

WORKING CAPITAL

The Newsletter of the Chicago Program of Local Initiatives Support Corporation

Spring Into Sports Brings Olympics to Neighborhood Youth

Taking advantage of the City's interest in the 2016 Olympic Games, half a dozen Chicago neighborhoods sponsored a new youth sports competition this spring, featuring a range of Olympic sports and engaging more than 1,500 youth during the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) spring break.

Spring Into Sports was held at four public high schools across the city between April 4 and April 11, which coincided with the visit of the International Olympic Committee. Athletes played and competed in sports from badminton to basketball to boxing, and past Olympians were on hand to share their experiences and work with kids.

Organized in cooperation with Beyond the Ball, World Sport Chicago, the Chicago Park District and CPS, all events were held at high schools in four host communities where New Communities Program (NCP) lead agencies – Bickerdike, Enlace Chicago, Near West Side CDC and Teamwork Englewood – took responsibility for programming the activities and involving neighborhood youth and their families.

"For us, Spring Into Sports is a demonstration of the vitality of our neighborhoods and their capacity to be part of the global community," said Keri Blackwell, Program Officer with LISC/Chicago. Blackwell explained that "Spring Into Sports is not a momentary effort but part of an ongoing program to create healthy, engaging activities for youth on an ongoing basis."

As a result of the surge in community sports in Chicago neighborhoods, LISC has established Neighborhood Sports Chicago (www.neighborhoodsportschicago.org), an association of community-based organizations working to engage youth and families in sports, active-living and broader community-building activities. In addition to providing a healthy, active way to spend spring break, Spring Into Sports previewed the summer programs that will be in neighborhoods soon. And judging by the success of Spring Into Sports, this summer promises to be the best yet.

More pictures on page 5



Spring into Sports closing ceremonies on April 11, 2009 at Crane Technical Prep High School

2008 Year in Review

LISC/Chicago's support of community development projects and programs totaled more than \$75 million in 2008, including grants, loans and equity. These investments led to the development of 1,079 units of affordable and market-rate housing, financed 197,112 square feet of commercial space and seeded a spectrum of neighborhood-building programs.

Highlights from 2008 included the New Communities Program's "Getting It Done" Conference, where over 900 participants from across the country learned from the NCP model of comprehensive community development. The year also saw the launch of programs like Elev8, which brings new and existing LISC resources to students in five schools across Chicago, and the Great Neighborhoods Program, which will apply NCP lessons to other Chicago neighborhoods, starting in Albany Park. And in October, LISC/Chicago welcomed Bishop Arthur M. Brazier as its first Senior Fellow.

While there was much to celebrate in 2008, the economic downturn presented challenges as well. But LISC/Chicago's programs continue to be uniquely able to respond to these challenges quickly and effectively. In addition to NCP's comprehensive foreclosure-response strategy, Centers for Working Families are providing assistance to more people than ever, including housing and employment counseling.



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The Neighborhood Stabilization Program: A Chicago Perspective

By Bill Goldsmith, President of Mercy Portfolio Services

The Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) is set to offer much-needed help to neighborhoods threatened by growing numbers of vacant, foreclosed, boarded up homes. But simply throwing money at the problem is not enough. So the City of Chicago's Department of Community Development (DCD) has put the wheels in motion to ensure that the funds make the biggest difference in the shortest time.

NSP, authorized by the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008, has provided the City of Chicago with \$55.2M to acquire and redevelop properties in communities with high concentrations of foreclosures. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development requires that all the NSP funds be committed to specific properties within 18 months of the grant start date of March 27, 2008. The funds are specifically designated for the redevelopment of vacant and foreclosed property and cannot be used for foreclosure prevention.

Chicago has been recognized as an example of efficient, effective use of the funds. The City's strategy includes focusing on neighborhoods that have been heavily impacted by foreclosures but also have a relatively solid social and economic infrastructure. Not by coincidence, many of these neighborhoods are part of LISC/Chicago's New Communities Program – neighborhoods that have seen years of effective investment in housing, transportation and jobs.

The City is also partnering with a non-profit organization, Mercy Housing, Inc., which has formed a new corporation called Mercy Portfolio Services (MPS) to provide an efficient way to do the work of NSP. MPS, acting as an extension of the City, is in a unique position to streamline the process by providing a single point of contact for owners of foreclosed properties, developers, appraisers, specification writers, board up services and realtors. It will also provide a centralized system of tracking and reporting.

Developers and community organizations who wish to learn more about NSP can download the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) at www.chicagosp.org or call William Towns at 312-445-4609.

CWFs Step Up in Hard Times

With neighborhoods and families struggling through the economic crisis, it's no surprise that LISC/Chicago's Centers for Working Families (CWFs) are busier than ever.

"We're being flooded with people looking for jobs, looking for food stamps, looking to save their house from foreclosure," said Ricki Lowitz, LISC/Chicago's senior program officer in charge of the CWF network since its inception in 2004.

But the CWFs are also more disciplined than ever, helping families prepare for and find living-wage jobs, craft budgets, set

up direct deposits to interest-bearing bank accounts, win loan modifications, apply for government assistance and avoid predatory loans and fee-laden financial services.

The achievements of the 12 CWFs that operated throughout 2008 speak to the value of the program's integrated menu of services: more than 8,000 families were served; more than 5,000 obtained employment services, with nearly 1,000 placed in jobs and another 1,500 in education and training programs; and nearly 1,000 were helped to apply for benefits or income supports worth over \$1 million.

Still, it's in the people, not the numbers, that the real achievements of the CWFs take form.

Jacqueline Hawkins sees it every day as director of the CWF in South Chicago, where more and more pink slips are leading people to seek employment services.

"We try to ascertain where they've been, and what they need to get to where they want to go. Maybe it's back to school. Maybe it's re-training. Most often it's coming up with a budget that fits the new circumstance."

"And almost always," said Hawkins, "it's about self-esteem...showing someone what they're worth, or could be worth, so they don't go away thinking they're worthless. That much is fundamental."



LISC/Chicago's Centers for Working Families served more than 8,000 families in 2008.

15th Annual CNDA Honors the Best in Chicago Neighborhoods

The 15th annual Chicago Neighborhood Development Awards® drew a record crowd of 1,500 to honor those who make Chicago a model of community development. Community partners from every corner of the city and a range of fields – architecture, government, real estate, non-profits, philanthropies and business – were on hand to recognize the winners and celebrate a momentous year in Chicago.

This year’s theme, “New Beginnings: Make No Small Plans,” acknowledged the centennial of the Burnham Plan as well as the new opportunities represented by the ascendancy to the White House of the nation’s best-known community organizer.

Seven awards were given out for various aspects of community development leadership and three were sponsored by the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation for Architectural Excellence in Community Design. Among the awards presented was a new one – the Polk Bros. Foundation Affordable Rental Housing Preservation Award, presented this year in memory of the late affordable housing leader John Pritscher.


A special moment of the event was the presentation of the Friend of the Neighborhoods Award to Valerie Jarrett, a long time leader in the redevelopment of Chicago’s neighborhoods and now Senior Advisor to President Barack Obama. In her remarks, Ms. Jarrett, who among other things served on the LISC local and national advisory boards, as chairman of the CTA and Commissioner of the Department of Planning, said, “It is those of you in this room that taught me the many lessons that brought me where I am today. You taught me how a well organized grassroots effort could do that which everyone said could not be done.”

Equally noteworthy during the event were the remarks of event chair John A. Canning, Jr., Chairman of Madison Dearborn Partners, LLC and Board Chair of the Chicago Community Trust.

“The ceremony and the attendees represent not just the importance of community development work in Chicago, but the diversity and strength of the partnerships that make our neighborhoods work so well,” said Canning. “The programs, projects and people honored this year are models for all of Chicago and the nation.”

More pictures on back cover

The Chicago Community Trust
Outstanding Community
Strategy of the Year




The CARA
Program

The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation
Award for Outstanding
Non-Profit Real Estate Project



SOS Children’s Villages
Lavezzorio Community Center

The Polk Bros. Foundation Affordable
Rental Housing Preservation Award




Ehresman Management for the
Lawndale Restoration project

The Outstanding For-Profit
Neighborhood Real Estate Project Award



DL3 Realty, L.P. for the
Roseland Medical Center

Special
Recognition Award



The United Neighborhood
Organization (UNO)

The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Award for Architectural Excellence in Community Design



First Place
Studio Gang Architects
SOS Children’s Villages
Lavezzorio Community Center



Second Place
LCM Architects
Access Living
Headquarters



Third Place
Kennedy King Architects, LLC
the new
Kennedy-King College

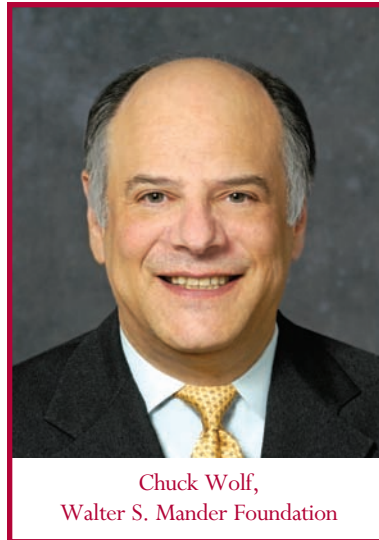
The Walter S. Mander Foundation Committed to supporting working Chicagoans and their neighborhoods

An interview with Chuck Wolf, President of the Walter S. Mander Foundation.

The Mander Foundation makes grants primarily in four areas which are related to Walter S. Mander's interests and background, including cancer research, Chicago community development, Jewish and Israeli organizations and programs, and agriculture and the food industry. Chuck Wolf, President of the Mander Foundation and nephew of Walter S. Mander, spoke with LISC about the foundation's commitment to community development.

The Walter S. Mander Foundation is involved in a number of community development efforts in Chicago. Can you give some examples of the Foundation's efforts aimed at building and sustaining strong communities?

Community development in Chicago was one of the things that was of great interest to Walter Mander. He cared a great deal about working people and wanted to help them succeed as he had. In carrying on his commitment, the Foundation supports a range of community development organizations, from neighborhood organizations like the Greater Southwest Development Corporation to food and agriculture groups like Growing Home.



Chuck Wolf,
Walter S. Mander Foundation

The Walter S. Mander Foundation has provided support specifically to LISC/Chicago's Centers for Working Families. Why is this of particular interest to the Foundation?

The Centers for Working Families marry three areas of support: employment, housing and public benefits. Research and experience show there is a tremendous synergy between those areas; you can do a lot more good for people if you coordinate these three areas of service. We'd like to see this concept developed further. I think it will serve the working people of Chicago well.

How would you characterize the relationship between the Walter S. Mander Foundation and LISC/Chicago?

LISC does terrific work in the city of Chicago, and we're glad to be a part of the team. In addition to seeing the successes of programs like the Centers for Working Families, we and the community organizations which we support have learned a lot from LISC. LISC brings together a range of groups doing great work, and we all benefit from the educational and networking opportunities which LISC facilitates. In fact, we've come to support a number of the groups who we have met through LISC, as well as LISC itself. We're proud to be involved.

First Quarter LISC Grant & Loan Activity

LISC dispersed a total of \$3,320,719 in grants and loans to projects across the city from December 2008 through February 2009, including the following:

The schools and community partners in the **Elev8** school program received grants including \$70,000 to Advocate Charitable Foundation for a mobile dental program at Ames Middle School, Marquette Elementary School, Orozco Academy, Perspectives Calumet Charter Middle School and Reavis Elementary School.

Through **The Civic Life Fund**, five organizations each received a \$1,500 grant to participate in creating neighborhood tours for the Burnham Plan Centennial: Claretian Associates, Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation, North River Commission, Quad Communities Development Corporation and The Resurrection Project.

The Homestead Fund made a \$1,400,000 loan to Woodlawn Community Development Corporation to support the acquisition of the 25-building, 587-unit Southside Preservation Properties, which will be maintained as affordable rental buildings.

The Community Male Empowerment Program received a grant of \$3,000 through **The Leadership Fund** to support the purchase of new technology.

The Main Street Fund made a grant of \$52,506 to West Humboldt Park Family and Community Development Council for a commercial development strategy targeted to areas of the West Humboldt Park neighborhood.

Economic Recovery Bill Offers Community Development Opportunities

By Buzz Roberts, National LISC Senior Vice President for Policy

The recently enacted American Recovery and Reinvestment Act – more popularly known as the federal stimulus bill – provides several funds targeted at neighborhood recovery. The bill is vast, but here are a few:

- **Foreclosed homes:** \$2 billion for the Neighborhood Stabilization Program for the acquisition and rehabilitation of foreclosed and abandoned homes. This amount adds to the \$3.9 billion that Congress approved last year, including \$55 million for the City of Chicago. Cities, states, and nonprofits can apply for the new funds.
- **Low Income Rental Housing:** To jump-start stalled Low Income Housing Tax Credit projects, Congress approved two resources. First, states will receive \$2.25 billion in HUD grants under a new Tax Credit Assistance Program, including \$94.7 million for Illinois. Second, states will be able to exchange LIHTC authority for cash grants to the extent that private investments are not available.
- **Community Development Block Grants:** An additional \$2 billion is available to cities and states, including \$22.5 million for the City of Chicago.
- **Energy efficiency:** The Energy Department will distribute \$5 billion in weatherization funds, which can provide up to \$6,500 for each housing unit occupied by households with incomes up to 200% of the poverty line. HUD will also distribute \$250 million to improve the energy efficiency of Section 8, Section 202 (elderly) and Section 811 (disabled) housing.
- **Homelessness prevention:** \$1.5 billion, including \$34.4 million for Chicago.
- **Public housing improvements:** \$4 billion, including \$221 million for Chicago.
- **AmeriCorps:** An additional \$89 million.



More than 1,500 youth participated in Olympic activities as part of Spring Into Sports.

Assessor's new approach to foreclosures

In many Chicago neighborhoods, the impact of the foreclosure crisis is obvious, but the effect of foreclosures on property values is harder to determine. Assessor James M. Houlihan has commissioned a new study of how foreclosures affect property values in the current environment, which will help his office adjust its assessment process to ensure that homeowners get the most accurate current assessment possible.

"With foreclosures at record levels, we need to take a fresh look at their impact – not just on the resale prices, but on entire neighborhoods and communities, too," Houlihan said.

The Assessor's Office estimates the value of 1.8 million properties in Cook County using sophisticated modeling that incorporates sales data and other information. Partnering with RW Ventures, LLC and University of Chicago professor Christopher Berry and with funding from the MacArthur Foundation, the Assessor's Office will study concentrations of foreclosures around individual properties, explore differences in sales volume among neighborhoods, and look at foreclosure resale data, as well as other factors.

Houlihan has already announced that assessments will decline in suburban areas by 5 to 15%. The impact on Chicago properties will be found as the triennial reassessment is done in the latter half of 2009.

Senior Fellow Update



Bishop Arthur M. Brazier, appointed as LISC/Chicago's first Senior Fellow last year, has begun sharing his experiences and wisdom across the country, with presentations to national LISC staff at a meeting in Philadelphia and several community development events in Kansas City. He has also penned several memoirs on his experiences in community development.



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John A. Canning, Jr. of Madison Dearborn Partners chaired the 15th Annual CNDA, which welcomed a record number of 1,500 people to celebrate the best in Chicago's neighborhoods.

The Friend of the Neighborhoods Award



Valerie B. Jarrett, Senior Advisor to President Barack Obama and Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Relations and Public Liaison

The Norman Bobins Leadership Award



Rami Nashashibi, Executive Director, Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN)