

SOUTH CHICAGO: Change on the Horizon



4 COMMUNITY

South Chicago Planning Task Forces
Neighbors Make a Difference

9 VISION

Honoring Our History, Forging Our Future

11 STRATEGIES

Nine Steps to a Stronger Community

32 WORK PROGRAM

Schedule and Lead Organizations

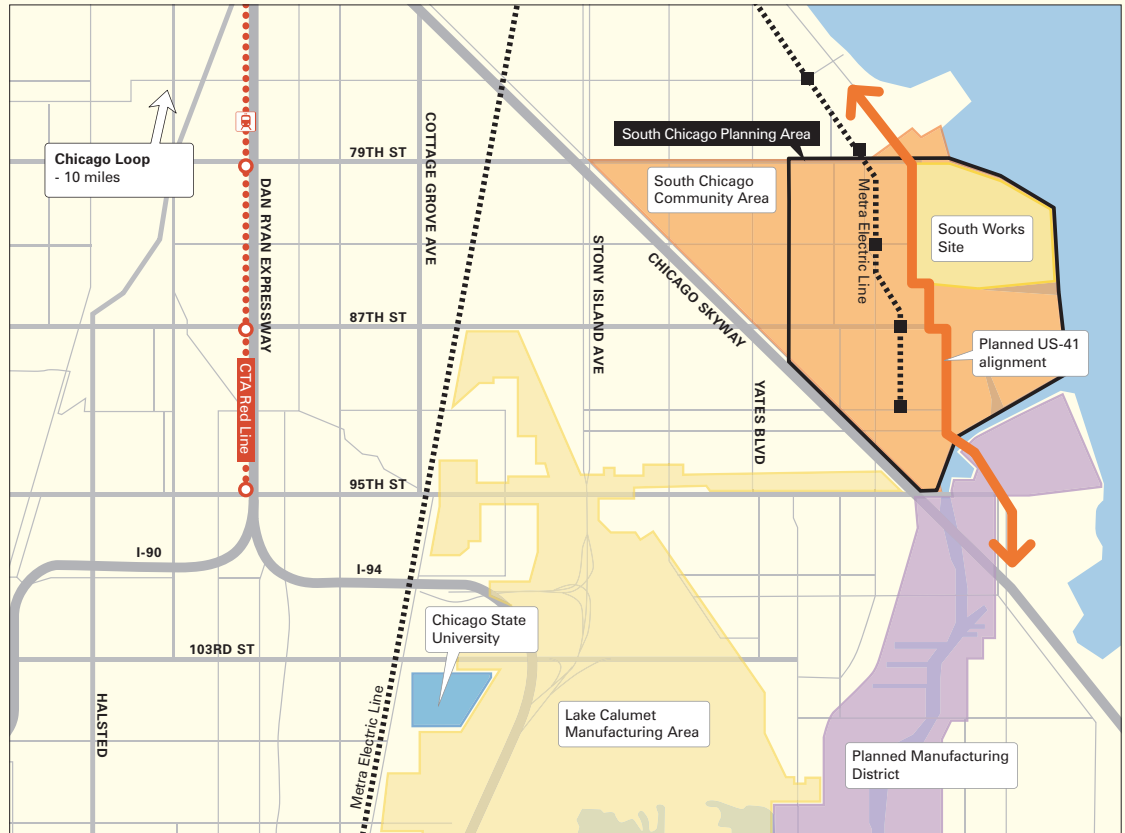


FIGURE 1 South lakefront location

South Chicago is 10 miles from Chicago’s Loop with strong transportation connections including U.S. 41 and the Metra Electric commuter rail line. Redevelopment of the former U.S. Steel site will reconnect South Chicago to Lake Michigan.

South Chicago's Planning Task Forces

Two task forces comprised of local leaders developed this combination quality-of-life and arts-in-action plan for our neighborhood. The groups, which included representatives from education, housing, health, youth programs, family and senior services, employment and the arts, worked in coordination with each other to develop the strategies and projects in this plan.

The South Chicago New Communities (NCP) Task Force was convened in the Fall of 2005 by the Southeast Chicago Development Commission (SCDCom), the former NCP lead agency. The task force met monthly from October to May to update a previous quality-of-life plan completed in 2000.

The South Chicago Building Community through the Arts (BCA) Task Force, also convened by SCDCom, met monthly from October to June to create an arts-in-action plan that was then integrated into this combined document.

Claretian Associates became the new NCP lead agency for South Chicago in 2007. Participants from both task forces will implement the projects in this plan.

NCP Denotes NCP Task Force Member

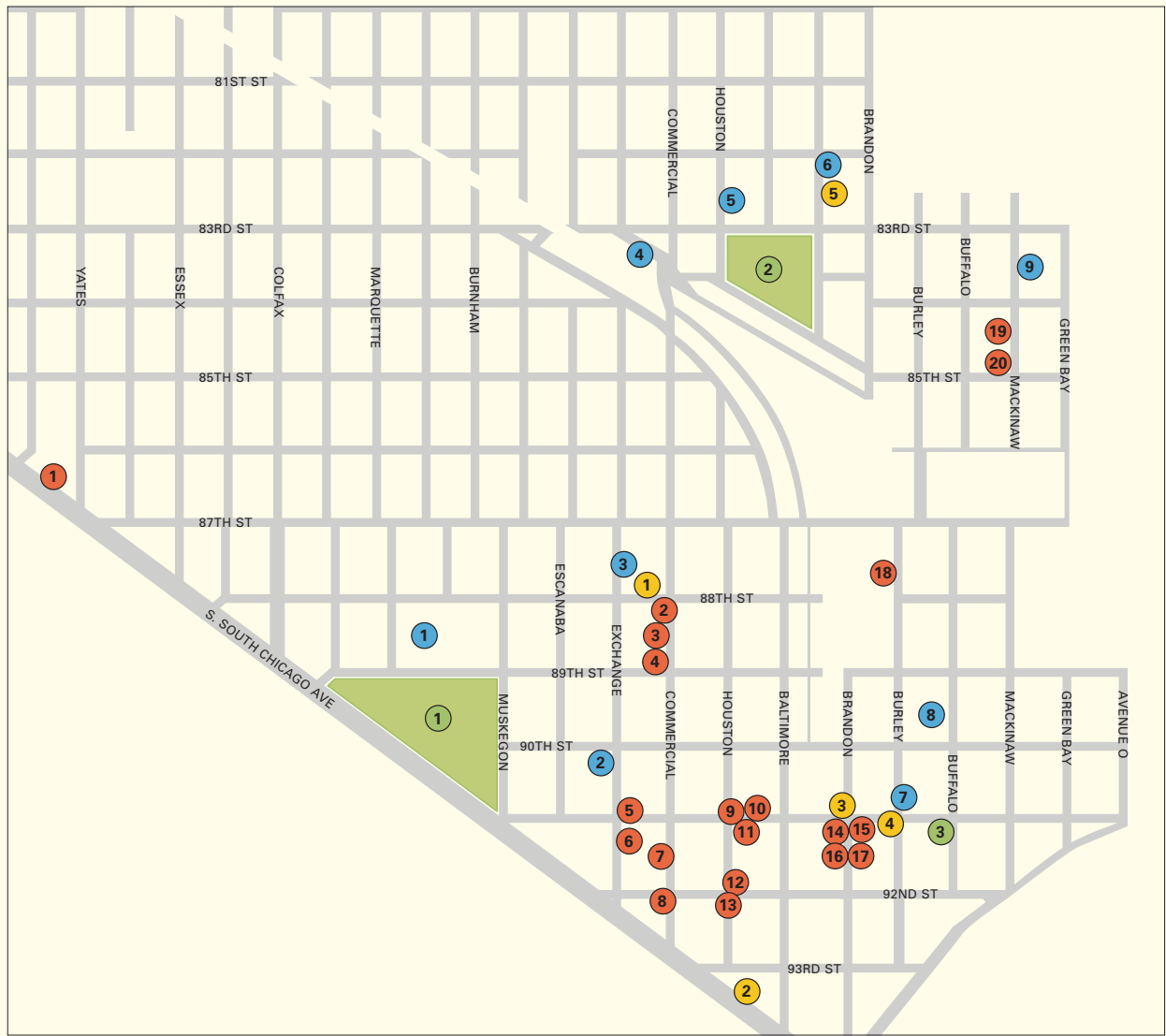
BCA Denotes BCA Task Force Member

We are thankful to all who devoted time and energy to our planning process, including:

James Allen, Resident
Miguel Alvarado, Ada S. McKinley Neighborhood House
BCA Marisa Arévalo, Artist/Resident
BCA Edie Armstrong (Mama Edie), Artist/Resident
NCP Hilda Arroyo, 10th Ward Aldermanic Office
Karina Ayala-Bermejo, Southeast Chicago Development Commission Board of Directors, Resident
Officer Baran, Chicago Police Department
Jermaine Bell, North River Commission
Neil Bosanko, Executive Director, South Chicago Chamber of Commerce, Resident
Blake Bradford, Hyde Park Art Center
Mike Burnside, Allstate Insurance
Marian Byrnes, Southeast Environmental Task Force
Lupe Castañeda, Claretian Associates
Lynne Cunningham, former Executive Director, Southeast Chicago Development Commission
BCA Derric Clemmons, Artist, Resident
Wendy Cox, Executive Director, Chicago Family Health Center
BCA Bonnie Dinell-Diamond, Steel City Furniture
Theresa DuBois, Chief Program Officer, Family Rescue
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Dorothy Lyles (Mama Sunshine), Artist/Resident
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NCP Michael Manning, Property Owner
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Rosita Nardi, El Valor Corporation
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Tony Navarro, Chicago Park District, Resident
Michelle Ortega, South Deering Voices, Resident
NCP Sylvia Ortega, Bush Homeowners & Tenants Association, Resident
Brian Page, Executive Director, South Chicago YMCA
Jorge Perez, Executive Director, Calumet Area Industrial Commission, Resident
Fr. Robert Perez, St. Michael Church
Elvia Perez, Park National Bank, Southeast Chicago Development Commission Board of Directors
Alderman John Pope, 10th Ward Aldermanic Office
Mike Quinn, Charter One Bank
Mr. Bivian Ramey, Vice Principal, J.N. Thorp Elementary School
Dinah Ramirez, Executive Director, Healthy South Chicago, Resident
Elvira Reyes, Resident
NCP Mary Karen Reynolds, former NCP Director, Southeast Chicago Development Commission
Bridgette Robinson, Executive Director, Germano Millgate Community Center
Amy Rodriguez, Chicago Family Health Center
Karen Roothaan, Resident
NCP Faith Ross, Pilgrim Baptist Church
BCA Chela Ruiz, Resident
Martha Salas, Resident
Antonio Salazar, C.A.P.S.
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Linda Stevenson, Bush Homeowners & Tenants Association, Resident
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Mike Tsandakas, Owner, Roma's Restaurant
NCP Michelle Turner, Resident
Jaqui Ulrich, Chicago Park District
BCA Martha Valadez, Teacher, Sullivan Elementary School
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Angelina Villanueva, Artist/Resident, Mexican Fine Arts Center
BCA Maria Villarreal, Artist/Resident
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Gail Walker, Envirocom
BCA Sarah Ward, Executive Director, South Chicago Art Center
Evelyn Washington, Resident
BCA Julia White, Buffalo Soldiers, 10th Cavalry
BCA Mary Young, Artist/educator
Alex Zamora, Russell Square Park, Chicago Park District
Taalib-Din Ziyad, Artist/Resident
Greg Zyvert, Executive Director, Southeast Alcohol & Drug Abuse Center



Community Organizations

1. Southeast Alcohol & Drug Abuse Center
2. Centro Comunitario Juan Diego
3. Chicago Department of Public Health
4. Chicago Family Health Center
5. SCDCom Job Resource Center
6. South Chicago Chamber of Commerce
7. Healthy South Chicago
8. Southeast Chicago Development Commission
9. South Chicago Library
10. Metropolitan Family Services
11. South Chicago YMCA
12. El Valor - Rey Gonzalez Center
13. Olive Harvey Learning Center
- 14a. Claretian Associates
- 14b. Neighborhood Housing Services, South Chicago office
15. South Chicago Art Center
16. Villa Guadalupe Senior Services, Inc.
17. Spanish Coalition for Housing
18. Germano Millgate Community Center
19. Bush Homeowners & Tenants Assn.
20. Ada S. McKinley – Neighborhood House

Churches

1. Immaculate Conception Church
2. Power Circle Center
3. Our Lady of Guadalupe Church
4. Pilgrim Baptist Church
5. St. Michael's Catholic Church

Schools

1. Bowen High School Campus
2. Arnold Mireles Academy
3. Immaculate Conception School
4. Niños Heroes Magnet School
5. South Chicago Community Academy
6. St. Michael the Arch Angel School
7. Our Lady of Guadalupe School
8. James N. Thorp School
9. New Sullivan School / SUCCESS

Public Parks

1. Bessemer Park
2. Russell Square Park
3. People's Park

FIGURE 2 A community of neighbors

Residents and institutions throughout the community are committed to reclaiming a sense of neighborliness by nurturing old relationships and forging new ones.

Neighbors Make a Difference



Local youth planted a new garden at Russell Square Park.

South Chicago is a community of neighbors. Some of us are new. Many of us have lived here all our lives. Long-time residents fondly remember the South Chicago of the prosperous years, when neighborhood identity was crystal clear. It was a booming steel town where for over a century, tens of thousands of residents worked at nearby steel mills and related industries. They made a good living, owned their homes, supported local businesses and sent their kids to good schools. They enjoyed shopping on Commercial Avenue, strolling through the parks—even late at night—and knowing everyone on their block. Newcomers often hear about “the good old days.”

After operating in South Chicago for more than 100 years, U.S. Steel’s South Works—like many other mills in the region—shut down for good in 1992. Our neighborhood, which for generations had sent men and women to work in the mills, was a community in decline. Many jobs were gone, schools were under-performing, businesses had left or lowered the quality of their merchandise, and gangs and drugs made our streets and parks unsafe. Old residents moved out, new people moved in and neighbors no longer knew each other. Instead of a robust steel town, we were

another urban community abandoned by industry, with few options for creating economic vitality. Over four decades, South Chicago’s population declined by 11,000 people, to just 38,596 in 2000.

In the face of these challenges, South Chicago could have rusted away, but we chose to reinvent our community. Local leaders, the City of Chicago and institutions such as the Southeast Chicago Development Commission, Claretian Associates, Metropolitan Family Services, South Chicago Chamber of Commerce and others have worked hard to make the present better and to plan a more vibrant future.

Today, our population is about 68 percent African American and 27 percent Latino. More than 40 percent of our housing is owner-occupied, but there are nearly 1,700 vacant units and more than 1,000 vacant lots.

Many of our residents struggle to find good jobs and affordable apartments, keep old homes in good condition and find schools that prepare our children for the future. We wish there were a large grocery store nearby and better shops along Commercial Avenue, and we see a desperate need for more teen and family activities. But these aren't just wishes. They are now goals. And we have a plan for how to achieve them.

Building on our assets

For years, many of us—residents, business owners and neighborhood leaders—have been working on making our neighborhood a better place. In the last year, we have done this by participating in two community planning initiatives and reaching out to new stakeholders.

We have discovered that there are many underutilized assets in South Chicago, including pools, parks, social service and recreation programs, and a small community of artists. Yet there are other resources that do not exist here and that we need to bring in. We also recognize that we should get to know one another again as people who live, work, raise families and do business in the same community. And we need to reach out to new residents who will move

to South Chicago as new homes are built at the South Works site and throughout the community.

With South Works closed for more than a decade, we must create a new identity for South Chicago that includes the neighborliness of our past as a steel town, while incorporating the strengths of a 21st Century community with a mixed economic base. The manner and form of new development at the 573-acre South Works site will help forge this new identity, and we will work closely with the development company McCaffery Interests, our aldermen, and the City of Chicago to ensure redevelopment of the site is consistent with core principles defined by hundreds of community residents during a city-led planning effort in 1998 and 1999. These principles include:

- Existing neighborhoods adjacent to South Works will be strengthened with a new park, upgraded streets, renovated homes and new homes.
- Commercial Avenue will continue in its historic role as the neighborhood retail core.
- Chicago's grand lakefront park system will be extended along the entire South Works lakefront, and South Chicago will be reconnected to the lakefront.
- U.S. 41 will be relocated to a new alignment on the South Works site and new streets at South Works will connect to existing neighborhood streets to create a unified community and ensure pedestrian and vehicle access into the South Works site and to the new lakefront park.



Commercial Avenue remains an important shopping area where businesses are reinvesting in their facilities.



New development at the South Works site should connect to existing shopping districts.

Likewise, we will support city efforts to attract a new developer to the Solo Cup parcel on the southern end of South Works. Located only eleven miles from downtown Chicago, with a stunning lakefront view and a brand new roadway already in place, we believe this 187-acre, shovel-ready “signature site” presents enormous opportunity to attract a state-of-the-art green business park, an institutional campus or a mixed-use lakefront neighborhood. Across the globe, cities have positioned old industrial sites for this type of redevelopment. Within the U.S., there are few waterfront urban redevelopment opportunities of this scale, and we encourage the city to seek a user who can take full advantage of the unique assets of the site.

The power of planning

In 1999 and 2000, South Chicago residents and leaders engaged in a community planning process as part of LISC/Chicago’s New Communities Initiative (NCI), the pilot phase of the New Communities Program. That planning process brought stakeholders together and created a quality-of-life plan with concrete revitalization strategies.

In the last five years, that plan has leveraged more than \$7 million in investment. Hundreds of South Chicago stakeholders have helped improve our community by creating neighborhood watch groups, establishing community gardens and beautifying our commercial district. Many have participated in workshops and advisory groups to guide the mixed-use redevelopment of the South Works property, new lakefront parks and other public and private investment. The scale of that new and planned development means that our neighborhood is on the verge of tremendous change.

Building Community through the Arts is the latest and perhaps most innovative planning effort we have undertaken. BCA seeks to integrate the arts into neighborhood development strategies—to leverage the arts as a catalyst for positive economic, physical or social change.

Through the BCA process, we discovered that there are arts and cultural activities happening in many places and that several artists—professional, emerging, young and old—live in South Chicago. Some have been here all along; others came because of the affordable housing, cultural diversity or our small-neighborhood feeling. They are active in our schools, churches, social service organizations and parks. They perform at weddings, restaurants and bars, and in city and state festivals. They work with youth and seniors.

The artists we met are our neighbors and share the same commitment to South Chicago as other residents, business owners, teachers, community workers and leaders. They know our history and they want to be part of our future.

Foundation to build on

This plan positions the neighborhood to benefit from its many committed stakeholders and from the new development that is on the horizon. The plan outlines nine strategies and over 40 projects. The plan is ambitious, but it is also achievable, because we have built a solid track record. Some of our community's accomplishments over the past decade:

- SUCCESS, the South Chicago Community School at Sullivan, provides after-school, evening and weekend activities including music, theater, sewing, visual arts and computer graphics for adults and children.
- The Southeast Chicago Observer, a community newspaper started in 1998, has kept neighborhood people informed and connected. It has a circulation of 15,000.
- The Job Resource Center (JRC) has provided placement, training and computer resources during more than 37,000 visits since 1998. Expanded programming through the Center for Working Families (CWF), started in 2006, will help families access workforce services, income supports and financial counseling.
- Funding from Nationwide Insurance enabled 13 homeowners to install windows, repaint porches and make other improvements in the area called Bush, adjacent to the former South Works site. Funding from the South Chicago TIF (tax-increment financing) district allowed additional homeowners to make façade and energy improvements.
- Casa Kirk, constructed by Claretian Associates in 2005, provides 29 families with affordable housing and social services. Through the Claretian Associates' New Homes for South Chicago program, almost 30 additional families have become homeowners. Neighborhood Housing Services has also helped 26 families become homeowners, reclaimed three vacant buildings and saved 35 homeowners from foreclosure.



Artistic and cultural activities can help South Chicago reach its community development goals.



After training in the LEAD! South Chicago program, residents put their leadership skills to work on community projects.

- Since 2001, the South Chicago Art Center has provided a safe place where children can go after school to participate in free visual arts programs. An estimated 1,000 youth and community residents have participated.
- New street trees, banners and façade improvements along Commercial Avenue are drawing shoppers to its stores and restaurants. A beautiful mural was painted on 90th and Commercial Avenue, beautifying this troubled corner and making it safer for children to walk to and from school.
- Vacant lots have been transformed into three community gardens where neighbors grow vegetables, flowers and fruit. South Chicago People's Park has become a safe gathering place, the Bush garden is tended by proud neighbors and Russell Square Park was updated with a playground, garden and fitness center.
- Healthy South Chicago was formed in 2001 to facilitate access to health care, promote healthy behaviors, foster a positive community environment and support community development.
- LEAD! South Chicago promotes neighborhood development and "learning by doing." A 10-week series of classroom sessions is followed by a 10-month practicum during which participants complete a community project.

These successes and others give us confidence that we can implement this plan. We also recognize that our neighborhood's future is interlinked with other neighborhoods on the Southeast Side. We will work with our neighbors in Hegewisch, Eastside and South Deering to learn from their community improvement efforts, share the lessons we have learned and replicate successful projects and programs throughout the Southeast Side.

Honoring Our History, Forging Our Future




At the South Chicago Art Center garden, students wrote wishes and hung them in a tree.

We will reinvent South Chicago by building upon our history, institutions, values, diversity and arts and culture. We will create a safe, strong community where neighbors know one another and have a shared commitment to the future. Our neighborhood will come alive with new green spaces, environmental programs, community events and cultural activities. South Chicago will be a thriving neighborhood where institutions, businesses and new development at the South Works site will meet the needs of residents—and where people of all ages have numerous opportunities for growth.

Nine Steps to a Stronger Community

1. **Create** an identity for South Chicago that builds connections to our history, our institutions and each other.
2. **Create** a mixed-income, sustainable community that embraces green building technologies and includes market rate and affordable housing.
3. **Beautify** our neighborhoods with new and improved parks, community gardens and green space, and reconnect South Chicago to the lakefront.
4. **Build** family wealth by attracting businesses with living-wage jobs, and by improving employability, legal knowledge and financial skills.
5. **Strengthen** Commercial Avenue as South Chicago's "downtown."
6. **Create** better social, recreational and enrichment opportunities for youth and families.
7. **Expand** student and parent programs that enhance academic achievement.
8. **Improve** security so that children and families can walk safely throughout our neighborhoods and better utilize community resources.
9. **Develop** a strong arts community in South Chicago and use art as an innovative and powerful tool for community restoration.

The NCP and BCA task forces worked in parallel to develop this plan. Projects developed by the BCA task force have been incorporated throughout. The BCA projects are denoted by the  **BCA** symbol.

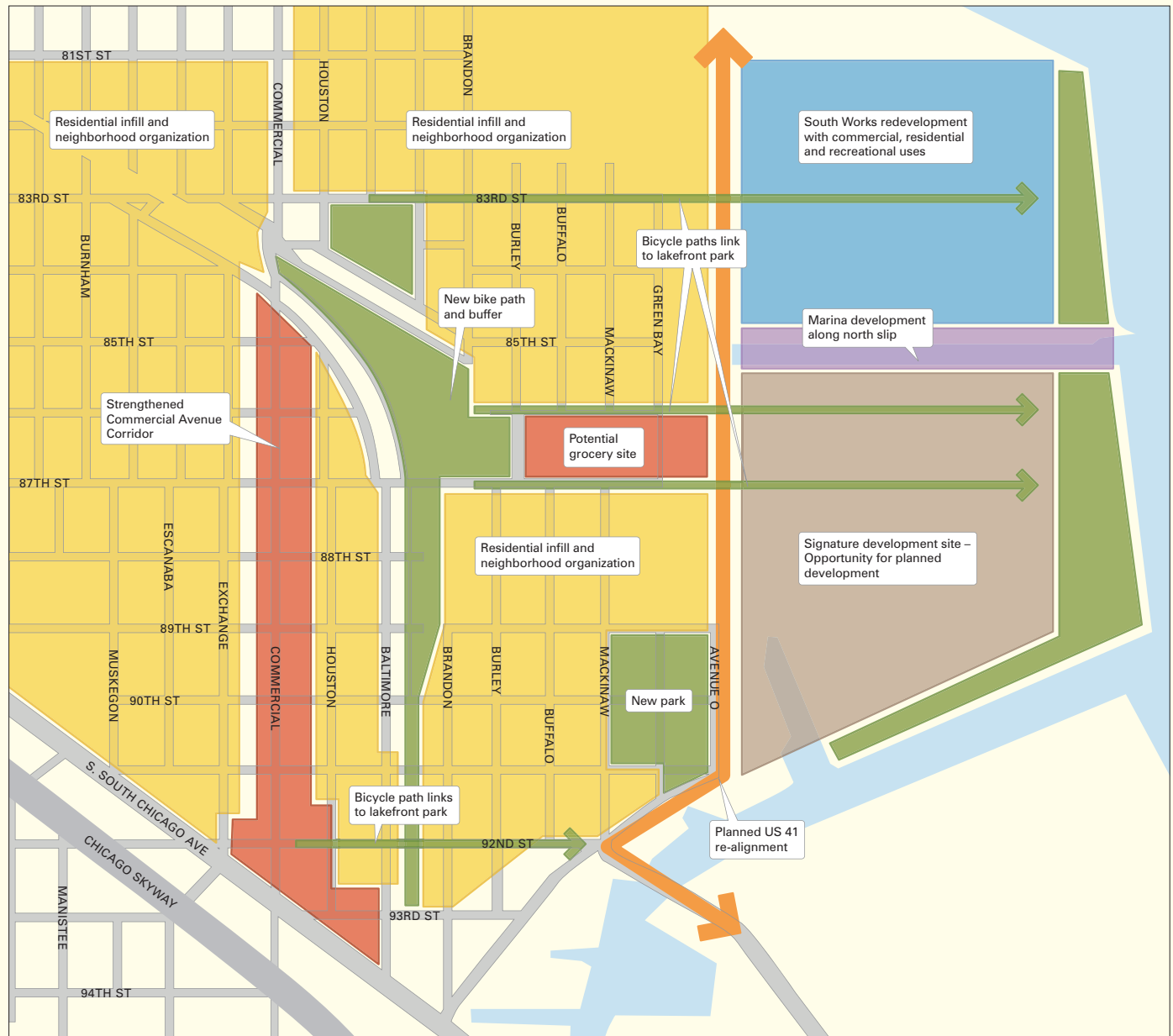


FIGURE 3 Community vision

New development on the former steel site, including new lakefront park space, will be integrated with other efforts to strengthen the existing community.

STRATEGY 1**Create an identity for South Chicago that builds connections to our history, our institutions and each other.**

“As I was growing up, as my family was growing up, we knew everyone on our block. At that time there were more Mexican families moving in and still a lot of Polish families. Sometimes I didn’t know where my children were, but I didn’t worry because I knew neighbors would watch out for them and they wouldn’t be in harm’s way.”

—Sylvia Ortega, South Chicago resident

Long time residents recall growing up in a community where families knew each other for generations and everyone had at least one relative who worked at the steel mills. Children would swim at the YMCA and dance at the record hops at Ada S. McKinley’s Neighborhood House. Families would spend the entire day at Rainbow Beach.

Since the mills closed, South Chicago has struggled to overcome not only the economic impact caused by the loss of jobs, but also the social impact. We simply do not know our neighbors anymore. New residents sometimes feel disconnected from the community’s past and many feel disconnected from each other. Steel will always remain an important part of our history, but it is not our future.

Our plan is to celebrate and promote our history by creating bridges that connect our past to the future. We will recapture a sense of neighborliness by nurturing old relationships and forging new linkages, reaching out to one another and to new residents who move in to new homes at South Works and throughout the community.

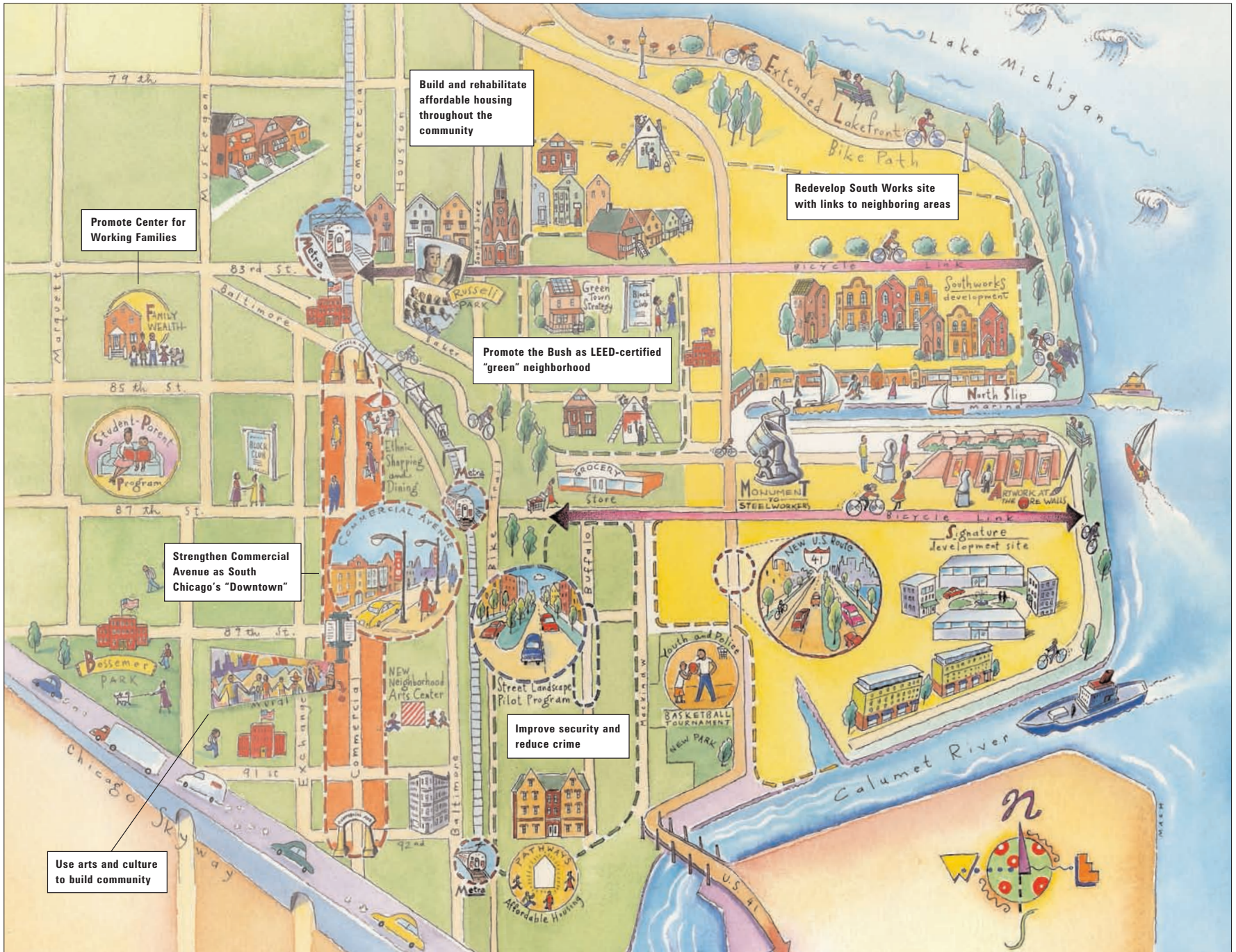
Making art and creating culture are powerful ways of bringing people together to share an experience, learn about each other and develop their individual potential. We believe that as more art activities are created, performed and shared in the neighborhood, our residents and community will be transformed.

1.1 Strengthen existing block clubs and establish new block clubs through mentorship and small grants.

Block clubs are a vital tool of this plan because they help us get to know our neighbors, beautify the neighborhood and make it safer. We will launch a block club mentor program to partner successful block club organizers with fledgling clubs, and provide small grants to support clean-up days and block parties. We will develop model tools for new clubs including an annual agenda of activities and a prototype sign that could be individualized for each block while giving a uniform look throughout the neighborhood. The sign will be developed in conjunction with local artists.

1.2 Establish a Community Welcome Wagon to greet new residents and invite them to become active community members.

New homes will soon be constructed on 80 city-owned lots in the Bush area and elsewhere, bringing in many new residents. We will form a Welcome Wagon that will greet residents and provide them with information about local institutions and resources, contact information for the nearest block club captains, a calendar of events, and coupons and promotions offered by the South Chicago Chamber of Commerce and businesses.



Promote Center for Working Families

Build and rehabilitate affordable housing throughout the community

Redevelop South Works site with links to neighboring areas

Promote the Bush as LEED-certified "green" neighborhood

Strengthen Commercial Avenue as South Chicago's "Downtown"

Improve security and reduce crime

Use arts and culture to build community

BCA**1.3 Construct a community website to keep residents informed and connected, and to attract visitors to South Chicago.**

We will establish a community website to include a calendar of neighborhood events as well as a directory of businesses, institutions, city services, artists and other resources.

It will be used to promote communication within the community and attract visitors and resources. The directory will be printed and distributed, and a calendar will be designed by local artists and made available in print and on the web.

BCA**1.4 Host the South Chicago “Art Attacks.”**

Arts and culture are ideal tools to beautify our neighborhood, bridge cultural and language barriers and promote understanding among people of all backgrounds. In 2006, we initiated a year-long series of arts and cultural activities in different venues and hope to continue these in upcoming years. Art Attacks activities include music and other performances at People’s Park, oral history projects, fence art on the South Works property at 87th and Burley, and the highly successful Día de los Muertos altar exhibits. Also included are the culminating events for our BCA Early Action Projects, the Wish Tree project and “Stepping Through South Chicago” mosaic art project. We will promote these with an on-line and print arts calendar, a community information kiosk and through businesses and organizations.

BCA**1.5 Compile and present oral histories of Bush neighborhood residents, steel workers and other long-time South Chicago residents.**

Three oral history projects will be completed and presented to the community to honor our past and generate greater understanding among current residents.

BCA**1.6 Install public art to create gateways to South Chicago.**

We will install public art at key locations to welcome visitors to South Chicago, beginning with the north and south ends of Commercial Avenue. The gateways will be designed with community participation to reflect our history and culture.

BCA**1.7 Install a public art piece to honor the generations of South Chicago workers who ran the South Works steel mill.**

We will work with students, retired steel workers and the Chicago Park District to generate design concepts and create a historical marker at the planned lakefront park at South Works. We will incorporate the eastern edge of the massive walls that were used to stockpile ore so the steel mill could continue running during the winter months. These walls are the sole structures that remain to commemorate the mill, which was once the largest producer of structural steel in the world. At an appropriate time in the development of the site, we will work with Chicago’s Steel Heritage Project, U.S. Steel and banks to identify funding for installation.

BCA**1.8 Provide opportunities for local musicians and other performance artists to participate in sidewalk sales, back-to-school shopping events and other chamber of commerce activities.**

Each year the South Chicago Chamber of Commerce hosts events in which merchants sell products along the sidewalks and food vendors and others without storefronts set up booths. Adding local performers will make these events more inviting, boost business for retailers and give exposure to performers.

FIGURE 4 Key projects

New projects will build upon recent successes and position South Chicago to benefit from redevelopment at South Works and throughout the community.

STRATEGY 2

Create a mixed-income, sustainable community that embraces green building technologies and includes market rate and affordable housing.

“South Chicago has two assets that few Chicago neighborhoods can claim—a very affordable stock of housing and more than 700 acres of vacant land.”

—Angela Hurlock, Executive Director, Claretian Associates

With the pending redevelopment of the 573-acre South Works site and new housing planned for 64 city-owned lots, our community is poised for dramatic change. We must be proactive if we wish to create a mixed-income community that attracts middle- and high-income residents while also ensuring that existing residents will have access to housing they can afford.

After many years of stable or declining prices, both land and housing values are rising and this trend will very likely accelerate. A narrow window of opportunity is open to us, and we must seize this opportunity to acquire and land-bank vacant parcels now to maintain housing affordability in the future. The need to create a mixed-income community extends to the South Works site, which should include a range of affordable and market-rate housing.

We also have an opportunity to be better stewards of our environment by promoting environmentally friendly, green development. The City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development has designated South Chicago as a pilot community for the city’s LEED ND (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Neighborhood Development) program, and we will support and build upon these efforts to promote development that helps conserve resources and minimizes pollution and waste.

2.1 Acquire and preserve land for affordable housing and other community needs.

We will explore opportunities to acquire and hold land for affordable housing through use of a land trust. A land trust is a non-profit organization that holds title to the land a home sits on, while the houses are sold to low- to moderate-income buyers who are offered long-term, renewable ground leases. Because the land trust retains title to the land, affordability is maintained even when the original homeowner sells the unit.

2.2 Transform South Chicago from a “Steel Town” to a “Green Town” by encouraging environmentally friendly development.

We will promote South Chicago as a “Green Town” by encouraging state-of-the-art strategies that conserve resources and minimize pollution and waste such as:

- Energy efficient buildings
- Rain gardens and native plantings
- Community gardening using organic practices
- Designated walking/bike paths throughout the neighborhood connecting to schools, parks, and the Commercial Avenue business district

The City of Chicago is working with developers to obtain LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification for the new buildings being constructed on 80 vacant lots. To obtain LEED for Neighborhood Development certification for the project area, we will encourage reuse of existing buildings and in-fill development, and promote use of local materials and construction services.

2.3 Rehabilitate existing affordable housing for families.

Predatory lending and home improvement scams are widespread, and much of South Chicago's housing stock suffers from deferred maintenance. We will continue to work with Neighborhood Housing Services to utilize home improvement loans, TIF/NIF grants and other available financial and technical assistance to rehabilitate houses and apartments, to avert foreclosures and to protect residents from unsavory real estate practices.

2.4 Preserve affordable housing that is at risk of contract expiration.

Some rental buildings in the area were developed with tax credits in exchange for offering rents for 15 years at an affordable rate. This time period will expire soon for many buildings, making some apartments unaffordable for existing tenants and other community residents. Claretian Associates recently helped convene the Southside Regional Affordable Housing Summit to educate residents about this issue and to develop strategies for protecting the affordable housing. We will continue to work with local residents, landlords and building owners to provide technical assistance and other help to groups interested in purchasing one of these buildings or otherwise maintaining its affordability.

2.5 Construct new affordable housing for families and seniors.

There is strong demand for quality, affordable housing in our community. When the Claretian Associates opened Casa Kirk in 2005, it received more than 1,400 applications for 29 available apartments. Also needed is specialized housing for single parents, grandparents raising grandchildren and senior citizens.

We will explore the following opportunities to meet the needs of our residents:

- Expand affordable senior housing. Two new senior housing facilities to be constructed by NHS and Pathway Senior Living, LLC will provide 112 units of supportive living and 72 units of senior apartments. The development, which will break ground in 2007, will also include a Chicago Department on Aging senior satellite center offering recreation, computer classes and other services. The entire development will be affordable to seniors.
- Provide affordable housing for grandparents raising grandchildren. Across the U.S., the number of grandparents serving as primary care givers is growing rapidly. Federal legislation was recently approved to establish a demonstration program to develop intergenerational housing for these grandparents, but no funds have yet been allocated. The City of Chicago is using funds from an NEA New Public Works Initiative to develop prototype housing for grandfamilies in the Roseland commu-



The 29 units of new rental housing at Casa Kirk were quickly rented because of high demand for affordable units.



Storefronts in underutilized commercial areas can become live/work spaces for artists.

nity that will include two Head Start classrooms, 10 dwelling units and green roofs. We will work with Claretian Associates and Chicago's Department of Housing and Department on Aging to pursue similar opportunities in South Chicago.

- Promote the city program to pre-qualify teachers for new housing. The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Teacher Homebuyer Assistance program provides financial assistance to Chicago public school teachers who are first-time homebuyers. The forgivable loan provides \$3,000 in closing costs and down-payment assistance. We will work with the CPS Teacher Housing Resource Center, the City of Chicago and developers to host a workshop and housing fair for local teachers, and to highlight buying opportunities. We will also work with developers to extend this benefit to other full-time CPS employees.
- Explore co-op housing for single-parent families. Buying a first home is often difficult for a single parent. We will investigate housing cooperatives and strategies used by other cities to support single-parent families. We will begin by hosting a roundtable with the Chicago Department of Housing, affordable housing developers and others to identify viable strategies.

- Include affordable housing at South Works. We support the city's redevelopment strategy for South Works ("From Steeltown to Hometown," 1999) which calls for "a combination of market rate and subsidized development [to] create a mixed-income and mixed-aged lakefront community."

- Require affordable housing when feasible. On any developments that involve city assistance programs or zoning changes, we will seek the maximum feasible number of affordable units.

BCA

2.6 Renovate old buildings for affordable housing or live/work facilities.

South Chicago has many vacant and under-utilized commercial buildings, some of which are being rehabilitated for residential use. We will explore options for providing affordable and market-rate housing or work studios, as well as combined live-work spaces that create savings for artists and others who can work from home. As a first step, we will host a roundtable discussion with developers and other experts to identify successful models and possible sites.

STRATEGY 3**Beautify our neighborhoods with new and improved parks, community gardens and green space, and reconnect South Chicago to the lakefront.**

“I am no longer the Mexican and she is no longer the Black lady. She is Dorothy and I am Miguel.”

—Miguel Orceo, resident, on how neighbors are getting to know each other in the community’s gardens

Three decades of disinvestment left South Chicago with more than 1,000 vacant lots that became full of weeds and debris.

We have begun to reclaim the vacant land to build housing, a school and a new Metra station and parking lot, but we must also preserve and expand our green spaces. We are a community of gardeners, and in our gardens we come together not only to plant and harvest, but to enjoy nature and to get to know one another. We will continue to reclaim abandoned and under-utilized space and enliven these spaces with public art, gardens and parks.

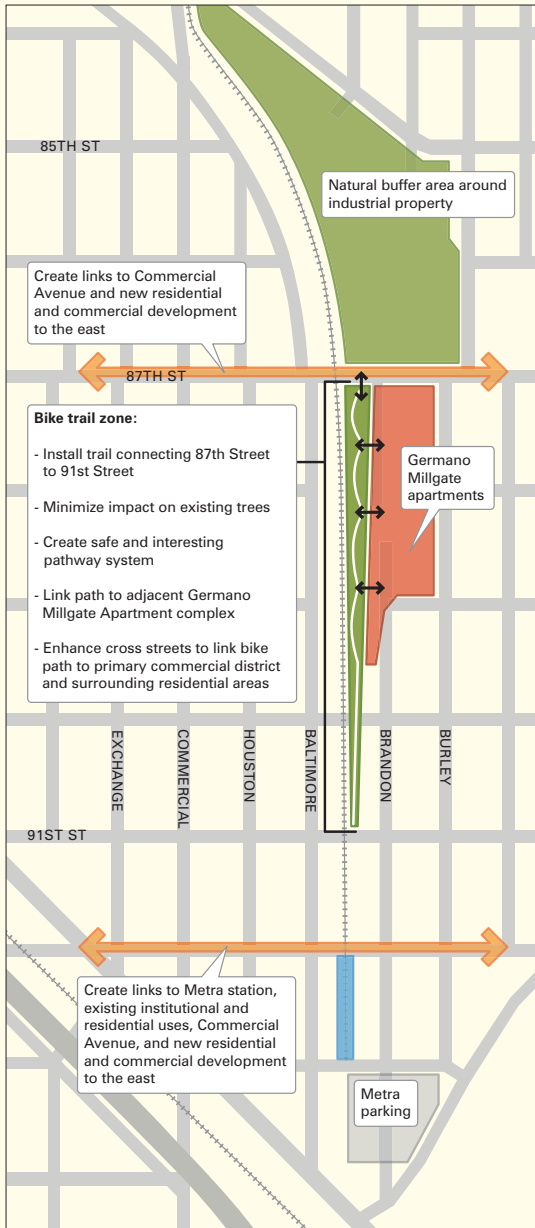
The pending redevelopment of South Works presents the first opportunity in more than 100 years to connect our neighborhoods to Lake Michigan and fill one of the last remaining gaps in the city’s world-famous lakefront park system. We will continue to work with the city to ensure that the new Route 41 includes landscaped parkways and medians and safe pedestrian crossings, and that bike paths and other greenways connect existing neighborhoods to the lakefront park.

3.1 Establish a Park Advisory Council to work with the Chicago Park District to plan, develop and program new park space at the South Works lakefront and at 89th and Mackinaw.

U.S. Steel has transferred the first parcel of land to the Chicago Park District and will transfer the remaining lakefront in the next few years—nearly completing a continuous lakefront park as envisioned by Daniel Burnham in the 1909 Chicago Plan. Almost 100 acres at South Works will be conveyed for the new lakefront park and the bike and pedestrian paths connecting the community with the lakefront. In addition, the city is completing acquisition of nearly four blocks at 89th and Mackinaw for a neighborhood park. A new park advisory council will work closely with the park district to plan, develop and program these new parks.

3.2 Establish a network of greenways, bicycle paths and walking paths throughout the neighborhood and to the new lakefront park.

New greenways and pathways are needed both to connect South Chicago to the new lakefront park and to connect development at South Works to adjacent neighborhoods. Creative approaches are needed in some locations, such as the northwest corner of the site where the South Works land is approximately eight feet higher than the adjacent Bush neighborhood. Another challenge is to ensure residents can safely cross the re-aligned Route 41 on foot or bike, or via a pedestrian bridge.



We also will establish a network of bike and walking paths to connect residential areas to schools, parks and the Commercial Avenue retail corridor. We will begin by working with the alderman, CSX Railroad, and other property owners to clean up the vacant and industrial parcels adjacent to the tracks and to explore opportunities to create a pathway and other greenway buffers.

BCA

3.3 Build a new community arts garden on Commercial Avenue and enhance the community gardens at Russell Square Park, Bush and Millgate.

Community gardens have been a catalyst for building community connectedness and have transformed unused space into inviting gathering spaces. We will create a new community arts garden in one of the vacant lots along Commercial Avenue, seek public and private support to add picnic tables at the Bush garden behind the Neighborhood House at 84th and Mackinaw, and install landscaping to enhance the aesthetics of the South Chicago Artist's Garden in Millgate. At Russell Square Park, we will install three sculptures created by local artist Roman Villarreal with students at Bowen High School.

FIGURE 5 Walking and bicycle trails

New walking and bike paths will connect neighborhoods to schools, the Commercial Avenue shopping district and to the new lakefront park and other green spaces.

3.4 Reclaim vacant land and enliven abandoned or under-utilized spaces.

We will continue to reclaim other abandoned and under-utilized space throughout the neighborhood and enliven these spaces with gardens, murals and other public art.

3.5 Install landscaped medians on wide blocks.

South Chicago boasts some of the city's widest streets, well beyond the need for existing or projected traffic. Installing landscaped medians will improve the appearance of these blocks, reduce urban heat islands and improve safety by reducing speeding. Starting with the blocks adjacent to Thorp School or other appropriate location, we propose to establish a pilot program that will use TIF or other funds to install landscaped medians.



FIGURE 6 Residential street median

Landscaped medians will be installed on wide side streets to beautify neighborhoods and improve safety by slowing traffic.

STRATEGY 4

Build family wealth by attracting businesses with living-wage jobs, and by improving employability, legal knowledge and financial skills

“Too many of our residents are still without jobs and do not have the skills or other qualifications needed to get living-wage jobs.”

*—Mary Karen Reynolds, former NCP director,
Southeast Chicago Development Commission*

While household incomes are rising, the 2000 Census reported that per capita income in South Chicago was only 62 percent of the citywide average (\$12,520 for South Chicago compared to \$20,175 citywide). The unemployment rate was 18.1 percent for South Chicago, almost twice the citywide rate.

South Chicago is adjacent to the Lake Calumet industrial corridor, the largest industrial area in the City of Chicago. It is a short drive from Ford’s Chicago Assembly Plant and the adjacent supplier park, which together support more than 3,000 jobs.

The city’s Calumet TIF district generates funds for infrastructure and other programs that help retain existing companies and attract new industries. As jobs open up with existing and new companies, and as new construction begins for infrastructure and buildings, we must ensure that our residents are prepared for these and other employment opportunities.

One focus of our efforts will be to encourage more use of programs and services already available. We will also address problems related to drug and alcohol abuse, which disqualify too many of our residents. We will work collaboratively with our neighbors in Hegewisch, East Side and South Deering to strengthen existing programs and increase the number of residents using resources offered by:

- The South Chicago Job Resource Center
- Organization for Jobs On the Southeast (OJOS)
- Olive Harvey Learning Center
- CPS/IIT Skills-Based Program
- Union Apprenticeship Workshops

4.1 Promote the Center for Working Families (CWF).

Added to the Job Resource Center in 2006, the CWF provides a unique combination of one-on-one financial counseling, job placement services and connections to mainstream banking services, all with the goal of increasing a household’s earning power and financial strength. We will promote the CWF’s programs to families throughout South Chicago.

4.2 Increase placement of Southeast Side residents in jobs related to new development.

Construction at South Works and on other projects will provide hundreds of job opportunities, and we will work with the alderman and others to connect residents to those jobs. We also will ask the developer of the South Works site to provide opportunities for local contracting firms.

4.3 Connect youth interested in careers that require skills training with existing programs that provide needed training.

We will work with the Olive Harvey Learning Center, South Chicago Job Resource Center and Chicago Public Schools' high schools to promote careers as police officers, firefighters, medical workers and other growing professions that provide living wages and benefits.

4.4 Expand alcohol and drug rehabilitation treatment and outreach to help those recovering from substance abuse return to school or work.

The Southeast Alcohol and Drug Abuse Center (SEADAC) has been successful at assisting persons in recovery and in staying sober and returning to work or school. We will work with SEADAC to expand its services.

4.5 Help community residents access legal information and assistance through workshops, consultation with attorneys and alternative dispute resolution.

Fathers, ex-offenders and other residents have been able to receive information about parental rights, expungement laws and child support through workshops held in the community. Metropolitan Family Services' Legal Aid Bureau and the Chicago Legal Clinic will build on this initial success by providing regular workshops, individual consultations and other assistance to help residents resolve legal issues and remove barriers to employment.

We also will establish a network of bike and walking paths to connect residential areas to schools, parks and the Commercial Avenue retail corridor. We will begin by working with the alderman, CSX Railroad, and other property owners to clean up the vacant and industrial parcels adjacent to the tracks and to explore opportunities to create a pathway and other greenway buffers.



The South Chicago Job Resource Center is one of several resources that can help connect residents to jobs.

STRATEGY 5

Strengthen Commercial Avenue as South Chicago's "downtown."

“For decades you could buy everything you needed here on Commercial Avenue and no one needed to leave South Chicago to shop in the suburbs. Then, during the demise of the steel industry, the economy went out from under us, and Woolworths, Fannie May, Goldblatts and other well-known stores abandoned Commercial Avenue. But we were able to hold on and rebuild this vital shopping district by finding a new niche. We believe that mom-and-pop ethnic specialty shops and restaurants are the key to Commercial Avenue’s future success.”

—Neil Bosanko, life-long resident and Executive Director of the South Chicago Chamber of Commerce

Commercial Avenue remains one of Chicago’s best pedestrian-oriented shopping districts. With distinctive architecture, independent shops and restaurants and small storefronts built right to the sidewalk, Commercial Avenue invites shoppers to stroll from one store to the next. This street should remain the core business district of South Chicago.

Redevelopment of South Works and infill development throughout the neighborhood will increase demand for dining, shopping and other services. A new retail center at South Works is likely to include one or more “big-box” national chain stores, and we hope this center will provide convenient shopping for residents who now leave South Chicago to purchase clothing, office supplies, linens and other household items. As this development takes place, we will position Commercial Avenue to capture its share of a growing market by highlighting its ethnic and specialty shops and restaurants.

The active, vibrant, southern end of the shopping district should be sustained and supported with continued streetscaping, façade improvements and special events. The northern end should be revitalized through clean-up efforts and code enforcement.

Giving residents more and better options along Commercial Avenue and at South Works can help capture more local spending, bring in new shoppers from surrounding communities, create jobs and other economic opportunities, and generate additional taxes for our Special Service Area and TIF districts, which reinvest in South Chicago.

5.1 Revitalize the north end of Commercial Avenue through clean-up efforts and code enforcement.

Most Commercial Avenue business operators and property owners take pride in the appearance of their property. Many have taken advantage of the city’s façade rebate program and/or invested private funds to install new awnings, replace old windows and signage, and make other improvements. However, some property owners simply are not maintaining their buildings. Debris is allowed to collect behind security grates, old and faded signs are not removed, paint is peeling, and windows are covered with old blinds or drapes. These owners have an obligation to be better neighbors.

At the request of the South Chicago Chamber of Commerce and Alderman Pope, the city recently initiated a door-to-door inspection of Commercial Avenue and issued 135 citations for code violations. Business owners were encouraged to remove debris, paint over graffiti and take other actions to maintain and beautify their buildings. We will continue to use incentives and code enforcement to beautify the neighborhood’s main retail corridor.



FIGURE 7 Commercial Avenue revitalization plan

North of 87th Street, incentives and code enforcement will be used to encourage property owners to clean and rehabilitate buildings. Opportunities to attract new investment and to develop new off-street parking will be explored.

5.2 Install outdoor dining areas along Commercial Avenue.

With a very modest investment, a restaurant, ice cream shop or other food-related business can expand its seating area and help enliven the Commercial Avenue streetscape by establishing a small outdoor dining area along the sidewalk, or by constructing a larger dining patio on an adjacent vacant lot. The chamber of commerce is working with business owners to develop plans for outdoor cafes, providing permitting assistance and helping owners secure affordable insurance. We will support the chamber's efforts.



FIGURE 8 Outdoor cafes

Dining patios and cafes can enliven the business district and help draw diners to ethnic restaurants.

- Banners and streetscaping consistent with south Commercial Ave. district
- Awning and signage enhancements on existing storefronts
- Storefront benches to promote sidewalk activity
- Seasonal planters to beautify facades
- Sidewalk cafe seating at restaurants
- Parallel parking to create buffer between traffic and sidewalk



Many small stores are doing well along Commercial Avenue, but a large grocery store is still needed.

▲ 5.3 Install an information kiosk on Commercial Avenue.

A kiosk will be installed on Commercial Avenue to provide residents and shoppers with a map and listing of shops and restaurants, as well as information regarding community activities and arts and culture events. We will seek a local artist to design and construct a kiosk that is functional, attractive and reflective of the community's character and vitality.

■ BCA

5.4 Display artwork by neighborhood artists, seniors and youth in empty storefronts on Commercial Avenue.

The Southeast Chicago Fine Arts Center will schedule and install art displays in vacant storefronts in collaboration with building owners and the South Chicago Chamber of Commerce. This will improve the atmosphere of the street while providing opportunities for professional artists and others to display their work.

5.5 Improve the availability of fresh produce and other healthy foods, with a long-term goal of opening a new full-line grocery store.

A 2006 study by the Mari Gallagher Research & Consulting Group found that residents of “food deserts” —large geographic areas with no or distant grocery stores —will likely have increased premature death and chronic health conditions. The report designates much of South Chicago as a food desert.

For several years we have tried to bring a full-line, large-format grocery to a vacant site at 92nd and Harbor, but developers have told us that the existing household income and population density cannot support such a store.

With no full-line grocery now serving our community, many residents travel to other neighborhoods or the suburbs to find a broad selection of food and other items. To address this, we will pursue a four-part strategy:

- Expand production and local distribution of fresh produce at local community gardens and attract new farmers' markets to the neighborhood.
- Support efforts by Healthy South Chicago and the South Chicago Chamber of Commerce to expand and improve the selection of fresh produce at existing food stores.
- Explore opportunities to develop in the near term a full-line but smaller format grocery store at an appropriate site.
- As South Works redevelops, support efforts already initiated by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development to attract a full-line, large-format grocery store to the east side of the community.

STRATEGY 6**Create better social, recreational and enrichment opportunities for youth and families.**

“I’m not on the street anymore.”

—Anthony Steele, former student and current teaching assistant at the South Chicago Art Center

Young people are the future of South Chicago. We want to provide them with the same opportunities afforded to more privileged youth, including high-quality intellectual, social and cultural programming.

We believe that artistic and cultural activities are especially valuable for youth development because they teach about working with others, encourage shared undertakings and help participants recognize other points of view. This interaction builds healthy relationships, tolerance of neighbors and a stronger bond to community.

Art classes have been reduced in many schools due to lack of funding, but we believe they are integral components of quality education. The arts can improve and enrich conventional classroom teaching, open new avenues of understanding for students who are struggling and provide new challenges for those who are considered successful. The arts also foster a creative and exciting school culture.

The best and most efficient way to expand youth programming is to build on the work of organizations that are already operating here, including the South Chicago Art Center, Metropolitan Family Services, the YMCA, Russell Square Park, the Ada S. McKinley Neighborhood House and La Causa. We will also improve access to programming at underutilized recreational facilities such as our pools, parks and the YMCA.

BCA**6.1 Expand access to arts programming by establishing a South Chicago Art Center satellite in Bush and more in-school programs.**

The South Chicago Art Center will develop a satellite program at South Chicago Neighborhood House to provide after school activities and programs for Bush residents. We will also seek new funding to expand the art center’s in-school programs to three Chicago Public Schools—Arnold Mireles, Marsh and J.N Thorp—as well as Our Lady of Guadalupe parochial school.

BCA**6.2 Work with Ada S. McKinley, the Chicago Park District and other community groups to expand and improve cultural programming.**

We will strengthen current youth groups that meet regularly to address community improvement issues and enhance community organizing skills. Ideas being discussed include dance classes, storytelling, culinary arts and seniors providing homework help and/or teaching skills such as sewing, cooking and woodworking. We will also engage the world of opportunities outside our neighborhood by taking youth on cultural field trips to places such as Millennium Park, the Art Institute and Chicago museums.

BCA**6.3 Establish free and regular teen-specific and family-friendly activities.**

We will work with the South Chicago Neighborhood House, South Chicago Art Center, YMCA, the Zone, Hegewisch Teens, the local chambers of commerce and the alderman’s office to organize regular activities for teens and families. We will rent buses to provide transportation to bowling, roller skating, movies and other activities. We will work with the YMCA, Russell Square Park, Bowen High School and Washington High School to waive pool fees, offering a free “Family Swim” one night per month throughout the year.

STRATEGY 7

Expand student and parent programs that enhance academic achievement.

“By providing a variety of expanded learning opportunities for students and their parents, we can increase academic competence and enhance students’ chances for success at school, at home and in the community.”

—Michelle A. Scheidt, Manager, Metropolitan

Family Services

South Chicago has an estimated 8,200 students from kindergarten through 12th grade. A 2004 analysis by the Illinois Facilities Fund found that none of the seven public elementary schools achieved the top level of student test performance (with 60 percent of the student body testing at or above standards). Area high schools show weak student test scores, high dropout rates and low numbers of students continuing into higher education.

South Chicago has made recent progress in addressing these challenges. Programs to enhance academic achievement are offered in schools and community organizations throughout the neighborhood. Several, such as the Pilgrim Baptist mentoring program, have helped students achieve better grades. Others, such as the READ program at Sullivan School, have helped parents provide better academic support to their children.

To build on these gains, we will expand successful programs and connect more parents to programs that are underutilized, such as “Young Fathers,” which teaches jobs skills, financial literacy and parenting, and “Parents Plus,” which provides socializing and learning experiences for parents and their children under five.



Arts programming in schools and at community centers can contribute to academic gains.

7.1 Replicate the SUCCESS program at another neighborhood school.

Metropolitan Family Services (MFS) and SCDCOM launched SUCCESS at Sullivan School in 2002 to transform Sullivan into a “community school” and provide academic and social enrichment activities for children, parents and community members on weekends and after school. SCDCOM and MFS will team up again to identify a new community school and solicit funding for SUCCESS on that site.

BCA**7.2 Expand and continue the READ program to engage parents in their children's education.**

READ is a parent outreach strategy designed to develop parent leadership and involvement while supporting reading achievement at the New Sullivan Elementary School. This program is based on Family Reading Connections, a parent leadership and outreach strategy for Madison County, Indiana. Parent leaders are trained to conduct outreach to the families of pre-school, kindergarten and first grade students. After an initial one-on-one visit, parent leaders make monthly follow-up phone calls to answer questions, share reading tips, advertise upcoming events or share the titles of good books. Literacy-themed events are held monthly at the school and children receive a new book each month to add to their home library.

7.3 Expand the capacity of Pilgrim Baptist to provide social and academic enrichment services to more community youth, including those not enrolled in school.

With very limited funds and space, Pilgrim Baptist Church has been effective at engaging young people of all backgrounds. The youth programs keep kids off the street and give them opportunities for social, academic and personal development. SCDCOM will work with Pilgrim Baptist to secure funding for staff and organizational development, facilities and new programs.

7.4 Create a parent-to-parent initiative that promotes participation in community programs for parents.

A number of neighborhood programs are designed to improve parenting skills and enhance parents' ability to support their children's academic achievement, but several of these are not well attended. We will train parents, using the community health promoter's model (peer educators), to recruit other parents for participation and to ensure that program offerings are appropriate and needed.

7.5 Initiate a college-readiness program for high school students.

We will initiate a South Chicago college-readiness program to support family discussion of college options and increase at-risk students' and others' enrollment in and graduation from college. Programs such as Upward Bound provide fundamental support to students and parents in their preparation for college entrance, from help with college selection to filling out applications and seeking financial aid. We will investigate the structure and methods of college-support programs and develop a program to serve South Chicago high school students and their families.



As a "community school," Sullivan has an extended-day program and more time for enrichment activities.

STRATEGY 8

Improve security so that children and families can walk safely throughout our neighborhoods and better utilize community resources

“Forming the block club helped bring out leadership and gave residents the courage to get involved and call the police when they see things happening.”

—Michelle Turner, block club captain

The number of “index” crimes in South Chicago has fallen since the 1990s but our neighborhood continues to face serious security challenges, with more than 2,800 index crimes in 2004. Neighbors do not feel safe on some streets, especially after dark, and youth do not have full access to community programs because gang activity discourages them from entering certain areas.

A primary step in improving safety is to create a neighborhood that is attractive and well maintained. This sends a message that South Chicago is a neighborhood that people care about. While we can’t change the neighborhood overnight, we will continue to clean it up block by block.

For example, a new mural at 90th Street and Commercial Avenue helped spruce up a problem corner that kids pass each day on their way to school. Block clubs have been organized by the Bush Homeowners and Tenants Association and NHS, helping to make some areas safer. More than 1,000 students, teachers and parents participated in the 2005 violence prevention campaign. New police cameras have increased security at several drug hot spots.

We need to do more by supporting successful efforts and expanding them to other parts of the neighborhood. The following projects address public safety and build on initiatives already underway.

8.1 Expand the Southeast Anti-Gang Initiative.

The Southeast Chicago Anti-Gang Initiative (SECAGI) helps youth steer clear of gang involvement through youth workshops and conferences, non-violence marches, Youthnet activities, peer jury programs in local high schools, restorative justice programs for first-time offenders, and by promoting after-school programs. We will develop small-group sessions in schools and community settings to reach more youth with this successful program.

8.2 Conduct the Better Block Blitz twice a year.

Each May and October, two to four block clubs will be selected for the Better Block Blitz in coordination with the City of Chicago’s bi-annual Clean & Green program. Brooms, shovels, rakes, trash bags and anti-graffiti paint will be provided by the city, along with reduced-price porch security lights and installation assistance. Flowers and trees will be planted along parkways or in front yard areas visible to the street. We will work with the Red Cross and the Chicago Fire Department to coordinate safety checks in the target blocks, inspect furnaces and install smoke detectors. The clean-up will culminate with a block club party including local performers and other artists to celebrate the day’s work and build relationships with neighbors.

8.3 Host a police and youth basketball tournament.

The Chicago Police Department (CPD) and youth organizations will coordinate a police and youth basketball tournament to build relationships between patrol officers and youth. A task force made up of representatives of the South Chicago Neighborhood House, Russell Square Park, CPD, schools, churches and youth will organize and plan this tournament. Organizers will explore closing a street and hosting a combined street fair and basketball tournament, plus the possibility of hosting a tournament on an annual or semi-annual basis, perhaps in conjunction with the Better Block Blitz.

8.4 Set up a formal system for residents to report crime-related concerns to the alderman's office.

Some residents report being afraid to speak up at CAPS (community policing) meetings because gang members “are in the audience, and others have complained that gang members with police relatives receive preferential treatment. Block clubs will work closely with residents who are afraid to speak at meetings or deal directly with police and refer these residents to the alderman, who will follow up with the Police Department on their behalf.



Keeping the neighborhood attractive is one way to improve safety.

STRATEGY 9

Develop a strong arts community in South Chicago and use art as an innovative and powerful tool for community restoration

“If we address the arts, we address part of life and the human experience. Art expression tells who or what you are, and South Chicago needs to activate that expression along with its development.”

—Derric Clemmons, artist and resident

Arts and culture have been a constant part of life in South Chicago, but have not been highly visible to most residents. Through the planning process for Building Community through the Arts, we discovered arts and cultural activities happening in many places and that several artists live in South Chicago. We also learned that residents see the arts and culture as potential tools for improving the community and for building connections between current and future neighbors as described in Strategy 1. We believe a new cultural and fine arts center will serve not only as an arts anchor for South Chicago, but also as a bridge that connects new and future residents.

We recognize the challenges that local artists face in practicing their art, developing their skills and earning a living. We intend to cultivate the sustainability and growth of the arts community in South Chicago by creating affordable housing and work spaces for artists, promoting their work and connecting them to legal, financial and other resources. We believe that support for the arts and culture can help us achieve our vision for South Chicago.

BCA

9.1 Build a cultural and fine arts center for visual and performing arts.

South Chicago stakeholders are committed to building a cultural center that will serve as an arts anchor and provide well-designed space for performance arts as well as exhibit and work space for artists. The Southeast Chicago Fine Arts Center (SECFAC), a volunteer-run organization, has been the leader in this effort. Though it has a committed board, SECFAC will require assistance to become a formal non-profit organization with paid staff, and to obtain the resources and expertise needed to build the center.

This is a long-term project that will not be realized within the five-year scope of this plan, but planning has begun with the scheduling and hosting of arts events, and strengthening the organizational capacity of SECFAC. In the meantime, existing non-traditional arts spaces can be used for arts activities. These include vacant store fronts, vacant land, community gardens, Bessemer Park field house, churches and the South Chicago Neighborhood House.

BCA

9.2 Facilitate information-sharing, networking and learning among artists, businesses, organizations and residents.

Many South Chicago artists are already connected to each other and to city-wide arts resources. Nevertheless, many—especially emerging artists—express interest in greater local collaboration and access to resources and information. We intend to:

- Develop a print and online resource directory of individuals and organizations engaged in arts and cultural activities;
- Promote the Chicago Artists Resource (CAR), a website that provides information on issues related to artists' creative and professional practice;
- Host artists networking forums at businesses and community organizations;
- Post activities and resources on an Artists' Bulletin Board in a public place such as the library, South Chicago Art Center or the community kiosk to be installed on Commercial Avenue;
- Add an arts page to the South Chicago website.



The “Art Attacks” program provides local opportunities for artists while strengthening the community.

BCA

9.3 Provide opportunities for artists to work together on projects in this plan.

Developing a stronger artist community will require that artists learn from each other. We envision a system of mentorship and collaboration that will serve the dual purpose of building relationships while implementing projects. We will:

- Connect Residents that have an interest in the arts as a second career to Established Lead Artists through a process of shadowing and assisting the lead artist in a community-based project;
- Connect Emerging Artists that are working on building and improving their work experience to Established Lead Artists who can mentor and coach them while implementing a community arts project;
- Connect Established Lead Artists who are seeking to expand their career skills to a Master Artist to learn a new art form or expand their experience and skill base.

Building Community through the Arts (BCA) BCA

Launched in 2005, BCA is a demonstration program funded primarily by the Joyce Foundation and being implemented in three Chicago communities: Albany Park, South Chicago and Humboldt Park. LISC works with these communities to integrate the arts into their respective economic and community development strategies—to leverage the arts as a catalyst for economic, physical or social change. The process aims to create a new understanding of the value of arts and culture to the sustainability and vibrancy of neighborhoods.

BCA provides South Chicago and the other target communities with technical and financial assistance to:

- articulate a vision for arts and culture in their neighborhood;
- launch short-term arts and culture projects that advance revitalization goals;
- develop an arts-in-action plan to address community needs; and
- secure the resources required to advance long-term initiatives that employ the arts as a catalyst for positive neighborhood change.

Communities received funding for staff and the professional assistance of a planner, writer, and arts consultant, as well as access to seed grants as in NCP.

Key to Participating Organizations

The following organizations have committed to participate in implementation of this plan.

BC Block Clubs	NSES New Sullivan Elementary School
BCATF Building Community through the Arts Task Force	NHS Neighborhood Housing Services
BHTA Bush Homeowners and Tenants Association	PLS Pathway Senior Living, LLC
CA Claretians Associates	PBC Pilgrim Baptist Church
CC City of Chicago	RSP Russell Square Park
CDOH City Department of Housing	SAI School of the Art Institute
CDOE Chicago Department of Environment	SCAC South Chicago Art Center
CDPD Chicago Department of Planning and Development	SCCC South Chicago Chamber of Commerce
CDOT Chicago Department of Transportation	SCCA South Chicago Community Academy
CDA Chicago Department on Aging	SCNH South Chicago Neighborhood House
CLC Chicago Legal Clinic	SCTIF South Chicago TIF Task Force
CPS Chicago Public Schools	SCYMCA South Chicago YMCA
CDA Chicago Department on Aging	SECAGI Southeast Chicago Anti-Gang Initiative
CPD Chicago Park District	SCDCom Southeast Chicago Development Commission
CPAG Chicago Public Art Group	SCO Southeast Chicago Observer
CTRC Chicago Teacher Resource Center	SCDComJRC SCDCom Job Resource Center
CAPDC Commercial Avenue Planning and Development Committee	SCFAC Southeast Chicago Fine Arts Committee
4thCAPS 4th District Community Policing Office (CAPS)	SEADAC Southeast Alcohol and Drug Abuse Center
FP Friends of the Parks	SSRAHS Southside Regional Affordable Housing Summit
HSC Healthy South Chicago	SWAG South Worx Art Group
LS Local Schools	SUCCESS SUCCESS
OHLC Olive Harvey Learning Center	10thWARD 10th Ward Aldermanic Office
MFS Metropolitan Family Services	VG Villa Guadalupe Senior Services, Inc.
NCPTF New Communities Program Task Force	
NPAC New Park Advisory Council	

Schedule and Priorities

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME (YEARS)			ORGANIZATIONS	
	1	2-3	4-5	PRIMARY ORG(S).	SUPPORT ORG(S).
1. CREATE AN IDENTITY FOR SOUTH CHICAGO THAT BUILDS CONNECTIONS TO OUR HISTORY, OUR INSTITUTIONS AND EACH OTHER					
1.1 Strengthen and expand block clubs.	■	■	■	NHS, CA	BHTA
1.2 Establish a community welcome wagon.		■	■	CA	SCCC
1.3 Construct a community website.	■			SCDCom, CA	SCCC
1.4 Host the South Chicago “Art Attacks.”	■			SCDCom, BCATF	CA, SCFAC, SCAC, NSES, SUCCESS, MFS, others
1.5 Compile and present oral histories of steel workers and other long time residents.	■			MFS	BHTA
1.6 Install public art to create gateways to South Chicago.		■	■	SCDCom	SWAG, SCFAC
1.7 Install a public art piece to honor steel workers.	■	■	■	CPD, SCDCom	SAI, CDA
1.8 Provide opportunities for local musicians and other performing artists.	■	■	■	SCDCom	SCCC
2. CREATE A MIXED-INCOME, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY THAT EMBRACES GREEN BUILDING TECHNOLOGIES AND INCLUDES MARKET RATE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING					
2.1 Acquire and preserve land for affordable housing and other community needs.	■	■	■	CA	SCDCom, CDPD
2.2 Transform South Chicago from a “Steel Town” to a “Green Town.”	■	■	■	CA, SCDCom, SCCC	SCTIF, NHS
2.3 Rehabilitate existing affordable housing for families.	■	■	■	NHS	CA
2.4 Preserve affordable housing that is at risk of contract expiration.	■	■	■	CA	SRAHS
2.5 Construct new affordable housing for families and seniors.	■	■	■	CA, PSL, CTRC, SCDCom	NHS, CDA, CDOH, LC
2.6 Renovate old buildings for affordable housing or live/work facilities.	■	■	■	SCDCom	SCCC, CA

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME (YEARS)			ORGANIZATIONS	
	1	2-3	4-5	PRIMARY ORG(S).	SUPPORT ORG(S).
3. BEAUTIFY OUR NEIGHBORHOODS WITH NEW AND IMPROVED PARKS, COMMUNITY GARDENS AND GREEN SPACE, AND RECONNECT SOUTH CHICAGO TO THE LAKEFRONT					
3.1 Establish a park advisory council to guide planning, development and programming of new parks.		■	■	NPAC, CA	CPD, FP
3.2 Establish a network of greenways, bicycle paths and walking paths.		■	■	CA	
3.3 Build a new community arts garden on Commercial Avenue and enhance existing community gardens.	■	■		BHTA, RSP, SCAC, SCDCom	SCCA, CPAG
3.4 Reclaim vacant land and enliven abandoned or under-utilized spaces.	■	■	■	SCDCom, SCAC	SWAG
3.5 Install landscaped medians on wide blocks.		■	■	SCDCom, 10thWARD, SCAC	CDPT, CAPCD
4. BUILD FAMILY WEALTH BY ATTRACTING BUSINESSES WITH LIVING-WAGE JOBS, AND BY IMPROVING EMPLOYABILITY, LEGAL KNOWLEDGE AND FINANCIAL SKILLS					
4.1 Promote the Center for Working Families.	■	■	■	SCDCom	
4.2 Increase placement of area residents in jobs related to new development.	■	■	■	SCDCom, JRC, 10thWARD	
4.3 Connect youth interested in careers that require skills training with existing programs that provide needed training.			■	SCDCom, JRC	OHLC, CPS, others
4.4 Expand alcohol and drug rehabilitation treatment and outreach.			■	SEADAC	
4.5 Help residents access legal information and assistance.	■	■	■	MFS	CLC, VG

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME (YEARS)			ORGANIZATIONS	
	1	2-3	4-5	PRIMARY ORG(S).	SUPPORT ORG(S).
5. STRENGTHEN COMMERCIAL AVENUE AS SOUTH CHICAGO'S "DOWNTOWN"					
5.1 Revitalize the north end of Commercial Avenue.	■	■	■	SCCC, CDPD	
5.2 Install outdoor dining areas.	■	■		SCCC	
5.3 Install an information kiosk.		■		SCDCom	
5.4 Display local artwork in empty storefronts.	■			SCFAC	SCCC
5.5 Improve the availability of fresh produce and other healthy foods, with a long-term goal of opening a new full-line grocery store.	■	■	■	SCDCom, SCCC, HSC	BHTA, SCAC, VG
6. CREATE BETTER SOCIAL, RECREATIONAL AND ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES					
6.1 Expand access to arts programming by establishing a satellite location for the South Chicago Art Center.	■	■	■	SCAC	SCNH, Thorp, Mireles, Marsh, and Our Lady of Guadalupe School
6.2 Expand and improve cultural programming.	■	■	■	SCAC	
6.3 Establish free teen-specific and family-friendly activities.			■	CA	YMCA, parks, schools

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME (YEARS)			ORGANIZATIONS	
	1	2-3	4-5	PRIMARY ORG(S).	SUPPORT ORG(S).
7. EXPAND STUDENT AND PARENT PROGRAMS THAT ENHANCE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT					
7.1 Replicate SUCCESS at another neighborhood school.	■	■	■	MFS	SCDCom
7.2 Expand and continue the READ program.	■	■	■	MFS, SCDCom	CA, NSES
7.3 Expand Pilgrim Baptist youth programs.	■	■	■	PBC, SCDCom	SCDCom
7.4 Create a parent-to-parent initiative.	■	■	■	MFS	
7.5 Initiate a college-readiness program for high school students.	■	■	■	MFS	
8. IMPROVE SECURITY SO THAT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES CAN WALK SAFELY THROUGHOUT OUR NEIGHBORHOODS AND BETTER UTILIZE COMMUNITY RESOURCES.					
8.1 Expand the Southeast Anti-Gang Initiative.	■	■	■	SECAGI	
8.2 Conduct the Better Block Blitz twice a year.	■	■	■	SNHS	CA, Collaboration of community organizations
8.3 Host a police and youth basketball tournament.		■	■	4thCAPS	BC, 10thWARD
8.4 Set up a system for reporting crime concerns via the Alderman's office.	■	■	■	4thCAPS	

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME (YEARS)			ORGANIZATIONS	
	1	2-3	4-5	PRIMARY ORG(S).	SUPPORT ORG(S).
9. DEVELOP A STRONG ARTS COMMUNITY IN SOUTH CHICAGO AND USE ART AS AN INNOVATIVE AND POWERFUL TOOL FOR COMMUNITY RESTORATION					
9.1 Build a cultural and fine arts center.			■	SCFAC	BCATF, NCPTF
9.2 Facilitate artists' networking and learning.	■			SCDCom	SCO
9.3 Provide opportunities for artists to work together to implement projects in this plan.	■	■	■	SCDCom	

New Communities Program

NCP is a long-term initiative of Local Initiatives Support Corporation/Chicago to support comprehensive community development in Chicago neighborhoods. It seeks to rejuvenate challenged communities, bolster those in danger of losing ground and preserve the diversity of areas in the path of gentrification. Each effort is led by a neighborhood-based lead agency that coordinates programs among other local organizations and citywide support groups.

The program gives each of the lead agencies several resources: two full-time staff positions (an NCP director and organizer), technical support for planning and documenting the planning process, a pool of loan and grant funds distributed on a competitive basis for project seed money, and opportunities for learning from both peers and subject-area experts.

All NCP neighborhoods undertake a structured community planning process that leads to the quality-of-life plan, then move on to implementation. They are encouraged to be “doing while planning,” undertaking short-term “Early Action Projects” such as launching a youth program, opening an employment center, creating public art or sponsoring local health fairs.

NCP is designed to strengthen communities from within—through planning, organizing and human development. The comprehensive approach is designed to help broaden opportunities for local residents through better education, broader housing choices, safer streets, stronger personal finances and new economic opportunities. The strengthened community is better equipped to take advantage of larger market forces, attract new investment and enhance the overall quality of life.

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