABOUT

Certain topics keep coming up in NCP planning sessions, suggesting that neighborhoods might learn from each other as they address common issues. Here's an unscientific summary of what people are talking about at this early stage in the planning.

1: Building financial strength

Money is a dominant issue and it comes up in many different forms: how to earn more, moving into employment, creating jobs for kids, taking care of bad credit, getting a mortgage, starting a business.



PHOTO: ED FINKEL

Money: Residents want expanded job opportunities and ways to build wealth. Above, a Bickerdike construction crew.

2: Improving the schools

Participants call repeatedly for better schools and have many specific ideas: smaller class size, more parent involvement, after-hours community use of schools, foreign-language training, math-science centers, parenting training and more responsive principals. Improvements at the high school level are seen as critical to support healthy teen lifestyles.

3: Viable retail strips

Many NCP communities lack the retail basics: groceries, clothing stores, coffee shops, sit-down restaurants, video stores. Residents want to replace boarded storefronts and vacant lots with attractive, safe shopping areas that include locally owned stores as well as "big box" outlets like Target, Home Depot, Whole Foods and Best Buy.

4: Selling the community

Groups want to promote the good things that their neighborhoods have to offer. Marketing campaigns could bring in new investment and residents. Web sites and joint advertising could connect residents to local goods and services.

5: Addictions and drug trafficking

Without good schools, recreation and job opportunities, residents see little hope of reducing drug and alcohol use, street sales of drugs and the social problems that result. Quality addiction treatment is considered essential and good policing is mentioned, but neither is seen as an adequate solution by itself.

6: Local entrepreneurship

Many want to see more local people involved in business, in particular African-American entrepreneurs on revived retail strips. Chambers of commerce, business resource centers and group marketing have been suggested to support small-business development.

7: Mixed-income housing

Most communities desire more options at the high end of the housing spectrum (because these choices have not existed locally), but also want to create good, affordable rental housing to protect against residents being priced out of their own neighborhood.



PHOTO: DEBRA SIMMS FOR MARTHA BROCK PHOTOGRAPHY

Retail: Many call for revival of local shopping areas. Above, new stores at 79th and Halsted in Auburn Gresham.

8: Improving specific sites

Almost every neighborhood has identified specific streets or parcels that represent crucial development opportunities. Some want housing or retail development; others seek open space or park facilities. Locations are easily identified, but there is not always consensus around intended uses.

9: Youth recreation and job opportunities

Communities recognize that kids with nowhere to go after school and with no culture of part-time employment are more likely to engage in anti-social activities. High-quality social programs, recreation (roller rinks, movie theaters, parks) and after-school jobs are seen as tools to keep youth on track.

10: Support for ex-offenders

Several NCP communities are receiving large numbers of parolees from the prison system. Residents seek programs that provide immediate supports to the ex-offenders along with job training and placement services to help them resist the criminal lifestyle.

Other themes discussed include open space/parks; access to health care; improved social services; beautification and greening; development coordinated with transit; violence prevention; improved communication within neighborhoods; immigration issues; and cultural and artistic opportunities.



PHOTO: PATRICK BARRY

Schools: Education is on everyone's list. Above, South Chicago's New Sullivan School offers evening programs.

RE:NEW

A publication of LISC/Chicago's New Communities Program

Local Initiatives Support Corporation/Chicago
1 N. LaSalle Street, 12th Floor Chicago, Illinois 60602
p 312.360.0800 f 312.360.0183

LISC

The New Communities Program is supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation with additional funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, Living Cities/National Community Development Initiative, Mayor's Office of Workforce Development, Nationwide Insurance, Polk Bros. Foundation and Surdna Foundation.