



# Involving **the** Community in Neighborhood Planning



COVER: Gamaliel Ramirez designed the mural *We All Came Together as One* with inspiration and assistance from local students. The mural, located in an SDCCom-sponsored building in Chicago, was funded by the Local Initiatives Support Council through the New Communities Initiative and the South Chicago Housing Collaboration.

N U M B E R 1

# Involving the Community in Neighborhood Planning

The 2004 ULI/Charles H. Shaw Forum on  
Urban Community Issues

September 22–23, 2004

Prepared by Deborah L. Myerson



**Urban Land  
Institute**

## ABOUT ULI

ULI—the Urban Land Institute is a nonprofit education and research institute that is supported by its members. Its mission is to provide responsible leadership in the use of land to enhance the total environment. ULI sponsors education programs and forums to encourage an open, international exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences; initiates research that anticipates emerging land use trends and issues and documents best practices; proposes creative solutions based on that research; provides advisory services; and publishes a wide variety of materials to disseminate information on land use and development. Established in 1936, ULI has more than 26,000 members in 80 countries representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines.

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ULI is influential in the discussion of and debate on important national land use policy issues. To encourage and enrich that dialogue, the Institute holds land use policy forums that bring together prominent experts to discuss topics of interest to the land use and real estate community.

The findings of these forums can guide and enhance ULI's program of work. They can also provide ULI district councils, ULI members, and others addressing land use issues with information they can use to improve quality of life, advance community values, and—in the words of the ULI mission statement—"provide responsible leadership in the use of land in order to enhance the total environment."

*ULI Community Catalyst Reports* are intended to make the findings and recommendations of ULI land use policy forums relevant—accessible to and useful for practitioners at the community level where land use decisions are made and their consequences most directly felt.

*Community Catalyst Reports* can be downloaded free of charge from ULI's Web site ([www.uli.org](http://www.uli.org)) or ordered in bulk at a nominal cost from ULI's bookstore (800-321-5011).

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# Introduction

Neighborhoods are the building blocks that shape a city's identity and vitality. Changes in a city's population, employment levels, housing choices, and transportation options all have an impact at the neighborhood level. Collaborative neighborhood planning on issues involving land use and development, redevelopment, transportation, and economic development offers cities the opportunity to identify, coordinate, and prioritize a variety of goals with the involvement of the local community.

However, collaborative neighborhood planning is not a common practice in many cities. Rather, a city may produce plans for housing densification, economic development, mass transit, or traffic circulation without the input of the neighborhood(s) they affect—if, indeed, it adopts any plans at all.

With little or no planning occurring at the neighborhood level, local residents and stakeholders often become active only when proposed changes or persistent problems arise. Neighbors come together when there is an urgent issue at stake or to respond to a problem.

Neighborhood planning on a comprehensive level can help residents and business owners identify their community's priorities, plan for the long term, and ensure the consistency of their community's goals with those of the larger city.

Nonetheless, collaborative neighborhood planning encounters many challenges. It is difficult to attract a critical mass of community members to meetings and to maintain the momentum that is needed to complete a planning process that can take up to a year. Most planning efforts are also constrained by limitations on funding and staffing.

Participants at the 2004 ULI/Charles H. Shaw Forum on Urban Community Issues identified seven key principles for successful collaborative neighborhood planning and reviewed some examples of neighborhood planning practice.

# Neighborhood Planning Principles

**T**he forum began with presentations on neighborhood planning practices in South Chicago, San Jose, and Austin. Forum participants then worked in small groups to formulate their own set of principles and practices. Each group presented its recommendations to the entire forum and the participants reached a consensus on the following set of principles and practices for effective neighborhood planning.

# 1 Start with Community Building

A cohesive, strong community is a key underpinning of neighborhood planning. It will provide the momentum that successful collaborative planning requires—as well as the commitment to see the effort through a process that often takes up to a year.

*Identify and understand the neighborhood's demographic and cultural influences.*

Planners need to take a community's race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic mix into account in order to engage in a successful collaboration. Planning for future development should reflect local history, culture, and traditions.

*Involve residents, businesses, civic groups, and institutions early on.*

Belief comes after behavior. When people feel that they have had a vital role in collaborative planning, they are more likely to have confidence in the process and voice support for the endeavor.

*Establish trust and treat people with respect.*

Trust is an important foundation for a successful collaborative planning effort. Planners can achieve it by listening with sincerity and showing that they take neighborhood input seriously. Being listened to enhances a neighborhood's pride and self-esteem.

*Know who is affected by but not represented in the collaborative process and provide them with a voice.*

Squeaky wheels and active, participatory residents are not the only people with something at stake. It is important to reflect the needs of affected children, nonresidents, nonparticipants, and unsqueaky wheels in the planning process.

*Do not be distracted by people who oppose any change.*

There will always be naysayers who are skeptical about the planning effort and may try to derail it. Some people simply fear change, but it may be possible to assuage their fears by identifying emerging leaders and enlisting them in the effort. In the end, however, the collaborative planning process should focus on the people who will help the project move forward.

*Obtain frequent feedback.*

Periodically assess whether the neighborhood is genuinely engaged in the planning process. If not, adjust the procedures for ensuring participation.

## 2 Foster Leadership

A collaborative planning process that brings together many stakeholders needs someone who is accountable at the end of the day. Thus, it is important to make clear the policy and decision-making framework of the planning process, and to specify who will be responsible for implementing agreed goals and plans.

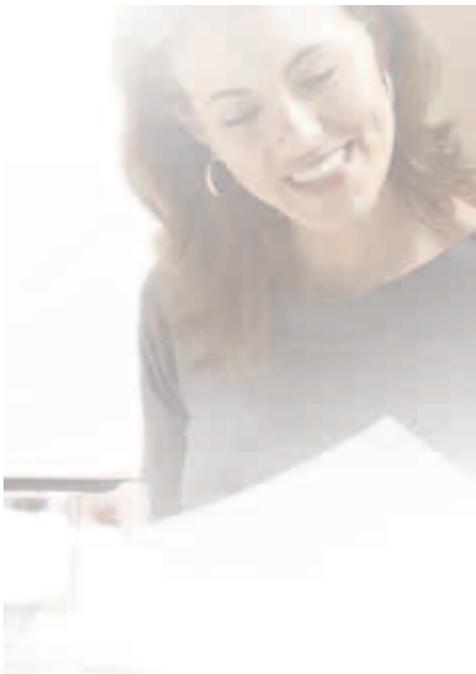
*Appoint a local entity to champion the planning effort.*

Often, local community development corporations (CDCs), neighborhood associations, or other local community organizations constitute the essential link between a city's central planning agency and individual neighborhoods. Such local entities are a logical choice for being named the keeper of the plan that emerges from a collaborative planning process. A locally based organization with a commitment to the plan can be key to achieving the plan's goals.



*Decide on responsibility for each neighborhood goal.*

Each of the outcomes of the neighborhood plan needs a responsible steward or champion. It is important to identify a local individual, community group, civic institution, or other stakeholder who can see each neighborhood goal through. Localizing ownership and responsibility for the plan will add to the value and sustainability of the planning effort.



# 3 Plan for Implementation

The purpose of planning is to set the stage for action; without implementation, planning becomes an empty exercise. If people perceive that collaborative neighborhood planning is meaningless, they will likely become demoralized and withhold their cooperation in the future. The forum participants recommended several collaborative planning principles to help ensure planning implementation within neighborhoods.

*Build in certainty, clarity, and predictability.*

Planners should present participants with a road map that defines the beginning, the end, and the process in between. This will keep the process moving forward and maintain enthusiasm for the effort.

*Set short- and long-term goals and establish milestones.*

While participants should understand the long-term nature of planning, planners can work with them to establish markers that will recognize goals they have achieved along the way. Periodic assessments can help show people where they are today, how far they have come, and where they are going.

*Do not set the community's sights too low.*

Communities may not realize how much they can achieve. A shared vision can help raise residents' expectations, leading them to strive for more progress in the neighborhood.

*Energize the long-term vision with short-term successes.*

While planning is still ongoing, undertake some interim improvements and programs. Small accomplishments along the way will boost and maintain interest in the project.

*Establish priorities.*

It is not possible to implement all the elements of a comprehensive plan at once. Prioritizing goals—along with identifying who is responsible for reaching those goals—is an efficient method for realizing outcomes.

*Learn from what other communities have done.*

Neighborhoods may feel like they are embarking upon unknown territory, but in truth other communities have gone through similar processes. Study both success stories and failed attempts at planning—and also recognize that each community must tailor its plan according to the particular resources that are available to it.

*Keep the plan flexible enough to capture opportunity.*

Structure is good, but communities need to be able to accommodate opportunities as they arise, including opportunities that may not be anticipated in the original plan.

*Create a sustainable planning and implementation process.*

The momentum from the planning effort needs to last for the long term—that is, longer than most mayors and legislators stay in power.

## 4 Take Advantage of Available Tools and Resources

Neighborhood planning does not require sophisticated tools and technologies. Sometimes even the simplest tools can be quite effective. A variety of tools and resources that can facilitate the planning process may be right at hand.

### *Offer hospitality.*

“Feed them and they will come” is a good rule for planning meetings. Providing refreshments helps get people to meetings and establishes a social setting that encourages participation.

### *Use visual aids.*

In the planning process, a picture can truly be worth a thousand words. Good illustrations—maps, charts, drawings, or photographs—can dispel preconceptions and offer a way around the difficulties of language.

### *Map the neighborhood’s assets.*

The exercise of inventorying the neighborhood’s assets and charting them on a map can be an effective way to gather information about the community, to gain a sense of the spatial distribution of the neighborhood’s strengths, and to help residents realize that the neighborhood has strengths on which it can build.

### *Put together a toolbox of best practices.*

Planners and participants should identify successful projects that provide models for replication, share them widely, and gain knowledge from these planning efforts.

## 5 Be Financially Realistic

The planning and implementation process costs money. Neighborhoods should know from the outset what financial or other local resources are available to advance their goals.

### *Know what things cost and how much money is available.*

A neighborhood vision should be grounded in financial feasibility. Neighborhood planning will fare better if participants know the sky is not the limit. Every choice has a cost. Understanding the tradeoffs and opportunity costs that may be involved in the choices made is essential.

### *Be creative at filling in gaps in financing.*

Financially strapped communities can still pursue neighborhood planning and implementation with the help of locally available resources. Local companies and organizations may be willing to provide in-kind contributions or donations of professional expertise. Government agencies, corporations,

### AN EXERCISE IN SETTING NEIGHBORHOOD PRIORITIES

At a neighborhood planning meeting, have the participants determine a sum of money that represents available funds. Set out buckets corresponding to each project that they wish to pursue. Have the participants engage in negotiations to allocate the available funds among the possible projects/buckets.

foundations, and nonprofit entities may make available grants, matching money, and other financial resources for planning purposes.

*Involve developers in the process.*

Bringing a market perspective to community planning efforts can add a healthy dose of reality. Furthermore, developers who participate in the planning process (even if only as silent observers) are thereby introduced to opportunities in which they may want to invest. Developers not only can provide a market viewpoint that will help establish a feasible neighborhood vision, but also can raise expectations within the community that a particular project may indeed be within reach.

## 6 Communicate the Planning Process Effectively

**S**elling the planning process to constituents requires actions as well as words.

*Market neighborhood planning.*

Make a persuasive case for the value of neighborhood planning. Reach out to a wide range of stakeholders, and make it clear that their input is valued and important.

*Deliver tangible results early on.*

Actions tend to speak louder than words. If constituents have been told that the neighborhood planning process is outcome-oriented, the process must produce some short-term results.

*Be honest about what the planning process can and cannot achieve.*

If certain neighborhood goals are not within the realm of the lead planning agency, planners need to acknowledge this fact upfront. While facing up

to limitations risks disappointing participants in the community planning process, it also can inspire them to seek other means of realizing their goals.

*At the heart of Chicago's  
New Communities Program  
is a structured neighborhood  
planning process aimed at  
improving the quality of life.*

# 7 Make the Neighborhood's "Social" Capital Grow

**M**aking the “right” people—people who can contribute wealth, wisdom, or work—aware of the plan and interested in its outcomes can materially assist the implementation of a neighborhood plan. Often, neighborhood leaders and residents can foster this interest and awareness by making the most of people they already know.

*Know the city's political culture and structure.*

Learn what roles different public officials play and how they interact to get things done. This knowledge can facilitate the task of coordinating the implementation of the various components of a comprehensive neighborhood plan.

*Engage community decision makers in the planning process.*

Keep elected officials informed, recognize neighborhood leaders, and provide opportunities for them to play a role in the planning process.

*Engage corporate and civic leaders in the planning process.*

Identify and get to know local and regional corporate and civic leaders who have a stake in the neighborhood. They may be able to help with funding, sponsorships, or networking.

*Engage public officials in the planning process.*

City, county, and regional agencies may have resources and programs that are available for supporting the realization of the neighborhood's goals—especially for projects that fit into the agency's mission.



SAN JOSE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

# Neighborhood Planning Practice

**I**n the spirit of learning from what other communities have done, forum participants heard presentations on three examples of successfully involving the community in neighborhood planning. In addition, participants toured some of the Chicago neighborhoods targeted for that city's New Communities Program.

# Chicago:

## New Communities Program

Sponsored by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)/Chicago, the New Communities Program (NCP) is designed to help nonprofit community development corporations in 16 Chicago neighborhoods develop and implement comprehensive planning processes to strengthen their neighborhoods. Launched in 1998, the NCP seeks to revitalize declining communities, support neighborhoods in danger of deterioration, and deter displacement in gentrifying areas. LISC is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping nonprofit CDCs transform distressed neighborhoods into healthy communities. LISC/Chicago is one of a number of regional offices around the country.

The NCP focuses on three strategies for neighborhood redevelopment:

- a lead agency/CDC that is responsible for bringing people to the table and providing project accountability;
- community-generated quality-of-life planning; and
- comprehensive development addressing multiple aspects of community life.

The NCP planning processes are outcome driven and supportive of community collaboration. Each neighborhood effort seeks to assemble as many resources and as much technical support as possible and to leverage other public and private resources.

NCP neighborhoods are spread around Chicago. In each community, a neighborhood-based organization is in charge of the planning process. This organization works to coordinate programs among various local organizations and citywide groups. The NCP provides the lead organization in each program neighborhood with the following:

- funding for two full-time staff positions—an NCP director and an organizer;



The Southeast Chicago Development Commission (SCDCom) involved the community in planning to improve the neighborhood quality of life. Above, storefronts in the 92nd and Commercial Avenue shopping district were renovated through the assistance of the SCDCom. Below, a class in community gardening sponsored by SCDCom is held in the Bush neighborhood of South Chicago.



- a pool of loan and grant funds (competitively awarded by LISC) for launching short- and long-term initiatives and leveraging other public and private resources; and
- technical support—including planning expertise, training, access to experts, meetings with counterparts in other NCP agencies, and consultants as needed to talk about increasing employment options, providing affordable housing, or other issues of concern to the neighborhood.

A structured neighborhood planning process aimed at developing strate-



Above, the West Haven community, a neighborhood plan sponsored by Near West Side Community Development Corporation, features new housing being built in conjunction with the transformation of public housing.

Left, a Walgreens development on Madison Street in the West Haven community was also developed in cooperation with the Near West Side Community Development Corporation neighborhood planning process.



gies to improve the neighborhood's quality of life is at the heart of the NCP approach. NCP lead agencies are encouraged to enter into partnerships with nonprofit groups and public sector agencies to address the many issues involved in planning

for community revitalization, including employment, parks and recreation, health care, affordable housing, commercial and retail development, child care, education, and the appearance and safety of the neighborhood.

### CHICAGO: SOUTH CHICAGO AND WEST HAVEN

#### South Chicago

A once vital neighborhood, South Chicago was hard hit by the closing of its largest employer, the USX SouthWorks steel mill, in 1992. The NCP's South Chicago initiative helped organize a neighborhood citizens task force with the Southeast Chicago Development Commission as the appointed lead agency. The task force helped develop a plan for the neighborhood that specified six strategies: (1) economic development, (2) affordable housing, (3) improved safety, (4) beautification, (5) improved health, and (6) public/private cooperation. A number of key projects or programs emerging from these strategies have been undertaken—including plans to revitalize portions of the main shopping corridor, several transit-oriented development projects, the establishment of a job resource center, and the publication of a community newspaper.

The former USX site is now designated for redevelopment with factories, housing, and a lakefront park. Planning is underway for the

development of a 100,000-square-foot grocery store. Neighborhood support for the grocery store has leveraged a \$500,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

#### West Haven

West Haven, a one-square-mile historically African American neighborhood just west of downtown Chicago, is the site of another NCP initiative. Working with the Near West Side Community Development Corporation (the lead agency designated by the NCP), the West Haven community has created a neighborhood redevelopment plan that focuses on (1) balanced, mixed-income development; (2) reinvestment in commercial areas, housing, and infrastructure; (3) recreation programs; (4) safety; and (5) family services. The redevelopment plan has succeeded in attracting a grocery-anchored shopping center that will be developed on the southeast corner of West Madison Street and South Western Avenue and 22 housing units to be developed under the city-sponsored New Homes for Chicago program.

# San Jose:

## Strong Neighborhoods Initiative

The city of San Jose's Strong Neighborhoods Initiative (SNI) is a partnership involving the city, the redevelopment agency (RDA), and city residents and business owners. It was launched in 2002 to create strong, livable neighborhoods in cooperation with neighborhood organizations. SNI helps coordinate resources that come from the city, the RDA, property and business owners, individuals in the community, and public/private partnerships. SNI is allocating \$100 million over a five-year period for neighborhood redevelopment projects. The funding for SNI comes from many different sources, including the city and the RDA. SNI also makes use of resources from public agencies and private sector investments.

There are 19 active SNI neighborhoods. They are located throughout the city, cover 11,000 acres, and have a population of 230,000—which is nearly a quarter of the city's residents. Keeping in mind its ultimate goal of developing the capacity of neighborhoods to manage community improvement programs over the long term, SNI seeks to capitalize on neighborhood assets and bring in dedicated resources. Its priorities include affordable housing, cleaner neighborhoods, safe and attractive residential streets, vital business districts, and sufficient parks and community centers.

The strong neighborhood program consists of two stages: planning and implementation. Each SNI area establishes a neighborhood advisory committee (NAC) and a neighborhood improvement plan. Assigned several significant roles and responsibilities in both the planning and implementation stages, the NACs are the linchpin of the process. Neighborhood leaders, residents, business owners, and other stakeholders with an interest in serving their community make up the NAC's membership.

The planning stage involves the collaborative development or updating of the neighborhood improvement plans. Each neighborhood improvement plan sets forth the neighborhood vision and includes a top-ten priority projects plan. Completing a plan takes approximately eight months to a year. With its monthly NAC meetings, which are



Neighborhood residents and businesses approved over \$2 million in investment in new pedestrian-scale lights, street trees, and sidewalk and facade improvements that have enlivened the streetscape in San Jose's 13th Street Strong Neighborhoods community.

open to the public, and several community workshops, the SNI planning process has been able to engage the attention of NAC members and community residents. Neighborhood participation is on the rise in some SNI areas and new neighborhood and business associations have been formed.

The implementation stage depends on community residents, property owners, and other stakeholders to pursue projects related to proposals and recommendations identified in the planning stage. The NACs continue to play a key role—they oversee the progress of the plans, provide input on project development, and act as liaison to neighborhoods.

Implementation of the SNI program has drawn attention to some lessons for collaborative neighborhood planning:

- City departments should organize their programs by neighborhood to reflect the fact that neighborhoods are the fundamental building blocks for planning and implementation.
- Plans should build on existing neighborhood strengths and assets.
- Neighborhoods must establish clear priorities (for example, by agreeing on a list of top ten goals).

- A specific party or parties should be responsible—and accountable—for the implementation of priority projects.

- Aligning the city's budget with neighborhood priorities is essential to achieve the maximum impact from city resources and to avoid conflicts.

- Neighborhood and city leadership must be developed to support collaborative planning and implementation efforts.

- Perhaps most important, planning efforts must maintain momentum. Implementing the priority projects takes time and financing—and requires the continued involvement of the neighborhood to sustain the effort over the long term.

As an administratively established program, SNI does not have a legal mandate and is thus subject to political change. This fact represents a challenge to the program.

## NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING PROFILE

### **SAN JOSE: FIVE WOUNDS/BROOKWOOD TERRACE**

The Five Wounds/Brookwood Terrace neighborhood seeks to maintain a small-town atmosphere with the development of a walkable, livable mixed-use environment. Located in the eastern section of San Jose approximately one mile east of downtown, the neighborhood is primarily residential with a mix of single-family houses, multifamily dwellings, and small businesses concentrated in three main commercial areas. Spanish and Portuguese baroque architecture abounds. The Five Wounds Portuguese National Church is a centerpiece for the region's Portuguese community.

Participating residents of Five Wounds/Brookwood Terrace identified a number of core development principles and community goals that have been incorporated into the SNI plan:

- walkability and small-town character in order to allow people to walk comfortably to recreation, shopping, and other destinations;
- cultural and natural enhancements in order to conserve and leverage the neighborhood's distinctive cultural and natural assets;
- improvements in the range, accessibility, and safety of parks and trails in order to provide recreational opportunities;
- economic diversity in order to support local businesses; and
- transportation improvements in order to support walkability and connect residents and businesses to regional opportunities.

Reflecting these principles, the neighborhood improvement plan's top ten projects include the redevelopment of commercial areas, traffic and streetscape improvements, more parks and recreational corridors, housing rehabilitation, and activities programs for local teenagers.

A monthly newsletter keeps residents informed about the progress of the plan and about the monthly neighborhood advisory committee meetings.

# Austin:

## Community Involvement and Neighborhood Planning

In 1995, a citizens planning committee recommended that comprehensive planning and development regulations should begin at the neighborhood level, whereupon the city council enacted a neighborhood planning program.

The goals of the Austin neighborhood planning process are threefold:

- accommodate higher-density growth (and address neighborhood resistance to it);
- create more livable communities; and
- involve the emerging immigrant community.

The city initiated its neighborhood planning process, which is implemented by the city planning department, in 1997. Nineteen planning areas have completed plans that have been adopted by the city council. These planning areas represent more than 50 neighborhood associations and contain approxi-

mately 158,000 residents—nearly a fourth of Austin’s population. The city hopes to complete plans for all its core neighborhoods in the next few years. When all neighborhood plans are complete they will encompass more than 358,000 people or close to half of the city’s residents.

Austin’s neighborhood planning process deals with four elements of neighborhood life:

- land use and zoning;
- transportation (transit, cars, bicycles);
- urban design/neighborhood character; and
- city services and infrastructure.

Construction is close to complete on the Texan, the first multifamily development to use the University Neighborhood Overlay (UNO), a product of the collaborative Central Austin Combined Neighborhood Planning process. The neighborhood-derived UNO allowed the development of 62 units in a district where the existing zoning only permitted 23.



MARK WALTERS

Neighborhood planning is a 12-month collaborative effort designed to encourage anyone who lives, works, or owns property in the neighborhood to participate in shaping the outcome of land use, transportation, and design issues affecting the neighborhood. The process for creating a plan includes two community workshops and several task group meetings. Before the first workshop takes place, a neighborhood survey is sent to residents. Staff from the city's Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department guides participants through the steps for creating a neighborhood plan, which is based on input gathered from the workshops, focus groups, and the survey.

By means of the neighborhood planning process, the city has been able to accomplish a number of planning and development goals:

- identify areas suitable for new housing;
- find ways of preserving and protecting neighborhoods;
- identify areas appropriate for commercial or industrial development;
- identify sites appropriate for mixed-use development;
- improve and protect open space and parks; and
- take steps to improve local transportation routes.

## NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING PROFILE

### AUSTIN: THE CENTRAL AUSTIN COMBINED PLANNING NEIGHBORHOOD AREA

Located near the University of Texas at Austin campus, the Central Austin combined planning neighborhood area contains a diverse mix of owner- and renter-occupied single-family houses, commercial buildings, and properties owned by the University of Texas that are exempt from local planning and zoning.

The priorities for the area that are identified in the neighborhood plan include

- the preservation of its historical character;
- the preservation of the integrity of single-family neighborhoods;
- continued multifamily development and redevelopment consistent with the historic character of the neighborhood; and
- the provision of safe parks and attractive open spaces.

Addressing the needs of a diverse, pedestrian-oriented community, the plan accommodates compatible increases in density in zones that are appropriate for student housing and seeks to ensure that new development is appropriately scaled relative to its immediate neighborhood. In particular, it outlines a University Neighborhood Overlay district that allows denser, pedestrian-oriented commercial and multifamily development in the West Campus area.

## DEVELOPER-INITIATED NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING

### CHICAGO: HOMAN SQUARE

Homan Square provides an example of a neighborhood redevelopment plan initiated by a private developer, rather than by a nonprofit organization or public agency. In 1988, developer Charles H. Shaw sought to contribute to the redevelopment of the North Lawndale neighborhood surrounding the original Sears, Roebuck and Co. world headquarters—a riot-scarred neighborhood on Chicago’s west side that was in sore need of revitalization.

In 1994, the Shaw Company completed a 300-unit mixed-income residential development at Homan Square on the Sears site that has created a foothold for the renewal of the North Lawndale neighborhood. The development includes the Homan Square Community Center, a \$28.7 million community-service center—offering a health care facility for uninsured patients, a technology-services center, and a recreation center—that has become a centerpiece for the North Lawndale neighborhood. Shaw led the construction of this facility within a neighborhood planning process that included the city of Chicago, the Chicago Park District, state and local elected officials, neighborhood leaders and residents, private lenders, foundations, and hundreds of individual donors as partners. Affluent African American families have begun to move back to the North Lawndale community, which is now continuing its collaborative planning efforts as a participating neighborhood in LISC/Chicago’s New Communities Program.

Residents, business owners, and civic interests come together in this process to establish clear neighborhood visions that take into account both current needs and anticipated growth. Participants seek to visualize what the neighborhood should look like 20 to 30 years hence, and they make recommendations on how to accomplish those goals.

At the end of each neighborhood planning effort, the city adopts the neighborhood plan. It must

refer to the plan in implementing local projects and deciding on zoning cases. The adopted plans include a neighborhood plan that sets forth a vision, goals, and recommendations; a land use map to guide development; and a zoning ordinance—including base zoning, conditional overlays, and options for infill—to implement the land use plan.

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