

QUAD COMMUNITIES: Connecting Past, Present and Future

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



QUAD COMMUNITIES

WASHINGTON
PARK

Quad Communities



Quad Communities Development Corporation

Planning Task Force

Hundreds of neighborhood residents, business owners, institutional leaders and youth came together over the past 18 months to discuss and contribute to this quality-of-life plan. Quad Communities Development Corporation thanks all participants, and, in particular, acknowledges the many hours of work by members of the Planning Task Force and its committees.

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 Quad Communities
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The Quad Communities Development Corporation (QCDC) was formed in 2003 through a partnership of Ald. Toni Preckwinkle (4th) and a diverse cross-section of neighborhood leaders. It seeks to build upon the powerful forces now reshaping North Kenwood, Oakland, Douglas and Grand Boulevard.

The mission of QCDC is to convene residents, organizations, businesses and institutions to plan, guide, support and monitor human infrastructure and community development activities that will create a sustainable, healthy, mixed-income neighborhood. The QCDC board includes representatives and leaders from block clubs, public housing developments, the University of Chicago, developers and non-profit organizations.

The QCDC service boundary includes all of Oakland, Kenwood north of 47th Street, and parts of Douglas and Grand Boulevard. According to 2004 Claritas data, the QCDC service area is home to 8,700 households with a total population of 22,400. The median income is a little more than \$30,000, and median home value is a healthy \$245,000. However, only 15 percent of the 11,300 housing units in the service area are owner-occupied.

In its first year and a half, the organization has built a strong track record. In addition to organizing more than 500 participants in the 16-month quality-of-life planning process that created this plan, QCDC sponsored a number of Early Action Projects to develop momentum for community improvement. QCDC has:

- Implemented initiatives to improve public education, including the appointment of a three-year Cluster Coordinator for local elementary schools; formation of a Principals Group; and creation of a Summer Institute, facilitated by the University of Chicago’s Center for Urban School Improvement.
- Advocated successfully for early childhood education programming at Robinson Elementary, achieving full enrollment of 40 children at two full-day pre-kindergarten programs.
- Created and launched a \$20,000 Neighborhood Beautification Grant Program, awarding five organizations up to \$5,000 each.
- Organized significant work around commercial and retail development, including a market study of the trade area, a survey of more than 360 residents, and eight focus group sessions with more than 75 residents and stakeholders.
- Worked with the Mayor’s Office of Workforce Development to secure federal and regional funding to implement a community-driven employment transportation project for low-income families.

By bringing together residents and institutions around community-building activities, QCDC seeks to become the custodian of the community’s vision.

A Vibrant, Safe and Diverse Community



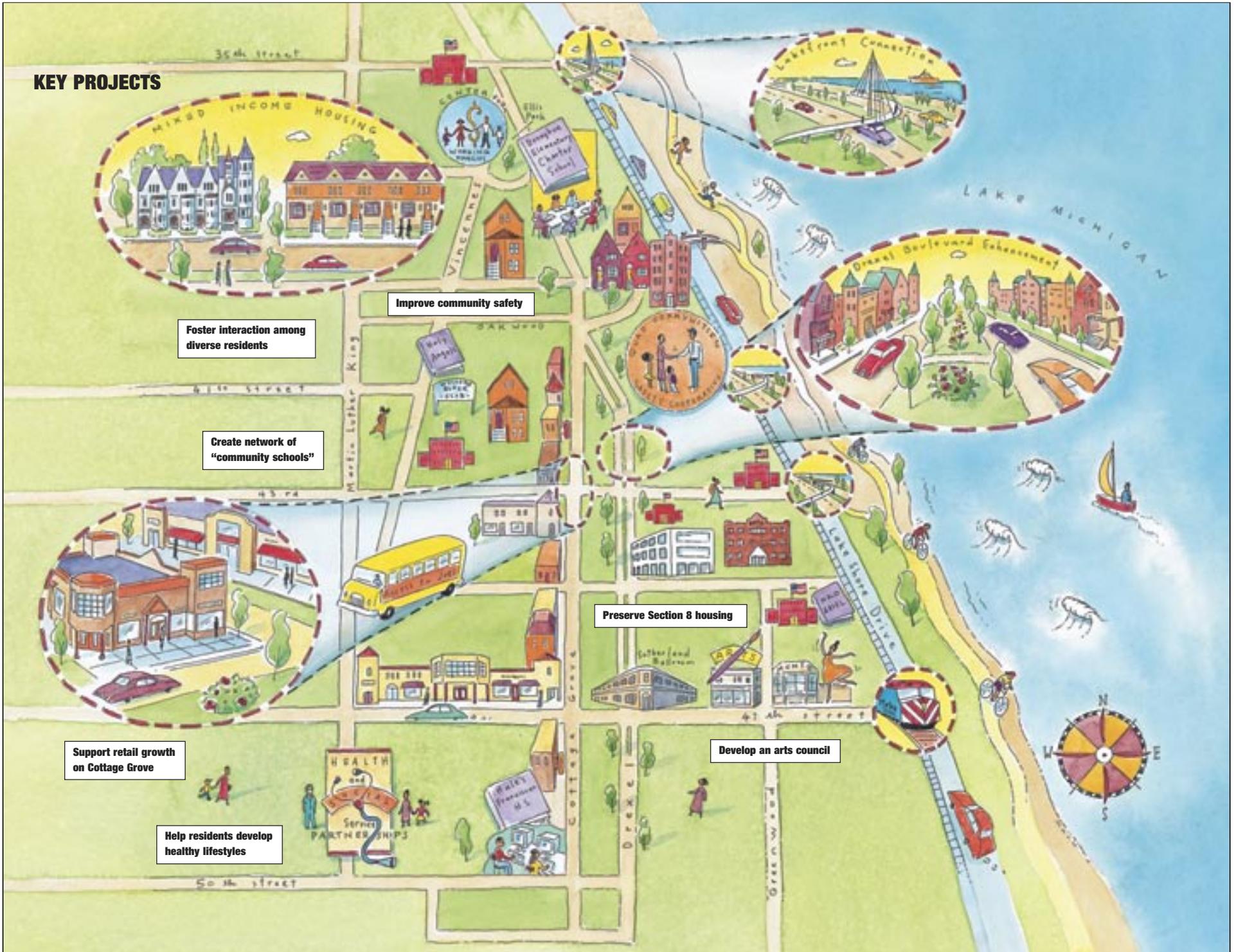
We need to provide a supportive environment for children of all ages, beginning in pre-school.

Quad Communities will become a place where a top-notch education is available to all, where residents walk streets that are attractive and safe, where the arts, culture and history are part of everyday life.

Families of all incomes and cultures will be welcome in our communities, and they will have ample support for raising healthy children and for earning a good living at both local and regional jobs. Our residents and families will benefit from a cohesive social environment and a healthy lifestyle that includes:

- Life-long learning opportunities for all, from preschoolers to senior citizens
- Investment in our youth through educational, recreational, cultural and intergenerational programs
- Prosperous commercial districts, with locally owned businesses providing business good jobs and needed goods and services
- A wide range of transportation options, from walking and biking facilities to improved public transportation and road systems
- Empowered residents who are vested in the community and connected with its many resources
- Respect for the community's rich history, cultural traditions and arts contributions

KEY PROJECTS



Foster interaction among diverse residents

Improve community safety

Create network of "community schools"

Support retail growth on Cottage Grove

Help residents develop healthy lifestyles

Preserve Section 8 housing

Develop an arts council

Building on History— and Pursuing the Vision



Historic greystone buildings are among the area's many architectural assets.

Chicago's historic Mid-South Side, once a capital of culture and commerce that inspired America with the jazz of Louis Armstrong and the moral clarity of activist Ida B. Wells, is again on the threshold of greatness.

Getting there is squarely up to us.

It is we, the people, families and stakeholders who stayed and struggled through the hard times, alongside many new residents, who will determine what this community will become. Will it be a collection of strangers, of look-alike condo developments and chain retail strips? Or a community of neighbors, a vibrant and interesting place, where families of diverse backgrounds and incomes can grow and prosper in an atmosphere of mutual support and respect?

That is the challenge facing Quad Communities as change sweeps across the four south-lakefront neighborhoods officially known as Kenwood, Oakland, Douglas and Grand Boulevard. Here, the Chicago Housing Authority, in partnership with private and non-profit developers and community leaders, is transforming public housing, replacing poor enclaves with mixed-income developments intended to foster a feeling of community. Here Chicago has launched a major effort to improve its schools. Here city planners and community leaders are drafting ideas for revitalizing commercial streets, including Cottage Grove Avenue and 39th, 43rd, 47th, and 51st streets. And here the Chicago Park District and the Chicago

Department of Environment are changing the face of Burnham Park on Lake Michigan.

Most of all, here is Chicago's next up-and-coming neighborhood. With an excellent location close to downtown and reknowned institutions and organizations, the Quad Communities area has been rediscovered by older families and young professionals alike. Alongside 110-year-old row houses and greystone mansions, more than 5,000 new units of housing are built, under construction or planned. A dedicated core of longtime residents—people who kept faith even as Quad Communities' population fell by 120,000 over 40 years—is determined to participate in the revival that their hard work and endurance helped ignite.

The goal of Quad Communities' quality-of-life plan is to build upon this momentum and shape a new community that is a great place to live and work for longtime residents and newcomers alike. More than 200 community representatives, working with and through a Planning Task Force, helped craft a unified vision of that future community. The Quad Communities Development Corporation seeks to serve as custodian of the vision by implementing the following strategies:

STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS

STRATEGY 1 Improve the quality of all local schools, and ensure they are open to all residents.

- 1.1** Ensure children living in a school attendance area can attend that school, and that the attendance areas encompass a mix of incomes.
- 1.2** Create a network of “community schools.”
- 1.3** Assess child-care needs and affordability.
- 1.4** Support charter and parochial schools.
- 1.5** Improve high school education.
- 1.6** Create business and education partnerships.
- 1.7** Enable teachers and parents to better help students.
- 1.8** Ensure that arts, physical education and health and sex education are core disciplines.
- 1.9** Track student progress and attendance.

STRATEGY 2 Provide employment and financial education services through new programs and better coordination of established ones.

- 2.1** Develop a Center for Working Families.
- 2.2** Develop an employment-services task force.
- 2.3** Develop a Quad Communities employment report and employment resource directory.
- 2.4** Initiate a Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) pilot program.
- 2.5** Improve job-training programs to close gaps between employer needs and resident skills.
- 2.6** Organize and host quarterly job developers’ forums.

STRATEGY 3 Create recreational, social and employment opportunities for youth.

- 3.1** Develop youth enterprise opportunities.
- 3.2** Expand year-round recreation programs and facilities.
- 3.3** Develop youth leadership through internship, mentoring and other programs.
- 3.4** Develop an inventory of community service projects.
- 3.5** Create a Digital Youth Initiative.
- 3.6** Create intergenerational workshops.

STRATEGY 4 Support a mix of low-income, affordable and market-rate housing, and foster interaction among diverse residents.

- 4.1** Create an Affordable Housing Resource Center.
- 4.2** Ensure that long-term economic and social supports are in place at new mixed-income developments.
- 4.3** Create live-work spaces for artists and musicians.
- 4.4** Develop a Smart Planning Initiative.
- 4.5** Create community connections through a Building Blocks Initiative.

STRATEGY 5 Improve safety through partnerships with residents, the Chicago Police Department and the University of Chicago Police Department.

- 5.1** Develop a Quad Communities Safety Cooperative.
- 5.2** Organize a Safety and Strategic Work Group.
- 5.3** Further expand University of Chicago Police Department patrols.

STRATEGY 6 Promote and coordinate health care and social services, and help residents develop healthy lifestyles.

- 6.1** Develop directories of health and social services.
- 6.2** Create partnerships among social services organizations.
- 6.3** Create a Senior Heritage Initiative.
- 6.4** Support healthy lifestyles.

STRATEGY 7 Develop unique retail and commercial districts, and foster locally owned businesses.

- 7.1** Institute a commercial design standard.
- 7.2** Organize, staff and manage a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Advisory Council.
- 7.3** Develop public- and private-sector resources to attract specific business types desired by the community.
- 7.4** Establish a retail development planning team.
- 7.5** Enhance the capacity of chambers of commerce and other support organizations.

STRATEGY 8 Improve community infrastructure, including transportation and information systems.

- 8.1** Promote neighborhood resources through a Community Information Hub.
- 8.2** Beautify the neighborhood.
- 8.3** Enhance Drexel Boulevard.
- 8.4** Implement a parking, transportation and infrastructure strategy.
- 8.5** Create new transit connections and services.

STRATEGY 9 Integrate arts, culture and history into the everyday life of the community.

- 9.1** Develop an arts council to create linkages among groups involved in arts, culture, heritage tourism and recreation.
- 9.2** Implement fine arts programming.
- 9.3** Create a neighborhood historical society.

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 spend their first year undertaking 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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The New Communities Program (NCP) is supported by a major grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Additional funding has been provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Joyce Foundation, Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, Living Cities, Mayor’s Office of Workforce Development, Nationwide Insurance, Partnership for New Communities, Polk Bros. Foundation and Surdna Foundation.