

BUILDING *sustainable* COMMUNITIES

A Progress Report on Meeting LISC's Next Generation
of Challenges and Fulfilling the Promise of
Community Development



LISC

LOCAL INITIATIVES SUPPORT CORPORATION

Our Mission:

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) is dedicated to helping nonprofit community development organizations transform distressed neighborhoods into healthy and sustainable communities – good places to work, do business, and raise children. LISC mobilizes corporate, government, and philanthropic support to provide local community development organizations with:

- loans, grants and, equity investments
- local, statewide, and national policy support
- technical and management assistance

LISC is a national organization with a community focus. Our program staff is based in every city and many of the rural areas where LISC-supported community development takes shape. In collaboration with local community development groups, LISC staff helps identify priorities and challenges, delivering the most appropriate support to meet local needs.

LISC's efforts to build sustainable communities include five goals:

- expanding investment in real estate
- increasing family income and wealth
- stimulating economic activity
- improving access to education
- supporting healthy environments and lifestyles

Foreword

In 2006, LISC embarked upon a strategic planning process. At that time, the organization had been working in America's low-income communities for 25 years, and had focused on affordable housing and other real estate projects as the primary driver to stabilize distressed neighborhoods. We could see that our local programs and the organizations with which we work were moving beyond housing, supporting projects that promote a broader definition of a healthy neighborhood. But it was done in an ad hoc manner. So we looked at our work and asked several questions: what makes a neighborhood a desirable place to live? How does a community become a good place to live, work, and raise a family? What does it take to sustain these characteristics?

In some of our sites, this broader approach to community development had been underway for a while. In Harlem in New York City and along the 14th Street corridor in Washington, DC, a broad-based revival was taking place, growing naturally out of the efforts of the local community groups and LISC to build strong neighborhoods. In Chicago, the efforts were undertaken systematically through a program called New Communities. There, they created a process by which the City, community groups and other stakeholders worked together to articulate priorities, delegate leadership to one lead organization, and collaborate on implementation of a strategy in targeted neighborhoods. When looking at this successful work on the ground, we thought about how it could be replicated, and came to the conclusion that the Chicago model, with its well defined structure and process was something that could be undertaken in neighborhoods and rural communities across the country.

We call the strategy *Building Sustainable Communities*, and began its implementation in 2007 in 10 local sites. Today, 17 LISC programs are executing the *Building Sustainable Communities* strategy, and our 12 other programs have begun the local planning and organizing to put it into practice.

Why do we think LISC's *Building Sustainable Communities* strategy will work when so many others have not? We believe that the lessons learned over nearly three decades of success by scores of organizations involved in community development inform this strategy. We also believe that the capacity built over the same period of time among community-based organizations can successfully execute it. Perhaps most importantly this strategy is taking place in neighborhoods where LISC has had a presence for many years, creating a foundation of capital investment and physical renewal, and building local partnerships and organizational leadership. In short, the time is right.

This document presents highlights of our success to date. In Chicago, Washington, DC and Indianapolis - three very different cities - the strategy has been executed in ways that address the unique needs of those cities and the neighborhoods we serve. The results have been beyond our expectations, especially in the current economic environment. We are excited by our progress, and believe that this strategy can be transformative for low-income communities across the nation.



Michael Rubinger
President and CEO
August, 2009

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BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Completing the Promise of Community Revitalization

From half a century of progress in community development, this much is clear: Organizations representing the residents of distressed neighborhoods and rural areas can reverse the decline of their communities, build more attractive and stable environments, and preserve a diversity of incomes and households — provided they have sufficient capital, technical expertise, and political will to support them. Hundreds of successful community development organizations across the country stand in testimony to this conclusion, and their continued accomplishment enlarges the evidence year by year. LISC, approaching the start of its fourth decade, remains the nation's pre-eminent vehicle for delivering financial and technical resources to these organizations, and for helping to expand the scope and promise of the work they do.

The next question, which will define the prospects for community revitalization in the decades ahead, is this: Can the material and social achievements of community development groups — and of the widening network of other organizations and programs that strengthen developing communities — be *sustained*? Can the communities where they work continue to expand the circle of improvements, maintain a desirable and healthy environment for those who live there, attract new residents, and strengthen the business, educational, and social institutions that make a community thrive? In short, can improving communities *keep* improving, on more and more fronts, through lean times and periods of growth?

To be certain the answer to this question is Yes. LISC's two-year-old *Building Sustainable Communities* initiative has brought together, in a single strategy, the full range of proven, long-term approaches to community revitalization in 17 places (and counting) around the country. The initiative encompasses not only capital investment in the built environment, but widening opportunities for income and wealth, improving education, stimulating local economic activity, and creating safe, healthy surroundings. It brings back into the fundamental definition of community development all the essential elements that make communities desirable. And it enlists a full circle of community leaders and organizations in a

single, coordinated effort to renew, enrich, and sustain the places where America's working families live.

Amid the sharp economic downturn beginning in 2007, the planned, multifaceted activity of *Building Sustainable Communities* has proven to be even more valuable than in stronger times. As resources have tightened and market forces weakened, the consequences have struck lower-income communities on multiple fronts: housing foreclosures and vacancies, troubled and failing businesses, shrinking employment, lost health coverage, stressed and anxious families. A coordinated, community-wide response to these difficulties is not only the most effective way to grapple with their interlocking causes and effects. It is also the surest way for communities to protect and preserve the assets that will allow them to rebound when times improve. It is precisely in difficult times when the sustainability of community improvement comes into question — and when the means of resilience are forged.

To see the methods of *Building Sustainable Communities* in action, consider Milwaukee's Washington Park, an 80-block neighborhood where more than half the 9,000 residents live below the poverty line. LISC has invested not only in new and renovated housing, but in schools, recreational amenities, businesses, health services, and programs to improve employment and help families build assets. Besides supporting the conversion of a brownfield into productive industrial space, we've helped create the Center for Family Prosperity, a career and financial services center for working families. We've helped seed a vocational training program for young people in the construction trades, called Operation Fresh Start. Together with State Farm Insurance, LISC has invested in a service-learning program in the local middle school, a new Urban Ecology Center offering environmental education programs, and a Family Leadership Academy to promote parental involvement in the school.

Along with commercial development, business attraction, and other economic improvement, we're supporting the expansion of the Westside Health

Clinic, improvements to the grounds at Westside Academy elementary school, development of a community garden and, through the NFL Grass Roots program, a thoroughly renovated neighborhood playing field. All of these developments are in close proximity — a factor that makes them mutually reinforcing and that multiplies their effect on the neighborhood's durability and quality of life.

Central to this concentration of effort has been the formation of an unprecedented coalition of 12 local organizations plus Harley-Davidson, whose world headquarters is at the southern end of the neighborhood, along with the City of Milwaukee and LISC. Weaving together the members' various missions and specialties, the coalition, called Washington Park Partners, has compiled a comprehensive plan for raising the quality of life in the neighborhood on all of the five coordinated fronts that define a sustainable community:

- *the built environment,*
- *income and assets,*
- *economic vitality,*
- *education,*
- *and health and the environment.*

The plan lays out a complete rationale for all of the programs and projects described earlier, and many others as well. Such plans — formulated and led by the communities themselves, working side-by-side with local institutions, businesses, government, and technical advisers — are the backbone of *Building Sustainable Communities* efforts in each city. In Milwaukee, the success in Washington Park is spreading to other neighborhoods across the city — an expansion fueled, most recently, by an unprecedented \$50 million commitment from philanthropist Joseph Zilber.

Because of the intensely local character of these plans, no two sites in the LISC *Building Sustainable Communities* national network are quite alike. But all of them integrate the five basic elements of desirable communities into a vision of lasting, self-sustaining transformation. Each of them enlists leaders who are authoritative and accountable, both from within the community and from broader centers of influence and resources, including critical public systems like health and education. All of them concentrate their efforts on carefully defined target areas, devise

methods of measuring and accounting for their progress, and work with expert intermediary organizations that can provide specific forms of expertise and help manage projects. All are spearheaded by a local lead institution that represents the community's residents and businesses and is responsible to them.

And all of them are supported, guided, and partly funded by LISC, whose role in shaping the *Building Sustainable Communities* effort extends from the earliest formation of coalitions and planning exercises all the way to the forging of operating partnerships, assembly of financing and investment, development of projects, and evaluation of results. Our financial and technical support are aimed not just at individual developments, but at building the full range of skills, assets, and alliances that communities need to pursue a complete, continually improving quality of life.

The Five Essentials of *Building Sustainable Communities*

To appreciate the difference that this kind of integrated, broad-based approach can make in a community's long-term quality of life, it helps to see the process, and the results, in action. This paper will present a close look at the progress now under way in a few *Building Sustainable Communities* sites. But first, it is important to look more closely at the five essentials on which the program is built, and to understand how the process of deliberately combining these elements leads to improvements that are not only greater than any one kind of intervention could achieve on its own, but that are more likely to endure, to fuel further improvement, and to produce a community whose quality of life can be sustained over the long term. We'll start with the five basic components:

1. The Built Environment: *Expanding capital investment in homes and other structures that are safe, decent, and affordable.*

Marshaling capital for physical redevelopment is nothing new for LISC, and it remains one of the cornerstones of community development activity nationwide. But the scale of accomplishment on community real estate over the past three decades has tended to obscure a longstanding fact about this work, and about LISC's role in it: Physical redevelopment is crucial to the vitality and quality of life in

cities not solely on its own, but because of all the other things it makes possible. Physical blight and disorder lead to unhealthy environments where families leave as soon as they can, where criminality takes easy root, where recreation and physical activity are difficult and unsafe, where investment and other economic activity are scarce, and where community life is constrained or choked off entirely. In short, redeveloping homes, commercial districts, and public amenities is essential to all the other necessities that make for healthy communities.

That is the reason why *Building Sustainable Communities* starts with a continued commitment to capital investment in a wide variety of new and renovated homes, community facilities, commercial and industrial property, and the public spaces that link all these elements together. It is no accident that many of the other strategic elements on this list prominently incorporate physical developments as anchors of the change they are bringing about. But even on their own, construction, renovation, and preservation of affordable housing and reinvigoration of commercial property remain crucial strategic necessities for any long-term plan to bring communities to lasting health.

Fortunately, a healthy body of financial tools, investment incentives, supportive government policy, and public subsidies has built up around the community-based development of homes and businesses. LISC has been at the forefront of the creation and application of many of these resources, both in formulating and advocating for effective policies and in pioneering the way the various programs and resources are put to use. The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, the New Markets Tax Credit, innovative uses of the HOME and Community Development Block Grant programs, and many creative approaches to public housing and community facilities bear the stamp of LISC's influence, practical experience, and circulation of best practices across the country.

These programs — and the historic expansion of capital for physical redevelopment that they have unleashed — remain critical, core elements of *Building Sustainable Communities*. LISC's own financial products and services expand on these public resources with innovative uses of private capital for project financing and equity investment, venture capital pools, land banks and community land trusts, and capacity-building grants to bolster the ability of community-based organizations to mount increas-

ingly sophisticated, high-impact projects. The resulting physical improvements are not only the early fuel that sets many communities on the path to revitalization, but they are a key sustaining force, applied steadily year after year, for preserving affordability, improving the physical and natural surroundings, providing space for essential services and amenities, and stimulating new investment and economic activity over the long term.



Olneyville neighborhood of Providence, RI

2. Family Income and Assets: *Increasing opportunity for employment, skills development, and greater prosperity for residents of developing communities.*

To sustain the recovery of struggling communities, residents need to have opportunities to improve their economic condition over time and the confidence to invest in their homes and businesses. More broadly, thriving communities need to be places where lives are visibly improving, and where a rising income doesn't necessarily entail a decision to move away. In other words, while it's obvious that every family hopes for advancement, and that skills and career development are every individual's main routes out of poverty, it is less obvious — yet every bit as true — that a successful *community* needs to have residents whose economic prospects are rising. A sustainable community is one where lower-income and working families can afford to live and feel at home, but also where they envision a future even after their circumstances improve.

To open avenues to higher-wage, higher-skilled job opportunities, to encourage entrepreneurship, and to expand small businesses, LISC directly provides

capital and supports programs with proven success. Examples of such programs, now operating in *Building Sustainable Communities* sites in many cities, include these:

- LISC's *Financial Opportunity Centers*, based on a model pioneered and supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, provide families with services across three areas: employment placement and career improvement; financial education and coaching; and public benefits access. (Milwaukee's Center for Family Prosperity, described earlier, is one version of this model.) These core services are woven together for each client so they reinforce one another and offer a multi-faceted approach to income and asset building. LISC currently has 27 centers operating in six cities with the goal of expanding to every *Building Sustainable Communities* neighborhood nationwide.

- *Job-creation strategies* are part of nearly all LISC's retail and commercial development efforts, ensuring that the creation of facilities for new and expanding businesses also expands opportunity for community residents to share in a growing job base. We also support targeted (sometimes called "sectoral") employment efforts that help local industries recruit, train, and promote residents as they build their work force.

- *Micro-enterprise and entrepreneurship venture capital* loans help strengthen businesses that have five employees or fewer and a capital base of \$35,000 or less. Typically, micro-enterprises have no access to the commercial banking sector.

- *Individual Development Accounts (IDAs)* are matched savings accounts that help low-income families to save more, build assets more quickly, and accelerate their entry into the financial mainstream.



Lao Family Center in San Francisco, CA

3. Economic Vitality: *Stimulating local economic activity and connecting communities to the broader economy.*

Regardless of income, families generally prefer an environment where businesses can start up, succeed, provide essential goods and services, and offer at least some job opportunities. By contrast, when residents feel compelled to look outside their neighborhood for all their shopping, recreation, and basic services, the message is fairly clear: This community is not sustainable. It's a place that residents would prefer to leave, circumstances permitting. By making strategic investments in efforts that stimulate neighborhood economies, LISC helps community organizations and business associations create environments that encourage enterprise, attract further investment and new business, and bring vitality to neighborhood commercial districts. These are among the economic-stimulus strategies LISC and its partners are now using throughout the *Building Sustainable Communities* network:

- *Making deep, targeted investments* that bring density and scale to physical development and stimulate the neighborhood economy.

- *Attracting businesses* to underserved neighborhoods, not only with new facilities and improved commercial districts, but with research and marketing efforts that demonstrate the business opportunity these communities present. For example, MetroEdge, LISC's pioneering market-research program, furnishes sophisticated demographic and economic evidence of the untapped buying power and business potential of the communities where we work.

- *Forming alliances with public sector leaders* who can focus public policy and resources on targeted commercial districts, and who can improve the programs and systems that should be fueling business activity in these areas.

- *Developing strategic institutional partnerships* with universities, hospitals, foundations, corporations, and other purchasers and investors, to channel more business to local enterprise and to enrich the pool of capital for expanding commerce.

- *Promoting transportation-oriented development* to create compact, walkable communities centered around high-quality public transportation that reduces dependence on cars and gives residents more ways to travel to work or to other destinations beyond the neighborhood.

4. Education: *Opening avenues to enriched learning, skill-development, and opportunity for children and adults.*

Access to quality education is a defining characteristic of a sustainable community. Not only are schools a primary factor in families' decisions about where to live, but so is the wider circle of educational opportunities, for people of all ages, beyond the standard K-12 school day. Even more fundamentally, any hope of community economic advancement depends in large part on residents' ability to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to compete in the labor market. Consequently, building on its pioneering work with charter school facilities dating back to the 1990s, LISC has greatly expanded its educational focus in recent years, helping *Building Sustainable Communities* partnerships work with school districts, parent-teacher groups, child care facilities, colleges and universities, and youth development and after-school programs to help make local education an integral part of the arsenal of community improvement.

To draw these critical partners into *Building Sustainable Communities* efforts nationwide, LISC has taken these approaches, among others:

- *Aggregating capital* for new or renovated schools.
- *Helping communities integrate schools* — both new facilities and high-performing educational programs — into their overall plans for community and economic development.
- *Helping schools open their facilities* as community assets and encourage faculty and staff to participate in community-improvement activities.
- *Organizing parents* into groups that have an impact on the education of their children.

- *Supporting educational programs and initiatives* that enhance school performance, such as service learning; proven improvements in math, science, and reading; and career development programs.



Giant Supermarket at the Shops at Park Village in Washington, DC

5. Health and Environment: *Ensuring that developments promote active lifestyles, sustainable use of resources, and safe and healthy surroundings.*

Residents' attitude toward their community depends, to a considerable degree, on their feeling of well-being and security — the perception that their environment contributes to their health and quality of life and to the safe, healthy development of their children. Where the environment seems polluted and unhygienic, when constructive activity for kids is scarce and there are few reasons to venture out of doors, or when the basic requisites of recreation and health care are lacking, a community isn't sustainable. Eventually, investment will dry up and people will move elsewhere as soon as their resources permit.

In *Building Sustainable Communities*, LISC and its partners have set a safe, healthy, inviting environment as a primary goal in every site — encompassing everything from tree-shaded walkways and safe playing fields to community clinics and environmentally sound design. These efforts are backed by a web of strategic partnerships with law enforcement, health care providers, the public sector, and youth and community organizations focused on improving the quality of their surroundings. Among the activities that LISC supports for building healthy environments and lifestyles are these:

- *Partnerships with law enforcement* to prevent and discourage crime and to respond to trouble effectively and quickly.
- *Secure, high-quality playing fields*, parks, and green space to attract people to public spaces and encourage common physical activity.
- *Access to quality, affordable health care* for all residents.
- *Green development*, including energy-efficient homes and buildings to ensure healthy living spaces and a more sustainable use of resources.
- *Aesthetically attractive infrastructure* that encourages public use and active lifestyles.
- *Better transportation options* that are accessible and equitable.
- *Sources of healthy food and retail products*, including quality markets and community gardens.

Building Sustainable Communities in Action: Three Profiles

The five elements of *Building Sustainable Communities* described in the previous section are practical building blocks that together define the kind of healthy neighborhood that we are seeking to create and preserve over time. The three following examples, drawn from the 17 *Building Sustainable Communities* sites nationwide, demonstrate how these component activities combine to produce wide-ranging, measurable, and lasting differences in real communities.

Quad Communities in Chicago

Because it is the first, and remains the most advanced, of the *Building Sustainable Communities* cities, **Chicago** is the logical place to start. Among the 16 Chicago neighborhoods participating in the initiative, one of the clearest examples of how the various elements fit together is in the Quad Communities area, a largely African-American community on the city's Mid South Side, where 38 percent of the 79,000 residents live below the poverty line. After decades of decline, the entire Mid South Side has lately experienced a surge of redevelopment, at least until the financial and real estate busts of 2008.

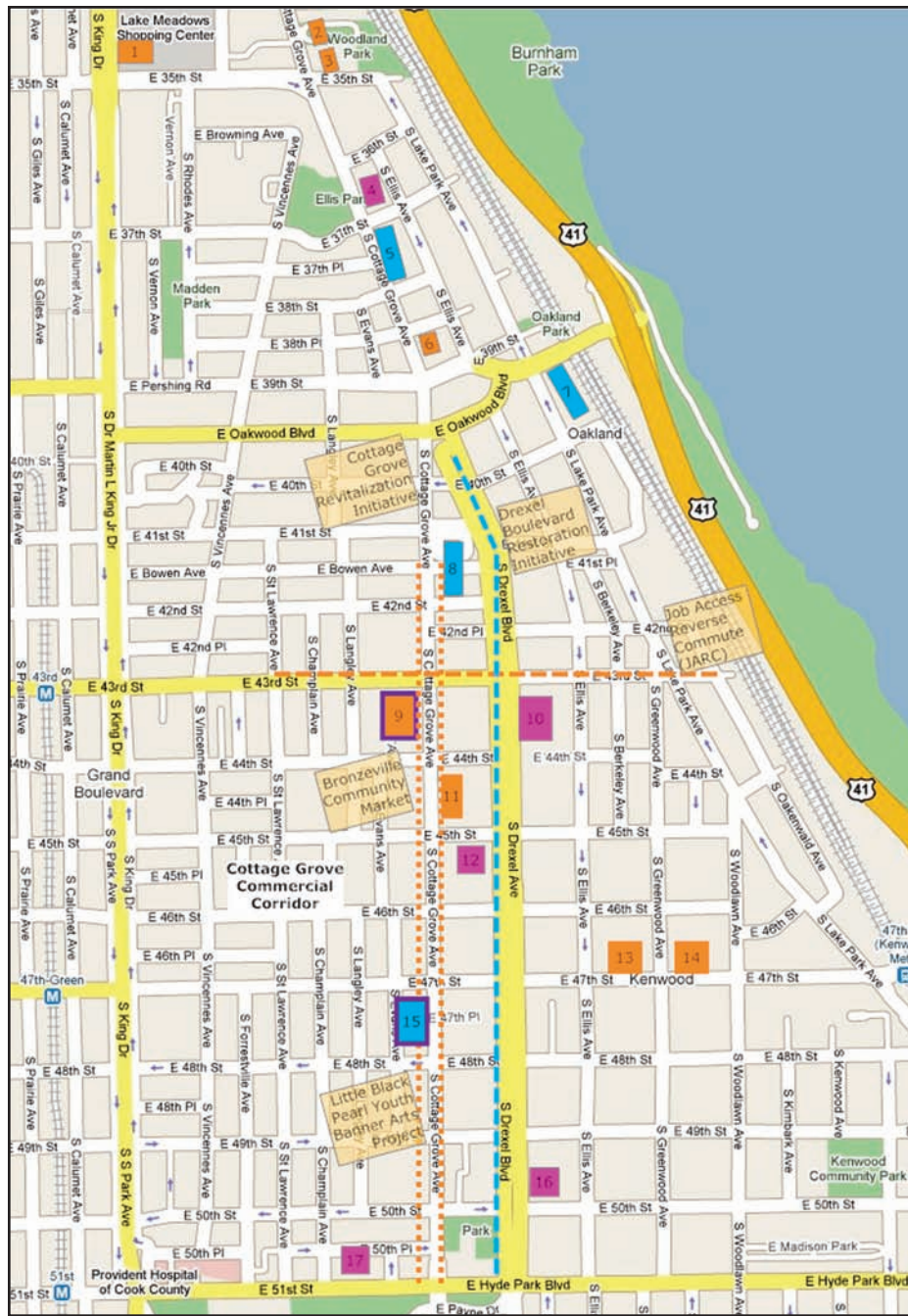
Yet amid these simmering signs of improvement, Quad Communities lacked a resident organization strong enough to lead the kind of multifaceted development coalition called for in the *Building Sustainable Communities* blueprint. So among LISC's first steps in the neighborhood was to help residents create the Quad Communities Development Corp. (QCDC) in 2003, which immediately proceeded to organize a quality-of-life planning process for the area. It assembled a planning and implementing coalition made up of more than a dozen critical partners, including various branches of city government, the University of Chicago, local businesses and residents, and nonprofit organizations specializing in housing, youth, health, and the arts, among other things.

Many of the results of the planning process are visible in Figure 1, a plot of some of the main efforts under way in Quad Communities. The map shows both the concentration and the enormous range of diverse and ambitious projects that have flowed from the *Building Sustainable Communities* effort there — including a \$36 million reconfiguration of 3,000 public housing units at Oakwood Shores, development of Donoghue Charter Elementary School, commercial revitalization along Cottage Grove, development of a new Hyde Park Arts Center, and the creation of a Center for Working Families (another version of LISC's Financial Opportunity Centers), a one-stop source of help with financial planning, employment, tax preparation, and application for public benefits. But a closer look at the network of developments shows what is arguably the most significant feature of the *Building Sustainable Communities* approach, and a direct outgrowth of the quality-of-life



Indianapolis Public School #15

Figure 1: Quad Communities



LEGEND

- Community Facilities
- Commercial / Retail
- Education
- Housing

1. Black Metropolis National Heritage Area
2. The Woodlands Home Ownership Counseling Project
3. Hyde Park Art Center Youth Banner Project
4. University of Chicago Charter School, Donoghue Campus
5. Oakwood Shores
6. Center for Working Families
7. Lake Park Crescent
8. Jazz on the Boulevard
9. Groovin' on the Grove Festival
10. Elementary School Principals's Cluster
11. Little Black Pearl Mural Arts Project
12. King College Prep
13. Little Black Pearl Art & Design Center
14. Muntu Dance Theatre of Chicago
15. Shops & Lofts at 47
16. Reavis Math / Science Specialty School
17. Dyett High School

plan: The various projects are geographically and strategically integrated.

Note, for example, the tight clustering of education, arts, commercial development, and the Center for Working Families along the immediate boundaries of the big Oakwood Shores redevelopment. In what had once been a geographically and socially isolated compound of run-down public housing, a dramatic HOPE VI reconfiguration has created a mix of housing types and income levels that blends seamlessly into the physical fabric of the redeveloping community. The new housing is in turn surrounded by amenities and services that not only bring

these investments, together with the work of QCDC in brokering, partnering, and building relationships, is a complex web of activity addressing all five of the core programmatic objectives of *Building Sustainable Communities*. Yet neither LISC nor QCDC is solely or, in several cases, even primarily responsible for carrying out the actual work. The public housing authority, the University of Chicago, and Chicago Public Schools all took lead roles in significant developments. The Hyde Park Arts Center, the Center for Working Families, and several other specialized actors and sponsoring organizations are deeply invested in the neighborhood and its overall redevelopment. Cooperation among these partners and programs places an ongoing foundation under the progress already made in Quad Communities, even as it continues to tackle more and more parts of the neighborhood plan.

Congress Heights in Washington, DC

Another example is in the Congress Heights neighborhood of Washington, DC, where the grand opening of a new commercial plaza in 2007 fulfilled a six-year-old community plan to integrate retail into a web of new developments in housing, education, youth services, recreation, and the arts. For years before the Shops at Park Village opened, residents had been forced to travel miles outside the neighborhood for daily necessities, crossing into Maryland for trips that could take an hour each way. Today, the new retail complex contains banks, an insurance agency, restaurant, dry cleaner, and the area's first full-service supermarket in a decade.

The retail plan — the result of a community-wide exercise led by the East of the River CDC with LISC support — documented widespread, unmet demand for basic goods and services throughout the neighborhood. Much of that demand was coming from a growing residential population living in new or thoroughly renovated housing that covers the income spectrum from a HOPE VI public housing renovation to subsidized and mixed-income apartments to single-family market-rate homes. Many of these developments have been the work of William C. Smith and Company, a private, for-profit real estate developer, working in close partnership with residents and community organizations.

At the heart of these developments — just down the street from the new shopping center, and bordering two of the residential properties — is THE ARC,

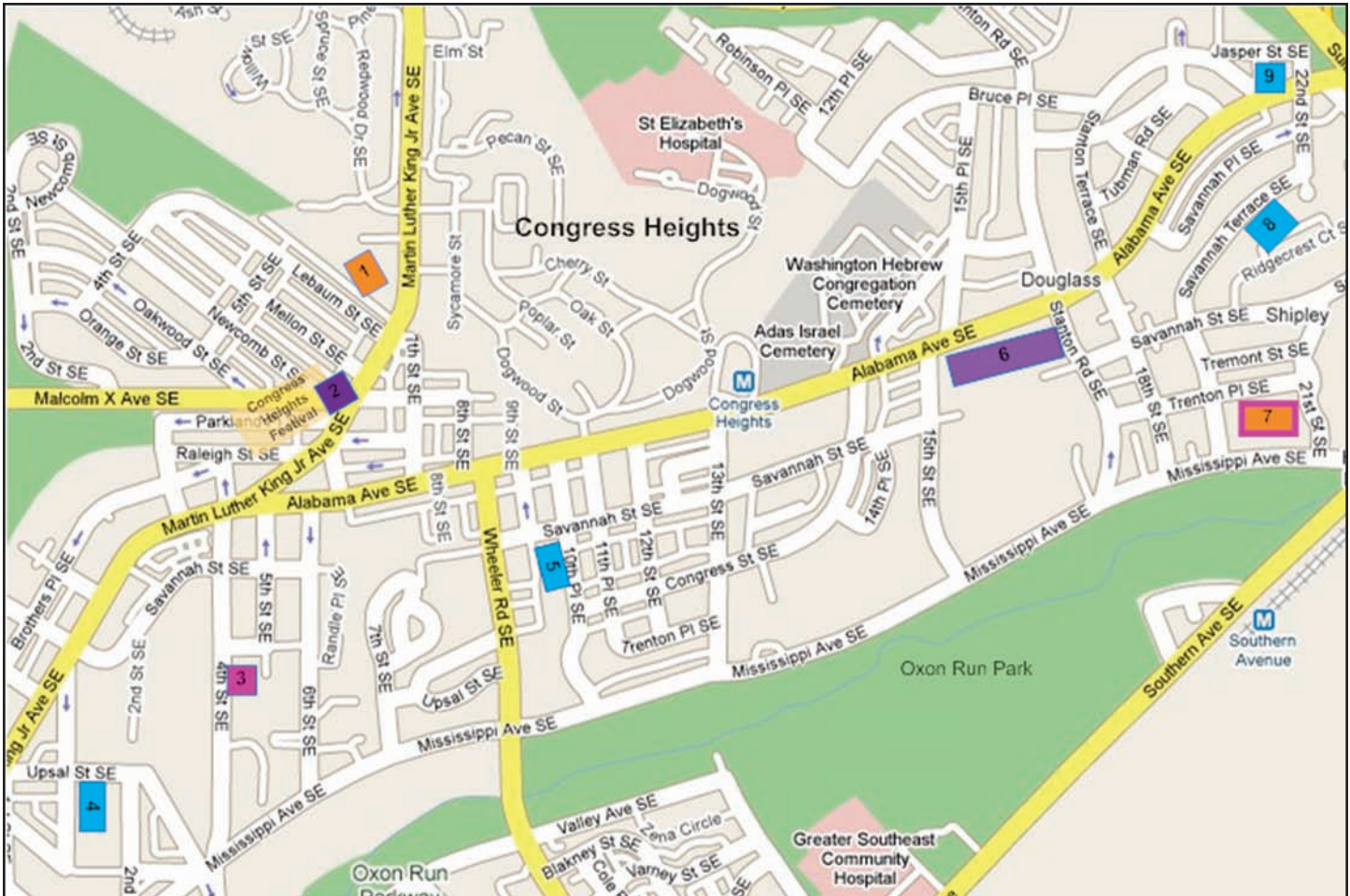


Sunday Parkways in Chicago, IL

opportunity to the neediest residents but also serve the entire neighborhood. Southward, ranging just three or four blocks in either direction from Drexel, come additional private housing developments consistent with the community plan and contributing to a further mix of affordable housing types. A close distribution of community centers, arts organizations, recreational space, and schools fills out additional aspects of the neighborhood's quality-of-life plan.

LISC/Chicago has invested nearly \$1.3 million in grants and \$19 million in loans and equity investments to support resident-driven initiatives in this one neighborhood alone. The combined result of all

Figure 2: Congress Heights



LEGEND

- Community Facilities
- Commercial / Retail
- Education
- Housing

1. Boys & Girls Club Football Field
2. Plaza 8
3. Ballou High School
4. Hope Apartments
5. 3339 10th Place Tenants Association
6. The Shops at Park Village
7. THEARC
8. Savannah Terrace
9. Jasper Place Apartments

a showcase nucleus of community activity that houses more than a dozen arts, health, education, youth, and workforce programs. The facility was developed by a nonprofit organization, Building Bridges Across the River, whose creation was spearheaded by the Smith Company, with financial and technical support from LISC. THE ARC involves, as both tenants and leaders, prominent Washington arts organizations, a middle school for girls, the local Parklands Community Center, and a spectrum of service providers from across Washington's nonprofit sector.

A few blocks away, just on the other side of the local Metro station, is a pediatric center. Throughout the neighborhood, parks and recreational spaces have been renovated and cleaned, including a 25-acre forested greenspace that was overhauled by volunteers coordinated by the Washington nonprofit Washington Parks and People.

This exceptional concentration of interlocking programs and developments bears a direct, linear relationship with the completion of the new shopping center. Without the residential developments, the market for retail would have been prohibitively small and weak. But as the environment and the residential population grew steadily stronger, efforts at business attraction found an increasingly receptive audience among retailers. Even beyond that, THE ARC's arts, recreational, and educational programs continue to strengthen both the retail market and the community's vitality. Its activities attract visitors into the neighborhood from other parts of the Washington area — additional parents and children who patronize businesses, contribute to enrollment for dozens of arts and youth programs, and populate the increasingly safe, busy streets. Figure 2 shows how the various developments not only cluster near one another, but array around the neighborhood's main destination points, including retail, transit, basic services, and public space.

Most significant of all, the community development corporation hasn't had to carry out this development itself. It was a steady partner in building relationships among other participants, and it helped to ensure that development serves the needs of longtime residents as well as newcomers. But the gathering of expertise in Congress Heights has been richer, with more far-reaching consequences, than any single organization could have achieved on its own. It is the extraordinary blending of all these forces of im-

provement — for-profit and nonprofit, physical and social, public and private, commercial and residential, natural and built, youth and adult — that makes the resurgence of Congress Heights not only overwhelming but lasting. It is a *sustainable* community precisely because it relies not on any one form of improvement, but on all the mutually reinforcing elements that make a place desirable to live, to raise families, to invest, and to spend time.

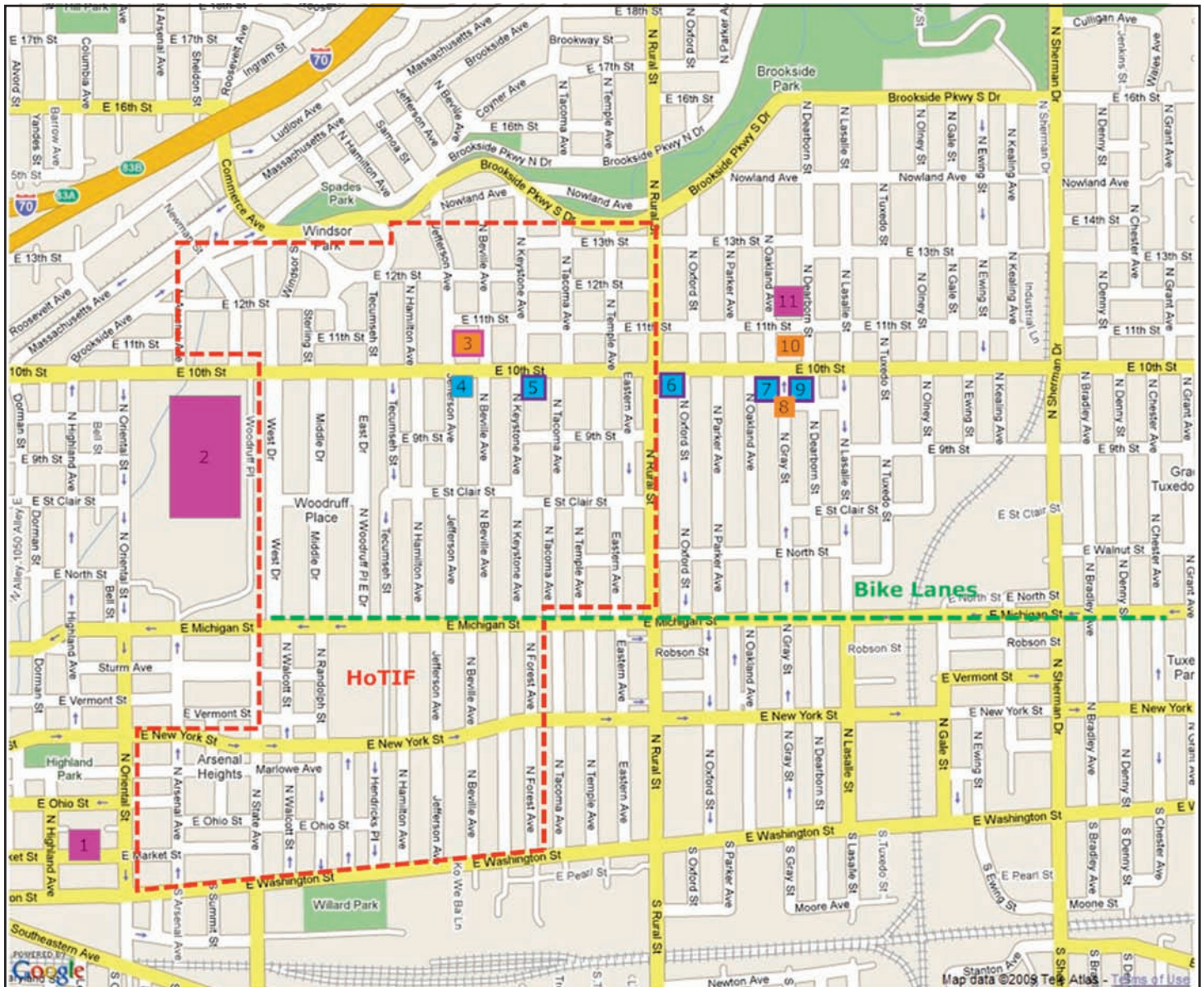
Near Eastside in Indianapolis

On the Near Eastside of Indianapolis, a coalition of organizations is carrying out a coordinated redevelopment effort of unprecedented scope. Focusing on two adjoining neighborhoods where LISC has been involved for years, including the commercial corridor that runs through both of them, the group has spearheaded a wide variety of housing developments, attracted dozens of new businesses, upgraded streetscapes and storefronts, launched educational enrichment programs at local schools, and established a Center for Working Families, among other services to help families raise their incomes, buy homes, and build assets. Working closely with the coalition, the City of Indianapolis has invested millions in improved streets, parks, and infrastructure in these same neighborhoods.

The concentration of activity on the Near Eastside was a major selling point when Indianapolis made its successful bid to host the 2012 Super Bowl. In choosing locations for the game, the NFL looks for opportunities to leave behind lasting improvements in the host community — tapping some of the economic and civic ferment surrounding an approaching Super Bowl to stimulate investments in residents' quality of life. In Indianapolis, the resulting "Legacy Project" has a perfect fit for the Near Eastside, thanks to the broad range of work already under way there. Through the Legacy Project, the NFL and other civic and corporate investors are supporting the coalition with \$10 million in additional housing and commercial redevelopment, special events and promotions, and the construction of a world-class practice facility at a local high school. And the project's investment pool is still growing.

The galaxy of projects and programs under way in the Near Eastside is coordinated by the Boner Community Center, which develops and manages housing, operates programs in local schools, and has recently created a pivotal office/retail building on the

Figure 3: Near Eastside



LEGEND

- Community Facilities
- Commercial / Retail
- Education
- Housing
- HoTIF District
- Biking Lanes

1. Washington Irving School #14
2. Arsenal Technical High School
3. Boner Community Center
4. Jefferson Place Apartments
5. St. Claire Place Apartments
6. Mazingo Place
7. Clifford Corners
8. Rivoli Theater
9. Dearborn Building
10. Legacy Square
11. Brookside School #54

10th Street commercial thoroughfare. The new building houses the community center's headquarters and facilities, along with a locally owned café and the neighborhood's Center for Working Families. Along the same corridor, the East 10th Street Civic Association, a member of the redevelopment coalition, has attracted 56 new businesses, created 71 jobs, and facilitated façade improvements on 49 storefronts. In addition, Housing Tax Increment Financing (HoTIF) is employed as a part of the area's affordable housing finance strategy.

Other critical developments on 10th Street include mixed-use buildings with shops and services on lower floors and apartments above. Three significant projects of this kind are under way at the time this is being written, including a 30,000 square-foot project called Clifford Corners and the newly acquired Dearborn Building, both of which will provide space for businesses that serve the neighborhood and will expand the variety of housing options available to residents. The historic Rivoli Theater is about to be redeveloped, possibly as an arts and cultural center. Figure 3 shows the concentration of these and other key developments around the neighborhood.

Behind all these physical developments is a corresponding web of programs to improve education and employment, increase outdoor recreation in neighborhood parks, draw new businesses and services into the neighborhood, and help families weather economic hard times. Just one example: The Boner Community Center runs a program in two local schools connecting students to services that can help them overcome barriers to learning. In one participating school, the percentage of children passing the state's standardized test shot up from 58 to 70 percent in a single year.

LISC has stood behind this network of activity by financing many of the component projects, supporting community organizing and project planning, helping to raise capital from private contributors and government programs, and providing staff support for coordinating the work of all the various partners. As Figure 3 makes clear, the result is not just an explosion of new development, but an interweaving of different *kinds* of improvements, touching all the necessities that make a community not just viable, but attractive, healthy, and rich with opportunity.

Conclusion: Preserving Achievements, Measuring Results

Since initiating our *Building Sustainable Communities* strategy in 2007, the number of LISC program sites actively pursuing this approach has grown from the original eleven demonstrations to seventeen. In addition to Chicago, Washington, DC, Indianapolis and Milwaukee cited above, these sites include the Twin Cities, San Francisco Bay Area, Detroit, Kansas City, San Diego, Houston, Duluth, Rural Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Newark, Mid-South Delta, New York City and Philadelphia. While each of these locations is progressing on somewhat different timetables consistent with local circumstances, each could provide examples of neighborhood development similar to those described in the previous section.

In 2008 alone, LISC invested \$826 million in our community development efforts nationwide. The results of this investment are much greater than the 15,200 affordable homes and 4 million square feet of retail and community space, all with a combined value upwards of \$3 billion. The results extend beyond the buildings and programs, to encompass better, healthier lives for children and their families: safer streets, more convenient shopping and services, quality health care and child care, better schools, more attractive public spaces, and inviting places to gather, exercise, and play. In difficult economic times, preserving and building on this momentum is naturally proving more challenging than in the early years of the initiative, but it has never been more important.

Some of these accomplishments are hard to quantify. But most can be tracked and measured as a way of gauging progress, and their combined effect can be evaluated in several ways. To be certain we gather as much information as possible, LISC has put in place a blended quantitative and qualitative assessment process being carried out by field researchers and data sources in a broad cross-section of *Building Sustainable Communities* sites. In each neighborhood, researchers are compiling data on production and investment and interviewing residents and other participants to gain perspective on the significance of the initiative and its accomplishments. In four of the sites, a more intensive data-collection and analysis exercise is zeroing in on seven participating neighborhoods, along with a sampling of comparison neighborhoods where the initiative is not under way.

To be sure, the rapid progress of *Building Sustainable Communities* has benefited from strong market conditions in past years, and will be tested even more now that the economy has weakened. Many sites are already incorporating new activities to respond to the recent constriction of credit, declining property values, and a spike in foreclosures and vacancy. But communities will surely be far better equipped to respond to these adverse circumstances with the consolidated, coordinated effort of the many organizations that have come together in the *Building Sustainable Communities* process. Periods of decline are, in a sense, the ultimate test of whether a community's improvements are genuinely sustainable — whether it can remain a good place to live, do business, work, and raise families, in good times and bad, over a span measured not in years but in decades.

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